

**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
COMMUNICATION IN SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES:
UNFINALISABLE AND DIALOGICAL PROCESSES OF
LEGITIMATION**

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Abstract

Building upon constitutive models of corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication (Golob et al., 2013; Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013; Schultz et al., 2013), which appreciate the role of both organisations and stakeholders in constructing CSR, this thesis suggests that understanding of CSR is on-going and emergent through unfinalisable legitimation processes in social networking sites (SNSs). Constructed upon management research that has examined discursive legitimation processes (e.g. Castelló & Lozano, 2011; Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Tienari, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2007) this thesis shifts away from CSR communications research into websites, CSR reports and press releases (Castelló & Lozano, 2011; Cho & Roberts, 2010; Livesey, 2002) to descriptively investigate discourse within interaction (dialogue) in the textually rich SNS context. The research thus unveils *how* discursive legitimation occurs in contemporary networked societies across four UK-based retailers: the Co-operative, Lidl, Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's.

The thesis contributes to the CSR literature by challenging conventional definitions of legitimacy (Suchman, 1995), which suggest that objective, legitimacy 'realities' are espoused from 'transmission' (sender-orientated) models of communication (Axley, 1984), to offer interpretations of legitimation processes rooted within discursive and dialogical constructionism (Bakhtin, 1986; Potter & Wetherell, 2001). While the extant legitimacy literature has attributed external actors with agency to 'give' legitimacy to organisations, this thesis empirically demonstrates and conceptually analyses how legitimacy is not 'given', but continually and discursively (re)constituted

by internal (organisational) and external (stakeholder) voices. Building upon the need for legitimacy theory to more markedly draw upon language theory, especially that which addresses multiple actors, Bakhtinian dialogism (1986) offers the conceptual basis for this empirical research project in examining the *performative* (constructive nature), *polyphonic* (multi-vocal) and *perpetual* (unfinalisable) characteristics of organisation-stakeholder discourse in SNSs.

Findings capture not only the ‘centripetal’ (unifying) forces at play in organisation-stakeholder dialogue across the SNSs, but also the ‘centrifugal’ (dividing) forces (Baxter, 2004), illuminating the indeterminate, disintegrative and dissensual character of CSR communication (Castelló et al., 2013; Schultz et al., 2013; Whelan, 2013). While identifying discursive processes of *normalisation, moralisation and mythologisation* as centripetal forces, the study also unveils discursive processes of *authorisation, demythologisation and carnivalisation* as centrifugal forces, which problematise the consensual tone of legitimacy as organisation-society ‘congruence’ (Suchman, 1995) and reveal the shifting and contradictory expectations that surround CSR. Within a Bakhtinian (1981, 1986) conception of dialogue, the findings most markedly reveal *perpetuality* in CSR communication and the impossibility of exhausting relations in *polyphonic* SNS environments, characterised by ‘dispersed authority.’ Furthermore, in conceptualising SNSs as interactive, agential organisational ‘texts’, findings also illuminate the *performative* nature of SNSs in organising and (re)constructing CSR through organisation-stakeholder dialogue. Therein, this thesis provides a framework for understanding legitimisation processes in SNSs, with implications for theory and practice.

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Glossary of Key Terms

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Given its fragmented development across management disciplines, a range of definitions for CSR exists in contemporary literature (Dahlsrud, 2008) (see Chapter 2). Broadly speaking, this thesis builds upon CSR as the dominant term through which to conceptualise business responsibility for the wider societal good (Matten & Moon, 2008). The thesis aligns with the prevailing epistemological stance that CSR is a social construction, forged between organisations *and* stakeholders (Gond & Matten, 2007; Lee & Carroll, 2011). Consequently, the thesis builds upon the definitional foundation provided by Aguinis (2011:855), who suggests that CSR relates to “*context-specific organizational actions and policies that take into account stakeholders’ expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance*”.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Communication: A plethora of conceptualisations of CSR communication are currently operating in management research (Crane & Glozer, 2014). Whilst Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive discussion of the variety of ways in which CSR communication is theorised, this thesis aligns with Podnar’s (2008) characterisation of CSR communication as a process of anticipating stakeholders’ expectations to provide true and transparent information on economic, social and environmental concerns.

Dialogue: Dialogical exchanges relate to interactive moments of joint action (Bakhtin, 1986) *between* mutually co-present individuals (Linell, 1998). Deetz

and Simpson (2004) propose that there are three key ways in which dialogue can be theorised; as a learning opportunity (liberal humanism); as a goal directed and consensus building pursuit (critical hermeneutics); or as a conflictual and transformative process (postmodernism). Explored further in Chapter 4, this thesis draws upon the postmodern approach and Bakhtinian dialogism (1986) to suggest that dialogue is performative (the purposive use of language in constituting reality [Potter, 2003]), polyphonic (celebrating pluralism and multi-vocality [Kristeva, 1980]) and perpetual (emphasising the on-going, ‘allosensual’ nature of interactions [Nikulin, 2006]).

Discourse: Whilst often used interchangeably, an ontological debate surrounds the terms ‘communication’ and ‘discourse’ in management scholarship. An emergent body of literature is proposing that ‘communication constructs organisations’ (CCO), suggesting that organisations *are* communication (rather than being containers for it) (Kuhn, 2012) (see Chapter 3). Whilst the constitutive nature of language is a key thread running through this thesis, questions of what an organisation is and how it comes into being are not the main theoretical pursuit. The focus upon CCO in this paper thus remains somewhat ‘implicit’ (Schoeneborn et al., 2014) and interest instead, resides around the *discursive* processes of legitimation. Discourse, broadly relating to all forms of spoken interaction and written texts, offers insight into ways of being and ways of knowing (Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984) and provides a valuable lens through which to explore the construction of social reality (see Chapter 5).

Legitimacy: It is argued that legitimacy is a core principle for defining CSR and for determining the success of CSR activities (Lee & Carroll, 2011). This thesis argues that CSR communication involves processes of legitimation and in doing so builds upon Suchman's (1995:574) seminal definition of legitimacy as, "*a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions*". The thesis also utilises Dowling's (1983) conception of legitimation as a social processes, to introduce a framework for understanding CSR as on-going and emergent through unfinalisable processes of legitimation.

Organisation: The terms business, company, corporation, firm and organisation are often used interchangeably in management research to capture the essence of a commercial entity as a 'bundle' of tangible and intangible resources (as per the dominant 'resource-based view' [RBV] of the firm [Barney, 2001]). Given the interest in the discursive construction of CSR in this thesis, the author adopts the broader term of 'organisation' to align with a more comprehensive view of business in society (i.e. moving beyond the economic theory of the firm). 'Organisation' is thus utilised throughout this thesis to refer to the case retailers, and the term is premised upon the definition of an organisation as, "*a social system oriented to the attainment of a relatively specific type of goal, which contributes to a major function of a more comprehensive system, usually the society*", (Parsons, 1956:63).

Social Media: Social media are defined as, “*a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (UGC)*” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010:61). Whilst social media in CSR contexts are discussed in Chapter 3, it is important to highlight that social media can be categorised into a range of platforms including, weblogs (e.g. blogs), microblogs (e.g. Twitter), content communities (e.g. YouTube) and social networking sites (e.g. Facebook) (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Given the focus of this thesis on Facebook, it is social networking sites (abbreviated throughout as ‘SNSs’) that are of focal interest here.

Stakeholder: Freeman’s (1984:25) conceptualises stakeholders as, “*any group or individual who can affect or who is affected by the achievement of the firm’s objectives*”. This thesis aligns with this definition, utilising the term ‘stakeholder’ to broadly refer to any interlocutor in the SNSs *that is not posting* from the organisation’s official profile. The author does not view all interlocutors as forming a homogenous stakeholder group, nor does she distinguish between ‘primary’ (e.g. employees) or ‘secondary’ (e.g. regulators) stakeholders (Clarkson, 1995), but instead appreciates that interlocutors in the Facebook pages may enact a variety of individual and/or collective identities (e.g. as customers, employees, activists etc.). The term interlocutor is thus utilised throughout the findings and analysis chapters. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 offer nuances into individual posts where possible (although all interlocutors are anonymised) and Chapter 5 elaborates on some of the challenges of researching in online contexts most markedly.

Chapter 1: Introduction

CSR Communication in Social Networking Sites

1.1 Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a general overview of this thesis entitled *Corporate Social Responsibility Communication in Social Networking Sites: Unfinalisable and Dialogical Processes of Legitimation*. The chapter first provides an introduction to the research area, describing its key characteristics and outlining the practical and academic context for the research (1.2). This section articulates the appetite for corporate social responsibility (CSR) communications research and the current practical climate, which is demanding more nuanced insight into how new technologies are shaping organisational communications. Section 1.3 sets out the main aims and contributions of the research, detailing the key research gaps that the thesis aims to address. Section 1.4 then presents the two research questions guiding the study. Section 1.5 provides a thesis summary, offering an overview of the key findings in anticipation of a more detailed discussion presented later (Chapter 9). The chapter closes with a summary in Section 1.6.

1.2 Introduction

This thesis is concerned with corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication in social networking sites (SNSs). As corporate responsibilities have evolved and widened due to increasingly globalised and ameliorated

stakeholder expectations (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011; Scherer et al., 2009), the spotlight has been placed on the way in which organisations communicate with their stakeholder constituents. From the impacts of BP's oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, through to the staggering human death toll at the Rana Plaza Bangladesh garment factory in 2013, questions of organisational legitimacy are increasingly being forged in communications about CSR. Most often delivered through conventional media such as advertisements, CSR reports, branding and corporate advertorials, organisational communications play a powerful role in augmenting a 'legitimate' view of organisations as socially responsible actors (Bhattacharya et al., 2004). However, at a time when there are very radical shifts in the information and communication technologies (ICT) enabling such communications (e.g. Web 2.0, social media), there has been scant attention paid to how social media impact upon and shape processes of legitimation. Specifically, social media transform the structure, nature and temporality of legitimacy, from 'monological' flows of information targeted at external stakeholders, to an on-going 'dialogical' and constitutive interaction between cross-network stakeholders. Focussing analysis at the level of discourse, this thesis explores the dynamics of legitimation in the increasing dialogical SNS context.

Social media account for around a quarter of user time online, ranking ahead of even gaming and emailing (Gallaughier & Ransbotham, 2010). Alongside more traditional platforms (e.g. CSR reporting), SNSs are becoming one of the key channels for communicating CSR issues (Birth et al., 2008; Dawkins, 2005). *Campbell Soup's* live Twitter chats on CSR, *Starbucks'* 'involvement' ideas

forums, *Bupa's* 'walking and heart health' Pinterest site, and *Allianz's* 'knowledge' generating Facebook page provide just a few examples of how organisations are taking advantage of the interactivity afforded by social media technologies to 'co-create' CSR (Bhattacharya et al., 2011). However, whilst innovative, these ventures into interactive contexts are experimental and there is, as yet, limited theoretical understanding of the role that these approaches play in shaping CSR knowledge, strategies and processes of legitimation. Indeed, while social media increase the speed, accessibility and transparency of CSR communications across geographies, as well as provide opportunities for stakeholders to consume and produce content, initial studies have suggested that the 'liberation' of CSR communications from the exclusive control of the organisation has exposed communications to questions of authenticity, legitimacy and integrity (Berthon et al., 2008; O'Reilly, 2005). Research has also suggested that organisations lack knowledge of how to appropriately engage with social media and often apply the same communicative principles (i.e. information dissemination akin to broadcast media) to their digital tools, failing to utilise social media channels to their full potential (Capriotti, 2011). Thus, despite opening new doors for corporations, social media bring novel challenges.

Since the turn of the century, attention has turned to academic scholarship to provide insights into these new communicative dynamics and how they are shaping CSR communication. Books such as *The Handbook of Communication and Corporate Social Responsibility* (2011) edited by Ihlen, Bartlett and May; journals including, *Corporate Communication: An International Journal*

(launched in 1996); scholarly papers, for example the Special Issue of the *Journal of Business Ethics* dedicated to CSR in the network society (2013), and conferences, such as *The International CSR Communication Conference* (launched in 2011) reflect the increased appetite for CSR communication research in contemporary academic debates. These publications and networks seek to provide insight into *how* new technologies shape processes of CSR meaning making at the organisation-stakeholder interface (Ihlen et al., 2011).

A key theme within contemporary discourses relates to the shift away from dominant corporate-centric ‘transmission’ models, which conceive of communication as the uni-directional transfer of information from organisations to passive stakeholder constituents (Axley, 1984). Instead, more network-oriented ‘constitutive’ models are evolving to account for the active and ‘involved’ role of stakeholders in building CSR knowledge across management scholarship (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). These approaches celebrate the socially constructed nature of CSR (Lee & Carroll, 2011) and build upon the ‘linguistic turn’ in social sciences. Therein, interest has turned to the performative role of both organisational and stakeholder language in shaping CSR (Austin, 1975; Christensen et al. 2013) and the emergent ‘communication constructs organisations’ (CCO) ontology (Craig, 1999) is increasingly being applied to CSR contexts (e.g. Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013). Within this vein, interest in the constitutive processes of legitimation has evolved within CSR communication research (e.g. Colleoni, 2013; Castelló et al., 2013; Schultz et al., 2013), with studies building upon Suchman’s (1995) definition of legitimacy as congruence between organisational activity and

societal expectations, to emphasise the discursive and deliberative characteristics of communication in ‘moral’ contexts (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007).

While conceptually rigorous, these studies have failed to empirically address a number of core questions that surround how the new ICT climate is transforming organisation-stakeholder communication and testing deeply engrained management theories further. For instance, little is still known about the (inter)discursive processes of legitimation (Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Tienari, 2008), particularly in dynamic SNS contexts, which permit opportunities for discordance and disintegration around CSR (Schultz et al., 2013). In fact, research within the CCO vein posits that networked societies problematise organisational endeavours to authorise a ‘monolithic’ organisational ‘text’ in the pursuit of legitimacy (Kuhn, 2008). This infers an inherent difficulty in examining an objective legitimacy ‘reality’ within polyphonic environments, (such as SNSs), which permit ‘many-to-many’ and ‘any-to-any’ models of communication (Hoffman & Novak, 1996). As the use of SNSs in organisational and CSR contexts expands, so does the need to interrogate what communication does to CSR, alongside the integrative *and* disintegrative possibilities for organisation stakeholder communication in the age of social media (Inauen et al., 2011).

This thesis seeks to descriptively examine the core question: *how is legitimation constituted through discursive and dialogical processes in online CSR communication?* Building upon discursive research into CSR

communication in organisational ‘texts’ such as advertorials (Livesey, 2002), reporting (Campbell, 2000; Castelló & Lozano, 2011) and websites (Cho & Roberts, 2010), this thesis interrogates SNSs as fluid, interaction and co-constituted organisational ‘texts,’ co-constituted through organisations and stakeholders. Using legitimation (Dowling, 1983) as a lens through which to understand contemporary and networked processes of CSR communication, the thesis contributes to the CSR literature by challenging conventional, somewhat functionalist definitions of legitimacy (Suchman, 1995) to offer constructionist (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) interpretations of legitimation processes rooted within discursive conception of dialogue (Bakhtin, 1986; Potter & Wetherell, 2001). Bakhtinian dialogism (1986) offers the conceptual basis for this empirical research project in examining the *performative* (constructive nature), *polyphonic* (multi-vocal) and *perpetual* (unfinalisable) characteristics of organisation-stakeholder discourse in SNSs. The thesis contends that we can never ‘know’ legitimacy, or CSR, as both are fluid and on-going concepts that evolve from organisation-stakeholder communication, particularly within the fluid and dynamic SNS sphere. Instead, this thesis contends that through CSR communication in SNSs, organisations and stakeholders engage in unfinalisable processes of legitimation, characterised by centripetal (unifying) and centrifugal (dividing forces).

Data gathering and analysis takes place around ‘naturally occurring talk’ (Bruce, 1999), garnered through immersion in, and observation of, organisation-stakeholder interaction in Facebook, a publically available social networking site (SNS) with over one billion active monthly users (Pring,

2012). The thesis adopts an interpretivist, methodological lens to explore ‘discursive constructionism’ and the purposive use of language in constituting CSR (Potter, 2003). This form of discourse analysis is not focussed upon uncovering an objective and fixed social reality (i.e. a static interpretation of legitimacy as an outcome of legitimation processes), but looks to uncover *how* reality is produced through partial, situated and relative contexts; the process through which discourse is both *construct-ed* and *construct-ive* (Potter & Wetherell, 2001). This strongly supports the focus of this research upon the interactive processes of legitimation in the Facebook pages of four retail organisations operating in the UK: The Co-operative, Lidl, Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury’s. As well as encapsulating high levels of CSR ‘interactivity’ (reciprocal engagement) and ‘intensity’ (level of CSR discussion) (Etter et al., 2011b), these cases also represent fascinating contexts for CSR given their complex global supply chains, diverse range of stakeholder constituents, and chequered history in CSR practice. In offering a descriptively rich and contextually nuanced ‘snapshot’ of legitimation processes in SNSs, these cases also present distinct similarities and differences in their articulation and execution of CSR communication, providing fertile territory for comparison. The aims and contributions of the thesis are now discussed.

1.3 Aims and Contributions of the Thesis

This section discusses three core contributions of this thesis that reside around theory, methods and practice. Dealing first with the theoretical contribution, in addressing the overarching research question presented in Section 1.2, this

thesis aims to address a significant research gap that resides around the *process of legitimation* in extant CSR and management scholarship. Indeed, whilst legitimacy is a well-established and much theorised concept within management studies (e.g. Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Parsons & Jones, 1960; Suchman, 1995; Weber, 1947) understanding of the (inter)discursive processes of legitimation remains obtuse (Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Tienari, 2008) as language theory is still underutilised in CSR studies of legitimacy. Conventional legitimacy theory has also attributed external actors with agency to ‘give’ legitimacy to organisations, yet this thesis empirically demonstrates and conceptually analyses how legitimacy is not ‘given’, but continually and discursively (re)constituted by internal (organisational) and external (stakeholder) voices. This is a particularly prevalent issue in CSR research given the ostensibly discursive and deliberative context within which legitimation occurs between organisations and publics (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006) (see Chapter 2) and the greater opportunity for interaction afforded by new ICT developments. This research then conceptually builds upon constitutive models of corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication (Golob et al., 2013; Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013; Schultz et al., 2013) (Chapter 3), which appreciate the role of both organisations *and* stakeholders in constructing CSR. Building upon legitimation (Dowling, 1983) as the lens through which to analyse processes of CSR communication, Bakhtinian dialogism (1986) offers the conceptual basis for this empirical research project in examining the *performative* (constructive nature), *polyphonic* (multi-vocal) and *perpetual* (unfinalisable) characteristics of organisation-stakeholder discourse in SNSs (Chapter 4).

This research gap is both important and interesting given the rapid way in which ICT developments are transforming CSR communication. Providing a more nuanced understanding of legitimation processes occurring in networked societies through ‘new’ media contexts such as SNSs, illuminates the concordant and discordant contexts within which CSR is negotiated between organisations and stakeholders; an area that is currently in need of empirical insight (Castelló et al., 2013; Golob et al., 2013; Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013; Schultz et al., 2013). The niche range of papers that do empirically explore CSR communication in SNSs reside around positivistic research methods (e.g. Fieseler & Fleck, 2013; Lee et al., 2013 [see Chapter 3]), eschewing interpretivist and descriptive insight into the discursive processes of legitimation amongst a variety of actors in online contexts. The thesis is original in its inclusion of the voices of ‘external’ parties in the process of legitimation, rather than being solely preoccupied with the organisational context. The research thus empirically unveils *how* discursive legitimation occurs in contemporary networked societies across four UK-based retailers: the Co-operative, Lidl, Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury’s. In demanding more conceptual and empirical insight, this gap drives the research questions and conceptual framework (see Chapter 4).

The core contribution of this thesis is in its suggestion that understanding of CSR is on-going and emergent through *unfinalisable legitimation processes* in social networking sites (SNSs). The findings of this study capture not only the ‘centripetal’ (unifying) forces at play in organisation-stakeholder dialogue across the SNSs, but also the ‘centrifugal’ (dividing) forces (Baxter, 2004),

illuminating the indeterminate, disintegrative and dissensual character of CSR communication (Castelló et al., 2013; Schultz et al., 2013; Whelan, 2013). While identifying discursive processes of *normalisation, moralisation and mythologisation* as centripetal forces, the study also unveils discursive processes of *authorisation, demythologisation and carnivalisation* as centrifugal forces, which problematise the consensual tone of legitimacy as organisation-society ‘congruence’ (Suchman, 1995), to reveal the shifting and contradictory expectations that surround CSR. Within a Bakhtinian (1981, 1986) conception of dialogue, the findings most markedly reveal *perpetuality* in CSR communication and the impossibility of exhausting relations in *polyphonic* SNS environments, characterised by ‘dispersed authority’, rather averred organisational authorities who ‘control’ CSR information (Schultz et al., 2013). Furthermore, in conceptualising SNSs as interactive, agential organisational ‘texts’, findings also illuminate the *performative* nature of SNSs in organising and (re)constructing CSR through organisation-stakeholder dialogue. Therein, this thesis provides a framework for understanding legitimisation processes in SNSs, with implications for theory and practice.

In summary of the theoretical contribution of this research, building upon discursive legitimisation processes (e.g. Castelló & Lozano, 2011; Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010; Erkama & Vaara, 2010; Higgins & Walker, 2012; Siltaoja & Vehkaperä, 2010; Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Tienari, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2007), constitutive models of CSR communication (Castelló et al., 2013; Golob et al., 2013; Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013; Schultz et al., 2013) and Bakhtinian dialogism (1981, 1986), this thesis contributes to current

conversations in management scholarship concerning *how* legitimation occurs (Vaara & Tienari, 2008). Most specifically, the thesis contributes to the CSR communication literature by shedding descriptive and empirical light onto the discursive and dialogical processes of organisation-stakeholder legitimation within the evolving SNS context, highlighting what communication does to CSR. Hence, rather than exploring the *organisation of communication*, this thesis explores *how communication organises* (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011). The three strands of literature and the associated research gap around *processual* understanding of legitimation and CSR communications are illustrated in the circles of the Venn diagram presented in Figure 1.

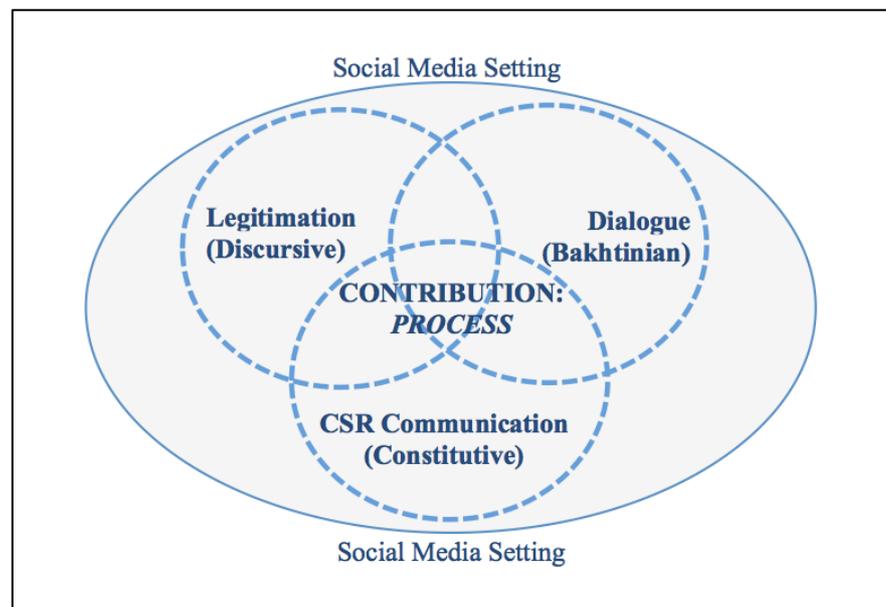


Figure 1: Processual Research Contribution

Aside from this theoretical contribution of this study, the methodological contribution relates to the original way in which discourse analysis is applied to SNSs that are conceptualised as fluid, interactional and co-constituted organisational ‘texts’. Whilst the utilisation of a discursive lens to examine

CSR communication in organisational ‘texts’ (such as press releases, reports and websites) is well established in CSR research (e.g. Livesey, 2002; Campbell, 2000; Castelló & Lozano, 2011; Cho & Roberts, 2010), the combination of online observation techniques (Cova & Pace, 2006) and discourse analysis (Potter, 2003) to investigate interactive SNS contexts as organisational ‘texts’ is somewhat more novel. Furthermore, the unique way in which social media data are distilled down into core CSR dialogues through thematic analysis (Spiggle, 1994) and continued researcher immersion in the SNSs, presents a unique way in which vast amounts of online data can be qualitatively interpreted. Whilst reflexivity around this contribution is discussed in Chapter 5, the author contends that deep, rich and ‘emic’ insights can be provided into SNSs through this approach. Furthermore, the author hopes that this thesis may ignite debates around how qualitative social media research is undertaken in CSR contexts and management studies more broadly.

The final contribution relates to the practical proposed contribution of this thesis. As developments in ICT, particularly SNSs, increasingly transform organisation-stakeholder engagement, many organisations continue to use social media as controllable tools for information dissemination, failing to build truly interactive contexts (Capriotti, 2011). This thesis provides insight for both policy maker and practitioner audiences through advocating that organisations should avoid treating social media as traditional media (in *informing* and *responding* to stakeholders) and should increasingly *involve* stakeholders in CSR communication (Morsing & Schultz, 2006) in order to stimulate positive social change (Christensen et al., 2013). The thesis then,

aims to move away from the control, consensus and consistency biases that have plagued CSR communication research, to provide empirical insight into the ‘unloved side’ of communication: the indeterminate, disintegrative and conflictual character of CSR (Schultz et al., 2013). Therein, the thesis illuminates the potential for non-antagonistic conflict and provides significant and contemporary insight into how a range of stakeholder actors engages in SNSs. The research questions are now presented.

1.4 Research Questions

The overarching research question guiding this study is: *how is legitimation constituted through discursive and dialogical processes in online CSR communication?* Building upon the aims of the research and the gaps presented in Section 1.3, this thesis looks to address two core research questions that address organisation-stakeholder interaction, as well as stakeholder-stakeholder (or interlocutor) interaction:

- 1. How do organisations and stakeholders engage in discursive processes of legitimation through online CSR dialogue?*
- 2. How do stakeholders/interlocutors engage in discursive processes of legitimation through online CSR dialogue?*

1.5 Thesis Structure

In exploring how organisations and stakeholders engage in processes of discursive and dialogical legitimation in SNSs, this thesis is structured as follows.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review (CSR and Legitimacy): In building upon development of the field of CSR, Chapter 2 platforms upon the idea that CSR is a social construction (Gond & Matten, 2007) forged between organisations *and* stakeholders. The chapter presents legitimacy as a core principle for defining CSR and the success of CSR activities (Lee & Carroll, 2011), highlighting Suchman's (1995) influential conception of legitimacy, divided into pragmatic, cognitive and moral conceptions, as congruence between organisational activity and societal expectations. In building an ontological position of constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), this chapter critically examines the managerialist and functionalist assumptions have dominated CSR research and espoused a static view of a fixed legitimacy 'reality'; a view that is inherently problematised in today's networked societies and 'new' media interactive contexts. Therein, the core discursive interest of this thesis in legitimation processes forged through communication is presented. In doing so, the chapter aligns with research that has examined the role of language in organisation-stakeholder legitimation processes (e.g. Alvesson, 1993; Brown, 1998; Castelló & Lozano, 2011; Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010; Erkama & Vaara, 2010; Higgins & Walker, 2012; Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Tienari, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2007). It also crucially identifies the core research gap surrounding

how (inter)discursive processes, practices and strategies (re)construct legitimation (Vaara et al., 2006).

Chapter 3 – Literature Review (Constitutive CSR Communication): Chapter 3 develops an understanding of conceptualisations of, and the context for, CSR communications in research and practice. The chapter builds upon the discursive and processual understanding of legitimation in Chapter 2, to focus upon constructionism within CSR communications research. In doing so, the chapter distinguishes between a paradigmatic divide between functionalist (transmission of a fixed legitimacy ‘reality’) and constitutive (social construction of plural ‘realities’ through legitimation) conceptions of communication. Therein, the chapter utilises Schultz et al.’s (2013) tripartite framework to map CSR communications into instrumental, political-normative and constitutive approaches and highlight the burgeoning interest in the latter view that CSR *is* communication. This conceptual discussion aligns the processual interest in legitimation with the constitutive paradigm. The chapter also identifies that the empirical context for understanding *how* CSR is (re)constituted in communicative processes of legitimation is currently lacking (Castelló et al., 2013; Christensen et al., 2013; Schultz et al., 2013), particularly in ‘new media’ environments (Whelan et al., 2013). The chapter then outlines a view of constitutive CSR communication in networked societies to orientate a focus upon social media settings, most specifically social networking sites (SNSs). In drawing upon empirical research, this section discusses how the practical climate is creating a new discursive and dialogical context for CSR communications research and studies of legitimation.

Chapter 4 – Literature Review (Bakhtinian Dialogism): The thesis then turns to the communication studies literature to introduce the concept of dialogue as a valuable lens through which to explore the constructionist processes of legitimation in online CSR contexts. The chapter first provides an overview of dialogical research in communication studies to outline core philosophies of dialogue, particularly within a postmodern tradition (Deetz & Simpson, 2004), which aligns with the constitutive concern of this thesis. The chapter then introduces Bakhtinian dialogism (1986) as the conceptual basis for the study, discussing three key components of Bakhtin’s conception of dialogue: performativity (how we ‘do’ things with words [Austin, 1975]); polyphony (reference to multiple voices); and perpetuality (the on-going nature of dialogue). Additionally, this chapter develops a conceptual framework and research questions for understanding the discursive and dialogical processes of legitimation, building upon constitutive views of CSR communication in social media settings (Schultz et al., 2013).

Chapter 5 – Methodology (Discursive Constructionism in Dialogue): Chapter 5 contextualises and rationalises the qualitative research design and philosophy guiding the thesis, emphasising a focus upon social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), introspective reflexivity (Finlay, 2002) and interpretivism given the interest in *processes* of legitimation (Lapan et al., 2012). Most markedly, the chapter provides a detailed discussion of the methodology of discourse analysis, building upon Potter and Wetherell’s (2001) notion of ‘discursive constructionism,’ which conceptualises language as both a *constructed* and *constructive* phenomenon. It also foregrounds the interest of

this thesis in the discursive features of dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). The chapter details the research design adopted in the study, outlining how social media data are contextualised, gathered and analysed, as well as addressing ethical considerations and core limitations. A significant contribution of the chapter is the discussion of the inductive and deductive coding processes which guide the findings and analysis. Finally, the chapter justifies the choice to focus upon the ‘Facebook’ social media platform and how the four case retail organisations of The Co-operative Group, Marks and Spencer, Lidl and Sainsbury’s are selected. It also offers some contextual insight into each of the retailer settings.

Chapter 6 – Findings and Analysis (Legitimation: Centripetal Forces): In response to Research Question 1, this chapter explores the discursive and dialogical processes through which centripetal (unifying) forces form part of legitimisation processes between organisations and stakeholders in the four SNSs. The chapter focuses on how organisations engage in legitimisation through the discursive processes of normalisation (establishing a ‘natural’ order) and moralisation (aligning with idiosyncratic value systems) (Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Tienari, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2007). It also examines how these discursive processes are enacted in interaction (dialogue) between organisations and stakeholders through (reactive) normalisation (re-establishing the ‘natural’ order) and mythologisation approaches (constructing mythical organisational archetypes). This findings and analysis chapter presents examples of organisational and stakeholder Facebook posts from each

of the four SNS contexts and compares and contrasts approaches across the case retailers.

Chapter 7 – Findings and Analysis (Legitimation: Centrifugal Forces): In keeping with the processual interest of this thesis, Chapter 7 explores how the processes identified in Chapter 6 are problematised by stakeholders and interlocutors in the four SNSs, in response to Research Question 2. The chapter builds insight into the indeterminate, disintegrative and conflictual character of CSR (Castelló et al., 2013; Schultz et al., 2013) to illuminate how stakeholders disrupt processes of legitimation across the SNSs through centrifugal (dividing) forces that involve authorisation (building credibility) (van Leeuwen, 2007), demythologisation (deconstructing the organisational ‘myths’ discussed in Chapter 6) (Thompson & Arsel, 2004), and carnivalisation approaches (the utilisation of apathetic, dysfunctional and parodic discourses) (Bakhtin, 1981). In providing data examples, distinctions are made between discursive contestation processes enacted by stakeholders and non-organisational interlocutors across the SNSs.

Chapter 8 – Findings and Analysis (Legitimation: Centripetal/Centrifugal Forces): This chapter aims to add descriptive colour into how competing centripetal (unifying) and centrifugal (dividing) forces play out between organisations and stakeholders in the SNSs in response to Research Question 1. The chapter investigates discursive processes of reactive normalisation (re-establishing the ‘natural’ order to pacify stakeholders) and authorisation (building credibility) (van Leeuwen, 2007) to extend research that has explored

the discursive construction of legitimacy (Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Tienari, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2007) by examining *how* legitimisation occurs in the SNSs between organisations and stakeholders. This chapter provides insight into the idiosyncrasy of strategies within the individual retail cases and compares and contrasts discursive approaches operating across the four SNSs.

Chapter 9 – Discussion and Conclusion (Unfinalisable Processes of Legitimation): This penultimate chapter offers an overall discussion of the research findings and draws conclusions from this extensive research project. Building upon the conceptual framework (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) and the discursive and dialogical processes of legitimisation identified through the findings and analysis (Chapters 6, 7 and 8), here the legitimisation processes are discussed in relation to the research questions. The chapter outlines the nascent understanding of *CSR as on-going and emergent from unfinalisable legitimisation processes* in SNSs through discussing Bakhtinian (1986) conceptions of performativity, polyphony and, most markedly, perpetuality. Legitimation processes are summarised as being made up of ‘centripetal’ (unifying) and ‘centrifugal’ (dividing) forces (Bakhtin, 1986; Baxter, 2004), and this chapter details the discursive and dialogical cues that form part of each of these distinctions within SNS contexts across the four organisational ‘texts’. The chapter also highlights the implications of these findings for CSR literature and legitimacy theory (Suchman, 1995) and offers a graphical framework for unfinalisable processes of legitimisation. The chapter then offers the core conclusions of this research project by providing a thesis summary and

outlining three contributions of the research for scholarly and practitioner audiences. Finally, the chapter outlines avenues for further research.

Chapter 10 – Appendices (Social Media CSR Dialogues): This final chapter provides additional data to support the findings and analysis, extracted from the four retailer SNSs. Appendix 1 offers a review of the social media platforms analysed across Facebook, Twitter and blogs and Appendix 2 provides additional data to support the thematic analysis of the organisational SNSs. Appendix 3 supports the discourse analysis discussed in the findings chapters.

Having discussed the thesis structure, Figure 2 provides a picture of the thesis narrative to clarify how the thesis is organised.

1.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided an introduction to this PhD thesis focussed upon processes of legitimation and CSR communication in SNSs. In doing so, it has offered an overview of the research area, describing its key characteristics and outlining the practical and academic context for the research (1.2). Section 1.3 set out the main aims and contributions of the research, detailing key research gaps and Section 1.4 then presented the two research questions guiding the study. Finally, Section 1.5 has provided a summary of the thesis, offering an overview of the key findings in anticipation of a more detailed discussion presented later on. Upon this foundation, the literature review ensues.

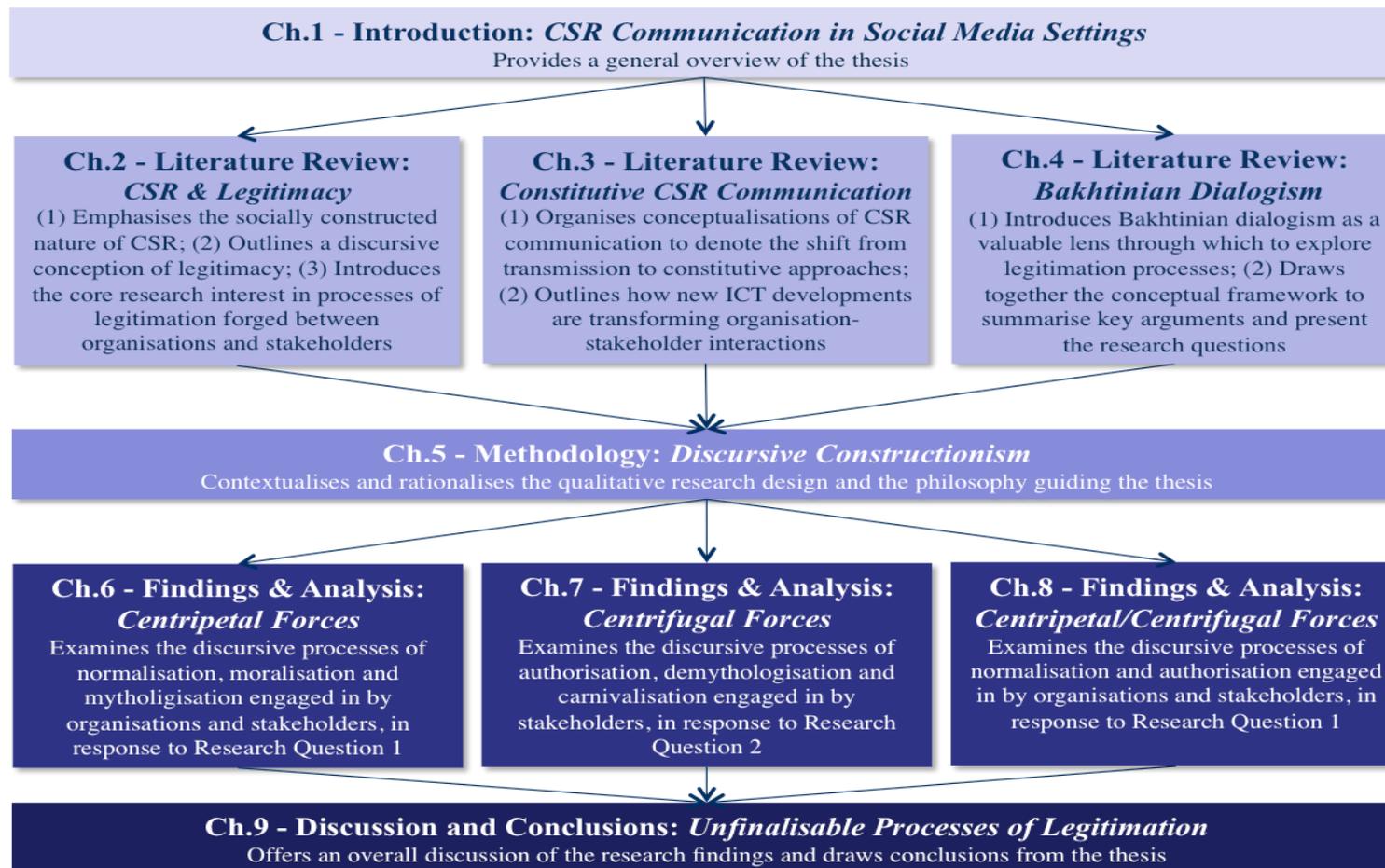


Figure 2: The Thesis Narrative

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Corporate Social Responsibility & Legitimacy

2.1 Chapter Overview

The key purpose of this chapter is to present the view that corporate social responsibility (CSR) is socially constructed through processes of discursive legitimation. The chapter critically examines the managerialist and functionalist assumptions that have dominated CSR research and espoused a static view of a fixed legitimacy ‘reality’; a view that is inherently problematised in today’s networked societies and ‘new’ media interactive contexts. The chapter begins by discussing the development of the field of CSR (2.2) prior to articulating the heterogeneous nature of the concept and the ontological view that CSR is a social construction (2.2.1). The chapter then builds upon this foundation to address legitimacy as defined by Suchman (1995) as a focal construct within the CSR literature, given its focus upon evaluating the congruence between organisational activity and societal expectations (2.3). The chapter defines legitimacy (2.3.1) then critiques dominant conceptions of legitimacy (2.3.2) to orientate towards the core interest of this thesis in processes of legitimation (2.3.3), most specifically premised upon evolving concepts of discursive legitimation (2.3.4). The chapter concludes with a summary (2.4).

2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Whilst evidence of socially and environmentally responsible business practice has been visible for centuries (Caulfield, 2013), it was arguably in the 19th century that businesses first began formally acknowledging their responsibilities to society (Moon, 2002; Vogel, 2005). Embedded within religious or altruistic endeavours, early pioneers of business responsibility, such as Cadbury, built upon Quaker beliefs to improve social and working conditions in industrial England and recognise their broader responsibilities to society (Moon, 2002). The first definition of CSR as a formal practice was, however, not coined in management scholarship until the 1950s (Bowen, 1953) to relate CSR to the societal regulation of economic behaviour. Bowen's definition of CSR has been reinforced in management scholarship to focus upon the 'business case' for CSR, however the field has flourished from its economic roots, to now draw from a diverse range of fields, including economics, politics, sociology and philosophy (see Lee & Carroll, 2011). Indeed, CSR research has originated from a variety of disciplines including environmental studies, organisational behaviour, human resources management, marketing, organisation theory and strategy, emphasising the interdisciplinary nature of the concept (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012).

The most frequently cited definition of CSR was developed in the 1970s to acknowledge a broader role for business in society. Indeed Carroll's (1979) seminal definition related CSR to the "economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary (philanthropic) expectations that society has of organisations at a

given point in time”, (p.497-505), providing insight into business responsibility beyond the commercial realm. Whilst ubiquitous in academic and industry circles given its simple nature, this definition has been critiqued for its incomplete theoretical development of the economic, legal and ethical domains, and its depiction of a hierarchy of relationships (Crane et al., 2013). Furthermore, the model has been challenged for its embeddedness within an Anglo-American business system and scholars have suggested that this conceptualisation fails to clearly discuss the implications of a broader set of responsibilities, such as environmental responsibility (ibid, 2013).

A number of scholars have built upon Carroll’s (1979) popular definition to more accurately locate understanding of CSR. Crane et al. (2013) for example, distinguish between ‘traditional CSR’ (profit generation and value enhancement) and ‘contemporary CSR’ (profit generation whilst living up to expectations of society). The authors suggest that CSR is largely built from three key areas of literature including *business ethics* (morality of business practice); *sustainability* (the ‘triple bottom line’ of society, environment and economy [Elkington, 1997]); and *corporate citizenship* (political nature of CSR) (Crane et al., 2008). It is however, Garriga and Melé’s (2004) conceptual framework that offers, perhaps, one of the most persuasive reviews of the CSR literature. The authors trace the trajectory of CSR research to map CSR into instrumental, political, integrative and ethical theories. *Instrumental theories* focus upon achieving economic objectives through social activities and are premised upon maximisation of shareholder value (Friedman, 1970) and competitive advantage (Porter & Kramer, 2002). Embedded in the business

strategy literature, this view has dominated management enquiry, resulting in a large proportion of scholarship working to identify causal relationships through quantitative and positivistic studies. Such research has dialled up economic benefits of CSR, including: risk management (Godfrey et al., 2008); increased consumer loyalty (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001); enhanced reputation and employee motivation (Loza, 2004; Crawford & Scaletta, 2005); improved brand image (Mohr et al., 2001); and relationship building (Paine, 2002). Orientated towards the ‘business case’ for CSR, this view has dominated CSR enquiry to date and has constructed CSR as an objectifiable, measurable and unified concept (Gond & Matten, 2007).

A turn towards *political theories* of CSR occurred in the 1990s to build upon conceptions of ‘corporate citizenship’ (Lodgson & Wood, 2002); a term often used as a metaphor to resemble an organisation’s relationship with society (Moon et al., 2005). Here CSR research has examined the social and political responsibilities that arise from shifting power dynamics between organisations and society as a result of globalisation. Scholars such as Scherer and Palazzo (2007) have sought to define the role of businesses as political actors, critically exploring the normative foundations of CSR and the conditions within which organisations can protect, enable and implement citizenship rights (Matten & Crane, 2005). Building upon the notion of integrative social contract theory (ISCT) (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1994; 1999), CSR theories have here taken into account the socio-cultural context of organisations and arguably present one of the most dynamic discussions operating within contemporary CSR scholarship today (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011).

Integrative theories of CSR examine how businesses integrate social demands in the pursuit of legitimacy and reflect how, “business depends on society for its existence, continuity and growth”, (Garriga & Melé, 2004:57). Building upon notions of corporate social responsiveness (Clarkson, 1995), corporate social performance (Wood, 1991) and issues management (Sethi, 1979), scholarship embedded within this approach is aligned with institutional perspectives of CSR. Largely drawn from institutional theory, scholarship has appreciated how the institutional environment encompasses shared cognitive and cultural rules, beliefs, symbols and rituals and these may either constrain and/or enable organisational activity (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Therein, CSR research within this vein has focussed upon determining the appropriate social systems, values and expectations that an organisation should adhere to in order to ensure its legitimacy (ibid, 1991; Oliver, 1991). This approach has been popularised within CSR scholarship to focus upon macro-levels of analysis (examining institutional and organisational frameworks) rather than micro-levels of analysis (individual frameworks) (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012) and remains a key theoretical focus for CSR studies today. Given the focus on legitimation, this study ostensibly platforms upon integrative theories of CSR.

Finally, *ethical theories* of CSR build upon normative conceptions of the business-society interface, building upon stakeholder theory (see Section 2.2.1), moral philosophy and the ‘common good’ (Melé, 2009). Here, CSR reflects broader theorisation, relating to human rights, labour rights and the environment, and most specifically, the values-based concept of sustainable development defined as “meeting the needs of the present without

compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”, (Brundtland, 1987:8). Business ethics scholarship is particularly pervasive within this domain, through analysis of moral value systems at both micro (individual), meso (organisational) and macro (societal) levels (Crane et al., 2013). Such research seeks to determine ‘right’ and ‘good’ conceptions of CSR activity across a range of organisational constituents and contexts and questions of morality and ethics continue to pervade management literature more broadly. Garriga and Melé’s (2004) interpretations highlight the contextually nuanced manner of CSR research and reinforce the core interest of this thesis in a socially constructed view of CSR.

2.2.1 CSR as a Social Construction

Building upon Garriga and Melé’s (2004) four theoretical distinctions, Gond and Matten (2007) have attempted to build epistemological insight into the view of CSR as a social construction. The authors build upon Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) seminal typology of sociological paradigms to map out a pluralistic framework of four CSR research traditions: *CSR as a social function*, *CSR as a cultural product*, *CSR as a power relationship* and *CSR as a socio-cognitive construction* (see Figure 3). This heuristic views CSR research as being positioned on two continuums representing objective/subjective views of science, as well as ‘order’ (regulation) and ‘conflict’ (radical change). This model serves to emphasise not only that all conceptualisations of CSR are sociological, but also the plurality of research paradigms operating in CSR research. Indeed, the authors argue that the view of CSR as a social function

has dominated CSR enquiry to date, and advocate that the constructionist view, which promotes subjectivity and a focus upon radical change, offers enhanced insight into the intricacy surrounding contemporary corporate-society engagement (Gond & Matten, 2007). This model provides a useful heuristic against which CSR research can be mapped and it is the upper left-hand quadrant (CSR as a socio-cognitive construction) that this particular research study seeks to extend. Most specifically in examining an interactive social media context, this study examines transformation and intersubjectivity between interlocutors as part of legitimation processes (see Chapter 5 for an extended discussion).

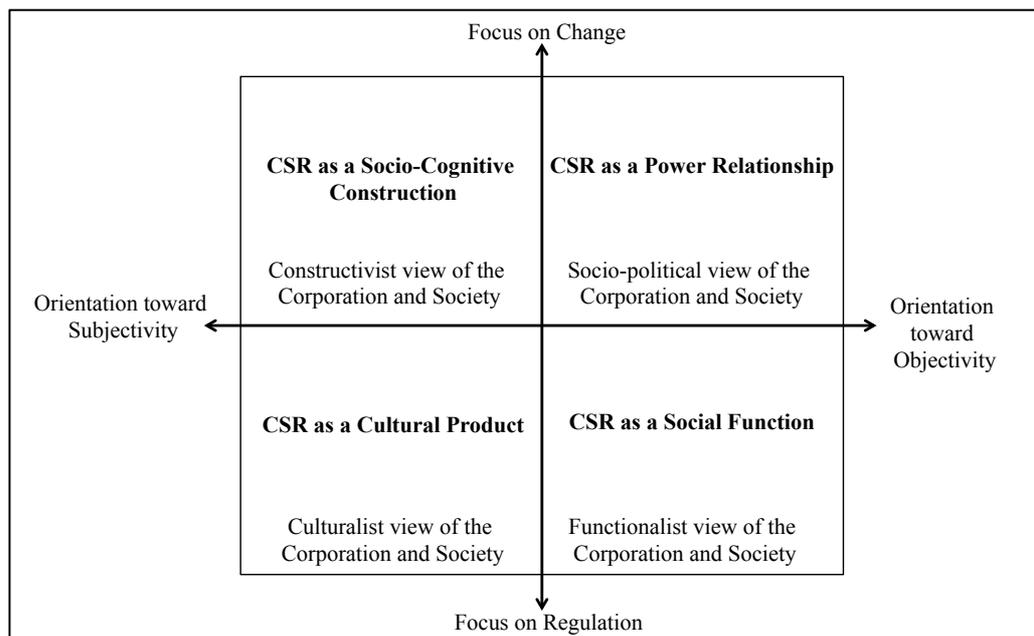


Figure 3: Overview of the Pluralistic CSR Framework (Gond & Matten, 2007)

A number of CSR scholars have aligned with the view that CSR does not represent a certain reality, but is constitutive of reality as a social construction, in line with the top left hand quadrant noted above (Campbell, 2007; Dahlsrud,

2008; Gond & Matten, 2007). This view is somewhat reflected in the fragmented and imprecise nature of CSR theorisation. Indeed, given its broad conceptual roots (as aforementioned), locating a uniform view of ‘CSR’ is problematic, and CSR has been related to a “set of heterogeneous firm activities rather than one monolithic measure”, (Campbell, 2007:950) and an ambiguous ‘umbrella term’ that encompasses a broad range of concepts (Matten & Moon, 2008). Dahlsrud’s (2008) extensive content analysis of the CSR literature encountered 37 definitions of CSR relating to environmental, social, economic, stakeholder and voluntary dimensions and scholars continue to posit that confusion exists around the core object of analysis in CSR (Carroll, 1999; Lockett, et al., 2006; Sabadoz, 2011). While this malleability continues to fuel critical scholarship which sees CSR as merely ‘rhetoric’, upholding rather than challenging unsustainable business operations (Fleming & Jones, 2013; Karnani, 2010; Moskowitz, 2002; Shamir, 2005), it is clear that there is not one uniform perspective of CSR operating in management literature. This problematises the dominant (functionalist) view that CSR is an objective outcome which can be managed and manipulated for instrumental benefit (Gond & Matten, 2007) and paves the way for more constructionist research, supporting the remit of this PhD project.

As a contested and socially constructed concept within the literature, CSR is thus understood to be ‘discursively open’ (Guthey & Morsing, 2014). This view is also translated to empirical work that has revealed that conceptions of CSR may differ by social context (Lee & Carroll, 2011), temporality (Pelozo, 2009), industry (Gond & Matten, 2007), operating country (Moon, 2004) and

stakeholder expectation (Vogel, 2005; Lee & Carroll, 2011; Bhattacharya et al., 2011). The open-ended nature of CSR is seen advantageously by scholars operating within the constructionist paradigm, and it has been argued that, “the many attempts to *talk* about CSR from a variety of positions and across social norms and expectations... have the potential stimulate positive social change”, (Christensen et al., 2013:2). Such perspectives posit that it is not possible to develop an objective and unbiased definition of CSR as definition limits interpretation. Instead, they seek to examine multiple interpretations of CSR operating within society and extend interpretivist research. This thesis aligns with the view that CSR is an open container for a range of meanings, building upon the view that, “CSR is a socially constructed value” (Lee & Carroll, 2011:117). Consequently, CSR is seen as an emergent, fluid and contextual concept, which reflects business responsibility for the wider societal good as manifested by both organisations *and* society (Matten & Moon, 2008). It is upon this basis that this thesis focuses upon the *processes* through which knowledge of CSR is constructed, most specifically through the lens of legitimation.

2.3 Legitimacy

CSR is regarded as one of the best ways for business to address social problems and maintain legitimacy (Castelló et al., 2013). It has been argued that legitimacy is the yardstick for discussions within the field of CSR (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006) with Lee and Carroll (2011:117) positing that, “CSR is a socially constructed value, and legitimacy is a core principle both for defining

CSR and for determining the success of CSR activities”. CSR and legitimacy are thus highly interrelated constructs within a constructionist paradigm (Gond & Matten, 2007), yet understanding of the processes of legitimation as part of CSR communications remains partial (Schultz et al., 2013; Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Tienari, 2008). This section is broken down into three areas to explore the interlinkages between the two concepts. Legitimacy is first defined (2.3.1) then critiqued through examining legitimacy and constructionism (2.3.2), to platform the interest of this thesis in processes of legitimation through language (2.3.3).

2.3.1 Defining Legitimacy

Largely born out of the sociological literature, interest in organisational legitimacy burgeoned in management scholarship in the 1960s and 70s (Parsons, 1960; Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975). One of those most notable studies came in the 1990s with Suchman’s (1995) exploration of legitimacy management. Suchman (1995) builds upon the seminal work of Parsons (1960) and Weber (1947) and the conception of legitimacy as conformity to a set of socially derived ‘rules’, to distinguish between ‘strategic’ legitimacy as an operational resource and ‘institutional’ legitimacy as a set of constitutive beliefs. The ‘strategic’ approach builds upon resource dependency theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), to argue that legitimacy is an essential organisational tool, as it aids in the attraction of resources and the continued support from constituents (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). Therein, legitimacy is seen through a somewhat functionalist lens; as an objective reality to be

‘managed’ by organisations. The second, more sociologically driven ‘institutional’ approach builds upon institutional theory to examine organisational alignment with societal institutions, expectations and norms (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Oliver, 1991). Here, a more external view of legitimacy is garnered, premised upon a broader perspective of the organisational environment (as would be stakeholder theory [Freeman, 1984]) and the view that legitimacy is constructed through pluralistic and socially constructed ‘realities.’ Consequently, viewed as a core concept within management scholarship, the vast proportion of management research has utilised Suchman’s (1995:574) popular definition of legitimacy as,

“A generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions”.

Suchman’s (1995) definition builds upon the idea that organisations are considered legitimate when their practices are perceived to satisfy the social expectations of the environment. In the case of CSR, this would mean that legitimacy is achieved when there is an alignment between the CSR agenda and societal expectations; congruence between the values pursued by the organisation and wider societal expectations (Parsons, 1960). When incongruence occurs between the organisation’s behaviour and societal expectations, a ‘mismatch’ may occur (Scherer et al., 2012). Also termed a ‘legitimacy gap’ (Sethi, 1975) or a ‘legitimacy test’ (Patriotta et al., 2011), in this instance the organisation’s legitimacy is brought into question, as the CSR agenda does not align with societal expectations. ‘Mismatches’ thus occur due

to shifts in social expectations, new organisational practices evolving or new actors entering into the environment (Scherer et al., 2012). It is through monitoring organisational activities that decoupling can be identified and legitimacy can be ‘protected’ (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). These views underline the inherently strategic nature of research into organisational legitimacy.

While legitimacy has been researched in a range of conceptual and empirical contexts, management scholarship has focused most specifically upon the ‘external’ perspective and examining the isomorphic pressures through which organisations conform to expectations of (external) societal stakeholders as part of institutional theory (e.g. DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Within this institutional vein, it is argued that three factors shape organisational legitimacy: the characteristics of the institutional environment; the characteristics of the organisation; and the legitimation processes through which the environment builds perceptions of organisations (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999). Studies have thus oscillated between *macro-level* analyses, for example, explorations into the impacts of globalisation on legitimacy (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999), as well as *micro-level* organisational analyses, such as how legitimacy is ‘managed’ in the Californian cattle industry (Elsbach, 1994) and in environments of organisational change (Erkama & Vaara, 2010). Incursions into ‘internal’ legitimacy (focusing upon organisational ‘members’) have occurred somewhat more recently to illuminate how legitimacy is established and maintained within organisational contexts (e.g. Brown & Toyoki, 2013; Drori & Honig, 2013). Research into legitimation processes on the other hand, is somewhat sparser, suggesting that research to date has concentrated more

upon *defining* legitimacy, rather than exploring how legitimacy comes into being.

CSR scholarship mirrors this trend, focusing upon external legitimacy most markedly to more adequately explain changing dynamics in organisation-society relations (e.g. Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). As CSR activities are seen as important conduits through which organisations convey conformity to social norms, values and expectations, CSR is often seen as a significant source of legitimacy for organisations, and has captured attention in the broad business and society scholarship (Castelló & Galang, 2014). Accordingly, the CSR literature has explored legitimacy in line with Suchman's (1995) seminal typology of legitimacy within both institutional and strategic veins. Suchman (1995) suggests that legitimacy relates to three core conceptual strands within these two distinctions: pragmatic, cognitive and moral legitimacy. Whilst there is some level of overlap in this prevalent typology, it is argued that as different legitimisation strategies operate on different 'logics' (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999), few organisations may pursue or 'construct' all three forms of legitimacy at any one time (Suchman, 1995). This typology then provides a useful framework to situate CSR studies of legitimacy.

Taking each view in turn, *pragmatic legitimacy* relates to the self-interested calculations of an organisation's most immediate audiences (Suchman, 1995) and has often been linked with the 'business case' for CSR (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). In alluding to the dominant and instrumental view of an organisation's role in society (fiduciary interests as primary), legitimacy research has adopted

a managerialist approach, seeking to identify economic benefits for both stakeholders and managers through CSR (e.g. cost savings and profit) (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001). A license to operate is secured as long as utility or benefit is maximised and cost is minimised for both organisations and stakeholders. It is argued that this benefit for stakeholders can be achieved in a number of ways, including diligent stakeholder management, inviting stakeholders to participate in organisational decision-making, or by strategic ‘manipulation’ of perceptions (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). Whilst reflective of a ‘strategic’ approach to legitimacy (Suchman, 1995), this view espouses an a-political role for corporations and a managerialist view of corporate-society relations.

Cognitive legitimacy has also received significant attention within CSR scholarship (Patriotta et al., 2011). Related to an institutional approach to corporate theorising (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), cognitive legitimacy relates to the societal and governance systems through which shared cultural norms, values and beliefs are derived (Suchman, 1995; Scott, 1995). These taken for granted cultural schemas and societal rules govern conceptions of appropriate organisational CSR activity (Matten & Moon, 2008) and this view suggests that legitimacy is ‘granted’ when organisations adapt to community norms or conform to societal rules. Ultimately, congruence is achieved when organisational CSR practices and societal expectations are fully aligned.

Finally, in providing further insight into political-normative approaches to CSR theorisation (Matten & Crane, 2005), CSR scholars have readily focused upon

conceptions of *moral legitimacy* (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). Moral legitimacy reflects a positive, normative evaluation of an organisation, and its activities and conscious moral judgments based on justifying reasons rather than narrow self-interest (Suchman, 1995). An established body of CSR research has sought to investigate internal and external value systems and attitudes towards the ‘right thing to do’ in legitimacy contexts (Thomas & Lamm, 2012), particularly in ‘controversial’ industries, such as gambling (Miller & Michelson, 2013) and extraction (Claasen & Roloff, 2012). Such studies propose that moral legitimacy is constructed through organisation-stakeholder communicative engagement (Inauen et al., 2011), with significant emphasis upon rational, participative discussion in line with Habermasian conceptions of deliberative democracy (Habermas, 1998) (see Chapter 4) and political CSR research.

While offering a more nuanced understanding of legitimacy, Suchman’s (1995) conceptions of pragmatic, cognitive and moral legitimacy as part of both strategic and institutional theoretical approaches, are somewhat at odds with the aforementioned view of CSR as a fluid social construction. This is because these definitions often regard legitimacy as an objective and fixed reality. Indeed, given the constructionist interest of this thesis in *processes* of legitimation, a critical lens is now cast onto dominant views of legitimacy in management and CSR research to account for limitations in theorisation in light of practical ICT developments and theoretical interest in constructionism.

2.3.2 Constructionism and Legitimacy

While a fulcrum theory within management and CSR scholarship, Suchman's (1995) dominant view of legitimacy is not without reproach. In interrogating the three strands of Suchman's (1995) tripartite framework, which divides legitimacy into pragmatic, cognitive and moral orientations, it may be argued that *pragmatic* conceptions of legitimacy continue to attract attention in business-case orientated CSR research (e.g. McWilliams & Siegel, 2001). Given the instrumental bias operating within CSR scholarship (as discussed in Section 2.2), this is perhaps not surprising. As Castelló & Lozano (2011) and Scherer et al. (2012) argue, the pragmatic approach assumes that corporations have the power to influence and control their societal contexts and manipulate perceptions of legitimacy. This conception has been challenged for failing to adequately reflect the expansion of organisational activities into new countries and cultures and the increasingly interactive and transparent environment afforded by ICT (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006).

Such strategic views of legitimacy largely espouse a functionalist view of the organisation-society interface (Gond & Matten, 2007). Premised around the business benefit of 'regulating' and 'managing' legitimacy as a fixed and objective reality, legitimacy theory is often characterised by corporate-centrism, seeing organisational issues as primary. Therein, CSR is used as a tool to create a 'fit' between organisational activity and societal expectations, assuming that congruence is possible between these two divergent sets of views (Parsons, 1960). Not only does this perspective overlook the multitude

of standpoints embedded within the notion of ‘societal expectations’, but it also most markedly adopts the view that legitimacy is a static entity. For example, CSR research that has examined the notion of legitimacy mismatches or ‘tests’ (e.g. Patriotta et al., 2011; Scherer et al., 2012) suggests that there is an objective state being contested and an idealised potential outcome. This view fails to account for the fluid, plural and continually shifting context within which process of legitimation occur.

While more sensitive to the institutional environment, *cognitive* views of legitimacy have also received critique for assuming relatively homogenous and stable societal expectations, regarding for example, compliance to national legal systems (Carroll, 1979). Certainly this approach is challenged in today’s global climate, where business interests may span a range of geographies (Scherer et al., 2012). Additionally, cognitive legitimacy is seen as a continuous and adaptive process that operates at the subconscious level. The scope for organisations to actively ‘manage’ cognitive legitimacy and generate positive associations of corporate reputation, as achieved in pragmatic legitimacy, has been contended in light of more constructionist approaches (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). Suchman (1995:573) supports this notion asserting that, “the multifaceted character of legitimacy implies that it will operate differently in different contexts, and how it works may depend on the nature of the problems for which it is the purported solution”. However, once again, in referring to the construct of legitimacy as a fixed reality, it seems that the functionalist biases still prevail within this conceptualisation.

To account for these paradigmatic limitations, political CSR research has focussed upon Suchman's (1995) conception of *moral* legitimacy (e.g. Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). Embedded within a more sociological or institutional approach to conceptualising the organisation-society interface, here CSR studies provide a more processual understanding of how legitimacy is constructed in pluralised modern societies through language (e.g. Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). Operating within constructionism, legitimacy is seen to be socially constructed through contradictory and fluid social values and expectations (Shocker & Sethi, 1973). However moral conceptions of legitimacy are ostensibly premised upon rational Habermasian (1984, 1996) views of discourse and the contention that the output of dialogue should be consensus upon an uncontested and legitimised CSR 'reality' (see Chapter 4 for extended discussion). Indeed, Scherer et al. (2012:14) argue that in moral reasoning, both parties should find a, "common solution that is based on a sound argument and serves the well-being of society". Scholars have thus argued for more focus upon moral legitimacy and 'moral reasoning' to more effectively reflect demanding conditions of globalised societies and how alignment between organisational and societal goals can occur (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). This is a point expanded upon by Scherer et al. (2012:7):

"In the course of the globalization process, the social environment has become heterogeneous and ambiguous so that the corporation often has to engage in a process of mutual adaptation and social learning where it is not clear from the outset whether the corporation or the societal expectations will dominate the resolution or whether a new position is commonly created".

This view, albeit in addressing a more interactive and communicative context for legitimacy construction, perpetuates the underlying assumption of legitimacy as congruence; an objective reality ‘secured’ through organisation-society consensus (Christensen et al., 2013). While characterised by heterogeneous and contradictory expectations, notions of consensus are problematic in today’s fragmented, networked and global environment (Scherer et al., 2012). Indeed it has been argued that societal demands are contextualised, time-bound and fluid (Greenwood et al., 2011) and that legitimacy theory is inherently “problematic” in failing to account for the multiplicity of societal views beyond the organisational frame (Ashforth & Gibbs: 1990:177). As recent works increasingly appreciate the intrinsically *dissensual* as well as consensual nature of CSR (Whelan, 2013), scholars have thus called for new approaches to examining legitimacy which acknowledge the ‘unloved side’ of organisation-stakeholder interaction; the indeterminate, disintegrative and conflictual character of CSR and the subjectivity surrounding legitimacy negotiation (Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010; Schultz et al., 2013; Castelló et al., 2013). They advocate a shift away from the ‘consensus bias’ of earlier models of legitimacy (Schultz et al., 2013) and the dominant functionalist orientations (Gond & Matten, 2007) to encourage insight into the dynamics of agreement and disagreement, and concordance and discordance, surrounding processes of legitimation. These scholars thus advocate more constructionist theorisation of the organisation-stakeholder interface and it is upon this critique that this thesis builds.

2.3.3 Processes of Legitimation

Legitimation refers to the social processes through which legitimacy is established (Dowling et al., 1983). There are largely two perspectives that have been utilised in relation to processes of legitimation. Firstly, impression management theories (e.g. Goffman, 1974), which adopt individual level analysis to examine the roles, social affiliations and explanations of behaviour following controversial events. Secondly, institutional theories (e.g. DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), which adopt organisational level analysis to explore how organisations project legitimacy by adaptation to socially accepted practices (see Elsbach, 1994). Building upon these perspectives, Suchman (1995:586) argues that processes of legitimation rest largely on communication and require, “a diverse arsenal of techniques and discriminating awareness of which situations merit which responses”. The role of communication within processes of legitimation is then, readily acknowledged.

However dominant views around legitimation in management theory continue to build upon functionalist contentions of legitimacy as an outcome of organisation-societal engagement, as opposed to more adeptly capturing the descriptive and constructionist processes of legitimation through communication. This is lucid, for example, in Dowling’s (1983) definition that suggests that legitimacy is ‘established’ through legitimation processes. Taking this critique further, Ashforth and Gibbs (1990) and Suchman (1995) present three challenges of legitimation, relating to gaining/extending, maintaining and repairing/defending legitimacy. Addressing each in turn, the first challenge of

gaining legitimacy is positioned on a continuum from passive conformity to active manipulation (Oliver, 1991). It is argued that this form of legitimacy is achieved through conforming to pre-existing ideals, selecting supportive audiences in the environment, and ‘manipulating’ environmental structures by creating new audiences and new legitimating beliefs. The second challenge relating to *maintaining legitimacy* relates to the routinisation of legitimacy within challenging and pluralised societal contexts. Suchman (1995) offers two strategies for maintaining legitimacy, relating to ‘perceiving future changes’ through continual monitoring of the environment and ‘protecting past accomplishments’ by converting legitimacy from episodic to continual forms through “developing a defensive stockpile of supportive beliefs, attitudes and accounts”, (Suchman, 1995: 595). In this sense, challenges of organisational activity are deflected and legitimacy as a static entity remains intact.

The final challenge relates to *repairing legitimacy*, representing “a reactive response to an unforeseen crisis of meaning” (Suchman, 1995:597). This involves a combination of the strategies aforementioned, along with three approaches. Firstly, the organisation may offer ‘normalised accounts’ through denying the disruption, providing excuses, justifying and/or explaining the disruption. Secondly, the organisation may ‘restructure’ through confessing the disruption and creating ‘watchdogs’ to avoid future recidivism or disassociate the organisation from ‘bad influences’. Finally, it is advised that organisations should ‘avoid panic’ as organisations that, “seek too frantically to re-establish legitimacy may dull the very tools that, if used with patience and restraint, might save them”, (Suchman, 1995:599). In exploring the circumstances

through which legitimacy can be gained, maintained and repaired, these three distinctions then, reinforce the functionalist undercurrents of legitimacy research.

As we further explore how legitimation has been theorised, a number of studies have developed distinctions between *substantive* and *symbolic* legitimacy ‘repair’ work (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Beelitz & Merkl-Davies, 2012). Ashford and Gibbs (1990) argue that substantive management entails a change in organisational practices relating to meeting stakeholder expectations, conforming to societal values, altering stakeholder dependence and influencing institutional traditions. Therein, substantive management reflects responsivity between organisations and stakeholders and a tangible outcome of communicative processes. Symbolic management, on the other hand, relates to simply portraying – or symbolically managing – organisational practices so as to appear consistent with social values and expectations (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). Thus, in working to transform the meaning of acts through ‘mystification’ (Richardson & Dowling, 1986), organisations may espouse socially acceptable goals, deny and conceal information, remove themselves from the situation through excuses/justifications, offer apologies and ceremonially conform. Whilst symbolic management, or ‘aspirational talk’ has been critiqued in management literature due to perpetuating inconsistencies between talk and action, this form of legitimacy management may actually produce positive developments through raising expectations among critical stakeholders and stimulating change (Christensen et al., 2013). Far from being seen as mutually exclusive, empirical work has discovered that symbolic and

substantive management are often used in tandem, for example in Driscoll's (2006) analysis of legitimating mechanisms in the Canadian Forestry Sector.

Through the underlying assumption that legitimacy can be gained, maintained and repaired, scholarship on legitimation processes remains ostensibly premised upon models of legitimacy 'management' (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Kostova & Zaheer, 1999; Suchman, 1995). Indeed in acknowledging that a key challenge of legitimation is that audience interpretations may diverge from organisational expectations, both Suchman (1995) and Ashforth and Gibbs (1990) perpetuate corporate-centrism in theories of legitimation and the panacea of organisation-societal congruence. As the view that legitimacy is not a static resource, but more a resource conferred by stakeholders through an intricate *process* of social construction, gathers pace (Beaulieu & Pasquero, 2002), research into the discursive features of legitimation is more adeptly illuminating the constructive and destructive climates within which CSR practices are communicatively negotiated. It is within this discursive vein that our attention now turns in the pursuit of greater understanding into the processes of legitimation and the core theoretical interest of this thesis.

2.3.4 Discursive Legitimation

In exploring organisational 'texts' for their discursive quality and meaning-making potential (Parker, 1992), a burgeoning literature stream is concerned with *how* processes of legitimation are produced and organised, shifting away from managerialist assumptions. These studies build upon the view that

discourse relates to all forms of spoken interaction (formal and informal) as well as written texts (Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984) (see Chapter 5). This body of literature is developing *discursive* understanding of legitimacy realities to reflect the importance of communication-based approaches to legitimacy construction (Castelló & Lozano, 2011; Swanson, 1999). The literature explores congruence and *incongruence* between organisational CSR agendas and societal expectations as part of on-going communicative engagement (Basu & Palazzo, 2008; Kuhn, 2012). Crucially, this conceptual strand also theoretically builds upon the epistemological status of language as constructing, rather than representing, reality, moving away from functionalist approaches that have viewed legitimacy as an objective resource.

Within management scholarship, scholars are increasingly exploring how discourse and rhetoric operate in processes of legitimation (Alvesson, 1993; Brown, 1998; Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010). Indeed, organisational and stakeholder language use has been explored in a range of different empirical contexts, including processes of legitimation in prisoner identity work (Brown & Toyoki, 2013); media coverage of cartels (Siltaoja & Vehkaperä, 2010); situations of organisational change, such as industrial mergers and cases of production unit shutdowns (Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Tienari, 2008); and longitudinal studies of new organisational contexts (Drori & Honig, 2013). From primary data such as interviews and ethnographic fieldwork, to secondary materials, such as a media sources, these studies focus upon a common discursive interest, utilising (critical) discourse analysis to examine the ‘bottom up’ practices that contribute to legitimation processes. In doing so,

the studies identify a range of different discursive processes of legitimation such as, *authorisation* (reference to the authority of tradition, custom or law), *moral evaluation* (reference to moral value systems), *rationalisation* (reference to goal-orientation), *mythologisation* (reference to narratives of reward and punishment), *normalisation* (reference to a natural order) and *problematization* (reference to questionable practices), building upon the influential work of van Leeuwen (2007) and van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999).

More rhetorical analysis of discursive legitimation approaches has also been undertaken to examine the persuasive intent of language use. For example, Higgins and Walker (2012) identify a ‘middle ground’ discourse of responsible and sustainable business through analysing the social/environmental reporting of three New Zealand-based organisations and exploring processes of *ethos* (credibility), *logos* (reason) and *pathos* (emotion). Erkama and Vaara (2010) extend this distinction by applying a rhetorical lens to organisational documents and interviews to also uncover processes of *autopoiesis* (narratives of organisational autonomy) and *cosmos* (arguments of inevitability) during organisational restructuring. Castelló and Lozano (2011), on the other hand, acknowledge *strategic* (embedded in a scientific-economic paradigm), *institutional* (embedded in normative and widely established organisational characteristics), and *dialectic* (embedded in moral deliberation between organisations and society) forms of rhetoric in organisational sustainability reports, to signal new understanding of the role of business in society. These studies unearth the coercive and manipulative nature of organisational attempts to promote and protect particular discourses and actively ‘manage’ legitimation

processes (Elsbach, 1994). Within a more critical vein, they also illuminate a more nuanced understanding of the discursive processes of legitimation and provide useful platforms upon which to develop an understanding of legitimation processes in online settings.

Within a CSR context, scholars have utilised (critical) discourse analysis to explore organisational ‘texts,’ including corporate advertorials (Livesey, 2002), press coverage (Patriotta, et al., 2011), corporate discourse (‘CEO-speak’) (Beelitz & Merkl-Davies, 2012), corporate reporting/CSR reporting (Campbell, 2000; Castelló & Lozano, 2011), CSR award nominations (Castelló & Galang, 2014), websites (Cho & Roberts, 2010), and media sources (Siltaoja & Vehkaperä, 2010). These studies have sought to illuminate organisational discourse as part of legitimation processes. Forays into legitimation within social media contexts are a more recent endeavour with only a handful of studies empirically exploring relationships between CSR agendas and stakeholder expectations in online settings (Colleoni, 2013; Lyon & Montgomery, 2013). By examining how legitimation takes place between actors within these online settings, these studies seek to reveal a more interactional context for legitimation. Yet, to date, these approaches have continued to present a managerial perspective, conceptualising stakeholders as ‘readers’ of legitimacy, rather than active participants in legitimation processes.

As interest in the fluid and discursive dynamics of organisation-stakeholder legitimation processes gathers pace conceptually (e.g. Castelló et al., 2013;

Schultz et al. 2013) and the practical landscape continues to afford new possibilities for understanding social media interactions as part of CSR communications (Birth et al., 2008; Dawkins, 2005), the need for a more adept understanding how legitimation occurs through language processes becomes ever more pertinent. It is still argued that the discursive processes, practices and strategies used within legitimation remain relatively unexplored in management literature (Vaara et al., 2006). It is also contended that existing literature has eschewed understanding of ‘intertextuality’ (the principle that local texts contain discursive fragments of wider conventional social discourses [Kristeva, 1980]; see Chapter 4) in legitimation contexts. Scholars are thus calling for enhanced insight into, “the interdiscursive dynamics where specific discourses and ideologies provide alternative and often-competing ways to legitimate or delegitimize particular actions”, (Vaara & Tienari, 2008:987). This interest is expedited as ICT developments gather pace and offer new possibilities for organisation-stakeholder interaction.

In viewing SNSs as organisational ‘texts’ in which legitimation occurs between organisations and stakeholders, this study seeks to address this aperture and build new understanding for CSR research and theories of legitimacy. This thesis utilises a discursive approach to illuminate *how* legitimation is continually (re)occurring locally in organisational SNSs, rather than adopting a static view of legitimacy as constrained by the interpretations of specific actors. So rather than being an end *outcome* of value signals (as under pragmatic and cognitive views) or rational argumentation (as under the moral view) (Suchman, 1995), in this context, legitimation is understood as an

ongoing negotiation of values, meanings and knowledge that contribute to an organisation's moral framing; an organised 'gaze' upon organisation-society relations made possible through ICT developments.

It is upon this platform that our attention now turns to critically examining and conceptually exploring the extant research on constitutive models of CSR communication. The next chapter explores constructionism within CSR communications research to offer a less functionalist and more constitutive view of organisation-stakeholder interaction, more suited to the dynamic social media environment and contemporary organisation-stakeholder interactions.

2.4 Chapter Summary

In building upon the core contribution of this thesis to challenge popular understanding of CSR and legitimacy in social media contexts, this chapter has critiqued popular understanding of legitimacy in espousing somewhat functionalist and managerialist biases (Suchman, 1995). In doing so, it has introduced a more constructionist view of the organisation-society interface premised upon discursive understanding of legitimation processes (Lee & Carroll, 2011). Most specifically, the chapter has discussed the field of CSR (2.2) to platform an epistemological view of CSR as a social construction forged between organisations *and* stakeholders (2.2.1). The chapter has also explored Suchman's (1995) prominent definition of legitimacy as pragmatic, cognitive and moral conceptualisations (2.3.1) and challenged managerialist assumptions of the theory (2.3.2) in light of practical ICT developments that

bring plurality to CSR discussions and emphasise the lack of theoretical and descriptive insight into the inter-discursive features of legitimation processes in CSR literature (Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Tienari). It has then summarised the extant research surrounding legitimation processes (2.3.3) and presented the emerging view of discursive legitimation (2.3.4), which offers insight into *how* organisations and stakeholders engage in legitimation processes through language use (Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010; Schultz et al., 2013) and the core theoretical pursuit of this thesis. In working towards a greater understanding of language theory within CSR and legitimacy, attention now turns to examining how a discursive view of legitimation can be orientated within a constructionist view of CSR communications. Most pointedly, Chapter 3 now examines the conceptual turn towards constitutive and dialogical models of communication in social media settings.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

Constitutive Corporate Social Responsibility Communication

3.1 Chapter Overview

In proposing a more discursive and processual understanding of legitimation in Chapter 2, the purpose of this chapter is two-fold. Firstly, it discusses constructionism within CSR communications research to distinguish between a paradigmatic divide between functionalist (transmission of a fixed legitimacy ‘reality’) and constitutive (social construction of plural ‘realities’ through legitimation) conceptions of communication (3.2). This conceptual discussion aligns the processual interest in legitimation with the constitutive paradigm. Secondly, the chapter outlines a view of constitutive CSR communication in networked societies to orientate the focus of this thesis on social media settings, most specifically social networking sites (SNSs) (3.3). In drawing upon empirical research, this section discusses how the practical climate is creating a new discursive and dialogical context for CSR communications research and studies of legitimation. Finally, Section 3.4 provides a chapter summary.

3.2 Constructionism in CSR Communication

It is perhaps not surprising given the heterogeneity surrounding understanding of CSR discussed in Chapter 2, that conceptual development of CSR communication remains fragmented in management literature (Maignan &

Ferrell, 2004; Morsing, 2006). While locating a definition that aligns with the multi-paradigmatic field of CSR communication is problematic (Crane & Glozer, 2014), many scholars support Podnar's (2008) assertion that CSR communication is a process of anticipating stakeholders' expectations to provide true and transparent information on economic, social and environmental concerns. Indeed, platforming upon the view of CSR as a social construction in Chapter 2, a number of attempts have been made to present defining characteristics, rather than all-encompassing definitions, of CSR communication. In doing so, scholars have mapped approaches to conceptualising CSR communication across the disparate streams of corporate communication, public relations, organisational communication, marketing and reputation management fields, with important implications for the study in hand (see Ihlen et al., 2011).

Given the interest of this thesis in constructionism and the discursive *processes* of legitimation, it is imperative to highlight a core epistemological divide operating in CSR communication studies. Scholars including Castelló et al. (2013), Crane and Glozer (2014), Glozer et al. (2013), Golob et al. (2013), Schoeneborn and Tritten (2013) and Schultz et al. (2013) have distinguished between *functionalist* and *constitutive* approaches to CSR communication. The 'functionalist' tradition of management research has espoused positivistic CSR communication studies that address the outcomes of messaging strategies and corporate-centrism (Golob et al., 2013). The 'constitutive' tradition, on the other hand, is built more specifically upon constructionism and the view that CSR is 'co-created' between organisation and stakeholder networks (ibid,

2013). This sentiment is replicated in Schoeneborn and Trittin's (2013) work that distinguishes between the *transmission* view (a linear view of communication) and the *constitutive* view (communication as a complex process of meaning negotiation).

To clarify this distinction further, Schultz et al. (2013) introduce three key ways to conceptualise CSR: the *instrumental* view, which "regards CSR as an organisational instrument to reach organisational aims such as improved reputation and financial performance"; the *political-normative* view, which "highlights the societal conditions and role of corporations in creating norms"; and the *communication* view, which "regards CSR as communicatively constructed in dynamic interaction processes in today's networked societies" (p.681). This typology aligns with the well-established view that organisations can choose to inform, respond or involve stakeholders in CSR communication (Morsing & Schultz, 2006), based on Grunig and Hunt's (1984) public relations model. The authors also acknowledge that CSR communications literature is unduly focused on the instrumental and political-normative approaches, which relate to functionalism, and purport that a shift towards more communicative and constitutive models provides a greater focus on the formative role of language in constructing reality. In order to align the constitutive approach to communication with the discursive view of legitimation presented in Chapter 2, and conceptually locate the core interest of this thesis in *process* rather than outcome, Schultz et al.'s (2013) tripartite framework of instrumental (3.2.1), political-normative (3.2.2) and constitutive

(3.2.3) models of CSR communication is now more clearly outlined in light of the discussion of legitimacy presented in Chapter 2.

3.2.1 The Instrumental View

An instrumental view of CSR communication has dominated CSR communications enquiry due to the prevalence of a ‘transmission’ view of communication’, first identified by Axley in 1984. Born out of communication theory (see Ihlen et al., 2011), the transmission model conceives communication as a uni-directional and asynchronous transfer of meaning from an active (internal) encoder to a passive (external) decoder, building upon a ‘conduit’ metaphor (Golob et al., 2013). This psychologically orientated perspective suggests that communication is a process of information transmission (stimulus-response) and information processing (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). Alongside functionalist conceptions of CSR communication, research embedded within the instrumental view supports managerialism, and the view that CSR communication is teleologically (goal-orientated) driven towards a strategic purpose and outcome (Golob et al., 2013; Podnar, 2008). This purpose may include persuading stakeholders of moral intent to boost organisational reputation (e.g. Bhattacharya et al., 2004), informing stakeholders of organisational identity (van de Ven, 2008) or driving positive brand awareness and purchase intent (e.g. Kotler & Lee, 2008). The instrumental view correlates with a ‘stakeholder inform’ strategy (Morsing & Schultz, 2006) where communications are seen as ‘monological’ one-way

relationships controlled by powerful organisational entities. This dynamic is graphically depicted in Figure 4.

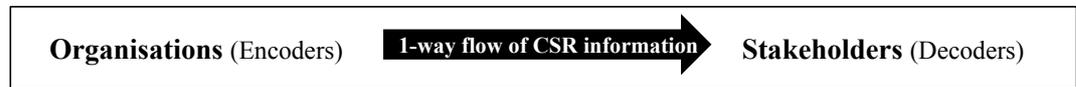


Figure 4: Instrumental CSR Communication

The instrumental approach prevails in CSR research (e.g. Esrock & Leichty, 1998; Du et al., 2010), perhaps suggestive of the managerial roots of CSR. However this perspective is also supported in broader fields, such as marketing and communications, e.g. ‘transaction marketing’ (see Bagozzi, 1974), indicating the dominance of the transmission model. As Schoeneborn and Trittin (2013) identify, reference to terms such as ‘tools’ (e.g. Podnar, 2008), ‘channels’ (Du et al., 2010) and ‘resources’ (Vargo & Lusch, 2008), alongside attributes including ‘strategic’ and ‘effective’, indicate an instrumental approach to communication aligned with the transmission view.

Yet, despite its dominance, a number of shortcomings have been identified and the transmission model has been critiqued for three core limitations. Firstly, as Axley (1984) identified, the model fails to appreciate the complex and dynamic nature of communication. In reducing communication to a linear and uni-directional view, and focussing upon information dissemination, the approach overlooks and constrains the formative role of communication and the process of meaning negotiation, inherent in communicative interaction (Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013). Secondly, the model perpetuates corporate-centric theorisation of the organisation-society interface. In assuming organisations to be powerful

entities, the model ignores the resistant, empowered and transformational nature of stakeholders in today's networked societies (Denegri-Knott et al., 2006). Thirdly, the model focuses upon a hierarchical and sender-biased model of negotiation (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011). Instead of appreciating multiple forms of reality negotiation (Castelló et al., 2013), the model propagates 'control' and 'consistency' communicative biases (Schultz et al., 2013) as part of a functionalist ontology. It thus fails to account for the ameliorated role of interactive technologies in rebalancing the information asymmetries that have traditionally characterised organisation-stakeholder relationships.

Under this view, the role of communication is to maintain, protect or enhance perceived value for stakeholders through persuasive and positive brand building, as well as deflecting any information that may undermine reputational value (Smith, 1990; Vogel, 2005). As Schultz et al. (2013) argue, the instrumental approach to communication aligns with a pragmatic conception of legitimacy, which is concerned with the self-interested calculations of an organisation's most immediate audiences and legitimisation 'gain' and 'maintain' strategies (Suchman, 1995). Indeed communications seek to divert, exclude or resist processes of dissent surrounding legitimisation, perpetuating managerialism. Practically speaking, examples of the transmission approach would include some of the earliest forms of CSR communication, such as institutionalised CSR communication campaigns, such as CSR reports (Idowu & Towler, 2004; Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010) and traditional advertising and mass-marketing campaigns which have low stakeholder

interaction potential (Schlegelmilch & Pollach, 2005). While the instrumental view still plays a key role in CSR communication studies, it fails to adeptly capture insight into the discursive process of legitimation.

3.2.2 The Political-Normative View

The political-normative view of CSR communication highlights the “societal conditions and role of corporations in creating norms” (Schultz et al., 2013:681). It builds upon network models of communication (Rogers & Kincaid, 1981) and research that has explored the dialectical relationships between language and action (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) as part of political CSR research (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011). Scholarship aligned with this approach moves away from outcome orientations, to develop a participatory and collaborative approach to communication (Morsing et al., 2008). It also develops conceptions of what effective CSR communication *should* look like, building upon democratic ideals of organisation-society interaction (see García-Marzá, 2005; Rasche & Esser, 2006; Stückelberger, 2009). Indeed, largely drawing upon theories of communicative action and discourse ethics (Habermas, 1984, 1996), CSR communications research has promoted the notion of an ‘ideal speech solution’, which offers normative guidelines for overcoming coercion and power differentials during stakeholder engagement (Drake et al., 2000). Embedded within this view is an assumption that communications should be bi-directional (two-way) and a/synchronous opportunities for parties to exchange information and ‘respond’ to one another to build consensus and avoid dissensus (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Figure 5

brings this dynamic to life, highlighting how both organisations and stakeholders adopt active roles as encoders and decoders. This shifts the dynamic from the asymmetrical organisation-stakeholder relationship embodied in the instrumental view of CSR communication, to a more ‘dialogical’ approach.

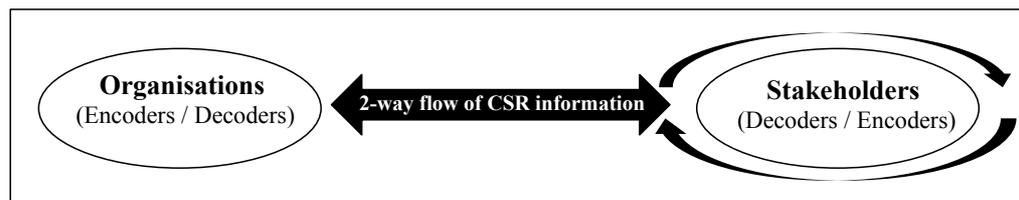


Figure 5: Political-Normative CSR Communication

Whilst this view captures the democracy-building potential of communications, the perspective is not without reproach. Firstly, scholars have acknowledged that social reality is rarely negotiated through rational argumentation, and have problematised this model for failing to acknowledge competing communication dynamics in today’s globalised and networked societies (Castelló et al., 2013). Indeed the political-normative approach espouses a view of harmonious relationships between actors engaged in communication and the view is critiqued for its ‘consensus bias’ in overlooking the productive nature of dissent in CSR communications and promoting a ‘shared view’ of CSR (Schultz et al., 2013). Secondly, whilst appearing two-way, the model may still be coerced by organisational activity, reflecting power dynamics at the organisation-stakeholder interface (Crane & Livesey, 2003). As Morsing and Schultz (2006:327) highlight, given information asymmetries, a ‘sender bias’ may operate in this approach favouring the organisation over the stakeholder

with communication perceived as, “feedback in terms of finding out what the public will accept and tolerate”.

Under this view, CSR communication looks to build relationships with stakeholders, aligning with both cognitive and moral interpretations of legitimacy and the notion of legitimation ‘gain’, ‘maintain’ and ‘repair’ strategies (Suchman, 1995). Taking each in turn, cognitive legitimacy relates to organisations signaling to society how they are performing against a set of well-defined CSR expectations, thus ensuring ‘congruence’ between organisational practices and societal expectations. Institutionalised mechanisms, such as social auditing and reporting criteria (e.g. The Global Reporting Initiative [GRI] (Tscopp, 2005)) and the increasing influence of CSR ratings and awards e.g. FTSE4Good (Parguel et al., 2009) represent measures of societal expectations in practice. Through bi-directional (two-way) flows of information, organisations build societal understanding in an attempt to resist divergent and discordant views surrounding processes of legitimation. Once again, this view espouses a functionalist view of legitimacy as an objective reality by suggesting homogenous and stable societal expectations (see Carroll, 1979).

The political-normative approach to CSR communication also aligns with a view of moral legitimacy. Palazzo and Scherer (2006:73) assert that through explicit public discussion, moral legitimacy is conceived of as, “deliberative communication: rather than manipulating and persuading opponents, the challenge is to convince others by reasonable arguments”. The shift towards digital ICT has been a key driver of this dynamic, providing transparent and

dynamic platforms for processes of legitimation to play out. Therein, through moral deliberation between active and diverse organisation and stakeholder ‘co-collaborators’, communications seek to build and maintain consensual and congruent organisation-society relations (Suchman, 1995). This is seen in multi-stakeholder industry collaborations and two-way feedback loops, which are increasingly appearing online (e.g. the ‘Tell Shell’ blog). Akin to cognitive legitimacy, the persistent focus upon consensus and congruence in moral legitimacy also espouses a functionalist view of legitimacy as an outcome, rather than appreciating the constructionist processes through which legitimation takes place.

3.2.3 The Constitutive View

Recent CSR literature has recognised that stakeholders are becoming increasingly ‘involved’ in CSR communication (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Building upon the ‘linguistic turn’ in sociology which occurred in the 1970s, organisational communication scholars have advanced a communicative ontology known as the ‘constitutive’ view of communication, positing that ‘communication constructs organisations’ (the CCO perspective [Craig, 1999]). The three main assumptions of CCO are that communication is constitutive of organisations, emergent, and processual in nature (Blaschke et al., 2012; Cooren et al., 2011; Schoeneborn et al., 2014). A number of authors have elaborated on these distinctions, such as Kuhn (2012) who relates CCO to: communication as being constitutive of social realities; organisations *as* communication (rather than containers for it); and communication as producing

intersubjectivity and predictability in a process that is “uncertain, ambiguous, paradoxical, fragmented and dilemmatic”, (p.549). This approach thus maps neatly onto the interest of this thesis in *processes* of legitimation through language.

In looking at the process of *organising* rather than *organisation* (Weick, 1979), the CCO approach favours communication *as* organisation, rather than communication *in* organisation. The perspective has recently been applied to CSR to conceptualise CSR communication as a complex process of meaning negotiation (Golob et al., 2013; Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013; Schultz et al., 2013). Crucially, this linkage provides insight not only into the communicative boundaries of organisations, but also the holistic, connected and interactive contexts within which organisations and stakeholders co-constitute consensus and dissensus around CSR realities. In this sense, CSR is forged in ‘genuine dialogic’ interaction that facilitates the co-creation of shared realities (Crane & Livesey, 2003) through a dynamic interplay of organisational and stakeholder a/synchronous communication which blurs internal/external boundaries. This alters the role of the CSR manager from being a ‘scientist’, “informing us about the true state of the organisation”, to a ‘motivator’, who tells us “what can be *made* true” (Christensen et al., 2013:8). This is illustrated in Figure 6.

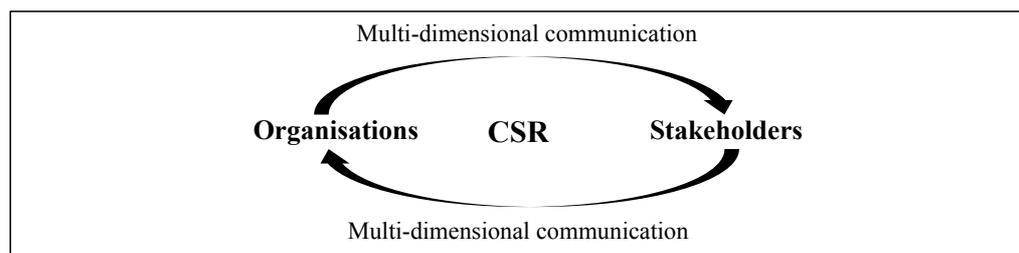


Figure 6: Constitutive CSR Communication

However, two limitations surround the constitutive approach to CSR communication. First, as Kuhn (2008) argues, further research is needed to examine *how* organisational texts change due to interactions with internal and external groups. Therein, there have been calls for further empirical work on constitutive approaches to CSR to explore communicative challenges and processes more adeptly (Bisel, 2009; Castelló et al., 2013), particularly in social media contexts (Whelan et al., 2013). This PhD study heeds this call to action by examining organisational texts in continual flux through online interaction. Second, CCO studies continue to conceptualise communication as being dialogical; an on-going interaction between an organisation and its stakeholders that is constitutive of social meaning. Yet, the use of the word dialogue remains somewhat obscure, ostensibly premised upon vague and reductionist conceptions (Kuhn, 2008). Kuhn (2012) elaborates on this limitation, questioning how, in situations of multiple and conflicting stakeholder claims, divergent themes evolve in dialogue and shape organisations. In the increasingly dynamic and multi-vocal social media climate, researchers are advocating an extension of CCO to better account for dissensual CSR and organisation-civil society discordance (Whelan, 2013), a core interest for this study.

Therein, Schultz et al. (2013) have proposed a *communicative* view of legitimacy construction, which aligns with the CCO perspective, and a constructionist focus on process rather than a functionalist view of legitimacy outcomes. The authors suggest that a plurality of conflicting voices is an essential condition for processes of legitimation (Latour, 2005), positing that

an agreed-upon, consensual and congruent conception of legitimacy is impossible to achieve. Rather than gaining, maintaining or repairing legitimacy as part of legitimacy ‘management’ (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Suchman, 1995), here the focus rests solely upon the active processes of legitimation engaged in by both organisational and societal actors. In celebrating dissensus and suggesting that the pursuit of an objective and universal understanding of legitimacy may actually distort CSR communication practices, Schultz et al. (2013) advocate a focus upon the discursive processes of legitimation. They conceptualise CSR communication as “conflictive, aspirational, disintegrative and co-constructed” (Schultz et al., 2013:685), and as reflective of fluid and evolving societal expectations outside of organisational knowledge and control. Within this view, any form of CSR communication has the potential to contribute to legitimation, emphasising the performative nature of language (Austin, 1975). Indeed, Schultz et al. (2013:688) argue,

“...Contemporary organisations cannot expect that the careful orchestration of one consistent and coherent CSR message will result in the achievement of legitimacy across a variety of stakeholders. Rather we propose that CSR as enabler of corporate legitimacy is interactively constituted in communication through ongoing and changing descriptions”.

In summary, Table 1 brings together key assumptions underpinning these three approaches to CSR communication, detailing the shift from the dominant transmission model of communication to more constitutive approaches, in line with the interest of this study in constructionism rather than functionalism. The

table outlines the purpose of communication within each approach and the intended outcome, while also elaborating upon the stakeholder role within each of these conceptions. The table details the theoretical grounding underpinning each approach, with the instrumental view being aligned with functionalism (legitimacy as a quantifiable ‘object’), the political-normative view being aligned to a critical/constructionist ontology (legitimacy as consensus) and the constitutive view aligning with a constructionist/communicative ontology (legitimation through communication). In outlining differences in Schultz et al.’s (2013) typology, the table reflects the trajectory of CSR communications research. It also provides a succinct foundation upon which to examine how practical information and communication technologies (ICT) developments are encouraging a rapidly advancing interest into constitutive models of communication and the discursive features of legitimation processes.

| | Instrumental | Political-Normative | Constitutive |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Communication Model | Unidirectional & Asynchronous | Bidirectional & A/Synchronous | Multidirectional & A/Synchronous |
| Purpose | Transmit information | Build agreement | (Co)construct meaning |
| Outcome | Consensus | Consensus | None (Ongoing Consensus/Dissensus) |
| Stakeholder Strategy | Inform (Passive Stakeholder) | Respond (Passive Stakeholder) | Involve (Active Stakeholder) |
| Practical Example | CSR Report | Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue | Social Media Dialogues |
| Ontology | Functionalist | ←————→ | Constructionist |

Table 1: Mapping Approaches to CSR Communication

3.3 Constitutive CSR Communication in Networked Societies

It is argued that ICT are transforming organisation-stakeholder social relations (Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010). Technological advancements have eroded boundaries and increased connectivity between organisations and stakeholders (Andriof & Waddock, 2002), facilitating the move from ‘one-to-one’ and ‘one-to-many’ to ‘many-to-many’ and ‘any-to-any’ models of communication (Hoffman & Novak, 1996; O’Kane et al., 2004). The dynamic nature of computer-mediated environments (Christodoulides et al., 2006) has also expedited the constitutive CSR communications paradigm, with contemporary research suggesting that a range of stakeholder actors including, employees, suppliers, government, NGOs and media now communicate *with* organisations through asynchronous communication channels, such as email (Condon & Čech, 1996), and quasi-synchronous communication, such as Internet relay chat (Hutchby, 2001). Through technology-mediated interaction, parties may not be co-present, there is no requirement for coterminous exchanges (Hutchby & Tanna, 2008), responses can be planned in advance (Condon & Čech, 2001) and non-response situations may occur (Rintel et al., 2003). Nevertheless, it is argued that computer-mediated communication is evolving to encompass the ‘fully duplex’, two-way and synchronous characteristics of ordinary conversation (Hutchby & Tanna, 2008). These complex changes have confronted the received and instrumental view of CSR communications as a value signaling opportunity to propose more dialogical conceptions of communicative processes. These developments also problematise the transmission view of communication and conceptions of static legitimacy

‘realities’, to agitate towards an interest in the discursive processes of legitimation.

This section interrogates these empirical and conceptual developments, by first providing definitions of the key communicative tools embedded in this ‘new media’ paradigm (3.3.1) and orientating discussions towards ‘social media’ as the core focus for this study (3.3.1.1). The section then outlines how social media have been researched within constructionist CSR scholarship as democracy-building opportunities (3.3.2), outlining the dialogic characteristics of online CSR communication, and further reinforcing the processual understanding of this thesis.

3.3.1 Defining ‘New Media’

The roots of ‘new media’ can be seen in the evolution of ‘Web 2.0’, which took place in the early 2000s. Web 2.0 encapsulates, “a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative fashion” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010:61). Not only technological, the Web 2.0 revolution is also ostensibly sociological (Berthon et al., 2012) in increasing the speed, accessibility and transparency of communications across geographies, permitting more constructionist approaches to CSR communication. The developments also extend the arsenal of communication tools available to organisations, from ‘old media’ such as newspaper articles,

press releases, corporate reports and traditional mass-media advertising, to dynamic forms of ‘social media’ (see Lee et al., 2013).

Social media channels are proliferating year on year and are defined as, “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (UGC)” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010:61). Comprising both the conduits and the content of communication, social media encompass texts, pictures, videos and networks (Berthon et al., 2012; Kietzmann et al., 2011). Kaplan and Haenlein, (2010) categorise social media into collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), weblogs (e.g. blogs, of which there are around 152 million), microblogs (e.g. Twitter with 288 million active users), content communities (e.g. YouTube with 1 billion active monthly users), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook with 1 billion active monthly users), virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft), and virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life) (see Pring, 2012). Largely encompassing any interactive form of communication channel that allows two-way interaction (Kent, 2010), social media provide opportunities for stakeholders to *consume* organisational content, *participate* in social interaction, and actively *produce* content (Shao, 2009). The potential for social media to increase the intensity and interactivity of organisational-stakeholder communication is striking (Etter et al., 2011b) and harnesses the move from (functionalist) organisation-controlled communications to more societal (constructionist) approaches. Indeed, social media arguably decentralise communication (organising communications around a network of individuals rather than a centralised entity, see Colleoni,

2013), boost interactivity (allowing individuals to generate and disseminate their own content, see Vernuccio, 2014), increase interconnectivity and openness between organisations and stakeholders (providing opportunities to coordinate strategic actions, see Lee et al., 2013) and facilitate two-way dialogue (building relationships between organisations and stakeholders, see Fieseler et al. 2010). These developments thus challenge the aforementioned conceptualisations of CSR communication by blurring the internal/external dichotomy and problematising the transmission model of communication that sees legitimacy as a static and objective ‘reality’.

CSR scholars have begun to explore how the new climate influences the way in which CSR is communicated, developing conceptual and empirical insights into websites (e.g. Maignan & Ralston, 2002), as well as social media channels (e.g. Etter et al., 2011b). Websites are arguably the most researched medium in online CSR communication (Etter et al., 2011a) and encompass text-based forms of communication, as well as picture-sharing websites (e.g., Flickr) and video-sharing websites (e.g., YouTube) (Berthon et al., 2012). Since the 1990s, an interdisciplinary body of research has empirically examined websites in a range of contexts including legitimacy building (e.g. Du & Vieira, 2012); reputation enhancement (Eberle et al., 2013); cultural meaning-making (e.g. Caruana & Crane, 2008); and activism (de Bakker & Hellston, 2013). While seen as valuable tools in creating opportunities to persuade, inform, educate and engage with stakeholders (Stuart & Jones, 2004), as ‘controllable’ and institutionalised organisational mediums, websites do not currently maximise their dialogic potential and largely remain focussed upon an instrumental or

transmission approach to communication (Fiesler et al., 2010; Parguel et al., 2009), unless they embed more interactive platforms, such as forums or blogs.

Social media, on the other hand, are characterised by network models, responsiveness, participation and real-time interaction, and shed light onto more reciprocal and interactive communicative processes between organisations and stakeholders (Kent, 2010). The phenomenon of weblogs or 'blogs', defined as, "websites owned and written by individuals who maintain regular commentaries and diaries that may include text, graphics, videos, and links to other blogs and web pages" (Berthon et al., 2012:263), has burgeoned practically and captured attention in CSR scholarship. Blogs adopt a high-level of functionality in allowing users to comment on entries, building an online network of collaboration and dialogue. Blogs are argued to be one of the most effective communication tools to engage stakeholders on CSR and facilitate communication between informed citizens as 'proxies' for face-to-face communication (Fieseler et al., 2010; Fieseler & Fleck, 2013; Rheingold, 2002). 'Microblogging' sites, such as Twitter, which see users send and receive short messages within a 140-character limit, have also been examined to explore publically mediated conversations (Page, 2014).

Within social media, social networking sites (SNSs), the focal channel of interest in this study, have evolved since the 2000s and are defined as, "web-based services that allow individuals to: construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system; articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection; and view and traverse their list of connections and those

made by others within the system” (boyd & Ellison 2008:211). SNSs such as Facebook allow users to find and ‘add’ friends/contacts to their online profiles, send messages to friends, and update personal profiles on demand (Berthon et al., 2012). Kent (2010:643) argues that SNSs are characterised by moderation (e.g. ‘friend’ requests), interactivity (e.g. ‘likes’), interchangeability (e.g. ‘shopping’ for friends on others’ profiles), propinquity (e.g. shared connections), responsiveness and synchronicity (e.g. threaded dialogue). SNSs thus provide a unique window into processes of CSR communication, and crucially illuminate *how* legitimation occurs. Attention now turns to examining how SNSs have been researched within constitutive CSR communications research to shed light onto how these mediums provide crucial insight into the discursive and dialogical dynamics of legitimation processes.

3.3.2 Social Media and Constitutive CSR Communications

Whilst it is argued that research on CSR communication in social media is insufficient (Etter al., 2011b), a small body of research has started to explore the communicative dynamics of social media in constructionist CSR contexts. A literature review conducted across the broad business and society literature revealed that CSR communication and social media research largely falls within three domains. First, research into the *ethicality* of social media, which examines moral themes surrounding online contexts (e.g. van Es et al., 2004). Second, research into the *strategic* potential of social media, which explores the instrumental benefits of social media in building stakeholder engagement, competitive advantage and enhancing organisational reputation (Eberle et al.,

2013; Fieseler et al., 2010; Sawhney et al., 2005). Third, research into the *dialogical* capacity of social media that is orientated towards discovering the broader societal benefit of online organisation-stakeholder interaction (e.g. Unerman & Bennet, 2004) in line with a political-normative and constitutive framings (Schultz et al., 2013). Given the interest of this thesis in how legitimation occurs through discourse and dialogue in online CSR communication, it is this latter category that offers a less (functionalist) outcome orientation and a more processual (constructionist) understanding, and is thus elaborated on below.

In addressing how the ‘information age’ has rebalanced the asymmetry of information and power that has traditionally categorised organisation-stakeholder interaction (Shankar et al., 2006), a range of studies have explored the more active role of stakeholders in agenda setting for CSR and the dialogical potential of social media. Themes of stakeholder empowerment (e.g. Denegri-Knott et al., 2006), resistance (e.g. Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009) and activism (e.g. den Hond & de Bakker, 2007) have evolved in CSR communication and social media studies to encapsulate the more active stakeholder role in online climates (de Bakker & Hellston, 2013). This body of research highlights the ‘democratisation’ of CSR knowledge creation (de Bakker & Hellston, 2013) and the ‘conversationalisation’ of public discourse (Thornborrow & Montgomery, 2010), whereby social media facilitate public expression and debate, and open up dialectical and dialogical spaces within which organisations and stakeholders can interact (Cova & Dalli, 2009). In providing opportunities for individuals to share views, voice dissent, network

and ‘dialogue’, social media dissolve the transaction and coordination costs of collective engagement and facilitate new forms of social and political debate (Fieseler & Fleck, 2013). Social media thus open up opportunities for increased insight into the discursive processes of legitimation enacted by both organisations *and* stakeholders.

Within this political vein, Whelan et al. (2013) have suggested that social media are more democratic than their ‘old’ media counterparts and facilitate the production of ‘arenas of citizenship.’ Building upon the Habermasian (1984) conception of public sphere (returned to in Chapter 4), Whelan et al. (2013) argue that individual citizens are empowered to create, debate and publicise CSR relevant issues and influence their broader political-economic environment through social media. In contrast to ‘corporate’ arenas, citizenship arenas are populated by a range of social issues (e.g. gossip, sport, current affairs), as well as broader CSR issues (e.g. sustainable sourcing policies). Thus, rather than portraying corporate-civil society agreement (consensual CSR), ‘dissent enabling’ public spheres see stakeholder actors agree and disagree over various CSR issues (dissensual CSR) (Whelan, 2013) and build upon the idea that knowledge in social media is both a ‘private’ good (owned by the organisation), as well as a ‘public’ good (owned and maintained by a community) (Wasko & Faraj, 2005). Indeed, “when knowledge is considered a public good, knowledge exchange is motivated by moral obligation and community interest rather than by narrow self-interest”, (ibid, 2000:155).

The dialogic potential of social media is conceptually evolving within this research vein to reflect synchronous, inclusive and constant communicative exchange between organisations and diverse stakeholders (Crane & Livesey, 2003). While it is argued that the notion of dialogue is still evolving in CSR and management literature (Heath et al., 2006; May, 2011), CSR research is suggesting that organisations are progressively seeking to enhance the discursive quality of their CSR communications through dialogic communication (Lee et al., 2013). Largely understood as an exchange between two or more parties (Ihlen et al., 2011) and a co-creation of *shared* understanding between organisations and stakeholders (Johnson-Cramer et al., 2003), the dialogic view on CSR communication conceptually aligns with the political-normative and constitutive approaches to CSR communication outlined in Chapter 3 (e.g. Golob et al., 2013; Schultz et al., 2013) and is juxtaposed against “conduit-based, positivistic or excessively individualistic and agentic accounts of human action” (Anderson et al., 2004:11). Organisation-stakeholder dialogue, according to King (2008), is comprised of shared meanings and social identities between organisations and stakeholders, suggesting that dialogue is a useful frame through which to explore processes of legitimation within a constitutive vein.

It is, however, noted that there has been a preoccupation with researching the antecedents and outcomes of dialogue to the detriment of understanding the process of how dialogue constructs meaning in social media settings (Illia et al., 2013). As conceptual interest in constitutive models of communication expands and social media tools are increasingly used as platforms to engage

organisations and stakeholders in CSR, scholars are acknowledging that there is a need for researchers to more adeptly address, “how the CSR agenda is set in societal discourses in which companies and stakeholders are key actors”, (Golob & Podnar, 2011:248). It has thus been acknowledged that there is a void of conceptual research around the extent to which social media might be used for legitimation purposes and dialogic stakeholder communication (Capriotti, 2011; Inauen et al., 2011; Whelan et al., 2013). Whilst many scholars continue to refer to ‘dialogue’ as a key feature of constitutive approaches to CSR communication, most fail to offer a clear definition of the perspective of dialogue against which they most readily align and the features of dialogue they build upon (e.g. Fieseler et al., 2010; Golob et al., 2013; Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013). This highlights the need for a conceptually sound understanding of dialogue within SNS contexts.

Furthermore, as aforementioned, CSR communication research currently resides around consensual approaches to legitimation processes (as part of political-normative framings), rather than acknowledging the indeterminate, disintegrative, and conflictual character of CSR communication in interactive online contexts (Castelló et al., 2013; Schultz et al., 2013). As Castelló et al. (2013) and Schultz et al. (2013) highlight, online settings are characterised by plural and polarised reality constructions and studies of CSR communication require a more conceptually nuanced understanding of the consensual and *dissensual* dialogical processes that occur in social media settings. Schultz and Wehmeier (2010) use the example of activist movements to highlight that dialogue is often an emotional process, with destructive actors keen to break up

dialogue, rather than find consensus. Indeed there are inherent limitations in assuming that communicative processes will generate a common interpretation of reality and it cannot be assumed that encouraging communication will result in dialogue or consensus (Basu & Palazzo, 2008; Colleoni, 2013; Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). This advocates a shift away from political-normative framings of communication that address the democracy-building potential of social media and expands the focus upon constitutive models of communication (Schultz et al., 2013).

This aperture is further compounded by the preoccupation with functionalist and normative approaches to understanding legitimation processes in CSR studies of social media. Even within research that adopts a dialogical approach to social media, corporate-centrism prevails through the dominance of quantitative research methodologies and social network analyses, that seek to unveil legitimacy outcomes rather than processes and strategies (Kent, 2010). Only a handful of studies have used qualitative methodologies to examine social media in CSR communicative contexts (e.g. Etter et al., 2011b), yet these approaches largely offer a view of what legitimation should look (normatively) look like, rather than presenting the descriptive features of *how* legitimation occurs. The discursive features of dialogue also continue to be overlooked. While empirical interest in the communicative dynamics of CSR in new media environments expands (Castelló et al., 2013), research continues to focus upon broad industry analyses (e.g. the Twitter accounts of the Fortune 500 [Lee et al., 2013]), rather than the micro-dialogic and discursive processes

of communication that occur between organisations and stakeholders in platforms such as Facebook.

As this chapter has identified how CSR communication in social media settings is characterised by less hierarchical and harmonious organisation-stakeholder relationships and more multi-directional and hyper-interactive contexts, the need for enhanced insight processes of legitimation and dialogue in SNSs comes further to the fore. Attention now turns to the communications studies literature to develop a conceptual framework for developing understanding into the discursive and dialogical features of processes of legitimation in online CSR communication.

3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the extant research on constitutive models of CSR communication (3.2) to emphasise a distinction between *functionalist* (one-way/transmission) approaches to conceptualising CSR communication and *constructionist* (two-way/constitutive) views. The chapter has elaborated on this binary distinction to organise approaches to conceptualising CSR communication across instrumental (3.2.1), political-normative (3.2.2) and constitutive (3.2.3) approaches, building upon Schultz et al.'s (2013) influential research into CSR communications in networked societies. Additionally, this chapter has offered a discussion of CSR communication in networked societies (3.3) and in doing so has defined 'new media' (3.3.1). It has then focussed upon social media as the core platforms for analysis, summarising research into

the dialogical potential of social media within a constitutive CSR communications framing (3.3.2). This section also highlights that while the constitutive approach presents novel avenues through which to explore processes of legitimation in SNSs, further conceptual and empirical work is required to fully understand the discursive, discordant and dialogical processes of legitimation amongst both organisations and stakeholders in CSR communication studies. This provides a ripe conceptual avenue to explore the role of discourse and dialogue in communicative processes and Chapter 4 now presents insights from communication studies literature; most specifically Bahktinian dialogism (Holquist, 1990).

Chapter 4: Literature Review

Bakhtinian Dialogism

4.1 Chapter Overview

The aim of this final literature review chapter is to introduce the concept of dialogue as a valuable lens through which to explore the constructionist processes of legitimation in online CSR contexts. Most specifically, this chapter develops a conceptual framework and research questions for understanding the discursive and dialogical processes of legitimation, building upon constitutive views of CSR communication in social media settings (Schultz et al., 2013). The chapter first provides an overview of dialogical research in communication studies to outline core philosophies of dialogue (4.2), particularly within a postmodern tradition (Deetz & Simpson, 2004) (4.2.1). The chapter then introduces Bakhtinian dialogism (Holquist, 1990) as a theoretical lens through which to interpret and analyse processes of legitimation (4.3), discussing key components of Bakhtin's work on dialogue and tying key arguments back into the CSR and legitimacy literatures (4.4). Section 4.5 provides a chapter summary and Section 4.6 consolidates the literature strands discussed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 to outline the theoretical framework. This final section also presents the core research questions that underpin the overarching research question of: *how is legitimation constituted through discursive and dialogical processes in online CSR communication?*

4.2 Dialogue: A Communication Studies Perspective

Building upon the ancient etymological roots of the word ‘dialogue’ (‘dia’ meaning ‘through’ and ‘logos’ meaning ‘word’), communication scholars have traced the evolution of dialogical understanding from ‘classical’ Socratic and Menippean roots, to contemporary dialogic enquiry (see Nikulin, 2006). These scholars note that whilst interest in dialogue was initially nurtured in the 1920s and 1930s to raise awareness of the presence of the ‘other’ in communicative action (Koczanowicz, 2000), it was in the 1970s and 1980s that a ‘conceptual turn towards dialogue’ took place amongst communication scholars. This was due to a burgeoning interest in interpretive research approaches and translations of classical texts, such as that of Bakhtin (1986) (Anderson et al., 2004; Stewart et al., 2004). It is thus to this contemporary time period that we turn in search of key definitions of dialogue.

Prior to the 1970s and 80s, language sciences were dominated by the approach of monologism, which portrayed ‘from-to’ interactions, and supported the modernist, positivist legacy in communications research. Conceptions of ‘monologue’ assume that communication has little ontological substance and support information processing theories of cognition (Mumby, 1997). An upsurge of interest in socio-cultural based, dialogical theories of communicative action has, however, occurred as researchers move away from enquiries focussed on “what goes on inside people”, and move towards those focused on “what people go on inside of” (Shotter, 2009:272). Dialogical exchanges relate to interactive moments of joint action (Bakhtin, 1986) where

a ‘living connection’ is created (Shotter, 2009) *between* co-present individuals (Linell, 1998). Indeed, dialogue is described as being a two-way movement of living utterances through which meaning emerges (Cunliffe, 2011). Open and interactive dialogue averts closure and finality as an, “on-going process with participants open for continuous reconsiderations”, (Linell, 1998:11), through which trust is engendered (Cassell & Symon, 2004). Whilst conventionally relating to face-to-face interaction, dialogue can also be analysed in telephone conversations (Hopper, 1992), SMS text message exchanges (Hutchby & Tanna 2008) and critically for this study, in digital real-time interactions (Severinson Eklundh, 1986). Discourse then supports understanding of both the texture and theoretical dimensions of dialogue in a given context and provides descriptive detail into how legitimisation processes may play out in SNSs.

Building upon the prescriptive ‘classical model’, which provides a set of norms for ‘true’ and ‘good’ dialogical practice (Grillo, 2012), contemporary scholars including Buber (1970), Habermas (1984), Gadamer (1976, 1989), Bohm (1996) and Bakhtin (1986) have developed more descriptive insight into dialogical processes. Perceiving language to be socially and historically constructed, these scholars have suggested that a pluralised reality is constituted through communication (see Nikulin, 2006). These philosophers and linguists have thus cast light upon processes of meaning making within communication and advocated constructionist approaches in communications research (Anderson et al., 2004). These approaches align neatly with the interest of this thesis in constitutive processes of legitimisation.

A number of attempts have been made to organise these contemporary theorisations of dialogue (e.g. Anderson et al., 2004; Ganesh & Zoller, 2012; Nikulin, 2006; Stewart & Zediker, 2000) and building upon these, Table 2 outlines the core principles of dialogue as posited by each scholar. The table chronologically details the prominent conceptualisations of dialogue, the optimum group size, characteristics of dialogue, as well as barriers to, and outcomes of, dialogue under each of the five perspectives. In doing so, the table emphasises significant similarities and differences in dialogical conceptions.

A key theme running through these conceptualisations is a focus on dialogue as an opportunity to unearth mutual and new forms of understanding. This is manifest in the idealised outcomes of dialogue, argued to be collaboration (e.g. Bohm, 1996) or co-optation (overcoming tensions to enhance convergence) (e.g. Habermas, 1984). Conversely, a focus on agonism and the positive benefits that may stem from tensions is highlighted only sparingly (Bakhtin, 1986). Clear differences are visible between Bohm's (1996) recommendation to convene in a circle of between 15-40 people and the Habermasian (1984) ideal speech situation, that offers normative accounts of what dialogue *should* look like. Buber (1970) and Bakhtin (1986), on the other hand, offer more a more fluid approach to dialogue. Notable differences in the conceptualisations thus relate to the barriers of dialogue, where power and coercion are seen as either problematic (e.g. Habermas, 1984; Bohm, 1996) or beneficial (e.g. Bakhtin, 1986; Buber, 1970; Gadamer, 1989).

| Author | Perspective on Dialogue | | | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|--|---|---|
| | Conceptualisation | Group Size | Characteristics | Barriers | Outcomes |
| Buber (1970) | “Speaking-and-listening in which the communicators manually manifest senses of uniqueness, presentness, immeasurability evanescence and ineffability”, (Buber, 1970:82-85). | Small: Two individuals ('I-Thou') | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation, contemplation & penetration • Dialogue cannot be objectively described by rules or logic; the self as a relational phenomenon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tension with instrumental and objective contact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance understanding and learning |
| Habermas (1981, 1996) | “... Whenever the actions of agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success, but through acts of reaching understanding”, (Habermas, 1981:1:286). | Undefined | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideal speech situation (generality, autonomous evaluation, transparency, role-taking, validity) • Goal directed actions • Rational argumentation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free from constraints (e.g. power dynamics) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus: Universal agreement |
| Gadamer (1989) | “... The medium in which substantive understanding and agreement take place between people”, (Gadamer, 1989:386). | Small: Two individuals (based on Socratic dialogue) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human truth is emergent • Address and response of focussed conversation • Language is a site of human understanding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on a universal truth | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding: Produce new meanings to test emerging truths |
| Bohm (1996) | “Stream of meaning flowing among and through us and between us. This will make possible a flow of meaning in the whole group, out of which may emerge some new understanding”, (Bohm, 1996:7). | Medium: 15 – 40 people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective participation • Facilitator present • Suspension of assumptions • Active listening • Convene in a circle • Face-to-face meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persuasion • Fragmentation • Defending assumptions • Fixed positions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust • Consensus (collective shared meaning) |
| Bakhtin (1986) | “The single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic human life is the open-ended dialogue. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue” (Bakhtin, 1986: 293). | Small: 3 people (addresser, addressee and a third to mediate) / Large: Polyvocal (plurality of voices) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polyphonic (multi-vocal) • Intertextual (Heteroglossia) • Dialogic Ontology • Performative • Question and answers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary positions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfinalisable understanding • Collaborative co-construction of meaning |

Table 2: Tabularising Theories of Dialogue

A further way in which the dialogical approaches have been distinguished is by ontology and Deetz and Simpson (2004) suggest that dialogical approaches can be categorised into three traditions, as summarised in Table 3. Examples from the extant CSR literature are also offered to evidence how each tradition has been examined in CSR scholarship. Firstly, *liberal humanism*, founded upon principles of understanding, empathy and active listening between diverse participants, which observes the learning potential of dialogue and builds upon the work of a Bohm (1996). Argued to be the dominant, ‘everyday’ conceptualisation of dialogue (Deetz & Simpson, 2004), this tradition is heavily utilised in organisational learning research (e.g. Isaacs, 1993; Senge, 1990) and contexts of multi-stakeholder dialogues in CSR research (e.g. Burchell & Cook, 2008; Payne & Calton, 2002). This view is, however, critiqued for over-emphasising the importance of developing common ground, “at the expense of encountering difference and mutually constructing understanding” (Deetz & Simpson, 2004:14). Indeed whilst productive, dialogue within the liberal humanist position may favour the culturally dominant position and reproduce the status quo.

Secondly, the *critical hermeneutic* tradition, which builds upon Habermas’ (1984, 1986) seminal works on discourse ethics and deliberative democracy, to illuminate socio-political views of interaction. Given the interest in principles of argumentation and consensus-building, this perspective relates to political CSR research (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011) and is often utilised to theorise conflict resolution amongst conflicting parties (e.g. García-Marzá, 2005; Rasche & Esser, 2006). While placing more emphasis upon the problem-

solving and decision-making components of dialogue in unearthing power differentials between the self and the other, the normative, rational and idealised conceptions of dialogue have been challenged in this tradition (Deetz & Simpson, 2004). Such critiques suggest that social reality is rarely negotiated through rational argumentation.

| Dialogical Tradition | Description | Dialogical Scholar | CSR Research |
|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------|---|
| Liberal Humanist | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understanding, empathy and active listening, suspension of prior assumptions ▪ Aim: consensus and create new understanding | Bohm (1996) | Burchell & Cook (2008); Payne & Calton (2002) |
| Critical Hermeneutic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rational argumentation acknowledging power relationship operating between parties holding divergent goals ▪ Aim: Radical change | Habermas (1984, 1986) | García-Marzá (2005); Rasche & Esser (2006) |
| Postmodern | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disrupts conceptualisations of meaning where differences are explored, rather than eliminated ▪ Aim: reveal unconscious assumptions underlying societal interaction. | Bakhtin (1981, 1986) | Johansen & Nielsen (2013) |

Table 3: Dialogical Traditions and CSR Research

Finally, the *postmodern* tradition, which emerges out of the work of Bakhtin (1981, 1986), to challenge the individualist rationalism of liberal humanism and consensual teleological interest of critical hermeneutics (Deetz & Simpson, 2004). The postmodern tradition is strongly opposed to the dominant ideologies that focus on maintaining the status quo in dialogical interaction (Butler, 2002; Deetz & Simpson, 2004) and has been used to examine constitutive approaches to CSR communication (e.g. Johansen & Nielsen, 2013). This approach aligns with the core interest of this thesis in examining the discursive, dialogical and dissensual climates within which processes of

legitimation occur and it is upon this basis that the postmodern tradition of dialogue is now explored.

4.2.1 Postmodern Dialogue

The idealised qualitative guidelines for dialogue proposed by both Bohm (1996) and Habermas (1984) are argued to be problematic to achieve within networked societies (Deetz & Simpson, 2004). Furthermore, the liberal humanist and critical hermeneutic traditions fail to specifically examine how *language* shapes dialogical processes. Given the focus of this study upon the discursive and dialogical features of legitimation, the postmodern tradition of dialogue helpfully develops concern for the functions of language, with particular interest in the power of dialogue in shaping reality. Indeed within a postmodern view, dialogue seeks to disrupt established conceptualisations of meaning and focuses upon meanings as emergent, contingent, and in flux (Butler, 2002). Postmodern theories embrace multi-vocality and contradiction-ridden interaction (Anderson et al., 2004) drawing upon tensionality (Stewart et al., 2004), agonism (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012), and most notably, descriptive theorisations of dialogue (Stewart & Zediker, 2000). The constitutive and processual nature of communication is emphasised within this tradition, as sovereign, knowing subjects are decentred in favour of the subject being continually (re)constructed through discursive practices (Mumby 1997). Meaning is thus socially negotiated through dialogue which unequivocally relates to utterances at the “moment of their expression” (e.g. word choice) and events surrounding their occurrence (Shotter, 2009:271).

Within postmodernism, dialogue is seen as an intersubjective force for restructuring the organisation-stakeholder interface whereby preconceived assumptions, or ‘discursive blockages’, are avoided in order to open up a dialogical space within which radical transformations can be enabled (Deetz, 1992). The focus is thus upon discursive ‘openings’, rather than discursive ‘closures’ (ibid, 1992). Dialogue thus acts as a complex process through which actors mutually shape new understandings of the world (Butler, 2002; Deetz & Simpson, 2004; Edvardsson et al., 2011). This illuminates the innovative role of dialogue in producing unintended and unpredictable outcomes, generating, “something that never existed before; something absolutely new and unrepeatable” (Bakhtin, 1986:119). This tradition of dialogue thus endeavours to reveal the unconscious assumptions underlying societal interaction (Butler, 2002). In doing so, differences are explored, rather than eliminated, and ‘otherness’ is celebrated (Deetz & Simpson, 2004). The postmodern tradition destabilises the modernist separation between the signifier and signified (Mumby, 1997), although any conception of ‘self’ or ‘others’ is not ‘fixed’, but is capable of being questioned. There is no ‘absolute truth’ within this perspective as the focus is squarely upon the active *production* of meaning, rather than the strategic *reproduction* of meaning through dialogue (Deetz & Simpson, 2004). This perspective aligns with the contentions made in Chapter 2 against objective legitimacy ‘realities’ and functionalist approaches to communication in Chapter 3, to build upon a processual understanding of legitimation born out of constitutive CSR communications.

The postmodern paradigm is sympathetic to the ontological questions of how dialogue brings about change in the perspectives (re-framing knowledge of CSR) and approaches of participants, to themselves, to others and to their surroundings (Shotter, 2009). Furthermore, it is acknowledged that conflict may be the outcome of such fundamental encountering of difference, resulting in negative implications for dialogical processes, such as cacophony, confusion, fragmentation and paralysis (Crane & Livesey, 2003), but also positive potentials which stem from agonism (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012). As Crane and Livesey (2003:50) crucially highlight,

“More than an exchange of words, dialogue involves taking on discursive regimes that potentially embody very different histories, different ways of thinking, different values and beliefs, languages and world-views”.

Bakhtin (1981) was one of the first philosophers to contrast the ‘dialogical’ and ‘monological’ features of language to propose that communication never takes place in a vacuum, but that utterances are dynamic and dialogical; what we say is in response to something that *has been* said, and in anticipation of what *will be* said. It is upon this discursive basis that attention now turns to discussing Bakhtinian dialogism (1986) in the pursuit of greater insight into discursive and dialogical processes of legitimation.

4.3 Bakhtinian Dialogism

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895-1975) was a Russian literary scholar whose work has transformed dialogical scholarship throughout the 21st, and latter part of the 20th, centuries. In extending Karl Buhler's interpretation of 'speech-act theory' (1970), Bakhtinian research coalesces around the notion of 'dialogism', a term coined by Holquist (1990) to emphasise the "relational nature of self-understanding and the necessity of interaction between inherently different persons or perspectives" (Strine, 2004:226). This perspective shifted away from popular conceptions of dialogue as a form of verbal interaction aimed at overcoming differences, to promote communication-centred understanding of language, society and culture (Holquist, 1990; Strine, 2004).

Bakhtin (1981:273) acknowledges that dramatic, rhetorical, cognitive and casual forms of dialogue have been overlooked in linguistic and stylistic studies, positing that, "the dialogic aspect of discourse and all the phenomena connected with it have remained to the present moment beyond the ken of linguistics". This observation authenticates Bakhtin's (1986) distinctive focus upon the 'utterance' as the 'unit of speech communication', as opposed to the sentence as the 'unit of language.' Speech communication is thus a dialogic exchange of utterances with the utterance being viewed as a link in a chain, a link bounded by both preceding links and the links that follow. This highlights the discursive features of dialogue and the key interest of this study. Furthermore, Bakhtin (1986:68) places specific emphasis on the heterogeneity of oral and written 'speech genres', arguing:

“The fact is that when the listener perceives and understands the meaning (the language meaning) of speech, he simultaneously takes an active responsive attitude toward it. He either agrees or disagrees with it (completely or partially), augments it, applies it, prepares for its execution, and so on... Any understanding of live speech, a live utterance, is inherently responsive, although the degree of this activity varies extremely”.

A key way in which Bakhtin defines his conception of dialogue is by discussing what dialogue is not. Bakhtinian dialogism contrasts greatly with the ‘classic’ Saussurean semiotic models (1959) that dominated communications and linguistic research throughout the 20th century. These structuralist traditions were concerned with language as an abstract system of representations and fostered ‘transmission models’ of communication. Bakhtin found this perspective to be inherently monological; an approach that suggested that words carried ‘truth’ or ‘meaning’ as objective entities, and which were transferred through a one-way, linear process of communication. In this monological vein, interlocutors were conceptualised as individualistic and autonomous actors, overlooking the range of independent, polyphonic voices interacting in dialogue through intertextual means (Kristeva, 1980). Bakhtin (1986) challenged the idea that live speech adhered to a specific ‘code’ and objected to conceptions of the other as a passive, finalised object. To Bakhtin, the meanings of words are derived from the social use of language in different contexts and for different purposes, rather than from fixed relationships between abstract signs (Maybin, 2001). He suggested that the cognitive transmission model of communication (‘from-to’ interactional

exchanges [see Linell, 1998]) should be replaced with a much more interactive and reciprocal notion of language. This aligns with the shift from functionalist approaches to conceptualising communication towards constitutive approaches, as discussed in Chapter 3. As opposed to purely focusing upon the content of an interaction, Bakhtin appreciated the *process* of dialogue, which was ostensibly erotetic and apocritic (involving questions and answers). This also supports the core contention of Chapter 2 and the interest of this thesis in processes of legitimation rather than static legitimacy ‘realities’. Commenting on Bakhtin’s processual interest, Wood (2004:xvi-xvii) argues,

“Dialogue is emergent (rather than preformed), fluid (rather than static), keenly dependent on process (at least as much as content), performative (more than representational) and never fully finished (rather than completed)”.

A challenge with utilising Bakhtin’s work on dialogue is that considerable variability exists in how Bakhtin’s work on dialogism is applied and understood. Valentin Voloshinov is a name synonymous with Bakhtin given that Bakhtin appears to have published a proportion of his research under this name. As a result, questions of authorship surround Bakhtin’s work. An additional challenge has been that Bakhtinian theories have been largely marginalised until recently due to their ‘aberrant’ nature (Holquist & Emerson, 1981) or active critique of Leninist and Stalinist regimes, which challenged the dominant political status quo (Baxter, 2004). Bakhtin viewed social life as a fragmented and disorderly interweave of opposing forces characterised by multivocality and the interdeterminancy, and within which order is a task to be

accomplished, rather than a given (Bakhtin, 1986; Baxter, 2004). Consequently, due to these political undertones, translations of Bakhtin's key works only became widely available in the 1980s and 1990s (Létourneau, 2012).

Significant presuppositions of Bakhtinian dialogue have, however, been identified by authors including Anderson et al. (2004), Baxter (2004) and Wood (2004). Building upon these developments, Table 4 summarises the key characteristics of Bakhtinian views of monologue and dialogue. It provides a simplified heuristic for understanding the juxtaposition of these two approaches by tabularising the role of language, actors and outcomes of dialogue. In emphasising monologue as being teleologically orientated towards meaning transmission, dialogue relates to the performative nature of language and the fluid and dynamic emergence of meaning. Consequently, in interaction, the subject dominates in monologue with the 'other' being constructed as a passive and static object. Conversely, in dialogue, a polyphony of independent voices co-construct new and contextually-derived meanings. In aiming to uncover universal truth, the outcome of monologue is either consensus (complete agreement) or discordance (complete disagreement). In stark contrast, dialogue promotes understanding with the outcome being largely unpredictable; in dialogue, action is on-going and unfinalisable, resulting in a never-ending stream of opportunity. The author thus categorises the core characteristics of Bakhtinian dialogism into three core concepts: performativity, polyphony and perpetuality (detailed in Table 4 in **bold**). Each

of these concepts is now discussed in turn in constructing a theoretical framework for analysis.

| | Monologue | Dialogue |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Role of Language | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rhetorical & representational (preformed) ▪ Subject dominates (focus on content) ▪ Transmission of fixed ‘reality’ | Performative: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intertextuality (emergent) ▪ Co-constitution of something new ▪ Multiple ‘realities’ |
| Actors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monoconscious (individualistic) interlocutors ▪ The ‘other’ as passive, static, finalised object | Polyphony: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Independent voices ▪ The ‘other’ as fluid, dynamic, responsive |
| Outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explanation: Discover universal truth ▪ Completion: Consensus/Dissensus ▪ Finalisation: Discursive closure | N/A: Perpetuality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On-going understanding ▪ Unpredictable ‘allosensus’ ▪ Unfinalisable: Discursive opening |

Table 4: Juxtaposing Monologue and Dialogue

4.3.1 Dialogue is Performative

It has been acknowledged that dialogue is characterised by mystery and surprise due to its potential for creating something unforeseen, something new and unique (Anderson et al., 1994; Wood, 2004). As interlocutors bring varied and novel perspectives, which are negotiated and shaped in the dialogical process, meaning is co-constructed through the exchange of utterances. This emphasises the performativity of language (Austin, 1975), as “language is never a representation of the world as it is, but is rather a creation of the world as we construct it” (see McNamee & Shotter, 2004:102). Bakhtin recognises the transformational power of dialogue and it has been argued that, “in dialogue, we do not know exactly what we are going to say, and we can surprise not only the other but even ourselves” (Cissna & Anderson, 2004:10).

Rather than suspending prior assumptions (Bohm, 1996) or ensuring participatory and democratic speech situations (Habermas, 1996), Bakhtin (1986) objects to conceptions of the other as a passive, finalised object. Instead, *active* interlocutors are immersed in (re)constitutive processes that are not entirely predictable or reproductive of previous experiences (Anderson et al., 1994; Wood, 2004) as “our dialogical actions are neither yours nor mine; they are truly ours” (McNamee & Shotter, 2004:98).

In this sense, dialogue is less concerned with uncovering absolute, objective ‘truths’ (akin to Bohmian dialogue, 1996) or concluding dialogue with concrete decisions and consensus (akin to Habermasian discourse, 1984), but instead, illuminates the interdependence of discourse, particularly related to the multi-vocal SNS environment. Bakhtinian dialogism then is not a mechanism to produce ‘new’ meaning, as the pursuit of common ground may thwart, rather than facilitate, genuine dialogue in allowing dominant voices to define what ground is ‘common’ or legitimate (Wood, 2004). Bakhtin (1986) instead believes that through dialogue parties can create, ‘aesthetic moments’, “fleeting moments of wholeness in which fragments and disorder are temporarily united” (Baxter, 2004:118).

Within the performative vein, Bakhtin (1986) developed understanding of ‘speech genres;’ relatively stable, yet flexible utterances that originate in communication and correspond to various social or cultural circumstances. Speech genres illuminate how culture is organised through verbal interaction and provide valuable, intersubjective windows into dominant social discourses

and hegemonic ideologies (Fairclough, 1995). The notion of speech genres highlights the discursive features of dialogue in that words and sentences are devoid of abstract expressiveness but are instead constituted through the dialogical exchange of utterances (Bakhtin, 1986). Macovski (1997) builds upon Bakhtin (1981) to distinguish between primary simple genres (unmediated speech communion e.g. oral dialogue) and secondary complex genres (written communication, e.g. novels) whereby secondary genres ‘absorb and digest’ primary genres to establish a definitive link between spoken dialogue and written modes. It is this latter form of speech genre that mirrors conceptions of ‘intertextuality’ and a key discursive component of dialogical interaction, of particular use in conceptualising legitimisation processes.

Arguably born out of Kristeva’s (1980) seminal interpretation of Bakhtin’s (1986) interest in dialogue as a literary genre, intertextuality suggests that meaning results from a complex inter-linkage of utterances which are always responding to, and anticipating, other utterances and acts (Wood, 2004). This illuminates the ostensibly erotetic and apocritic (questioning and answering) process of dialogue, where no utterance or word can be spoken without echoing how others have understood and used it previously. This suggests the performativity of discourse in dialogue through revealing and constructing broader discourses as part of an interwoven social fabric that operates between interlocutors. Furthermore, ideologies are not only drawn upon to make sense of society (e.g. through social representations and practices), but also serve to regulate social practices through the production, reproduction and challenge of

existing doctrines (van Dijk, 1998) and ideologies (Bottici & Challand, 2006). The second characteristic of polyphony is now presented.

4.3.2 Dialogue is Polyphonic

Bakhtin (1981) argues that the form and meaning of utterances are shaped by independent and distinct voices, which are not isolated but instead form part of a *polyphonic interaction* (a plurality of voices and persons). The Bakhtinian notion of polyphony embraces multivocality and a refusal to privilege any single voice, perspective or ideology (Wood, 2004). In this vein, there is no ‘centre’ in dialogue; every voice is a voice amongst others and a plurality of consciousness exists. Indeed, “the dialogic quality of communication means that there is always at least one other respondent voice implicit in any utterance” (Maybin, 2001:69). Dialogue may be external (between two different people) or internal (between earlier and later versions of the self) (Holquist et al., 1981), creating new ways to theorise difference and celebrate ‘otherness.’ Dialogue may also acknowledge different interests and positionalities between interlocutors.

It has thus been suggested that dialogue is a process that navigates between ‘simultaneous differences’ and contradiction-ridden conflict (Clark & Holquist, 1984). Rather than suppressing tension, suspending prior assumptions or reconciling different perspectives akin to a Bohmian (1996) approach to dialogue, Bakhtinian dialogism embraces tension between interlocutors as an inherent and integral feature of dialogue. This is due to the co-existence of

distinct realities and varieties embodying linguistic codes, the ‘heteroglossic’ nature of language (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2010). To Bakhtin, dialogue is always in dialectical flux characterised by simultaneous unity and difference between ‘centripetal’ forces (unity, homogeneity, centrality) and ‘centrifugal’ forces (difference, dispersion, decentring) (Baxter, 2004). Thus, in pursuit of holism, interlocutors must fuse perspectives, whilst also maintaining a degree of fragmentation in order to sustain uniqueness. Baxter (2004:114) is cautious to distinguish this form of dialectics from the Hegelian sense of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, asserting “to Bakhtin, the centripetal-centrifugal dialectic is a dynamic, fluid and on-going process whose particular shape varies chronotypically, or contextually”.

Dialogue is thus distinct from traditional approaches to conflict which frame difference as a problem to be solved or managed through encouraging consensus (Anderson et al., 2004). The liberating nature of dialogue is emphasised, championing ‘freedom from’ pre-established hierarchies, oppression, violence and subjectivity, and ‘liberation for’ one’s voice and attending to the other in dialogue (Nikulin, 2006). Central to this idea is Bakhtin’s (1965) work on the medieval carnival. In medieval times the carnival was a folk celebration within which oppressed social classes could challenge the authoritarian feudal system through free interaction between unlikely participants, eccentric behaviour, carnivalesque misalliances, and sacrilegious events (Bakhtin, 1986). Morson and Emerson (1990) state that Bakhtin’s carnivalesque (the carnival sense of the world) is characterised by mockery of all serious and ‘closed’ attitudes about the world, coupled with celebration of

‘discrowning’; inverting top and bottom in any given structure. Indeed, language ‘parodies and relativizes itself’, provoking laughter and detachment from representation (Kristeva, 1980). Through a disruption of authority carnival creates an, ‘alternative social space’ and this conceptualisation can be related to the cacophony and chaos often associated with CSR dialogue in online contexts (Crane & Livesey, 2003). The final element of the Bakhtinian interpretation of dialogue is now discussed: perpetuality.

4.3.3 Dialogue is Perpetual

Given the lack of focus on finding a ‘common ground’ between interlocutors in Bakhtinian dialogism, Bakhtin argues that dialogue is ‘unfinalisable’; an “on-going process wherein participants are open for continuous reconsiderations”, (Linell, 1998:11). This element of dialogue emphasises the intersubjectivity of dialogism and the constant renewal of meanings and identities in flux, again distancing the approach from more objective ways of viewing reality. Through the two-way movement of living utterances and open-ended exchange between numerous voices, there is, according to Nikulin (2006) as a key proponent of Bakhtin’s work, an impossibility of exhausting relations between the self and the other, or extinguishing polyphonic voices. In distinguishing between ‘unfinalisability’ (something or someone cannot be finished or finalised in principle) and ‘unfinishability’ (something or someone is simply not finished or finalised, without any further implications), Nikulin (2006) posits that the unfinalisability of a person means that, “she can never exhaust the various

relations she has with either herself (expressively) or with others (communicatively),” (p.56).

The perpetuality and potential infinity of discourse is alluded to here and, building upon Buber (1970), Bakhtin’s notion of the ‘dialogic self’ emphasises relationality and intersubjectivity in the conceptions of the self and other in dialogue. Bakhtin (1984:293) argues that, “life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue”. This perspective elucidates individuals as inherently dialogical beings, in perpetual conversation with each other, and adds useful ontological insight into the power of dialogue in conceptualising organisation-stakeholder communication. As Bostad et al. (2004) have highlighted, there are no limits to the dialogic context as it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future, where even past meanings are never stabilised and ‘finished’, but can always be renewed. Bakhtin (1986) confesses that his love for variations and diversity in definitions leads to an inherent and internal open-endedness of many of his own ideas. Here we see the postmodern flavour of Bakhtin’s (1986) work truly realised. Consequently, according to Bakhtin (1986:170) (cited in Bostad et al., 2004:2), there is

“...Neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future). Even past meanings, that is those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalised, ended once for all) – they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent development of the dialogue”.

Nikulin's (2006) interpretation and extension of Bakhtinian dialogism (1986) suggests that completing dialogue through either consensus (rational, total agreement) or dissensus (total dissension) is impossible, as each option would result in the termination of dialogue. Instead Nikulin (2006) focuses upon the benefits and productive nature of non-antagonistic conflict, a phenomenon Nikulin terms 'allosensus'. Arguing that any form of agreement can only be provisional or momentary (as aforementioned) due to the notion of an inexhaustible 'other' in polyphonic dialogical environments, Nikulin (2006) suggests that disagreement permits the restoration of dialogue by recognising the value of the other's objections and ensuring unfinalisability. Sitting between consensus and dissensus binaries, allosensus celebrates contradiction and the "inerasable difference of otherness" by, "dialogically liberating the other within oneself, which occurs by always trying to say the same thing, yet always in a different way, in front of the other", (Nikulin, 2006:222). Therein, through centripetal and centrifugal forces, dialogue is conceived as being in perpetual motion between the self and the other; a never-ending cycle through which meaning is transformed and renewed. Adopting a more discordant lens on communicative interaction, this processual view supports the core interest of this study and the next section now ties Bakhtinian dialogism back into the CSR and legitimation context of this thesis.

4.4 Bakhtinian Dialogism: Implications for CSR and Legitimation

Having discussed three core interpretations of Bakhtinian dialogism (1986) from within communication studies, it is now important to highlight the

implications of Bakhtin's work for building understanding of processes of legitimation in CSR communicative contexts. Currently it is within just a niche amount of papers on CSR communication that the true potential for Bakhtinian dialogism (1986) is realised, e.g. in Chistensen and Cornelissen's (2011) conceptual study of organisational and communication studies and Johansen and Nielsen's (2013) empirical exploration of strategic stakeholder dialogues, which acknowledge the constitutive nature of dialogue in facilitating meaning-making between participants. Bakhtin's (1981) work is connected with many more studies, particularly in management research that has explored language performativity and communication as constitutive of social reality, as part of the 'CCO' literature (e.g. Bencherki & Cooren, 2011; Blaschke et al., 2012; Cooren et al., 2011; Kuhn, 2012). However within the CSR communication literature more specifically, Bakhtin's (1981) work appears to be acknowledged somewhat implicitly, often with cursory acknowledgment and eschewal of the paradigmatic assumptions that underlie his contentions (e.g. Brennan et al., 2013; Christensen et al., 2013; Etter et al., 2011a; Golob & Podnar, 2011; Humphreys & Brown, 2008; Korschun & Du, 2012; Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013; Schultz et al., 2013). This thesis aims to bring Bakhtin's views of dialogue more squarely within CSR communication and legitimation theorisation.

In developing an interpretation of Bakhtin's work (1981, 1986) and acknowledging a need within academic scholarship to better account for dialogic research in management and CSR literature, this thesis seeks to analyse concepts of performativity, polyphony and perpetuality empirically in

legitimation processes. This section then contributes to the theoretical framework for this study through discussing *performativity* and the importance of examining processes of legitimation at the level of discourse (4.4.1); *polyphony* and the need to analyse organisation and stakeholder interactions through dialogue in social media settings (4.4.2); and *perpetuality* in identifying the on-going centripetal and centrifugal processes that form part of legitimation processes (4.4.3).

4.4.1 Performativity: Legitimation at the Level of Discourse

Whilst the performativity of language, as defined by Austin (1975), has been a feature of many qualitative investigations in CSR research, a more ‘explicit’ focus on the performative features of CSR language has come to the fore more recently in studies that adopt the view that communication constructs organisations (CCO) (e.g. Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013; Schultz et al., 2013) (see Chapter 3). Operating within a constitutive role of communication; the view that through communication, organisations and stakeholders construct knowledge of CSR, research has suggested that greater attention should be paid at the level of discourse in CSR communication to more fully understand what organisations and stakeholders *do* with words. For instance, Christensen et al. (2013) introduce the notion of ‘aspirational’ CSR to posit that CSR statements are not just descriptions, but prescriptions with performative qualities that commit organisations to act in a certain manner. Aside from judging organisation action, these studies elucidate the performative nature of intention, in line with the Bakhtinian (1986) focus upon the transformational power of

discourse. Yet Bakhtinian dialogism (1986) takes this interpretation further by emphasising the interdependence of discourse, suggesting that it is through dialogical *interaction* that the truly performative nature of language is realised. This emphasises the theoretical lens of this study on the level of discourse *within* interaction, a notion that has received scant attention in CSR studies to date.

In applying Bakhtinian dialogism (1986) to CSR communications contexts, the notion of interaction stretches beyond dialogue between organisations and stakeholders, to consider the influence of broader social and historical discourses ('speech genres') on contemporary language use. Indeed the concept of 'intertextuality', (Bakhtin, 1981; Kristeva, 1980) can provide useful ontological insight into how CSR is constructed in and through ideological and interactive discourses in communicative networks (see Filliettaz & Roulet, 2002). A number of CSR studies have interrogated the interconnectivity of organisation-stakeholder networks by exploring the intertextuality of macro-stakeholder discourses between internal and external actors (Livesey, 2002; Brennan et al., 2013). For example, Brennan et al.'s (2013) study supports processual understanding of dialogue by introducing an analytical framework that explores verbal interactions through 'turn-taking' (responses between parties), 'inter-party moves' (nature of the 'turn', e.g. denial, apology, excuse), and 'intertextuality' (intensity and quality of verbal interaction). By identifying how fragments of societal discourses permeate organisational and CSR 'texts', such studies elucidate the interdependence of discourse and the processes

through which local knowledge is (re)produced and (re)interpreted (Fairclough, 1995; Kuhn, 2008), providing a foundation upon which this thesis builds.

As management scholars call for further insight into “the interdiscursive dynamics where specific discourses and ideologies provide alternative and often competing ways to legitimate or delegitimize particular actions” (Vaara & Tienari, 2008:987), a focus upon intertextuality and language performativity similar to Bakhtinian dialogism (1986), may yield important insights into processes of legitimation. Indeed, shielding the authoritative organisation ‘text’ from the intertextual influence of other texts and maintaining a ‘monolithic’ CSR knowledge when interacting with actors in the social milieu is seen as a problematic power-based achievement requiring substantial work (Kuhn, 2008, 2012). The intertextual focus may also highlight that human (e.g. stakeholder) and non-human (e.g. policy document) constituents are playing an increased role in constructing organisational ‘texts’, emphasising the diminishing role of traditional managers in gatekeeping CSR knowledge. As Bakhtin has been sparingly drawn upon within management and CSR studies to illuminate responsivity and meaning construction at the organisation-stakeholder interface (see Belova et al., 2008) and explain communicative dynamics within online contexts (Martinez & Lacasca, 2008), Bakhtinian dialogism may thus offer a fruitful lens for exploring processes of legitimation in online contexts (see Korschun & Du, 2012).

4.4.2 Polyphony: Organisation-Stakeholder Dialogue in SNSs

Polyphony is arguably the most utilised element of Bakhtin's (1986) approach to dialogue in the broad management literature, with contemporary studies highlighting that the organisational voice is just one voice among many in constructing organisational CSR realities in networked societies (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2008). The notion of polyphony lends itself well to conceptualising the broad range of actors that contribute to knowledge creation in managerial environments (e.g. Oswick et al., 2000; Belova et al., 2013) by exploring organisations as, "discursive spaces where heterogeneous and multiple voices engage in a contest for audibility and power" (Belova et al., 2008:493). Also termed heteroglossia, polyvocality and multi-voicedness, polyphony has received conceptual attention (e.g. Shotter, 2009; Johansen & Nielsen, 2011), and has also been explored empirically, in settings including pedagogy (Christensen et al., 2008), organisational change (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2008), and organisational meaning construction (Oswick et al., 2000). As the scope of interactions in networked societies expands, there have been calls for greater application of the concept of polyphony within management research (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2008). This contention suggests that the core argument of this thesis is both timely and conceptually rich.

Within CSR contexts, polyphony has been used to highlight stakeholder views as fragmented and contradictory, with Humphreys and Brown (2008:422) stating, "organisations are not discursively monolithic, but pluralistic and polyphonic, involving multiple dialogical practices that occur simultaneously

and sequentially”. The approach of polyphony raises awareness of self-other relations in dialogue in illuminating the empowered nature of *both* organisational and stakeholder actors in engaging in processes of legitimation. Indeed, in exploring differentiated stakeholder perspectives and the active role of the ‘other’ (external voices), Crane and Livesey (2003) have suggested that organisation-stakeholder interactions are ‘schizophrenic’ (p.51) and are characterised by heterogeneity through, “a complex interplay of shifting, ambiguous and contested relationships” (p.43). In illuminating the plurality of voices surrounding CSR, dialogue is constructed as a navigational process between ‘simultaneous differences’ (Clark & Holquist, 1984). Indeed May (2011:100) highlights that, dialogic research allows us to consider, “what has been lost, negated, silenced, in the emergence of CSR itself”, (p.100) and “the recuperation of lost voices and marginalised people, with an emphasis on the local, situated nature of understanding” (p.91).

The empirical focus of this thesis upon constitutive organisation-stakeholder CSR communication in SNSs is thus fitting with the Bakhtinian (1981) conception of polyphony. Moreover, ‘carnavalesque’ behaviours (Bakhtin, 1986), which relate to the transformation of communication hierarchies, provide a fruitful metaphor for exploring how stakeholders discursively challenge CSR activity and engage in processes of legitimation online. A number of scholars have built upon the Bakhtinian notion of ‘carnival’ to examine conflicting organisational dynamics (e.g. Rhodes, 2001; Boje & Rhodes, 2005) and further theorisation around carnival in legitimation contexts may shed light onto how new ICT dynamics disrupt traditional markers of

authority and enable discursive and dialogical processes of legitimation. Indeed, often characterised by ‘flaming’ (exchanging personal insults), ‘griefing’ (tormenting others) and ‘trolling’ (intentionally disrupting online communities under a pseudonym), the borderless nature of the Internet often permits ‘bad’ behaviour. Understanding how these discursive processes play out as part of polyphonic CSR communications, may offer crucial insights into constitutive CSR communication and concordant as well as discordant processes of legitimation in social media settings.

4.4.3 Perpetuality: Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces in Legitimation

The perpetuality of CSR theorisation is a topic that has received a huge amount of focus in CSR studies. Whilst not currently tied to Bakhtinian theorisation per se, it has been suggested that CSR is a ‘moving target’, requiring constant consideration of the dynamic, on-going and unpredictable nature of stakeholder expectations (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). The lack of theoretical precision surrounding CSR conceptualisation reflects the socially constructed nature of CSR (Gond & Matten, 2007; Ihlen et al., 2011; Sabadoz, 2011), and thus the ‘unfinalisable’ nature of CSR in contemporary scholarship. Open-ended and intersubjective interpretations of CSR are argued to be advantageous to the field as they allow stakeholders more ownership over CSR co-construction, thus stimulating positive social change (Christensen et al., 2013).

Extending the Bakhtinian (1986) notion of ‘unfinalisability’ and Nikulin’s (2006) view of ‘allosensus’ more markedly, it has been recognised in CSR

communication studies that a consensual bias clouds understanding of the productive role of antagonism and conflict in organisation-stakeholder interactions (Schultz et al., 2013; Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010). Contemporary approaches to CSR communication often assume that the output of dialogue should be consensus upon an uncontested notion of ‘legitimacy’ (as discussed in Chapter 2) as part of political-normative framings of the organisation-society interface (as discussed in Chapter 3). Yet, as the literature review has presented, achieving absolute congruence between CSR activities and social expectations in the pursuit of ‘legitimacy’ is a problematic assumption in today’s networked societies. Building upon the call for enhanced insight into the role of conflict and dissent in constitutive communication models (Schultz et al., 2013), and dissensual as well as consensual CSR in social media settings (Whelan et al., 2013), this thesis seeks to explore the fragmentary and conflictual nature of processes of legitimation as part of CSR communications. This thesis will now turn to empirically exploring performativity, polyphony and perpetuality in online organisation-stakeholder dialogues.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined conceptions of dialogue operating in communication studies (4.2) to orientate the interest of this thesis in Bakhtinian dialogism (Holquist, 1990) (4.3). As a precursor to empirical investigation of postmodern dialogue, the chapter has offered a detailed overview of Bakhtin’s (1986) descriptive approach to dialogue, organising Bakhtin’s work on dialogue into three core concepts of polyphony (4.3.1), performativity (4.3.2) and

perpetuality (4.3.3). The chapter has then identified interconnections between the interpretations of Bakhtinian dialogism (1986) and the CSR communications research, building understanding of how legitimation processes can be conceptualised, and developing the theoretical framework for this study (4.4). Table 5 summarises this framework against which our understandings of CSR and legitimacy can be both critiqued and extended, and provides a sound foundation upon which the research questions can now be articulated.

| Concept of Bakhtinian Dialogism | Application to CSR | Supporting CSR Studies |
|--|--|---|
| Performativity | ▪ Examine CSR communications at the level of discourse | Brennan et al. (2013); Caruana & Crane (2008); Livesey (2002); Schoeneborn & Trittin (2013) |
| Polyphony | ▪ Examine the role of internal and external actors in legitimation processes | Schultz & Wehmeier (2010); Johansen & Nielsen (2011); Schoeneborn & Trittin (2013); Schultz et al. (2013) |
| Perpetuality | ▪ Centripetal and centrifugal forces that influence legitimation as on-going process | Christensen et al., 2013; Ihlen et al. (2011); Korschun & Du (2012) Morsing & Schultz (2006); Schultz et al. (2013); Whelan et al. (2013) |

Table 5: Theoretical Framework

4.6 Research Questions

The overarching research question guiding this study is: *how is legitimation constituted through discursive and dialogical processes in online CSR communication?* In order to address this question, Chapters 2, 3 and 4 have provided a thorough review of extant literatures relating to CSR, legitimacy, CSR communication, social media, dialogue and Bakhtinian dialogism. Table 6 details the core contention of each literature chapter and offers key

definitions, as well as summaries of the core concepts, arguments and gaps discussed throughout the literature review. Therein, the table captures the overarching research question and the focus of this study upon *processes of legitimation* in online settings, a focus that has received scant empirical interest in CSR and management research to date. It also reinforces the integrative links between the three literature chapters and the theoretical framework upon which the thesis builds. Finally, the table articulates the two research questions, upon which the empirical context of the study can now be explored:

- 1. How do organisations and stakeholders engage in discursive processes of legitimation through online CSR dialogue?*

- 2. How do stakeholders/interlocutors engage in discursive processes of legitimation in online CSR dialogue?*

Having summarised the core contentions of the three literature review chapters, this thesis now moves on to exploring the methodological focus of this study.

| | Chapter 2: CSR & Legitimacy | Chapter 3: Constitutive CSR Communication | Chapter 4: Bakhtinian Dialogism |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Chapter Contention | Develops constructionist view of the organisation-society interface premised upon discursive understanding of legitimization processes | Distinguishes between functionalist/constitutive conceptions of CSR communication conceptually and empirically (in SNSs) | Bakhtinian dialogism provides descriptive insight into processes of constitutive communication in social media settings |
| Core Definitions | CSR: <i>Business responsibility for the wider societal good as manifested by both organisations and society (Matten & Moon, 2008)</i> | CSR Communication: <i>A process of anticipating stakeholders' expectations to provide true and transparent information on economic, social and environmental concerns (Podnar, 2008)</i> | Dialogue: <i>Co-creation of shared understanding between organisations and stakeholders (Johnson-Cramer et al., 2003)</i> |
| | Legitimacy: <i>A generalised perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions (Suchman, 1995)</i> | Social Media: <i>Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010)</i> | Postmodern Dialogue: <i>Disrupt established conceptions of meaning; meanings is emergent, contingent and in flux (Deetz & Simpson, 2004)</i> |
| Core Constructs | Legitimation: <i>The social processes through which legitimacy is established (Dowling et al., 1983)</i> | Constitutive CSR Communications: <i>Communication is constructive, emergent, and processual (Schultz et al., 2013)</i> | Bakhtinian Dialogism: <i>Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue (Bakhtin, 1986)</i> |
| Research Gaps | How is legitimacy and illegitimacy (re)constructed through (inter)discursive processes, practices and strategies? (Vaara & Tienari, 2008) | How does the indeterminate, disintegrative and conflictual character of CSR influence negotiation of legitimacy in social media settings? (Schultz et al., 2013) | How can concepts of performativity, polyphony and perpetuality bring insights into processes of legitimization (Chapter 2) through online CSR communication (Chapter 3)? |
| Research Questions | How is legitimization constituted through discursive and dialogical processes in online CSR communication? | | |
| | 1. How do organisations and stakeholders engage in discursive processes of legitimization through online CSR dialogue? | 2. How do stakeholders/interlocutors engage in discursive processes of legitimization through online CSR dialogue? | |

Table 6: Literature Review Summary

Chapter 5: Methodology

Discursive Constructionism in Dialogue

5.1 Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualise and rationalise the qualitative research design and philosophy guiding this thesis. In doing so, the chapter foregrounds a focus upon discursive constructionism in dialogue through data from social networking sites (SNSs). The chapter is structured as follows. Section 5.2 provides a discussion of the research paradigm within which this project is situated and Section 5.3 outlines the method of discourse analysis utilised. Section 5.4 then presents the research design, which is built upon three processes of research contextualisation (5.4.1), data gathering (5.4.2) and data analysis (5.4.3). Ethical research considerations and limitations are then explored in Section 5.5, prior to a chapter summary (5.6).

5.2 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm (Kuhn, 1962) relates to, “sets of practices that define a scientific discipline or approach to conducting research”, (Lapan et al., 2012:7). It is argued that three core elements influence the research paradigm: *ontology* (5.2.1) (the nature of reality); *reflexivity* (5.2.2) (the relationship between the enquirer and the known); and *epistemology* (5.2.3) (how we know the world and gain knowledge of it) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In order to

justify the utilisation of a discursive lens in this research, each of these elements is discussed in turn.

5.2.1 Ontology

It is argued that, “the researcher’s view of reality is the corner stone to all other assumptions”, (Holden & Lynch, 2004:402). Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) seminal schematic has been widely utilised by social science researchers to position assumptions regarding the nature of science and the nature of society (Figure 7). Looking first at the nature of science, researchers must make a choice between subjectivism and objectivism, illustrating that ontology is not a fixed entity, but a fluid notion (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). Cunliffe (2011) builds upon this distinction to propose a continuum of three knowledge problematics: *objectivism*, which assumes that a concrete reality exists independently from our interactions; *subjectivism*, which posits that meaning and knowledge are “relative to the time, place, and manner in which they are constructed”, (Cunliffe, 2011:656); and *intersubjectivism*, which extends the contextuality of the subjective model to focus upon an interactional, multiple and shifting construction of meaning. As the unit of analysis in this study is discourse operating within the unit of observation (dialogue), the study presides upon fluid processes *in interaction*, it can be argued that the research paradigm is focused upon intersubjectivism, relating to shared subjective states (Scheff et al., 2006).

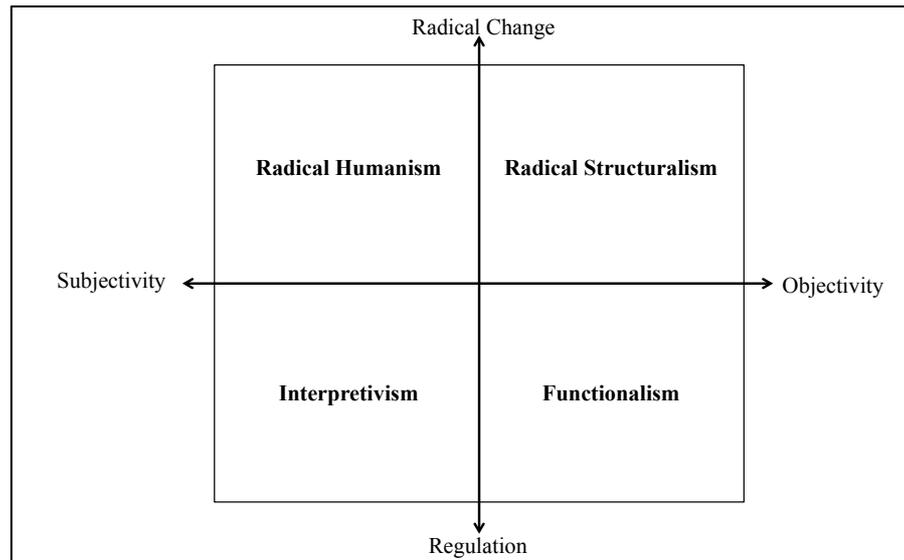


Figure 7: Framework of Sociological Paradigms (Burrell & Morgan, 1979)

Addressing the nature of society, on the other hand, two opposing societal views can be identified on a continuum from regulatory to radical change (Holden & Lynch, 2004). The regulatory view assumes that society evolves rationally through a ‘modernist’ perspective, whereas the radical change view offers a postmodernist model of society, whereby reality is in a constant state of revision (Bryman, 2004). A key ontological question in this thesis is thus, does language mirror the world around us or do we construct social reality through talk and text? (Gruber, 1993). In adopting a postmodern perspective, reality is assumed to be personal and nuanced with individuals developing a contextualised and reflexive relationship with the world around them; they both constitute and are constituted by their surroundings (Cunliffe, 2011). Research within this vein supports the view that reality is socially constructed and a social constructionist ontology aims to “reveal the structure of meanings as constructed by individuals engaged in a social process”, (Hackley, 1998:130). It is thus sympathetic to the view that the world, and everyday

realities, are not ‘there’, waiting to be discovered in an objective sense, but are brought into being through social action (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011). Given the focus of this research on the *processes* of construction, Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) seminal work on the social construction of reality underpins the research paradigm. Indeed in operating within a social constructionist paradigm, this research focuses on how “realities, identities and knowledge are created and maintained in interactions, and are culturally, historically and linguistically influenced” (Jupp, 2006:201).

5.2.2 Reflexivity

Qualitative research emphasises the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape enquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It is argued that in comparison to quantitative researchers who focus on method and technique, rather than underlying philosophy, qualitative researchers are more sensitive to their cultural, political and social contexts, and their epistemological and ontological commitments (Bryman, 2004; Johnson et al., 2006). Thus, as a social constructionist, the researcher understands that qualitative research is a process of co-construction between the researcher and the researched, and thus notes the importance of reflexivity (Bryman, 2004). Although a plurality of reflexivities exists (Lynch, 2000), reflexivity can be broadly defined as the process whereby “researchers engage in explicit, self-aware analysis of their own role in research” (Finlay, 2002:531). The researcher is sensitive to the double hermeneutic existing in social science research, which emphasises a

lack of universal truth and, instead, the co-constructed nature of meaning-making processes (Giddens, 1987). An *introspective* approach to reflexivity is thus adopted in this study (Finlay, 2002) to reflect upon how identity, experience and personal meanings shape the research process. This approach ensures that the assumptions underlying the research are transparent, in keeping with recommendations made by Bluhm et al. (2011), and also emphasises the aim of this research project.

In line with the Habermasian (1971) assertion that there are three types of knowledge, technical (scientific knowledge relating to an objective reality), practical (socio-cultural knowledge focussed upon hermeneutics) and emancipatory (knowledge of power relationships addressing marginalised groups), this thesis endeavours to reveal how knowledge of social reality is constructed amongst and between actors in SNSs. While not solely focussed upon power relationships, this thesis is concerned with exploring practical knowledge creation between organisations *and* stakeholders. Indeed, within dominant (functionalist) and managerialist conceptions of CSR, external voices are often marginalised (Gond & Matten, 2007). Following on from Chapter 4 and the presentation of a postmodern view of Bakhtinian dialogism (1986), this thesis thus challenges assumptions around the passive role of external voices in CSR communication to highlight the more dynamic and discordant nature of language in dialogue (Deetz, 1996; Schultz et al., 2013). Therein, the purpose of this research project is to examine practical, and to some extent emancipatory, interests in an attempt to illuminate how social media shape processes of organisation-stakeholder dialogue.

Within this vein, inferences made are, to some extent, attributable to the researcher's frame of reference and subjectivity regarding socio-economic status, geographical location, cultural background and work/educational experience. The positioning of the researcher in this study should thus be made explicit. I am a thirty-one year old British female who is currently a PhD candidate at The University of Nottingham (UK). I have five years of work experience through working in commercial contexts including sales, consumer/customer marketing and communications. Through these roles, I have gained first-hand experience of communicating CSR initiatives across multiple platforms to diverse audiences and this sphere of reference has informed the research design, most specifically 'contextualisation' (see Figure 10), alongside the empirical focus of this research.

Additionally, in viewing research as a social construction, I have also sought to discuss my interpretations with a range of people throughout the PhD process and gain constructive criticism on the avenues I explore. This constructionist approach aligns fully with the philosophical positioning of this research study and is enacted through: regular supervisory discussions; research review processes at the International Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility (ICCSR) at Nottingham University Business School; a study visit to Schulich School of Business, York University, Canada in 2013 hosted by Professor Andy Crane; and attending and presenting at international research workshops and conferences. These experiences have shaped both the thesis, and my ongoing personal and professional development.

5.2.3 Epistemology

Schensul (2012) argues that the main qualitative paradigmatic and epistemological choices are *positivist* (theory-driven research), *interpretivist* (participant-driven research) and *critical* (systemic/structural inequality research). Taking each in turn, traditional management scholarship has been dominated by *positivist* epistemological positions, deductive theory application techniques, and quantitative research methods (Johnson et al., 2006; Silverman, 2010). This body of research has sought to explain and predict causal-relationships, similar to the functionalist assumptions that have dominated CSR literature (Gond & Matten, 2007). Furthermore, quantitative research focuses upon linearity, precise quantitative measurement and statistical analysis and is guided by the notion that reality is external to the self (Lapan et al., 2012; Schensul, 2012). However, research processes may not necessarily follow an ideal, logical, step-by-step approach and given the constructionist ontology, the researcher errs towards a more fluid and dynamic notion of reality. Hence, whilst the role of positivist data in CSR literature is understood and valued by the author, quantitative research approaches have been found to be limited when researching multi-layered, complex and unpredictable human behaviour (Polkinghorne, 2005). Indeed the research questions, presented in Chapter 4, are focussed upon examining processes, rather than discovering motives or predicting behaviour, reinforcing the inadequacy of a positivistic approach.

Turning to *interpretivism*, it is argued that interpretivist studies favour expression over precision (Bate, 1997); depth of inferences over breadth, and

allow researchers to focus upon the intricacies of human interaction. Qualitative research has indicated that interpretive researchers assume that people create their own meanings in interaction with the world around them (Lapan et al., 2012) and that interpretive research provides deep, rich, emic insights into the ‘symbolic world’ (van Maanen, 1979). Given the interest in exploring ‘how’ legitimacy is constructed in SNSs, an interpretivist epistemological paradigm guides the methodology to explore how participation and social involvement facilitate the construction and development of CSR knowledge (see Morsing & Schultz, 2006; Rokka & Moisander, 2009). This research thus aligns with Denzin and Lincoln’s (2011) account of interpretivist research as focusing less upon ‘objectivity’ and more upon providing powerful, intuitive, emotional and empathic experiences.

In support of the interpretivist position, a somewhat ‘abductive’ approach to data analysis and interpretation is adopted in this study. This focuses upon both theory application (deduction), through foregrounding observations in relevant literature (rather than hypothesis testing), and theory building (induction) that acknowledges inferences drawn from the data (Morgan, 2007). Through converting observations into theories and assessing the theories through action (ibid, 2007), the author aims to provide connections between data and theory and a ‘constant comparison’ approach sees the author move iteratively between data and theory (Bluhm et al., 2011). In doing so, this research attempts to move away from deductive and positivist management enquiry to employ a flexible research design which allows themes to emerge from the data (Saunders et al., 2011; Watson, 1994). This approach complements the fluid

and ubiquitous nature of SNSs developments, allowing patterns to be explored as they arise. Whilst sceptics may argue that qualitative research and inductive approaches to theory building lack the validity, reliability, objectivity and generalisability of more traditional, scientific approaches to research (Saunders et al., 2011), these criteria are less applicable to interpretivist, qualitative research. Instead, data gathering techniques are ensured to be trustworthy, credible, plausible, confirmable and ethical through following an established research method (discussed in Section 5.3), ensuring reflexivity, and aligning with recommendations on how to conduct qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Saunders et al., 2011).

Finally, a *critical* paradigmatic choice relates to an interest in exploring inequality and oppression in society (Lapan et al., 2012). Whilst this study has touched on themes of stakeholder empowerment and activism (see Chapters 2, 3 and 4), the extent to which the study adopts an explicitly critical approach to DA is grounded in, and guided by, the data (Fairclough, 1995). Indeed, subjects of power, rhetoric, struggle, resistance and persuasion may inductively evolve during data analysis, however the researcher has not chosen to cement a critical lens to the methodology at the outset of the study. Doing so would focus analysis on the identification of power relations, rather than the broad range of constructionist processes. Instead the researcher allows for a more open interpretation of the data. Attention now turns to examining the methodological focus upon discourse analysis (DA).

5.3 Methods: Discourse Analysis

It is argued that, “methodological choice should be consequential to the researcher’s philosophical stance and the social science phenomenon to be investigated”, (Holden & Lynch, 2004:397). *Methods* are then the tools and techniques used to obtain and analyse data, and *methodology* is the theory of how research should be undertaken (Saunders et al., 2011). Building upon this distinction, the method adopted in this research study is discourse analysis (DA). This section first defines DA (5.3.1) and then discusses ‘discursive constructionism’ (DC), the particular variety of DA adopted (5.3.2). The chapter then ties the method of DC into the core interest in the discursive features of dialogue (5.3.3).

5.3.1 Defining Discourse

DA presents a powerful way of studying social processes “live in human affairs”, (Potter, 2003:791). The discursive tradition is well established in CSR research with authors exploring how CSR meaning is constructed through Foucauldian/critical discourse analysis (e.g. Caruana & Crane, 2008), narrative analysis (e.g. Humphreys & Brown, 2008) and content analysis (e.g. Patriotta et al., 2011). For instance in her discursive analysis of corporate texts, Livesey (2002:133) purports that DA: “shows how language reflects and reproduces the taken-for-granted realities that govern practice in the wider social arena”. A plethora of definitions exists for DA (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000) and this thesis aligns with Potter and Wetherell’s (1987) suggestion that

DA is not interested in language *per se* (as would be linguistics) but rather in understanding social life and social interaction through *cultural texts* (see Section 5.3.2). Discourse relates to all forms of spoken interaction (formal and informal) as well as written texts (Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984) and DA is defined as, “an approach with a range of meta-theoretical, theoretical and methodological elements” (Potter, 2003:787). This broad remit has led to DA being critiqued for being time-consuming, ungeneralisable, subjective and idealist (Burman & Parker, 1993) particularly as the methodology provides a broad theoretical framework, rather than an experimental method, to guide data gathering and analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Instead, DA analyses the active and purposive use of language in constituting knowledge of social reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1979) looking beyond the simple exchange of information, to consider the exchange of “arguments for the justification of our claims to truth”, (Nikulin, 2006:215). DA thus provides a compelling lens through which to address the research questions (Chapter 4).

In order to orientate a clear conceptualisation for DA, it is important to highlight that a range of approaches exist under the ‘DA’ umbrella and a number of scholars have sought to organise the differing interpretations. Phillips & Hardy (2002), for instance, present a useful heuristic to distinguish between four traditions of DA, as illustrated in Figure 8. This diagram mirrors the conceptual matrix used to position traditions of CSR research (see Figure 3) building upon Burrell & Morgan’s (1979) four research paradigms (Figure 7). It also highlights how DA traditions can be mapped against the degree to which they emphasise individual text (micro) or surrounding contexts (macro);

and the degree to which they focus on power and ideology or processes of social construction. The diagram highlights how discourse analysis endeavours to uncover the ways in which social reality is *produced*, rather than objectively interpreted (Phillips & Hardy 2002).

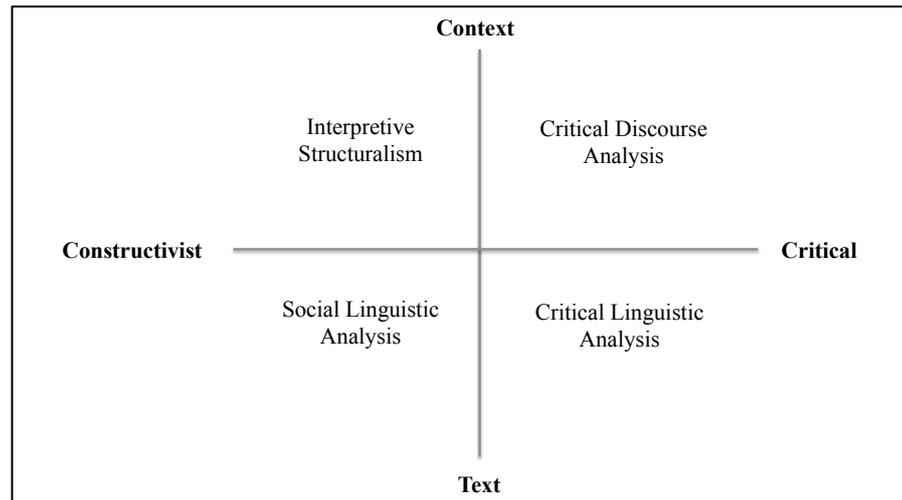


Figure 8: Approaches to Discourse Analysis (Phillips & Hardy, 2002)

Taking each of the quadrants in turn, Phillips and Hardy (2002) argue that *critical linguistic analysis* and *critical discourse analysis* are often used interchangeably, given their focus on, “the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by talk and text in the social and political context” (van Dijk, 2003:352). As Wodak (2009) summarises, critical discourse analysis has evolved from critical linguistic analysis, focusing analysis beyond sentence grammar and on larger units (e.g. conversations and speech acts) rather than isolated words and sentences. In this sense, DA is largely concerned with power dynamics. As this chapter purports, power dynamics may be emergent from this study, but are certainly not the core lens through which the data is analysed. As such, the critical domains of

Phillips and Hardy's (2002) heuristic are less applicable in the context of this research project.

Social linguistic analysis addresses the influence of society on language, considering how linguistic behaviour is shaped by social and cultural factors (see Stubbs, 1983). Here DA primarily focuses upon the ways in which meaning is (re)produced through language as part of individual texts. Finally, *interpretive structuralism* has a slightly broader focus, analysing social contexts and the discourse that supports them within a constructionist vein (Phillips, 2002; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). In this tradition, DA seeks to explore, "the way in which discourses ensure that certain phenomena are created, reified, and taken for granted and come to constitute that 'reality'" (Phillips & Hardy, 2002:20). While both situated within constructionism, and thus aligned with the philosophical positioning of the study, interpretive structuralism offers a more nuanced and ostensibly macro understanding of how discursive contexts come into being, rather than addressing more individualised texts. Therein, it is the final quadrant of interpretive structuralism that aligns with the broad principles of this research study and interest in legitimation processes most notably. This argument is further elaborated on in Section 5.3.3.

Wetherell et al. (2001) provide an alternative approach to organising conceptualisations of DA research, detailing the core disciplines, domains, data forms and discursive traditions of DA (see Table 7). Given interest in the *discursive and dialogical* construction of reality in this study, this research project focuses upon the domain of social interaction, drawing upon

sociological disciplines through analysis of naturally occurring conversation (albeit within an online context). Most specifically, this study utilises a form of DA known as ‘discursive constructionism’, which builds upon discursive psychology and Bakhtinian (1986) research. Utilised in the work of Potter (2003) and Potter and Wetherell (1987), discursive psychology builds upon social constructionism and the performative nature of language highlighted in Chapter 4, to examine, “how reality is constructed and the institutions, modes of representation and cultural/material discursive regimes which emerge as a result” (Wetherell, 2001:393). Bakhtinian research (1986) conceptualises speech communication as a dialogic exchange of utterances and is also premised upon an interest in how language originates in social interactions (Maybin, 2001). The interest is thus in construction of meaning in discourse rather than what discourse reveals about individuals.

| Disciplines | Domains |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Psychology ▪ Sociology/Cultural studies ▪ Social policy ▪ Anthropology ▪ Education ▪ Linguistics ▪ Politics and international relations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social interaction ▪ Mind, selves and sense making ▪ Culture and social relations |
| Forms of Data | Discourse traditions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews ▪ Focus groups ▪ Documents and records ▪ Media representations ▪ Naturally occurring conversation ▪ Political speeches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conversation analysis ▪ Foucauldian research ▪ Critical discourse analysis and critical linguistics ▪ Discursive psychology ▪ Bakhtinian research ▪ Interactional sociolinguistics and the ethnography of speaking |

Table 7: Diversity in Discourse Analysis (Wetherell et al., 2001)

5.3.2 *Discursive Constructionism*

Discursive constructionism (herein DC) has been traced from the discourse analytic tradition in sociology (e.g. Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984) and broader developments within social psychology (e.g. Potter & Wetherell, 1987), to contemporary theorisation (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011). DC conceptualises language as being both a *constructed* and *constructive* phenomenon (Potter & Wetherell, 2001), suggesting that discourse is constructed through the building of descriptions through words, grammatical structures, categories, metaphors, idioms, rhetorical commonplaces and interpretative repertoires (Potter & Hepburn, 2008). Therein, DC addresses how versions of the world are constructed and organised, rather than describing objective states (ibid, 2008). This methodology supports the constitutive view of communication (Chapter 3) and the performative role of language (Chapter 4).

Aside from its focus on language performativity, DC also appreciates the interactive context of meaning construction, supporting the author's interest in dialogue. It is thus important to emphasise how DC differs from two broadly related areas of DA: conversation analysis and Foucauldian/critical discourse analysis. Looking first at conversation analysis, research within this methodology builds upon social phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology to address the interactive procedures through which social order is accomplished. Studies have, however, focussed largely upon the mechanics of talk and the level of interaction (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011), building discourse as an objective and factual construct to analyse turn-taking,

sequence organisation, structure of conversations, etc. (see Sacks et al., 1974). In contrast, DC provides more of an action orientation on language, considering how versions of reality are assembled in talk and texts (Potter & Hepburn, 2008). This research project then aligns with Potter's (2005:105) assertion that DC is broader than the conversational analytic concern of talk-in-interaction, but also more focussed on the "specifics of people's practices than the Foucauldian notion of a discourse as a set of statements that formulate objects and subjects" (Potter, 2005:105).

Turning to Foucauldian research and critical discourse analysis, DC is anti-foundationalist and post-structuralist, and whilst drawing upon some Foucauldian principles, DC does not adopt the extended notion of discourse adopted in Foucault's work (e.g. discourse as an institution) (Potter & Hepburn, 2008). Foucault (1972) suggests that "nothing has any meaning outside of discourse" (see Hall, 2001:73) and Foucauldian theory posits that subjects are socially constructed within discourses as, "ways in which bodies of knowledge are produced, circulated and come to define our ways of knowing by objectifying power relations" (Shankar et al., 2006:1016). Thus, in a Foucauldian tradition, discourse constructs social reality. In contrast, DC's view is a little more restricted, positing that discourse constructs *knowledge* of social reality (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011) and it is in this vein that this research is situated. This distinction is often further clarified by reference to either a 'Big D' view of discourse (constructing social reality), or a softer, 'small d' approach to discourse (constructing knowledge of social reality).

5.3.3 Dialogue as Discourse

In conceptualising an SNS as an interactive organisational ‘text’, constructed by both internal and external parties, this thesis is concerned with the role of DC in processes of legitimation. Therein, the *discursive* features of dialogue are interrogated, whereby discourses, or ‘interpretative repertoires’ reflect how reality is discursively produced through multiple, shifting and shared meanings (Burman & Parker, 1993). Rather than working to uncover objective and fixed views of social reality, or ‘reading off’ stakeholder behaviour, this thesis seeks to give texture and dimensionality to dialogue through illuminating how it works in a fluid and discursive online context. This emphasises the focus of the research questions upon both the discursive and dialogical features of organisation-stakeholder communicative interaction. It also foregrounds the interest in the *production* of organisational texts, rather than their interpretation. Furthermore, Bakhtin’s (1986) distinctive focus upon the ‘utterance’ as the ‘unit of speech communication’, as opposed to the sentence as the ‘unit of language’, aids in securing the objects of analysis in the data. Indeed, whilst discourse is the unit of analysis in this study, it is the ‘utterance’, or the dialogic chain, that is the object of study, defined by a two-way movement of living utterances through which meaning emerges. This thesis thus adopts the view of dialogue as discourse (Nikulin, 2006) in its exploration of discursive legitimation processes.

Bakhtin’s (1986) work permits a discursive view of dialogue and reveals the situated nature of discourse within social and historical contexts. When we

explore legitimation at the level of discourse in a Bakhtinian research frame, it thus attunes us to the ‘intertextual’ (Kristeva, 1980) properties of social texts (such as SNSs), on the principle that local texts contain discursive fragments (metaphors, narratives and myths) of wider conventional social discourses. Drawing upon Bakhtin’s (1986) assertion that texts can transform social and historical genres, Kristeva’s (1980) seminal work on language introduced ‘intertextuality’ to illuminate how texts are constructed through fragments of interrelated discourses. Fairclough (1995) develops this perspective and the inherent connection between language (text) and social contexts (see Figure 9). Indeed, Fairclough, (1995:188-9) suggests that intertextual analysis illuminates the, “dependence of texts upon society and history in the form of the resources made available within the orders of discourse (genres, discourses, etc.)”. Therein, through discursive processes, organisational and stakeholder actors construct SNSs as organisational ‘texts’, which are distinct from other communication mediums e.g. adverts, CSR reports, etc.

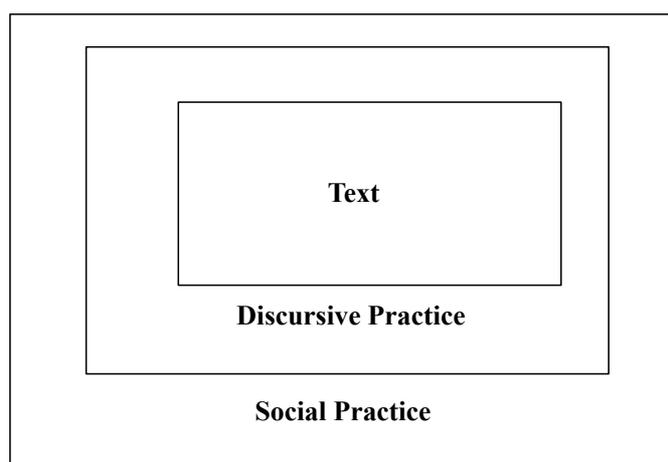


Figure 9: Text and Context (Fairclough, 1995)

5.4 Research Design

To contextualise the research setting and provide a foundation upon which to gather and analyse data, a seven-step model of research design was developed for this study (see Figure 10). This research design involved three key stages: research contextualisation (steps one to three) (5.4.1), data gathering (steps four to five) (5.4.2) and data analysis (steps six to seven) (5.4.3). Each of these three stages is now discussed in turn.

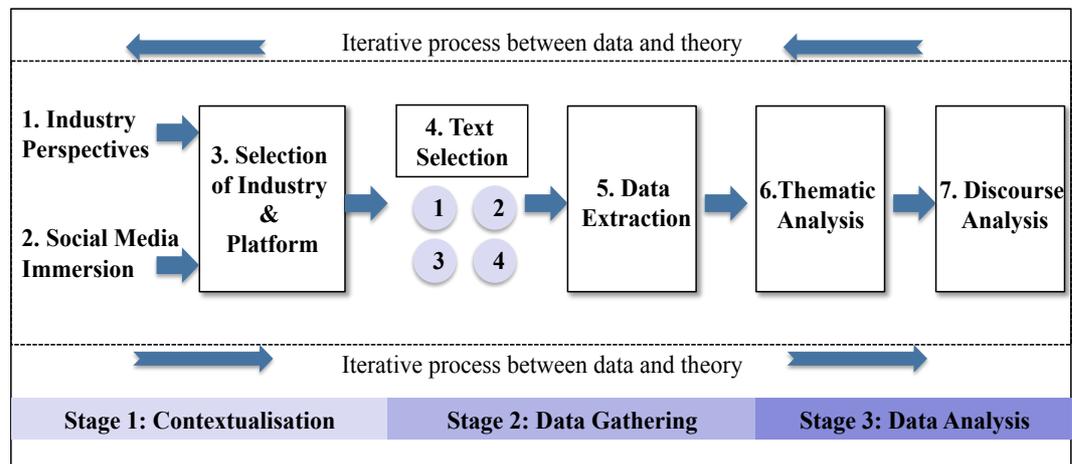


Figure 10: Seven-Step Model of Research Design

5.4.1 Research Contextualisation

Understanding the social and cultural milieu in which research is situated is essential to make clear inferences and ensure that the research is contextualised. In order to empirically ground this research study, the author engaged in two processes of data contextualisation: the collection of industry perspectives on CSR communication in SNSs (step one) (5.4.1.1); and an eighteen-month period of immersion in relevant SNSs (step two) (5.4.1.2).

This subsequently led onto the selection of an industry and a SNS platform upon which this research focuses (step three) (5.4.1.3). Each of these three stages is now discussed in turn.

5.4.1.1 Step One: Industry Perspectives

Phillips and Hardy (2002) argue that interviews can provide essential insights into the social contexts surrounding the primary texts of discursive investigation. To shape empirical understanding of CSR communication in online contexts, the author engaged in around 40 informal interviews with contacts across industry, policy and NGO organisations. These interviews, conducted in the first and second year of the PhD programme, were conducted over email. These exploratory interviews aid in informing the research context and identifying practical knowledge-gaps operating within industry, yet they do not form a substantive part of this thesis given the core focus upon meaning-making within the SNSs. They do, however, support ‘text’ selection, as well as actively shape the practical utility of the PhD research (see the practical implications discussed in Chapter 9).

5.4.1.2 Step Two: Social Media Immersion

The industry interviews and the author’s own knowledge and experience of CSR communication contexts (as aforementioned) informed the decision to focus upon three core SNS platforms: Facebook, Twitter and corporate blogs. Whilst a plethora of SNS platforms exist, Twitter and Facebook were focussed

on due to their scale and textual focus. In relation to scale, Facebook, which was launched in 2004, is the world's leading SNS and now has over one billion active monthly users as of March 2014 (Facebook, 2014). Twitter, the 'real-time' information network, has around 255 million active monthly users (Twitter, 2014). These statistics indicate the ubiquity of these SNSs in attracting diverse participants and creating vast amounts of rich, naturally occurring data (Kozinets, 2002). In relation to textual focus, whilst images are shared in 'posts' and 'tweets', both Twitter and Facebook focus predominately upon text-based communication. This differs from a number of SNSs that focus predominantly on imagery rather than text (e.g. Pinterest). In addition to these two sources, corporate blogs or discussion forums were also of interest given that many organisations have developed their own, unique platforms for engagement outside of traditional SNSs (e.g. 'My Starbuck's Idea'). Whilst these platforms are slightly lower scale than Facebook and Twitter in relation to active users, the blogs have a high amount of textual focus and are usually highly idiosyncratic and tailored to particular organisational contexts. Building upon Step 1, a sample of 60 Facebook pages, 58 Twitter handles and 49 corporate blogs were ascertained per platform through convenience and snowballing sampling techniques (see Babbie, 2013) (see Appendix 1).

In line with the principles of netnography, which applies principles of ethnography to the study of online cultures and communities (Kozinets, 2010), scholars have advocated that researchers should spend time observing online fora and the texture of 'multisemiotics' (e.g. images, 'likes', text) in online interaction before case selection is made. In doing so, researchers should

observe relevance (focus around a key theme), activity (recent and regular communication), interactivity (flow of communications between participants), heterogeneity (large numbers of discrete message posters) and richness (descriptively rich data) (Kozinets, 2002; 2010). The researcher then adopted a non-participatory online observation approach (see Cova & Pace, 2006) to observe organisation-stakeholder CSR communications taking place in each of the organisations across the three SNSs over a period of three-months (December 2012 to February 2013). This naturalistic approach allowed observation of unelicited and ‘naturally-occurring’ data that appear in day-to-day interactions between organisations and stakeholders (Bruce, 1999). On average, the researcher spent between half an hour and one hour on each individual page to observe current and historical activity, noting down prominent observations and tabularising key metrics (see Appendix 1).

Given the focus upon discursive and dialogical interaction as part of legitimisation processes, the organisations were then categorised in relation to CSR *intensity* and CSR *interactivity* on each of their SNSs, building upon a distinction made by Etter et al. (2011b) in their content analysis of corporate Twitter feeds. Whilst the authors do not clearly define the constructs, they do determine CSR *intensity* through quantitative evaluation of the proportion of CSR posts to non-CSR posts and *interactivity* through responsiveness, looking at the proportion of replies (e.g. posts that contain an @ sign). Given the qualitative and interpretivist nature of this thesis, the author inductively developed definitions of these two values, relating CSR *intensity* to the extent to which CSR communication (a firm’s commitment to environmental and

societal obligations) was prioritised over corporate ability messaging (a firm’s capability to produce quality products and services) by both organisations and stakeholders (Brown & Dacin, 1997). Each organisation was graded in relation to three criteria: *low* (very little mention of CSR), *medium* (regular mention of CSR) and *high* (CSR was a main focus). *CSR interactivity*, on the other hand, was determined by the extent to which CSR dialogues existed between the organisations and stakeholders in relation to turn taking (evidence of co-operation and responses); inter-party moves (e.g., denial, apology, excuse); and intertextuality (intensity and quality of interaction (Brennan et al., 2013). Organisations were again graded in relation to *low* (monological communications), *medium* (occasional dialogue) and *high* (regular dialogue). This process, summarised in Table 8, helped to identify organisations that displayed considerable amounts of CSR intensity and interactivity (see Appendix 1).

| CSR Intensity | CSR Interactivity |
|--|---|
| Low | |
| Communications Focus on Corporate Ability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Company's expertise in producing and delivering its outputs | Monologue (Inform Stakeholders): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inter-party moves (e.g., denial, apology, excuse) |
| Medium | |
| Communications Focus on Corporate Ability & CSR: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Company's expertise in producing and delivering its outputs ▪ Company's activities with respect to societal obligations | Monologue (Respond to Stakeholders): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inter-party moves (e.g., denial, apology, excuse) ▪ Turn-taking (evidence of co-operation and responses) |
| High | |
| Communications Focus on CSR: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Company's activities with respect to societal obligations ▪ Company's expertise in producing and delivering its outputs | Dialogue (Involve Stakeholders): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inter-party moves (e.g., denial, apology, excuse) ▪ Turn-taking (evidence of co-operation and responses) ▪ Intertextuality (the intensity and quality of interaction) |

Table 8: CSR Intensity and CSR Interaction in Social Media Sites

5.4.1.3 Step Three: Industry and Platform Selection

The tabularised observations (provided in Appendix 1) provided a rich database of organisational information across the three platforms and a number of assertions were made. Firstly, in order to look at the discursive construction of legitimacy, it was imperative to capture fluid dialogical interactions that were linguistically rich and contextually nuanced. Whilst the dialogic potential of Twitter has been highlighted (Etter et al., 2011b), the 140-character limit in Twitter “renders questionable whether the medium is suited to establish deliberative dialogues” (Inauen et al., 2011:2) and the ‘one-way’ focus of Twitter ‘conversations’ has been noted (Davenport et al., 2014). Additionally whilst blogs presented descriptively detailed accounts, interaction occurred less frequently. Given the scale and frequency of interactions, coupled with the lack of restriction on posting word limits, Facebook was chosen as the platform of focus. Through encouraging reciprocal friend ‘requests’, providing functionality that allows users to ‘tag’ one another, allowing users to post comments and ‘like’ one another, Facebook celebrates interactivity (Davenport et al., 2014). Additionally, through the high numbers of active users, Facebook also emphasises polyphony.

Secondly, in order to limit the scope of the study and provide a bounded comparison across similar contexts, food retail was selected as the sector of focus. Food retailers sit at the forefront of CSR debates given their scale (the UK food grocery industry was valued at £163.2 billion in 2012 [IGD, 2013]); complex supply chains and diverse CSR challenges; and their somewhat

chequered history in engaging consumers in social and environmental issues, such as Fairtrade, food labelling, local sourcing, etc. CSR communications are thus fluid, highly visible and broadly targeted to involve a range of CSR themes and discourses, and also comprise elements of marketing communication given the consumer-facing focus of the industry. The food retail sector also reflected high levels of CSR intensity and interactivity (Etter et al., 2011b) and was thus marked out as a rich case for analysis.

5.4.2 Data Gathering

Having identified the focus upon Facebook and retail, data gathering involved the selection of organisational SNS ‘texts’ (step four) (5.4.2.1) and data extraction (step five) (5.4.2.2). Each of these steps is now discussed in turn.

5.4.2.1 Step Four: Text Selection

Having identified the focus upon food retail, ten retailers were selected for analysis as demonstrated in Table 9. These ten retailers were selected due to their prominence in the UK market with regards to market share (YouGov BrandIndex, 2012), as well as unique approaches to CSR (e.g. Whole Foods’ fully integrated and award-winning sustainability strategy). The Facebook pages of these retailers were thematically analysed and filtered by CSR intensity and interactivity (Etter et al., 2011b) alongside the main CSR themes and the number of ‘likes’ for each of the respective pages¹. The author

¹ Data correct as of 11/03/2013

discounted organisations that performed ‘low’ on CSR intensity, instead focussing upon high and medium cases of both CSR intensity and interaction in order to ensure rich dialogic exchanges across the organisations. From here, four SNS ‘texts’ were selected: The Co-operative, Marks and Spencer, Lidl and Sainsbury’s. The four organisations were chosen to provide comparison across SNS ‘texts’ by determining idiosyncratic features of dialogue as well as industry-level observations. Moreover, these organisations differ in the extent to which they address CSR communication (see 5.4.3.1), and thus offered rich insights into the discursive features of dialogue in varying organisational contexts. Consequently, the four organisational texts are discussed individually in findings for Chapters 6 and 8, with Chapter 7 focussed upon contestation processes and structured by the stakeholder approach.

| | Retailer | No. of Likes | Main CSR Themes | CSR Intensity | CSR Interaction |
|----|----------------------------|---------------------|---|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | The Co-operative | 26,594 | Health, Community investment, Fairtrade, Sourcing, Animal protection, Environment | High | High |
| 2 | Marks & Spencer | 1,176,197 | Health, Community investment, Consumer campaigns (Swopping), Environment | Medium | High |
| 3 | Walmart | 26,265,184 | Health, Environment, Sourcing | Medium | High |
| 4 | Lidl | 322,122 | Health, Community, Fairtrade, Local Sourcing | Medium | Medium |
| 5 | Whole Foods | 1,158,674 | Health, Community Investment | Medium | Low |
| 6 | Waitrose | 104,044 | Health, Community, Fairtrade | Medium | Medium |
| 7 | Sainsbury’s | 614,412 | Health, Consumer campaigns (e.g. ‘Big Knit’) | Medium | Medium |
| 8 | Tesco | 1,102,363 | Health, Local Sourcing, Fairtrade | Low | Medium |
| 9 | Asda | 792,168 | Health, Community | Low | Medium |
| 10 | Booths | 1,629 | Local Sourcing, Sustainable Sourcing | Low | Medium |

Table 9: Food Retailers in Facebook (CSR Intensity and CSR Interactivity)

5.4.2.2 Step Five: Data Extraction

Utilising NVIVO software, and specifically the 'NCapture' functionality of NVIVO 10, the entire Facebook pages for The Co-operative, Marks and Spencer, Lidl and Sainsbury's were extracted into Excel sheets, comprising the full datasets for analysis. The NCapture software collates all comments posted by the organisations and their stakeholders into databases, compiling details including the names of users, the date and time of comment postings and the number of comment 'likes'. Given that the Facebook pages were on average, between two and four years old, the NCapture tool generated hundreds of thousands of posts and so it was important to draw some boundaries around the data given the qualitative nature of the research. A number of options were considered by the researcher including; temporal boundaries (analysing data over a specific timeframe, e.g. the most recent three months of activity), selecting a small number of contextually rich posts (e.g. those that garnered detailed discussions around CSR) or focussing upon a key sustainability theme (e.g. environment or Fairtrade). Given the interpretivist nature of the research, the author chose to continue online observation, in line with netnographical techniques (Kozinets, 2002, 2010), visiting the Facebook pages of the retailers on a daily basis over a one-year period. This allowed the researcher to remain close to the texture of the Facebook pages and ensure that data was not decontextualised. In parallel, the researcher read and discussed the extracted NVIVO data with her supervisors, building descriptive insights regarding the dynamics of the Facebook pages and fertile foundation for thematic analysis.

5.4.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis, conducted manually (outside of NVIVO) involved two steps: an initial thematic analysis to determine core CSR themes in the organisational Facebook pages (step 6) (5.4.3.1) and the central focus upon discourse analysis (step 7) (5.4.3.2). These two stages are now discussed in turn.

5.4.3.1 Step Six: Thematic Analysis

It is argued that thematic analysis can aid in allowing prevalent themes to inductively emerge from datasets as an initial stage of data analysis (Spiggle, 1994). Thematic analyses move “beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is, themes” (Guest et al., 2012:10). Building upon steps one to five, the author conducted a thematic analysis to provide a descriptive overview of the datasets. In doing so, key observations were noted in relation to the most active participants in the SNSs, the most popular topics and the tone of the interactions (see Kozinets, 2010 and the Appendices). Therein, key CSR issues, termed ‘macro-CSR themes’ were determined. The macro-CSR themes represented re-occurring subjects relating to either environmental or social issues and were both event-driven (e.g. in relation to discussion surrounding the closure of British newspaper ‘The News of the World’) and naturally occurring (e.g. themes spontaneously presented by stakeholders, e.g. calls for enhanced animal welfare). The themes are also highly heterogeneous across retailers. The findings of the exploratory thematic analysis are now

presented for The Co-operative (5.4.3.1.1), Lidl (5.4.3.1.2), Marks and Spencer (5.4.3.1.3) and Sainsbury's (5.4.3.1.4), providing background on each of the organisations, detail on each organisation's approach to CSR communication (particularly in SNSs) and the core macro-CSR themes. These descriptive overviews provide a contextual backdrop to the findings and analysis chapters.

5.4.3.1.1 The Co-operative

The Co-operative Group (herein the Co-op) is a UK-based consumer cooperative specialising in food retail, banking, insurance, consumer goods, pharmacy, travel services, funeral care and legal services. Its first store was opened in 1844 and today the Co-op is owned by 7.2 million members and operates 5,000 high street branches in convenience and medium-sized supermarkets. The Co-op's vision is, *"to build a better society by excelling in everything we do"*, and food retail is the largest division of the group with sales equating to £288 million in 2012 (The Co-operative, 2014). The co-operative organisational model guides a sustainability strategy, which relates to social responsibility, ecological sustainability and delivering value, and its leadership position in sustainability and proactive campaigning has been recognised in industry-wide CSR indices and awards (e.g. Business in the Community 'Big Tick' Award) and media coverage. The Co-op split its values into 'co-operative values', which relate to self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality and solidarity, as well as 'ethical values', pertaining to openness (*"nobody's perfect, and we won't hide it when we are not"*), honesty (*"we are honest about what we do and the way we do it"*), social responsibility (*"we*

encourage people to take responsibility for their own community, and work together to improve it") and caring for others (*"we regularly fund charities and local community groups from the profits of our business"*) (The Co-operative, 2014). However, in recent months, the media spotlight has been cast onto the Co-op as a number of high-profile events, including the near collapse of the Co-op's banking arm (The Independent, 2014), senior executive malpractice (The Guardian, 2014a), and the resignation of the organisation's Chief Executive in light of governance issues (The Guardian, 2014b), have compromised the ethical positioning of the organisation and created fertile ground for exploring on-going process of legitimisation.

The Co-op first began reporting on sustainability in 2005. Current CSR communications are born out of the Co-op's three-year ethical plan, which launched in 2011 with the 'Join the Revolution' campaign, designed to engage stakeholders in social, environmental and economic sustainability. As well as communicating its sustainability report online, CSR communication receives a prominent focus in a dedicated *Join the Revolution* blog, as well as in SNSs through the organisation's numerous Twitter feeds (e.g. *The Co-operative*, *Plan Bee* and *Co-operative Energy*), Facebook page, Pinterest page, Flickr page and YouTube channel. The Co-op also runs online member meetings to engage with members regularly. Additionally, CSR communication does not take place in one distinct platform, but instead forms part of mainstream communication channels. Through this myriad of communication platforms, the Co-op demonstrates its democratic and collaborative ethos, framing the

context for open discussions with stakeholders. This approach is epitomised in this statement from the organisation's website:

“As a co-operative we're owned by our members - people like you... Your members' meetings area is our chance to let you know how we have performed nationally and regionally, and provides you with an opportunity to find out more and get involved. After all, it's your business!” (The Co-operative Membership, 2014)

The Co-op's main Facebook page, launched on 6th March 2010, has 36,869 'likes' and is tasked with providing “the latest news from The Co-operative Group – Food, Insurance, Electrical, Pharmacy, Funeralcare, Legal Services and Travel” (see Appendix 2). The Co-operative also has dedicated Facebook pages for each of its core areas of operation, as well as a dedicated page for its employees. 22,554 posts were extracted from the main Co-op Facebook page, dating back from the launch of the page to date (12th August 2013). Aside from Co-op employees who both post on behalf of the organisation (usually providing their name) at least once a day, and comment on posts in their capacities as employees, stakeholders in the page actively present themselves as consumers, activists, shareholders and members, illuminating the polyphonic nature of stakeholder voices. Co-op's posts most often employ a jovial and light-hearted tone and posts can receive anything from a handful to hundreds of 'likes' and 'comments'. Whilst discussions of CSR issues are intertwined with commercial posts (e.g. product and service queries and complaints), a range of environmental and social macro-CSR themes emerged from the thematic analysis (see Table 10). All extracted data from the Co-op Facebook page was coded against these macro-CSR themes using NVIVO software and four themes were selected on the basis that they represented variation in CSR topics and rich cases for discourse analysis: animal welfare

(89 posts), the ‘No More Page 3’ (NMP3) campaign (414 posts), plastic bags (63 posts) and the ‘Plan Bee’ campaign (228 posts). Upon these 794 posts, discourse analysis ensued.

| Macro-CSR Themes | Selected Dialogues | Description of Dialogue Context |
|---|---|--|
| Social Issues: | | |
| Advertising in ‘The News of the World’; Animal welfare; Charity; Fairtrade and sustainable consumption; Funeral care; Gay rights; Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO); ‘ No More Page 3’ Campaign (NMP3); Poverty; Religion; Responsible Tourism; Trade with Israel; Workers rights e.g. employees, farmers. | Animal Welfare | Discussion of the inhumane treatment of animals in UK slaughterhouses. Dialogue is linked to legislation, industry practice, religious doctrines and vegetarianism. Stakeholders encourage The Co-operative to employ CCTV surveillance in their slaughterhouses and The Co-operative issue a statement to consent to the requests. |
| | ‘No More Page 3’ (NMP3) Campaign | Discussion of the objectification of women in ‘Lads mags’ and ‘The No More Page 3’ (NMP3) campaign (started by NGO activists), launched to boycott The Sun newspaper and its daily topless female photo. Dialogue is linked to pornography, gender equality, domestic abuse, religion, censorship, health issues, children, politics, gay rights and popular culture. Stakeholders encourage The Co-operative to support the campaign, but The Co-operative responds sporadically. |
| Ecological Sustainability: | | |
| Plastic bags; ‘Plan Bee’ Campaign; Energy use; Fracking; Waste | Plastic bags | Discussion of the environmental impact of plastic bag usage and incentivisation of bag re-usage. Dialogue linked to the environment, biodegradable products, waste, recycling, industry practice, behaviour change and cost. Stakeholders encourage The Co-operative to reduce its use of plastic bags and The Co-operative respond with measures that they have put in place to combat the issues. |
| | ‘Plan Bee’ Campaign | Discussion of the diminishing bee population in light of The Co-operative’s ‘Plan Bee’ campaign to address the decline in pollinators. Dialogue linked to the environment, climate change, legislation, industry practice, animal welfare, GMO, bee-keeping, science and gardening. Stakeholders support The Co-operative’s approach, although some challenge the company for not taking a more aggressive stance on lobbying. The Co-operative defends its position. |

Table 10: The Co-operative Macro CSR Themes

5.4.3.1.2 Lidl

As a privately-listed company, the grocery retailer Lidl launched in Germany in the 1930s and expanded across Europe in the 1990s. It was in 1994 that Lidl entered the UK market, and now operates 580 UK stores, with a further 35-50 planned to open in the coming year (The Telegraph, 2014). Focusing largely on a cost-value proposition, Lidl supports the mantra of, “*Where quality is cheaper*”, and for Lidl, CSR relates to four key areas including: charity, product range, employees and environmental protection. Very little detail is, however, provided on any of these areas given that Lidl does not currently report on its CSR agenda. Indeed while statements such as, “*in conducting our daily business, we assume economic, social and environmental responsibility*”, and “*we comply with applicable law and internal guidelines*”, form part of the company principles, Lidl’s asserts that the core ‘company principle’ is that, “*customer satisfaction is our primary goal*” (Lidl, 2014). Building upon this positioning, Lidl’s discount approach has seen the organisation gain traction with price-savvy consumers as a result of the current economic climate. As a more recent contender in the UK retail CSR space, and its ‘no frills’ positioning, Lidl provides a contrast to the more established CSR credentials of the aforementioned case and a useful context within which to explore legitimacy construction.

In stark contrast to the myriad of platforms engaged in at the Co-op, Lidl provides a much more modest approach to CSR communications. Lidl not only eschews more traditional modes of CSR communication (e.g. reporting), but

the organisation's SNSs are also very much emergent, with CSR issues evolving amongst a nexus of commercial discourse (rather than being discussed in a separate platform). CSR messages do not form part of Lidl's mainstream communications campaigns on television and there is no UK Twitter or blog presence to speak of. This results in the organisation's website offering the main details of the organisation's CSR strategy, and the Facebook page providing the core platform for stakeholder engagement. Lidl's UK Facebook page launched on 8th September 2011 and today has 624,572 'likes.' The page descriptor states, "*Welcome to the official Lidl UK Facebook page! We are available Monday - Friday 08:00 - 18:00, Saturday 09:00 - 19:00 and Sunday 10:00 - 16:00. Please note that we may not be able to answer all enquiries at the weekend*" (see Appendix 2). This statement develops the customer service focus of the page. Lidl employees, who post on behalf of the organisation at least once a day, rarely provide their names and refer to stakeholders in the Facebook page as 'Lidlers'. Indeed most posts begin with a "*Good morning Lidlers!*" or "*Happy Easter Lidlers*" message, conveying a familiar and jovial tone.

Given the high proportion of posts pertaining to product and service queries, the majority of the stakeholders in the page appear to be Lidl customers and Lidl provides product and service updates to cater for this audience, as well as 'alerts' and activities (e.g. 'spot the difference' games, competition activities and quizzes). Questions and queries around Lidl posts are often closed down, with stakeholders being driven to offline teams, such as the customer service team and posts receive a smaller number of comments and 'likes' than seen at the Co-op (around 20-30 per post). 45,749 posts were extracted from Lidl's

UK Facebook page from the inception of the site to date (22nd October 2013). Despite the lack of a strong CSR positioning at Lidl, a small number of environmental and social CSR macro themes do emerge from the thematic analysis of Lidl’s Facebook page (see Table 11). All extracted Lidl data was coded against these themes using NVIVO software and four themes were selected on the basis that they represented variation in CSR topics and rich cases for discourse analysis: animal welfare (235 posts), charity (498 posts), fireworks (275 posts) and genetically modified organisms (GMO) (80 posts). Upon these 1088 posts, detailed discourse analysis ensued.

| Macro-CSR Themes | Selected Dialogues | Description of Dialogue Context |
|--|---------------------------|---|
| Social Issues: | | |
| Animal Welfare; Charity; Community issues; Health; Pride of Britain Awards; Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO); Sustainable sourcing | Animal Welfare | Discussion of the ethicality of the sale of certain meat products (e.g. kangaroo meat) and the inhumane treatment of animals as part of religious rituals. Dialogue is linked to persuasive appeals (emotive language) and the British context. Stakeholders seek to influence Lidl’s approach to animal slaughter. |
| | Charity | Discussion surrounds fundraising activities (mostly related to the charity partner – CLIC Sergeant) and community support. Dialogue is linked to the causes charitable organisations support and personal experiences. Stakeholders congratulate the organisation for its altruistic efforts and encourage support for a broad range of causes. |
| | GMO | Discussion surrounds concerns around Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO). Dialogue is linked to health concerns and the social and environmental impacts of GMO. Stakeholders encourage Lidl to stop selling products that are linked to GMO. |
| Ecological Sustainability: | Fireworks | Discussion surrounds the safety and environmental issues of Fireworks and Lidl’s responsibility of care to its customers. Dialogue is linked to legislation, British traditions and anti-social behaviour. Stakeholders support the sale of Fireworks or encourage Lidl to ban the sale of Fireworks. |
| Carbon; Fireworks; Food waste; Plastic bags; Noise pollution; Recycling | | |

Table 11: Lidl Macro CSR Themes

5.4.3.1.3 Marks and Spencer (M&S)

With 766 stores across the UK, and a burgeoning international business, M&S is one of the UK's leading retailers of clothing, home products and food (Marks and Spencer, 2014). Opening its doors in 1884, the company now sees over 21 million consumers visit an M&S store each week and operates under the mission of "*Making aspirational quality accessible to all*". The largest proportion of M&S' business activity is in food where sales rose 3.9% in 2012 to £4.7 billion (Marks and Spencer Annual Report, 2014). With a focus on food freshness, speciality and convenience, M&S operates large out-of-town stores, as well as smaller, centrally-located 'Simply Food' stores. The organisation prides itself on its core 'guiding principles' or values, which relate to quality, value, service, innovation and trust. M&S' tenacity in developing a luxury positioning in food retail and an industry leading CSR initiative, contrasts with the volatile commercial performance of the organisation in recent years. Indeed, strategic overhauls, profit warnings (BBC, 2013) and accusations of 'sweatshop' sourcing (The Guardian, 2010) have been levied against the retailer and mark M&S out as a rich case for analysis.

M&S first began reporting on CSR in 2004 with the influential 'Plan A' CSR strategy launching in 2007. This award-winning five-year eco-plan has developed M&S' ethical profile, focussed on climate change, waste, natural resources, fair partnerships and health and wellbeing (Marks and Spencer Plan A, 2014). Plan A has been praised for its consumer facing approach and the initiative is communicated through a variety of platforms, including M&S'

website, a dedicated 'Plan A' report website, as well as through mainstream M&S SNSs including Twitter handles, a Google + page, a Pinterest page and a Facebook page. Also, through YouTube, 'marksandspencertv' hosts a range of corporate videos, as well as recent television campaigns, some of which directly relate to the organisation's Plan A commitments. Stakeholder communication through feedback, "*marketing communications which encourage consumers to take action*", and campaigns adopt a key focus in the organisation's 2013 Plan A report, which provides a strategic ethical focus for consumers. Additionally, M&S' Plan A communication also spans the organisation's physical sites, through in-store signage, on-pack messaging and the development of 'sustainable stores'. CSR communication at M&S forms part of mainstream communications, as well as occurring in niche platforms.

The M&S Facebook page launched on 29th April 2009, and as of August 2013 had 1,814,944 'likes' (see Appendix 2). Aside from this core UK-based page, the organisation also holds a number of international Facebook pages. Focussing upon the main UK site, 398,793 posts were extracted from M&S' Facebook page. It was found that CSR communications are somewhat more implicit in the site, predominantly focussing around campaigns, such as 'Shwopping' or 'Beach Clean Up'. Most posts are accompanied by product images and are personalised with the name of the employee who posted them. The majority of people commenting on posts relate to some experience of working or visiting an M&S store, suggesting that many stakeholders in the site are either M&S employees or customers. M&S posts are met with huge numbers of 'likes' and comments, often well into the thousands, creating a rich

depository of data. The page offers product and service updates, competitions and quizzes, often encouraging stakeholders to engage with posts through asking them to ‘like’ or vote on specific options, e.g. “Click *LIKE* if you love our Dine in for £10 deals...” Celebrities are also a main feature and are often used to promote campaigns and represent particular issues, such as ‘inspirational women.’ Whilst commercial discussions dominate the page, a range of environmental and social issues emerged from the thematic analysis (Table 12). All extracted M&S data were coded against these themes using NVIVO software and four themes were selected: animal welfare (191 posts), GMO (573 posts), Plan A (791 posts) and Shwopping (2175 posts). Upon these 3730 posts, data analysis ensued.

| Macro-CSR Themes | Selected Dialogues | Description of Dialogue Context |
|---|---------------------------|---|
| Social Issues: | | |
| Animal welfare; Advertising; British sourcing; Charity; Female empowerment; GMO; Health; Product sourcing / ingredients; Suppliers; Trade with Israel; Workfare | Animal Welfare | Discussion of the inhumane treatment of animals, most particularly related to animal testing (M&S cosmetics products are not tested on animals). Dialogue is linked to legislation, NGO campaigns and industry practice. Stakeholders demand more details from M&S and seem content with the organisation’s approach. |
| | GMO | Discussion of the ethicality of GMO in the food supply chain. Dialogue relates to industry practice, research, NGO campaigns, health and corporate irresponsibility. Stakeholders demand that GMO is eradicated from M&S’ supply chain and threaten the organisation with boycott if practices are not changed. |
| Ecological Sustainability: Beach Clean Up; Butterfly conservation; Food Waste; Packaging; Plan A; Plastic bags; Shwopping | Plan A | Discussion of the environmental initiatives which form part of M&S’ Plan A initiative. Dialogue is linked to a range of topics including environmental practices in store, industry practice and areas for improvement. Stakeholders appear keen to learn more and provide tips on where M&S can do more. |
| | Shwopping | Discussion of M&S’ campaign to raise awareness of clothes recycling and reduce the amount of clothing sent to landfill. Dialogue includes sceptical comments and concern for the impact on charity shops, as well as strong support of the initiative. Many stakeholders are keen to clarify the fundamentals of the initiative and discuss their experiences in store. |

Table 12: Marks and Spencer Macro CSR Themes

5.4.3.1.4 Sainsbury's

Sainsbury's was founded in the UK in 1869 and today operates around 1,203 supermarkets and convenience stores across the UK (Sainsbury's, 2014), attracting around 18 million shoppers into its stores each week (The Guardian, 2009). Sainsbury's objectives reside around the focal areas of commercial practice, most specifically food, merchandise and clothing, banking and energy. The organisation is built upon five core values, including 'best for food and health', 'sourcing with integrity', 'respect for our environment', 'making a positive difference to our community' and 'a great place to work'. The organisation strategy is built around a core vision of "*being the most trusted retailer where people love to work and shop*", and the promise of "*Live Well for Less*". These values interface with the Sainsbury's 20x20 Sustainability Plan, launched in 2011 to cover 'Active Youth', animal welfare, 'Best for British', community investment, 'Healthiest Baskets' and packaging (Sainsbury's 20x20, 2014). As one of the largest UK retailers with 16.8 per cent of the UK grocery market share, Sainsbury's mainstreamed its values through achievements, such as becoming the world's largest retailer of Fairtrade products in 2010. Given the scale and heritage of the organisation, a UK focus and prominent values, Sainsbury's represents a unique case.

Sainsbury's CSR reporting began in 2002. Today, Sainsbury's primarily communicates CSR through its Annual Report and Accounts, a dedicated 20x20 Sustainability Plan booklet, online factsheets and the organisation website. In 2012 Sainsbury's 'crowd sourced' its sustainability strategy,

allowing key stakeholders to comment on areas of success and areas for future improvement. As well as these specific CSR platforms, CSR content is also displayed through labelling on pack and is embedded within the organisation's mainstream communication channels. These include a corporate blog that permits moderated stakeholder comments, as well as an active SNS presence including a Facebook page, Twitter handles, a YouTube channel and Flickr page. Sainsbury's level of SNS engagement is thus comparable with the M&S and Co-op SNSs. Across all media, the organisation currently uses the hashtag '#ValueOfValues' when communicating about CSR to highlight the topic.

The Sainsbury's Facebook page was launched on 15th September 2012 and today (August 2013) has 950,596 'likes' (see Appendix 2). This is the organisation's sole Facebook page and so involves a range of different discussions relating to products, services, as well as elements of Sainsbury's 20x20 commitments. Posts use a range of product images, celebrity endorsements and ethical cues (e.g. the Fairtrade mark), as well as patriotic images and are usually personalised with the name of the person providing the post. The majority of people commenting on posts relate to some experience of working or visiting a Sainsbury's store, suggesting that many stakeholders in the site are either employees or customers. Posts tend to appear at least once a day and attract hundreds of likes and handfuls of comments and involve updates, as well as activities. 210,115 posts of extracted data were coded in relation to macro-CSR themes and data analysis ensued on four themes of focus: animal welfare (1402 posts), British values (180 posts), sexism (565 posts) and food waste (433 posts) (see Table 13).

| Macro-CSR Themes | Selected Dialogues | Description of Dialogue Context |
|---|---------------------------|---|
| Social Issues: | | |
| Advertising; Animal welfare ; Anti-social behaviour; British values ; Charity, Community; Fairtrade; GMO; Health; Racism; Sexism ; Trade with Israel | Animal welfare | Discussion of the inhumane treatment of animals and the ethicality of animal slaughter. Dialogue is linked to legislation, vegetarianism, industry practice, NGOs, religious doctrines and research. Stakeholders seek to encourage humane treatment of animals at Sainsbury's. |
| | British values | Discussion related to the importance of preserving British values. Dialogue relates to British sourcing, traditions and Sainsbury's communities. Stakeholders are keen to support a British retailer and appear disappointed if Sainsbury's does not appear to act in a patriotic manner. |
| | Sexism | Discussion linked to the objectification of women. Dialogue is linked to advertising policies and gendered approaches (e.g. boys and girls toys displayed separately in store). Stakeholders are keen for Sainsbury's to avoid association with 'sexist' newspapers such as the Daily Mail and the Sun and seek to promote gender equality. |
| Ecological Sustainability: | | |
| Bees; Energy; Food waste ; Organic; Plastic bags; Recycling; Sourcing; | Food waste | Discussion linked to the amount of food Sainsbury's waste. Dialogue is linked to environmental (flying produce in from overseas) and social issues (homeless people going hungry in the UK). Stakeholders work to influence Sainsbury's to avoid food waste and dispose of food responsibly. |

Table 13: Sainsbury's Macro CSR Themes

5.4.3.2 Step Seven: Discourse Analysis

The qualitative datasets extracted from the Facebook pages were analysed, interpreted, revisited and cross-referenced between the researcher and her supervisors, in order to support an inductive and iterative 'form and meaning analysis' (Spiggle, 1994). The researcher built upon Gilbert and Mulkey's (1984:6) assertion that analysts do not just reproduce discourse, but make three contributions in ensuring 'linguistic consistency'; firstly in subsuming responses under more general concepts; secondly in generalising statements; and thirdly, identifying segments that accurately represent social processes and

disregard others. It is important to highlight that whilst this research provides a snapshot of reality in the SNSs, the generalisability of the study is somewhat limited. Therein, the researcher aims to locate observations at an industry level to provide both micro and macro inferences. Consequently, akin to recommendations provided by Spiggle (1994), data are made sense of through categorisation (coding), abstraction (determining higher order constructs), comparison (drawing out differences and similarities) and dimensionalisation (exploring attributes along a continua or through dimensions).

Taking each of these elements in turn, a structured, thematic analysis was initially conducted to categorise the dialogues and allow prevalent themes to inductively emerge from the dataset (as discussed in Section 5.4.3.1). Detailed discourse analysis of the data then ensued to determine higher order constructs (abstraction). Building upon the DC approach outlined in Section 5.3.2 (Potter & Wetherell, 2001), the formal ‘mechanics’ of discourse were analysed in each of the four cases, e.g. sentence structure, clauses, discourse markers, language patterns, metaphors, metonyms and juxtapositions (Fairclough, 1995). Significant contextual cues of online interaction were also discerned through interpreting textual markers e.g. smiley face icons [;)/☺/:-)] to convey happiness; strength of opinion/emphasis signals (e.g. words entered in **bold** or UPPERCASE typefaces); tonal cues such as asterisk markers (e.g. *sigh*, *grin*); and key word indicators (#feelinghappy, #sustainability).

In identifying consistent patterns, data were clustered around common codes and through analytical coding, the researcher was able to ‘tack back and forth’

between data and emergent themes as the data analysis matured (Goulding, 2002). Theorising was a continuing and recursive process and through concurrent analysis and interpretation, theoretically grounded and empirically relevant inferences were generated (Eisenhardt, 1989). This flexible and unstructured approach allowed exploration of themes as they arose (Bryman, 2004) and given the comparative nature of this study, similarities and differences were drawn out within and across the cases. Furthermore this ‘abductive’ approach built upon Leclercq-Vandelannoitte’s (2011) suggestion of developing ‘tree nodes’ (data codes based on theory, e.g. ‘normalisation’ [Vaara & Tienari, 2008]) and ‘free nodes’ (data codes emergent from textual corpus e.g. ‘carnivalisation’) in order to develop coding tables upon which processes of discursive legitimation could be orientated (see Chapter 6). These codes were regularly discussed between the author and her supervisors to form a sound basis for the analysis.

5.5 Ethical Considerations

Given the interpretive epistemology, constructionist ontology and introspective reflexivity perspective guiding research, the concept of ‘researcher as instrument’ brings ethical considerations into the research design. Moreover, taking into consideration the ethics of Internet research and the challenges of gaining informed consent in the research context (see Kozinets, 2002), ensuring a sound ethical research strategy was an essential endeavour. Whilst a plethora of benefits and drawbacks surround online data gathering (see Buchanan, 2004), it has been suggested that the same ethical research concerns exist in online and traditional offline contexts (Rodham & Gavin, 2006), albeit

contextually defined (Maczewski et al., 2004). Lawson (2004) thus suggests that qualitative researchers should stipulate procedures through which ethical conflict can be minimised and provides two strategies for maintaining ethical integrity in SNS contexts. Firstly, ‘protection of participant identity’ relates to protecting the welfare and privacy of those involved in a study. All individuals were anonymised in this study by providing pseudonyms for the Facebook users and masking/deleting compromising details (e.g. location, time of postings). Secondly, Lawson (2004) discusses consent and the benefits and drawbacks of non-disclosure vs. disclosure. In aligning with an observational and non-participatory approach (Cova & Pace, 2006), the researcher chose not to disclose her presence in the SNSs. All data were, however, publicly accessible and in the case of the four chosen corporate Facebook pages, all sources had listed to ‘display information publicly’ as part of their privacy settings and thus supported full disclosure of content. The detailed Facebook terms were adhered to building upon the Facebook content sharing policy (Point 2.4):

“When you publish content or information using the Public setting, it means that you are allowing everyone, including people off of Facebook, to access and use that information, and to associate it with you (i.e., your name and profile picture)”.

An ethical research plan was developed in accordance with The University of Nottingham guidelines and the research gained full ethical approval prior to data gathering commencing. Throughout the research process, the author was mindful of three ethical principles: beneficence (maximise good outcomes and minimise risk), respect (treat people in the study with respect) and justice (ensure that procedures are reasonable, nonexploitative, considered and fairly

administered) (Mertens, 2012). Indeed, ensuring that data gathering techniques are trustworthy, credible, plausible and ethical is a key pursuit in developing sound qualitative research studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1999). Furthermore, as reliability is determined in qualitative research through open disclosure of data gathering processes (Silverman, 2010), this methodological chapter has sought to present a transparent discussion of the research design and philosophy of this thesis, as well as a reflexive account of work undertaken.

5.5.1 Limitations

In the spirit of reflexivity, a number of limitations of the methodology are worthy of mention. Firstly, given the large number of posts extracted for analysis, the interpretivist orientation of the research has, on occasion, been questioned. Whilst the initial dataset comprised 677,211 posts across the four case organisations, these posts were systematically and transparently distilled down utilising online observation techniques including, identifying the most popular topics and the tone of the interactions (see Kozinets, 2002, 2010 and the Appendices), as well as thematic analysis (see Section 5.3.3.1), to determine ‘macro-CSR’ themes. While this approach is somewhat original and in line with qualitative data analysis recommendations (Spiggle, 1994), the author acknowledges that this research project is thus heavily dependant on the notion of researcher as instrument (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) given the researcher’s immersive role in the SNSs and interpretive biases surrounding discourse analysis techniques (Fairclough, 1995). Thus, while the generalisability of the research is compromised for emic insights, the author

also reflexively invites readers to participate in the process of data interpretation through the transparent provision of verbatim quotes in Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 10. Inferences were also regularly discussed between the researcher and her supervisors.

Secondly, the terms ‘stakeholders’ and ‘interlocutors’ are utilised to capture the range of actors in the SNSs. Whilst useful in highlighting the diverse nature of Facebook users, the author is wary of suggesting that stakeholders represent a homogenised entity, and instead recognises that stakeholders may in fact, be consumers, activists, employees, or even the organisation itself. The disembodied nature of online data can be problematic in ensuring accurate understanding of participants, however the interest of this study is less on the ‘true’ identities of the actors in the Facebook pages, or outcomes, and more upon *how processes of legitimation occur in organisational ‘texts’*. In treating SNSs as ‘organisational texts’, the research thus focuses on meaning construction in particular contexts, building upon Kozinets’ (2010:130) assertion that, “the people at the other end of a social networking site or in virtual worlds are no less real than the people who talk to us on the telephone, author the books we read, or write us letters”. Interactions in the SNSs are thus understood as being constitutive of a socially constructed reality (one that is observed by any visitor to the SNS) and the term ‘interlocutor’ is used throughout the findings and analysis chapters to avoid making assumptions on individual identities and thus giving agency to actors within the SNSs.

Finally, the author acknowledges that there may be broader limitations in analysing SNSs to inform discursive and dialogical understanding of legitimacy. To a large extent organisations may still ‘control’ their SNSs as posts may be deleted. Furthermore, the texture of the Facebook pages changes regularly due to the frequent nature of postings, emphasising the temporal nature of the analysis. While these limitations do reinforce the interpretive focus upon the SNSs as fluid organisational ‘texts’, it is acknowledged that a greater understanding of the identities of those participating in the SNS may shed more light onto the motivations, underlying assumptions and broader social purpose of the SNSs. This sentiment is returned to in Chapter 9 when avenues for further research are discussed.

5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the methodology of this empirical PhD research project. As the section on research paradigm outlines (5.2), this thesis aligns with a social constructionist ontology (5.2.1), which appreciates intersubjectivism in knowledge construction (Cunliffe, 2011), and an introspective approach to reflexivity (Finlay, 2002) (5.2.2). This research also adopts an interpretive epistemology to explore the *process* of legitimation through qualitative research methods (Lapan et al., 2012) (5.2.3). Building upon the methodology of discourse analysis (5.3), the chapter has orientated a focus upon ‘discursive constructionism’ (DC), which conceptualises language as both a *constructed* and *constructive* phenomenon (5.3.2). Section 5.4 provides the research design, detailing processes of data contextualisation (5.4.1), data gathering (5.4.2) and data analysis (5.4.3). Therein, a rationale is

provided for the choice of Facebook as the main SNS for analysis, as well as the chosen focal industry (food retail) and the four organisational ‘texts’: The Co-operative Group, Marks and Spencer, Lidl and Sainsbury’s. Finally, Section 5.5 concluded with a discussion of ethical considerations of the research design, as well as core limitations. Upon this methodological discussion, the findings can now be presented.

Chapter 6: Findings & Analysis

Legitimation: Centripetal Forces

6.1 Introduction to Findings Chapters

In order to answer the overarching research question of *how is legitimation constituted through discursive and dialogical processes in online CSR communication*, the findings and analysis of this thesis are broken down into three chapters, pertaining to how legitimation takes place through *centripetal* (unity, homogeneity, centrality) discursive forces (Chapter 6), *centrifugal* (difference, dispersion, decentring) discursive forces (Chapter 7) and a combination of both *centripetal and centrifugal* discursive forces (Chapter 8). These chapters encapsulate the dialogical dimensions that construct legitimation processes (performativity, polyphony and perpetuality), extending research that has explored the discursive construction of legitimacy (e.g. van Leeuwen, 2007; Vaara et al., 2006, Vaara & Tienari, 2008) and building upon constitutive models of CSR communications (Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013; Schultz et al., 2013). Tables 14 to 16 set out the data coding processes that guide these chapters, moving from ‘first order’ (discursive themes) to ‘second order’ (discursive processes), to ‘third order’ (dialogical forces) categories. These tables provide a structured ‘map’ of the findings chapters.

| 1st Order Category: Discursive Theme | 2nd Order Category: Discursive Processes | 3rd Order Category: Dialogical Forces |
|--|--|---|
| Authorise: Experts / role models | Normalisation (Proactive) | CENTRIPETAL (Unity, homogeneity, centrality) |
| Conform: Align with industry norms / exceed expectations | | |
| Evidence: Tangible evidence & recognition of CSR activity | | |
| Naturalise: Day to day activities (business as usual) (retrospective, existing and prospective exemplarity) | | |
| Rationalise: Relevant knowledge claims | | |
| Reward: Praise and congratulations | Moralisation (Proactive) | |
| Moral alignment: Select supportive statements / audiences | | |
| Conform: Align with industry norms / exceed expectations | Normalisation (Reactive) | |
| Evidence: Tangible evidence & recognition of CSR activity | | |
| Naturalise: Perceive future changes / protect past accomplishments | | |
| Rationalise: Relevant knowledge claims | | |
| Repetition: Reinforcement to stress key points | | |
| Reward: Praise and congratulations | Mythologisation (Reactive) | |
| Interdiscursivity: Embodied organisational discourse (intertextuality) | | |
| Mythologise: Narratives of broader social themes (positive) | | |

Table 14: Centripetal Processes of Legitimation

| 1st Order Category: Discursive Themes | 2nd Order Category: Discursive Processes | 3rd Order Category: Dialogical Forces |
|--|--|---|
| Authorise: Build personal credibility | Authorisation (Proactive / Reactive) | CENTRIFUGAL (Difference, dispersion, decentring) |
| Moral alignment: Select supportive statements / audiences | | |
| Popularise: Draw upon societal 'role models' | | |
| Repetition: Reinforcement to stress key points | | |
| Analysise: Discrepancy between image & reality | | |
| Conform: Align with industry norms / expectations | Demythologisation (Proactive / Reactive) | |
| Demythologise: Narratives of broader social themes (negative) | | |
| Emotivise: Descriptive details of self-other relations | | |
| Interdiscursivity: Fragments of broader social discourses (intertextuality) | | |
| Irrationalise: Challenge rational / normalised views | | |
| Narrativise: Story-telling | | |
| Problematism: A problem that needs to be solved | | |
| Relationalism: Self-other relations | | |
| Grotesque: Obscene discussions | | |
| Parodying: Undermine discussion with humour | | Carnivalisation (Proactive / Reactive) |
| Profanity: Rude language / swearing | | |
| Sarcasm: Irony and ambivalence | | |
| Deny: Deflect the issue and conceal | | |
| Excuse: Avoid issue & neutralise | | |
| Explain: Discuss problem on rational grounds & justify | | |
| Reform: Alter practices & change | | |
| Defend: Rebuff issues | | |
| Divert: Shift the discussion into new territory | | |
| Ignore: Silence | | |

Table 15: Centrifugal Processes of Legitimation

| 1st Order Category: Discursive Themes | 2nd Order Category: Discursive Processes | 3rd Order Category: Dialogical Forces |
|---|--|--|
| Apologise: Offer condolences and empathise | Normalisation (Reactive) | CENTRIPETAL (Unity, homogeneity, centrality) & CENTRIFUGAL (Difference, dispersion, decentring) |
| Confess: Admit and provide assurances | | |
| Conform: Align with industry norms / exceed expectations | | |
| Deflection: Deflect the issue and conceal | | |
| Excuse: Avoid issue & neutralise | | |
| Explain: Discuss problem on rational grounds & justify | Authorisation (Reactive) | |
| Rationalise: Relevant knowledge claims | | |
| Reform: Alter practices & change | | |
| Authorise: Assert power position | | |
| Defend: Rebuff issues | | |
| Divert: Shift the discussion into new territory | | |
| Ignore: Silence | | |
| Repetition: Reinforcement to stress key points | | |

Table 16: Centripetal/Centrifugal Processes of Legitimation

6.2 Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to examine discursive processes of legitimation between organisations and stakeholders, in response to Research Question 1: *how do organisations and stakeholders engage in discursive processes of legitimation through online CSR dialogue?* Section 6.3 examines the discursive and dialogical processes that constitute centripetal forces (Baxter, 2004) by exploring organisational use of normalisation (6.3.1) and moralisation (6.3.2) strategies. Section 6.4 then investigates how these forces in organisation-stakeholder interaction through (reactive) normalisation (6.4.1) and mythologisation (6.4.2) approaches. This chapter is reinforced through the presentation of raw data (Facebook posts and visuals) to represent the rich texture of SNSs. The chapter concludes with a summary (6.5), which compares and contrasts legitimation approaches across the four organisational ‘texts’.

6.3 Organisational Discourse: Normalisation & Moralisation

The section provides insight into *organisational* discourse in the SNSs, to provide a backdrop against which the dialogical analysis of centripetal forces can take place (reciprocal interaction between organisations and stakeholders premised on unifying processes). As Christensen et al. (2013) argue, organisational statements are not just descriptions, but prescriptions with performative qualities that commit organisations to act in a certain manner. By presenting the discursive processes through which legitimation is constituted in the SNSs, the section builds upon strategies of normalisation (6.3.1) and moralisation (6.3.2) (Vaara et al., 2006, Vaara & Tienari, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2007) and illuminates the performative nature of discourse (what organisations are doing with their words) (Bakhtin, 1986). Therein, it explores the heterogeneous processes of discursive legitimation that inductively emerged across the four organisational ‘texts’.

6.3.1 Normalisation

Normalisation is defined as a process of, “rendering specific actions or phenomena ‘normal’ or ‘natural’, in relation to societal expectations” (Vaara & Tienari, 2008:988). Whilst evaluating what constitutes ‘normal’ or ‘natural’ actions in the SNS context is likely to be highly subjective, the author relates discursive normalisation to a process of establishing a ‘natural’ order in processes of legitimation. Thus, building upon shared cultural norms, values and beliefs, organisations work to reflect that their day-to-day actions are

consistent and conforming to the dictates of society in a UK context. Looking first at *consistency*, the discussion of normalisation builds upon naturalisation of CSR activities (pertaining to a ‘business as usual’ approach) and the provision of evidence of tangible outputs of CSR actions. This supports rationalisation strategies (reference to relevant knowledge claims) (Vaara & Tienari, 2008), and the assertion that legitimisation involves organisational reference to ‘retrospective’ (similar events in the past) and ‘prospective’ (new events to be expected) references (Vaara et al., 2006). Prospective exemplarity is also related to ‘cosmological constructions’, the notion of more positive futurological scenarios (Erkama & Vaara, 2010), which allow organisations to abstract discussions into innovative temporal terrains and aspire to new ideals (Christensen et al., 2013). Emergent out of the data are also examples of reference to current activity, a strategy that the author has termed ‘existing exemplarity’. Therein, organisations begin dialogues with ‘temporal’ statements that seek to either provide information and evidence on what the retailers *has* done (in the past tense), *is* doing (in the present tense) and *will* do (in the future tense), or combine elements of each of these approaches in an attempt to normalise their CSR activities. *Conformity*, on the other hand, is highly malleable across the SNSs. At times conformity suggests that the organisations are operating against a uniform (high) industry moral benchmark; at other times, organisations differentiate themselves from conformity by providing evidence on how they outperform industry benchmarks. Normalisation is now explored across the organisational ‘texts’.

6.3.1.1 The Co-operative

Legitimation takes place at the Co-op through normalisation strategies, which reflect consistency around the moral heritage of the organisation (retrospective exemplarity), highlight current activity (existing exemplarity) and introduce new intentions (prospective exemplarity). These techniques frame the retailer as being an institution central to community life (across temporal domains). The Co-op is arguably the retailer who draws most markedly on its previous CSR actions and ‘retrospective exemplarity’, building upon texts that underline the organisation’s moral roots (e.g. *‘founded by the Rochdale Pioneers’*) and democratic governance structure. Words such as ‘always’, ‘tradition’ and ‘history’ invoke the sense that the organisation’s CSR values transcend time and space, and work to reinforce consistency. Alongside these discursive cues, the organisation regularly provides visual artefacts of bygone eras, for example photographs of old Co-op stores to ‘evidence’ the organisation history (see Figure 11). Whilst not referencing CSR explicitly, these images and posts metonymically convey a sense of heritage in ‘legitimate’ business practice.



Figure 11: Mobile Co-op Grocery Van (1954)

Upon this basis of retrospective exemplarity, the Co-op illuminates positive current activity by regularly commenting on more recent successes. Evidence of existing exemplarity is highly visible in the Co-op's posts that draw on 'internal' intertextuality and make reference to the organisation's CSR approach (e.g. "*check out our Sustainability Report... all independently verified*"), current policies (e.g. "*we have started to put carrier bag recycling bins in our larger stores for customers to return carrier bags*") and CSR successes, e.g. "*Congratulations to the latest 'trainees' from our Plan Bee campaign's training course*"). Examples of external recognition (e.g. in receiving awards) are provided, further strengthening alignment between the organisation and societal markers. This also differentiates and normalises the organisation as performing ahead of the industry (not 'conforming').

With regards to prospective exemplarity, the Co-op makes regular reference to statements of intent in line with the organisation's sustainability strategy. In the post below, the Co-op discusses future initiatives built around engagement with members, and an NGO (the Bumblebee Conservation Trust), as well as provides tangible evidence and internal intertextual resources (*market beesearch*). This post discursively normalises a commitment to the betterment of society and engages interlocutors ("*Have a try yourself*"). Temporality is thus highly pervasive and illustrates how the organisation normalises a view of consistency and (non)conformity.

The Co-op: *Our Plan Bee campaign has mobilised members to help conduct an **annual census of bees, dubbed 'market beesearch'**. Members will be taught to find and identify bee species. Once trained, they'll contribute to BeeWalk, run by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, to get a **national picture of pollinator health**. **Have a try yourself** with this bee identification chart: <http://on.coop/l6VWyk>*

6.3.1.2 Lidl

As opposed to the established strategies of retrospective and prospective exemplarity seen at the Co-op, the normalisation approach most visible in Lidl's SNS is existing exemplarity. Perhaps due to the retailer having less moral and historical credence to draw upon in the UK market, or the absence of a future CSR strategy, the organisation provides evidence of CSR campaigns that are in current operation. The majority of the CSR activity resides around charitable giving and philanthropic connections with local communities. A high volume of posts thank 'Lidlers' (Lidl shoppers) for the money they have raised in relation to charity partners and stress the 'difference' that those supporters have made, affirming tangible outputs. The high repetition of these posts discursively normalises these altruistic endeavours within Lidl's approach to CSR and emphasises the importance of philanthropy in processes of legitimation. Two posts below capture this dynamic, celebrating successes ("*Well done and a big thank you to all our new fans...*"), naturalising charitable activities ("*Lots of people at Lidl HQ...*"), and building commonality through the use of emoticons (e.g. :-D; :-)), punctuation (e.g. !), and friendly greetings (e.g. "*Good afternoon Lidlers!*"). Lidl also builds goodwill (e.g. if you 'like' us, we will donate on your behalf), without influencing the organisation's core 'low price' brand promise, thus building consistency:

Lidl: Good afternoon Lidlers! We're thrilled to announce that since we pledged to donate £1 to CLIC Sargent for every new 'like' to our page last week, we have raised an extra £1,169 for the charity! Well done and a big thank you to all our new fans for raising money for this cause :-D

*Don't forget that **if we reach 250,000 fans we'll be donating an extra £10,000 to CLIC Sargent, so make sure you share this with your friends :-)***

Lidl: Happy Friday Lidders! Lots of people at Lidl HQ are getting involved in this year's Movember action... not only is the fundraising for a brilliant cause - men's health, specifically prostate cancer and testicular cancer - but it's also a great way to persuade your males friends and relatives to grow hilarious facial hair!

Visit their website to see how you can take part and donate :-)

<http://uk.movember.com/about>

Whilst temporality is very much implicit in Lidl's SNS, conformity is a key legitimisation process. Lidl often comments on its alignment with accepted societal norms and procedures, for example its Fireworks "*comply with all EU and country specific regulations*", and animals that are slaughtered for sale are, "*pre stunned in accordance with UK legislation and guidance as well as the Red Tractor Assurance Scheme*". While Lidl avoids drawing explicit comparisons with other organisations, discourse signals that the organisation operates within core legal requirements and conforms to pre-defined standards. This discursively normalises Lidl's 'licence to operate' in the UK retail market.

6.3.1.3 Marks and Spencer

M&S' discourse primarily focus upon the organisation's current ambitions (existing exemplarity) and future CSR intentions (prospective exemplarity). This is surprising as despite M&S' long history within the UK retail environment, evidence of retrospective exemplarity is scant. This is perhaps indicative of the organisation's strategic and CSR overhaul in recent decades (see Chapter 5). Focussing upon existing exemplarity, consistency is established through consumer-facing campaigns, such as 'Shwopping', which

incentivise consumers to recycle old clothes. In support of these campaigns, M&S invites environmental ‘experts’ and celebrity ‘ambassadors’ (intertextual ‘voices’) into dialogues as positive societal role models and credible ‘voices’ of the organisation. In personifying the organisation as an entity made up of a nexus of individuals (as opposed to a faceless conglomerate), these individuals act as signifiers of both social concern and interlocutor involvement lifted from external media ‘texts.’ They also popularise campaigns (Belch & Belch, 2003) and embed the organisation within the fabric of British society. Physical evidence of the outputs of CSR initiatives is also provided, as seen in the post below which raises awareness of National Tree Week and normalises activity undertaken “*each year*”. The provision of quantitative outputs (“*8 million cards*”) and a link to further information (“*here’s a little update*”) serve to provide evidence. Furthermore, activity is aligned with ‘National Tree Week’, emphasising M&S’ partnership with an influential NGO:

***M&S: Did you know it’s National Tree Week?
Each year we partner with the The Woodland Trust to recycle your
Christmas cards. In 2012, we collected over 8 million cards equating
to us planting 8,300 trees.
We asked you where you’d like to see the trees planted and here’s a
little update > <http://bit.ly/U26PdD>***

Prospective exemplarity is built upon current organisational activity. As in the post below, M&S highlights a current action (the launch of a recycling initiative), which is working towards a key aim (reducing electronic waste). M&S here engages in ‘aspirational talk’; announcing ideals and intentions in an attempt to stimulate actual social change (Christensen et al., 2013). Drawing upon the notion of performativity (Bakhtin, 1986), it may be argued that M&S uses a futurological scenario to project an enhanced image of its CSR agenda:

M&S: Today we've launched www.marksandspencer.com/recycle to encourage recycling of unwanted electrical items in exchange for M&S vouchers. We're hoping this will help reduce the one million tonnes of electronic waste the UK produces on average each year.

A prominent discursive theme in M&S' SNS is reference to being 'first'. This theme is continually reinforced through tangible evidence and recognition of the retailer's CSR achievements (e.g. "*We're delighted to be shortlisted for the RSPCA People's Choice Supermarket Award for leading standards in animal welfare*"), rewarding both itself and its stakeholders for collaborative efforts. The retailer seeks to emphasise, for example, its leadership position in GMO ("*we were the first retailer able to offer Non-GM products across all our range*") and Plan A ("*We're proud to announce that we're the first major retailer to become carbon neutral*") to discursively normalise itself as an industry leader, rather than a conformist. The post below captures this, with M&S rewarding itself for being 'first' through 'internal' intertextuality (the URL links to a Plan A '5th Birthday' press release):

M&S: We're proud to announce that we're the first major retailer to become carbon neutral. A HUGE thank you to all of you who have helped and taken part in our Plan A initiatives over the last 5 years. Take a look at the progress we've made together so far: <http://bit.ly/JQ31bs>

6.3.1.4 Sainsbury's

Despite its long history in the UK retail industry, retrospective exemplarity is used sparingly at Sainsbury's. Akin to Lidl, existing exemplarity most commonly discursively naturalises the organisation's CSR activities. Indeed, whilst a strong sense of British history is prevalent in the Sainsbury's

Facebook page with many images of British flags and reference to tradition (e.g. Pancake Day, Bonfire Night, etc.), discourse on Sainsbury's historical CSR performance rarely enters the SNS. Existing exemplarity, instead, builds around successes, such as raising money for charity (e.g. "*thanks to you we've raised over £10 million for Comic Relief*"). Sainsbury's also actively involves interlocutors in its posts (e.g. "*Show us how you got funny for money during Comic Relief 2011*"). As exemplified below, Sainsbury's encourages comments, 'likes' and photos from interlocutors around its British sourcing strategy, which builds centripetal forces:

Sainsbury's: "It's the only own-label Cornish ice cream actually made in Cornwall". We weren't going to bring you by Sainsbury's Cornish Vanilla Ice Cream unless it came directly from the heart of Cornwall. Hit like if you're a vanilla fan! <http://bit.ly/rar5cs>

While evidence of prospective exemplarity is far less pervasive at Sainsbury's than it is at the Co-op and M&S, the following post uniquely brings together the dynamic interplay of past, current and future tenses, emphasising intertextuality in the Sainsbury's SNS. Here Sainsbury's subsequently draws upon retrospective exemplarity ("*over the last five years...*"), existing exemplarity ("*Sainsbury's has a rigorous system of checks*") and prospective exemplarity ("*We will continue to maintain these strong relationships*") through legitimation processes. The post also discursively normalises Sainsbury's commitment to animal welfare and the organisation's commitment to 'always' (consistently) providing safe, high quality and affordable products:

Sainsbury's: Hi Charlie. We have been working closely alongside our suppliers to ensure we meet the high standards our customers rightly expect from us. Sainsbury's has a rigorous system of checks, audits and quality controls in place and was one of the first companies to

introduce DNA and country of origin testing. We will continue to maintain these strong relationships with British famers, and all of our suppliers. Over the last five years we've invested £40 million into British farming and we work closely with over 2,500 British farmers who are part of our Farmer Development Groups. This means we're always able to provide safe products of the highest quality at the best price. Simon.

Bar a handful of references (e.g. “*We have only sold eggs from hens kept in a cage free environment, from either barn or free range units since February 2009 and were the first major retailer to achieve this*”), Sainsbury’s leadership position in CSR remains somewhat implicit. Instead, discourse focuses upon alignment with social norms and requirements, echoing the approach to conformity seen at Lidl.

6.3.1.5 Normalisation Summary

Discursive normalisation takes place across the SNSs through reference to consistency and conformity, laying foundations for centripetal forces. A focus upon current action (existing exemplarity) allows organisations to discuss CSR at a transactional level in the SNSs, embedding discourse within societal expectations regarding organisational products and services. This sees all organisations refer to the ways in which they ‘conform’ with societal mandates. It is the Co-op that draws most markedly upon retrospective and prospective exemplarity, suggesting temporal consistency across legitimation processes. M&S also displays evidence of prospective exemplarity through a focus upon its ‘Plan A’ commitments. These two retailers, by exception, thus position themselves as industry CSR leaders, acting above and beyond societal

expectations. Sainsbury's and Lidl, on the other hand, focus much more on an operational view of CSR.

6.3.2 Moralisation

The second discursive process of *moralisation* refers to legitimation by reference to specific value systems (Erkama & Vaara, 2010). Moralisation involves discourses of moral and ideological value and is largely understood as an implicit, subconscious process. It builds upon the notion of morality, largely defined as, “the norms, values and beliefs embedded in social processes which define right and wrong for an individual or community” (Crane & Matten, 2004:11). Consequently, processes of moralisation tend to be embodied in the use of ‘moral’ language that builds conceptions around ‘healthy’, ‘natural’, ‘useful’ and inherently ‘good’ organisation-stakeholder interaction (van Leeuwen, 2007). They also relate to discourses of utilitarianism and the ‘greatest good for the greatest number’ (maximum benefit) and teleological orientations (goal-directed behaviour) (Ketola, 2008). Indeed, the ‘moralisation’ of CSR communications relates to idealistic definitions of CSR that form part of organisational self-presentations (Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010). Although evidence of moral alignment is visible across the organisational SNSs, morality is interpreted and communicated in a heterogeneous manner. Thus, while the retailers appear to align themselves with dominant societal values and influential stakeholders to normalise conformity (as aforementioned) and prove that they are ‘doing the right thing’, legitimation processes still vary by retailer.

6.3.2.1 The Co-operative

Utilising words such as ‘honest’, ‘open’, ‘listening’ and ‘ethical’, the Co-op moralises around the notion of inclusivity. Reinforcing its values of openness, honesty, social responsibility and care (see Chapter 5) the retailer discursively builds its democratic and community-based ethos through posts which allude to a sense of community (e.g. *“Good morning everyone! We’ve noticed there are quite a few new followers on our Facebook page so we just thought we’d say welcome”*) and provoke discussion (e.g. *“We would love to know...”, “have your say”*). Posts also serve a public service function, e.g. *“We just wanted to let you know”*. Morality is, to some extent, relational in Co-op’s SNS as the organisation moralises around the notion of organisation-stakeholder collaboration for a better world (utilitarian discourse) and the ‘levelling’ (see Caruana & Glozer, 2014) of relationships (e.g. bringing ‘outsiders’ into the organisation). In collapsing the traditional producer/consumer information dyad in this way, the Co-op presents a more level playing field in its interactions. Legitimation then takes place through co-operative and dialogical processes, shifting away from the information asymmetries that have traditionally characterised organisation-stakeholder interaction.

This approach is visible in the posts below from the organisation’s ‘Plan Bee’ campaign. Here the Co-op frames a moral issue (the decline in the bee population) through reference to moral duties (e.g. supporting research), goals (e.g. *“SAVE THE BEE’S”*), and responsibility at a societal level (e.g. *“open to everyone (not just members)”*). The Co-op’s moral discourse also builds upon

organisational actions (e.g. giving away “*FREE SEEDS*”) and through paraphrasing, external intertextuality (links to content) and engagement opportunities, discourse embodies moralisation as democratic engagement:

The Co-op: Bees don't just make honey, they pollinate a third of the food we eat! As part of our Plan Bee campaign which we extended last year to address the decline of other 'at risk' pollinators such as bumblebees, solitary bees, butterflies and moths, we asked our campaign Facebook fans over the 'summer' to send in their pollinator photos and we've put the pictures together in an album - have you taken a look?
<http://on.coop/R0vaEN>

The Co-op: We urgently need to "SAVE THE BEE'S".here is the buzzy new video accompanying the song"SAVE THE BEE'S"

The Co-op: Scientists are looking for bee keepers to send in jars of honey so they can better understand how it's anti-bacterial properties work . We'll send in a few from the hives on our farms. Any other bee keepers out there ?
<http://m.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/jul/25/honey-antibacterial-research-mrsa-c-difficile?cat=education&type=article>

The Co-op: Congratulations to the latest 'trainees' from our Plan Bee campaign's Urban Bees training course in London. They're now flying solo with their own hives! Kylie said, "the bees were incredibly calm, obviously productive and healthy. I'll do my best to keep them that way." Whilst Eleanor said, "It will be amazing to see a hive of bees in my garden after dreaming of it for two years!"

6.3.2.2 Lidl

Lidl's moralisation process works hand-in-hand with the retailer's low price promise and the organisation's core principle to deliver customer satisfaction. Indeed, morality relates to self-interest at Lidl, with marketing and CSR communications overlapping significantly. Whilst Lidl encourages interlocutors to “*join in discussions with other fans and learn their thoughts*

and opinions on shared interests”, and works to build collaborative interactions (e.g. *“together, let’s help more”*), doing ‘good’ in this context relates to providing value for money. Commercial messages are continually reinforced in the SNS (e.g. *“Pick up some beauty bargains this Saturday”*, *“Click ‘Like’ if you wouldn’t mind saving a few pounds!”*) with posts being marked out with, *“**Voucher Alert**”* or *“**COMPETITION ALERT**”*. In line with this commercial focus, philanthropic endeavours are also communicated in economic terms. Lidl most often presents social benefit as financial gain for consumers and this approach of enlightened self-interest is visible in the post below and in Figure 12. The post describes a cause-related marketing campaign on a household item. The cause message (a donation being provided to charity) is secondary, with the money saving message, gaining primacy. Figure 12 brings this dynamic to life visually, emphasising the rationality surrounding discursive moralisation strategies. Lidl’s ‘duty’ in this context is to provide value for money products and it is the consumers’ ‘responsibility’ to purchase them; the benefit of the donation to the recipients remains implicit. In the Lidl context then, moralisation organises CSR as an instrumental benefit to consumers, with legitimation processes residing around ‘value for money’:

Lidl: Good afternoon Lidders!

*We’ve teamed up with P&G to bring you some fantastic money-off coupons for two of your favourite household products! By visiting www.lidlcoupons.co.uk you can download a £1 off Ariel Actilift Gel (888ml) and 50p off Bold 2in1 Washing Powder(1.76kg) coupon. **Plus a donation to our charity partner CLIC Sargent will be made with the purchase of any of these products.** These coupons are valid until the 26th June so hurry whilst stocks last!*



Figure 12: Moralisation at Lidl

6.3.2.3 Marks and Spencer

Given the consumer facing nature of M&S' CSR communications, like Lidl, discursive moralisation strategies also adopt a rational and instrumental tone. Shwopping communications for example, emphasise the consumer benefit of participating (receiving a £5 voucher) rather than the social benefit (giving clothes to charity) or environmental messages (reducing the amount of clothes in landfill), perhaps in an attempt to encourage consumer participation. This approach is exemplified in the post below and Figure 13. The post accompanies a video recorded in Senegal by actress Joanna Lumley, which shows Joanna encouraging interlocutors to “*Shwop ‘til you drop.*” Although the social and environmental benefits of the initiative are highlighted in the video, the accompanying post focuses purely upon the economic incentive (enlightened self interest) for consumers. The ‘outcome’ of the initiative (reducing landfill and supporting African communities), remains somewhat implicit. Additionally, despite the presence of a ‘role-model’ voice here,

comments from a broader constituent audience (e.g. quotes from NGOs) are rarely provided. Figure 13 provides an image posted on the SNS to encourage Shwopping activity, prioritising the benefit or ‘reward’ for consumers in engaging with the initiative:

*M&S: Today’s the day! Take part on our One Day Wardrobe Clear-Out and **get a £5 voucher** when you bring your old clothes into M&S stores for Oxfam GB. Find out more here > <http://bit.ly.17BPJwP>*



Figure 13: Shwopping Post

These examples suggest that to align with societal expectations, M&S also utilises instrumental moralisation to pertain to the ethical ‘egoist’ (self-interested) focus of its consumer stakeholders. This is a technique that reoccurs in the SNS, with M&S posting details of ‘money off deals’ and ‘price promotions’, amongst product information and ethical messaging. In embedding Plan A into product attributes, M&S’ morality is manifested in economic activity, as opposed to the knowledge-building approach seen at the Co-op. Morality is thus contingent upon consumption; ‘doing good by shopping.’

6.3.2.4 Sainsbury's

Discursive moralisation occurs in Sainsbury's SNS in relation to the organisation's 'live well for less' corporate ethos and a discourse of 'British food is best.' Nationalistic discourse (see Vaara, 2002; Vaara & Tienari, 2008) becomes as a form of moralisation, with posts commenting, "*British asparagus is the best in the world*", "*See how our Dairy Farmers came up with lots of clever ideas to look after their cows and secure a long future for their British Farms*", and "*Give us a LIKE to celebrate British Food Fortnight.*". Reinforcing the connection between the retailer and British sourcing develops the notion that morality and British-ness are treated somewhat synonymously at Sainsbury's. In this sense, the utilitarian discourse is abstracted to a more macro level than that seen at Lidl and M&S, e.g. buying British/local produce provides a 'better quality' product (consumer benefit), which in turn supports farmers (producer benefit) and also supports the British economy (societal benefit). This, once again, emphasises the 'win-win' (outcome) associated with enlightened self-interested perspectives around morality and reinforces the moral duties of consumers. Sainsbury's moralisation is also directly tied to *British* altruistic causes. Posts such as, "*Please donate food to food banks, poverty in the UK is growing and this is Christmas. Celebrate with a gift to the poor*", emphasise the societal responsibilities of interlocutors in the SNS. These campaigns build implicit messaging around healthy and active lifestyles and a connection with British culture. Therefore, in the Sainsbury's context, discursive moralisation organises CSR as a conduit to national outcomes.

6.3.2.4 Moralisation Summary

Whilst broadly interpreted across the SNSs, moralisation refers to either instrumental discourses of ethical ‘egoism’ or more morally-grounded discourses of utilitarianism. It is the instrumental discourses that receive considerable focus at Lidl, M&S and Sainsbury’s, embedding morality in consumer value and quality propositions and a sense of ‘Britishness’, respectively. This emphasises the commercial and marketing nature of discourse in these SNSs, which is ultimately tied to product and service offerings and consumer participation. The utilitarian discourse seen at the Co-op instead builds upon democracy and community, suggesting a broader interpretation of morality in the Co-op SNS. These discursive strategies highlight the various ways in which organisations normalise their approaches to CSR and lay foundations for centripetal forces through dialogic interaction.

6.3.3 Organisational Discourse: Summary

Having explored the discursive processes through which organisations engage in legitimation processes in their SNSs, it can be summarised that organisations discursively *normalise* their CSR actions through a focus upon consistency and/or conformity, and *moralise* their activities by drawing upon idiosyncratic organisational values (Erkama & Vaara, 2010; Vaara & Tienari, 2008). All four retailers embed discourses in societal expectations (existing exemplarity), with the Co-op most markedly normalising temporal consistency through reference to retrospective and prospective exemplarity as an ‘industry leader’

(rather than conformist). Therein, moralisation relates to democracy and inclusion at the Co-op (moral legitimacy), whereas Lidl, M&S and Sainsbury's draw on more instrumental forms of moralisation. Aside from these differences, a core similarity running through the SNSs is the presentation of authoritative organisational 'frames' (Kuhn, 2008), where the SNS is treated in a similar fashion to 'old' forms of media (i.e. transmitting information to interlocutors). This is exemplified by reference to organisational artefacts (internal intertextuality) in order to normalise organisational activity further. However, all retailers display appetites for more dialogical engagement, either by engaging interlocutors in content (e.g. "*Have a try yourself...*"), encouraging 'likes' (e.g. Lidl and CLIC Sergeant) or promoting consumption activities (e.g. M&S' Shwopping). The next section interrogates discursive processes of normalisation and mythologisation and crucially, the interactive engagement *between* organisations and interlocutors, as part of centripetal forces of legitimation.

6.4 Organisation-Stakeholder Discourse: Normalisation & Mythologisation

This section presents the discursive and dialogical processes engaged in by both organisations *and* stakeholders as part of legitimation processes. The section builds upon the aforementioned discussion of normalisation, but in comparison to Section 6.3, here normalisation is reactive as stakeholders as well as organisations are also included (6.4.1). The emergent process of 'mythologisation' (6.4.2) (see van Leeuwen, 2007; Vaara et al., 2006, Vaara & Tienari, 2008) is also outlined. These themes are now discussed in turn.

6.4.1 Reactive Normalisation

Section 6.3.1 adeptly defined normalisation as a process relating to retrospective, existing and prospective exemplarity (Vaara et al., 2006). This section examines discursive normalisation as a *reactive* process between organisations and interlocutors in dialogue, examining how organisations and stakeholders participate in centripetal forces through dialogue. This is broadly related to a unifying process of ‘perceiving future changes’ through continual monitoring of environments, and ‘protecting past accomplishments’ through “developing a defensive stockpile of supportive beliefs, attitudes and accounts” (Suchman, 1995:595). Evidence of enhancing existing accomplishments is also seen in the organisational SNSs, as well as strategies of reward and repetition around conformity. These approaches are now discussed for each organisational SNS, with further examples provided in Appendix 3.

6.4.1.1 The Co-operative

Reactive normalisation occurs by both organisational and stakeholder actors in the Co-op SNS in response to questions surrounding the organisation’s CSR approach (actions) or values (intentions). The extract below, between the Co-op and five interlocutors, exemplifies legitimation processes around the ‘Plan Bee’ theme (Co-op campaign to protect the bee population). In illuminating processes of naturalisation, the Co-op’s post sets out a prospective intention and future challenge (reversal of the declining bee population) supported by a current action or ‘existing accomplishment’ (creation of meadows). Once this

approach receives challenge from Paul and Anton, Jessica, on behalf of the Co-op, passes the comment on to the 'Plan Bee' offline team (potentially taking forward the suggestion). However, as Sue's post probes Co-op further ("...would you hold training courses for bee-keeping at all co-op?"), Jessica protects past accomplishments by providing a link to supporting evidence ("we have run courses over the last few years"), referencing current action, and highlighting prospective exemplarity (courses next year). This exchange is met with reward in the shape of 'smiley face' emoticons to project happy emotions, congratulatory words ("well done all involved :-)") and supportive statements. The interaction is characterised by questions and answers, reflecting a dialogic relationship (Bakhtin, 1986) and reinforces the Co-op's values of openness, honesty and care (Chapter 5). Therein, the Co-op's frame of inclusiveness appears to be maintained, highlighting how discursive normalisation occurs in processes of legitimation.

Co-op: *The Co-operative Funeralcare joins Plan Bee's bid to reverse bee decline in the UK through the creation of eleven acres of new wildflower meadows...*

Paul: *We need more training to increase the number of experienced beekeepers and thorough scientific reasearch to study bee health issues*

Anton: *yes agree with Paul- training is a big issue, loads more disease spreading this year because of people not knowing how to look after bees properly! maybe work a bit closer along side local assosiations?*

Co-op: *Hi Paul, Anton - thanks for your comments. I've passed them on to the Plan Bee team – Jessica*

Sue: *Actually thats the point, would you hold training courses for bee-keeping at all co-op?*

Co-op: *Hi Sue - we have run courses over the last few years (you can read some blogs by our trainee beekeepers here:*

*<http://on.coop/qXG5fU>). We'll announce any new **Plan Bee** activity in spring 2012, but in the meantime, for details of local beekeeping associations in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland please see the link at the bottom of this page of our website: <http://on.coop/nF6ubV> - Jessica*

Frank: *hi Jessica I farm bees commercially and have contacts in north of England willing to help with beek training, in line with fera guidelines*

Sue: *thanks Jessica! =D*

Janey: *an inspiring initiative ... well done all involved :-)*

Co-op: *Hi Frank, we already have trainers for the urban beekeeping courses we are still running but please send you details to campaigns@co-operative.coop in case we do anymore - Jessica*

Additionally, the Co-op boosts its industry leading credentials through juxtaposing its (high) CSR performance with the perceived (low) CSR performance of other UK retailers in line with (non)conformity. The post below evidences how the Co-op works against conformity, carving itself out as an authority on palm oil as well as consumer relationships:

The Co-op: *Hi Katie. We use sustainable palm oil as detailed at this webpage:<http://www.co-operative.coop/food/ethics/Environmental-impact/Sustainable-Palm-Oil/> We also label honestly whereas legally most companies will list it as vegetable oil meaning you won't know! Hope that helps? Heidi, Food team.*

Although Heidi does not specifically mention a particular retailer in the post, her statement conveys transparent Co-op operations in contrast to more general, opaque industry-consumer relations. Her reference to the Co-op's webpage reinforces the organisation's authority position and her creative use of punctuation, coupled with the invitation to ask more ("Hope that helps?"), espouses honesty and openness in comparison to the majority ("most companies"). However at times, conformity is also presented in a positive

light. Chris' post below, for example, captures the malleability of conformity as he congratulates the organisation for aligning with industry norms and the actions of M&S, Lidl and Morrison's in bringing in CCTV in slaughterhouses. In doing so, he casts those that do not conform to this (high) industry line (Tesco and Asda) in a negative light and praises the Co-op on both a moral and instrumental basis ("*You, Co-op, will get all my money!!!*"). Reactive normalisation at the Co-op thus rests squarely upon both organisations and stakeholders protecting past and existing accomplishments and reinforcing the 'non-conformist' line.

*Chris: Can you feel the love Co-op??? Now that you, M & S, Lidl and Morrisons are getting CCTV put in the slaughterhouses we only have to concentrate on the giants, Tesco and Asda...who so far won't. It's their loss though and your gain.... I will spend no more money in Tesco or Asda until they get CCTV in. You, Co-op, will get all my money!!!!
xxxx*

6.4.1.2 Lidl

Within the Lidl Facebook page, reactive normalisation occurs through the protection of existing accomplishments (as identified in 6.3.1). Interlocutor queries, often treated as 'feedback', and are continually closed down in the SNS for potential action 'behind the scenes', with statements such as, "*We always welcome customer comments and feedback, which we always pass on to the relevant department. Thank you for feeding back :-)*". Whilst at times this approach is challenged (see Chapter 7), there is acceptance of this approach, where stakeholders assume that the comment will be 'dealt with' by the 'relevant department.' This pertains to trust and reciprocity between the

organisation and stakeholders. On the occasions when Lidl does provide a response, discourse reinforces reciprocity by building on Lidl's low price promise and instrumental approach to moralisation. As exemplified below, friendly cues including kisses (x) and smiley faces (:-)) reinforce positive relations between Lidl and its interlocutors ("so that's great news! Thanks"), representing discursive alignment:

*Jackie: what is your definition of 'free range chicken' please? it's just they are **incredibly cheap, half the price of other supermarkets**. How can they be free range? thanks x*

*Lidl: Hi Jackie, **Our free range chickens are indeed free range, it's just we always aim to keep our prices as low as possible for our customers :-)** You can also find out more about our commitment to British farming, and the Red Tractor scheme, by visiting this link here: www.lidl.co.uk...*

*Jackie: Thank you, yes I'm familiar with the red tractor scheme, just wanted to check on free range, **so that's great news! Thanks x***

While Lidl shies away from benchmarking its approach to CSR in relation to other retailers, if prompted, the organisation shows alignment to industry 'norms', appealing to conformity. The post below indicates how Lidl 'tows the industry line' on genetically modified organisms (GMO) and conveys a sense of collective responsibility (as highlighted in the statement, "as are the majority of UK retailers".) This approach is in fact, used by a number of the other case organisations to highlight an industry position on this CSR issue (for example see the M&S post below). These posts indicate the complex struggle operating between differentiation and conformity in legitimation processes:

*Lidl: Hi Lizzie, Due to global farming **we are finding it increasingly difficult, as are the majority of UK retailers**, to guarantee that imported crop used for animal feed does not also contain GM crop. With this in mind, we are unable to guarantee that all our products are produced using 100% GM free animal feed.*

M&S: *Hi Bill, the supply of non-GM animal feed (maize and soy) has shrunk to a point where it is no longer possible for us to specify non-GM animal feed. **Other retailers have already moved to this position** and GM animal feed is now so common that the vast majority of meat, poultry, dairy & eggs – over 80% sold in the UK is fed on a GM diet...Thanks, Charlie*

6.4.1.3 Marks and Spencer

Similar to M&S' lack of focus upon retrospective exemplarity, discursive naturalisation occurs in the M&S Facebook page through reference to existing and prospective accomplishments. Statements such as, "*our principles are simple; we trace it, so you can trust it*" and "*I can assure you our commitment to only using non-GM food ingredients remains the same*" appear in response to questions about M&S' use of GMO revealing how the organisation engages in processes of legitimation. In dialogues on the topic of animal welfare, we also see how external interlocutors support M&S. As demonstrated below, Shelley initiates conversation on animal testing and rather than closing the post down with a standard response (e.g. "*we will pass your suggestion on to the relevant team*"), Chris provides positive reinforcement:

Shelley: *Hi M&S, please can you **make more of the fact that you don't test products on animals?** I think if more people thought about it they would much prefer to purchase cosmetics and household items that say they haven't been tested on animals! It is my resolution for 2013! Thanks*

M&S: *Hi Shelley, this is a **really good resolution and maybe we should raise more awareness** about our BUAV approved products. **You're certainly helping :)** Good luck, Chris <http://bit.ly/NXvoWQ>*

Shelley: *I would have tried your products much sooner if I would have known! This would **CERTAINLY set you apart from the other high street shops** that sell cosmetics! One major competitor I spoke to didn't even know what the BUAV leaping bunny symbol meant! It makes marketing sense.*

Bella: M & s cosmetics are fantastic! Better even than YSL (which i used to buy) and even better that they are BUAV approved. Go M & S!!

By discursively normalising its ‘listening’ credentials, M&S is met with reward and recognition of its activities, with Shelley and Bella discursively placing the organisation on a higher moral ground than “*other high street shops*” and luxury brands. The post, however, also reveals the use of symbolic ‘management’ (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990) as in suggesting “*maybe we should raise more awareness...*”; M&S provides intention rather than action or evidence of ‘aspirational CSR’ (Christensen et al., 2013). M&S’ further engages in legitimation when interlocutors discursively reward the ‘leadership’ credentials of the organisation (“*Well done for being the first major retailer to meet your sustainability targets...*”). Note the repetition of the word ‘first’ in Briny’s post below, which supports M&S’ ‘non-conformist’ approach to industry norms:

*Brenny: I work for Markies, and we have old nothing but free range eggs, and had **nothing but free range** in our quiches and sandwiches etc for yeas. **We were the first. And we were the first** to give you fair-trade coffee as standard in our coffee shops without paying any extra. and tea (and its organic). and we have done that for 6 years at least, I’ve worked in the coffee shop for 6 years. and now our coffee is fair trade, organic AND rainforest alliance certified. And NOW, I sound like a total suck-up!! I am not, but I am proud of certain aspects of the company. Not all, though!!*

6.4.1.4 Sainsbury’s

In order to normalise its approach to CSR within legitimation processes, Sainsbury’s discursively naturalises its CSR activities by protecting present accomplishments. The organisation also rebuffs questions that misalign with

this approach, employing ‘symbolic management’ approaches through voicing intention (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). This is seen through posts including, “thank you for your feedback, I will pass this on to the relevant team”, “I will make our relevant team aware of this” and “I will pop a request through to the store manager now”. This dynamic is brought to life in the following interaction between Emily and Sainsbury’s around the topic of local sourcing:

***Emily:** Can you tell me why yesterday I can only find runner beans from Kenya none from the uk?*

***Sainsbury’s:** Hi Emily, I’m sorry if you can’t find them at your store. We source from Kenya and the UK. Which store do you shop at and **I’ll check.** Nick*

***Emily:** [reveals store]*

***Sainsbury’s:** Hi Emily, thanks for your patience. I’ve spoken to the store and they’ve told me that **because of the season** they only have these beans from Morocco and Kenya at the moment. Nick.*

***Emily:** Sorry I’m not understanding the UK runner bean season is June through to September, its now 7th July and they are not in the store?*

***Sainsbury’s:** Hmmm, maybe the store are wrong. **I’ll go speak to the Buyer. I’ll post again as soon as I can.** Likely to be early in the week though, as can’t speak to them at the weekend. Nick.*

***Emily:** Thats fine thank you, the ones from kenya were very nice but would prefer british while they are in season*

***Sainsbury’s:** Hi Emily, our buyers have confirmed that we’ll be getting British runner beans in store from the end of the week. **There’s been a supply issue with these but this has been rectified and we’ll have some in soon.** Hope this helps. Will.*

***Emily:** I have no runner beans in my garden yet - so maybe the season is delayed due to the weather recently.*

Emily here rationally builds upon Sainsbury’s support for British sourcing and the interaction presents insight into reactive normalisation in three ways. Firstly, the responsive nature of Nick and Will’s actions (e.g. *Which store do*

you shop at and I'll check", and *"I'll go speak to the Buyer. I'll post again as soon as I can"*) reflect discursive interest and response on the part of the organisation. Secondly, in transparently stating, *"Hmmm, maybe the store are wrong"*, Nick personalises the organisation and admits miscommunications, appearing reassuring yet non-committal (aligning with Sainsbury's 'consumer sovereignty' narrative highlighted below). Finally, Emily appears to leave satisfied from the exchange, showing a trusting and reciprocal relationship between herself and the retailer. This interaction presents a valuable example of discursive legitimation processes at work in the Sainsbury's SNS as part of centripetal forces, and crucially offers evidence of on-going dialogical dialogue (characterised by questions and answers).

6.4.1.5 Reactive Normalisation Summary

In interaction with interlocutors, Lidl continues to reactively normalise its existing CSR accomplishments through conforming to prescriptive industry norms and practices (e.g. GMO), emphasising alignment and unification. M&S, Sainsbury's and the Co-op, however, protect both existing and past accomplishments, with M&S and the Co-op continuing to build positionalities as industry leaders (non-conformists). Here we see how both the organisations and interlocutors engage in processes of legitimation through dialogic interaction and centripetal forces, which include, questioning and answering, positive reinforcement (e.g. *"well done all involved"*), friendship cues (:-)) and embodied organisational language in stakeholder posts (internal intertextuality) (e.g. Brenny's reference to 'first' in the M&S SNS). These elements suggest

aligned discourse in organisational and interlocutor approaches to discursive normalisation.

6.4.2 Mythologisation

Mythologisation, also termed narrativisation or mythopoesis, refers to evidencing acceptable, appropriate or preferential behaviour in story form (Vaara et al., 2006). The strategy contrasts with rationalisation approaches, by drawing upon more descriptive forms of argumentation and vivid and emotive imagery (see Du & Viera, 2012). Discursive narrativisation presents “specific, coherent and creative re-descriptions of the world” (Humphreys & Brown, 2008:405) and offers a rich discursive approach for understanding centripetal forces in legitimation. In organisational contexts, mythologisation is most often used to build narratives around rewarding ‘legitimate’ actions and punishing ‘non-legitimate’ actions with stories conveying winners and losers; heroes and villains; and themes of optimism and pessimism (Vaara et al., 2006; van Leeuwen, 2007). However all narratives are open to multiple interpretations (Kuhn, 2008), and whilst evidence of mythologisation is seen across the SNSs, it is interpreted to differing ends. This strategy is now explored in the four organisational ‘texts’, identifying intertextual connections between organisational and interlocutor discourses (Fairclough, 1995; Kristeva, 1980) as part of centripetal forces. Further examples are also provided in the Appendices.

6.4.2.1 The Co-operative

Within the Co-op's SNS, the organisation and interlocutors discursively reinforce a 'citizenship' myth. Citizenship narrativisation suggests that organisations construct stories around their roles as 'civil actors' and are thus "best placed to determine political agendas and deliver social and environmental needs" (Wright & Nyberg, 2013:2). Through the aforementioned approaches to (reactive) normalisation and moralisation, and the values identified in Chapter 5, the Co-op metonymically constructs the notion that it is focussed upon the betterment of environment and society as part of legitimation processes. Support for the myth of citizenship is seen through narrativisation around the Co-op as a moral 'hero' which allows interlocutor participation in governance, but also protects and enhances political, social and civil rights (Matten & Crane, 2005). For example, whilst the introduction of 'modesty wraps' on 'lads mags' (male magazines) is seen by some as a form of censorship by the Co-op, Jane's post below mythologises around a view of the Co-op as enabling freedom of choice:

Jane:** Thank you for taking the step to introduce modesty bags on lads mags. I know there are some that will complain that this step doesn't go far enough - **I don't think so, people should be allowed to make choices** that others find disagreeable (smoking, drinking, getting tattoos, buying porn... **life would be dull if we all agreed all the time**) but keeping those kind of pernicious images away from kids and indeed from people like me who find the casual objectification of women by the media to be offensive, its so easy! **And yet other retailers have been resistant to making tiny steps to make it happen. Kudos to you.

Evidence of organisation and interlocutor alignment around the citizenship 'myth' is also manifest in camaraderie, which is highly visible in the Co-op's

'Plan Bee' dialogues. Interlocutors adapt song lyrics ("*the bees are back in town, the bees are back in town*"), post photograph of bees, use emoticons and expressions to convey happy emotions (e.g. ☺, :), 'lol'), use descriptive and emotive language ("*colourful wildflowers*", "*wonderful initiative*") and use kisses to express affection or friendship (xx). Reinforcement of shared language cues also emphasises embodied organisational discourse in the interlocutor posts. Statements such as, "*I hope Co-op will bee part of this once more...*" (building upon the Co-op's 'Plan Bee' campaign and its reference to "*market beesearch*"), as well as direct reporting of Co-op's organisational artefacts, support and maintain legitimation processes, and crucially reflect reciprocity in organisation-stakeholder interactions.

*Ben: Just wanted to thank you guys for your Plan Bee campaign. This is a great idea and one I fully support. I'm proud to be a customer. It's good to see a supermarket **doing something truly beneficial for the environment, and by extension, all of us.** <http://www.co-operative.coop/corporate/Press/Press-releases/Headline-news/Bee-roads-to-act-as-main-routes-for-pollinators/>*

6.4.2.2 Lidl

Mythologisation in the Lidl SNS is much more implicit than that seen in the Co-op SNS and focuses predominantly upon a myth of consumer sovereignty. Lidl's duty of care spans from quality of products, to value for money, but safety remains a key concern for interlocutors in a number of macro-CSR themes (e.g. faulty fireworks causing injury, GMOs harming health). The consumers' needs are seen as primary, with many posts pertaining to the notion that the 'customer is always right.' In this sense, legitimation revolves around

discourses of protection and the two examples below highlight how Lidl reinforces the myth of sovereignty against accusations of faulty products. Adopting a more serious tone than the majority of Lidl posts (“*Good Morning Lidlors!*”), Lidl reassures interlocutors (“*we would like to assure you that this has been looked into as a matter of priority*”) through repetition (“*The Aquila fireworks have been thoroughly tested*”, “*Stringent tests carried out on these fireworks*”), reference to institutionalised guidelines (“*performance qualities of the European conformity certificate*”), direct reporting and crucially, by building on the customer satisfaction promise, providing details for customer refunds. The posts demonstrate Lidl’s focus upon conformity to societal expectations and the reference to financial compensation consistently reinforces the retailer’s instrumental focus:

Lidl: Hi Kelly

Thank you for your feedback regarding the Aquila fireworks. We have taken all comments from our customers onboard and would like to assure you that this has been looked into as a matter of priority.

The Aquila fireworks have been thoroughly tested at every stage of production and meet all required standards and performance qualities of the European conformity certificate.

Stringent tests carried out on these fireworks revealed no anomalies in performance or quality, however should any customers wish to discuss receiving a refund on their purchase, please contact our Customer Services Team on 0870 444 1234 or via the online contact form here: www.lidl.co.uk/cps/rde/xchg/lidl_uk/hs.xsl/6491.htm.

Such ‘expectations’ around protection are further manifest in the interaction below. The topic of genetically modified organisms (GMO) creates a huge amount of narrativisation within the Lidl SNS, and across all the SNSs, as Monsanto (GMO producer) is constructed as the industry ‘villain’, and retailers as the (potential) ‘heroes’ in preventing GMO in their supply chains. Sheila discursively reinforces the protection narrative (“*This is an area where so*

many people are becoming increasingly worried”) and lays down the baton for Lidl to become a ‘winner’ and the ‘first’ retailer to “*take this issue seriously*”. Indeed in referring to ‘safe’ products, Sheila insinuates that products using GMO are harmful, suggesting the importance of action in processes of legitimisation (prospective accomplishments). In response, Lidl employs symbolic management (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990) through conforming to societal values (aligning with industry norms). In this vein, the interaction presents an example of mythologisation around prospective industry practice:

Sheila: *Can Lidl UK assure it’s customers that it does not stock products that contain GMO ingredients nor meat or animal products which have been feed on GM crops?*

Lidl: *Hi Sheila, We work closely with our meat and dairy suppliers to ensure they use non-genetically modified crops in their feed where possible. Due to global farming we are finding it increasingly difficult, as are the majority of UK retailers, to guarantee that imported crop used for animal feed does not also contain GM crop. With this in mind, we are unable to guarantee that all our products are produced using 100% GM free animal feed. We can guarantee, however, that products from our organic range, such as milk and eggs, are free from GM feed.*

Sheila: *Thanks for the response. This is an area where so many people are becoming increasingly worried. The first supermarkets that take this issue seriously and start insisting on the labelling of GM free products as well as encouraging farmers to choose GM free animal protein and therefore offering more ‘safe’ food products, will be winners! I look forward to Lidl being one of the first.*

6.4.2.3 Marks and Spencer

In line with Lidl, M&S also projects the consumer sovereignty narrative, but here the focus is less on price and more on a ‘better’ product offering. Mythologisation is embodied through a commitment to quality and consistency in the organisation’s products and services, wherein the organisation’s CSR

agenda results in instrumental consumer benefit. M&S posts promise adherence to “*the high standards that you expect from us;*” delivery of products, “*with the quality that you expect every time;*” that the “*quality or provenance of the food that you buy from M&S will not be affected*” (by GMO); and a continued use of “*optimum packaging for our products which takes into consideration the raw materials used, the carbon footprint and the reduction of food waste*”. This dynamic is visible in the dialogue below on animal welfare, which illustrates how both M&S and interlocutors mythologise around the notion that moral activity leads to higher quality and a better product. Shaun’s response “*And of course knowing that i didn’t cause animals horrific suffering makes me feel better*”, particularly illuminates this strategy:

M&S: Cast your vote! M&S has been shortlisted for the RSPCA People’s Choice Supermarket Award which is part of the RSPCA Good Business Awards. These recognise the very best businesses that go the extra mile to ensure animal welfare is a top priority. Find out more about why we’ve been shortlisted and vote here www.independent.co.uk/voterspca

Jenny: I think this is fantastic!! Wish more companies cared like M&S do! Btw, I really think you need to shout more about your ethics!! Most people don’t know that all your cosmetics, toiletries and cleaning products are BUAV approved...you should make more of that Leaping Bunny logo!! x

Shaun: I totally agree Jenny. I no longer yes any product that is tested on animals. Why continue to feed fat global companies like smyth,Klein & beecham, Johnston, procter n gamble. When we have the likes of m&s the co op who are all BUAV approved. I love m&s toiletries a little goes long way and my hair skin etc look better. And of course knowing that i didn’t cause animals horrific suffering makes me feel better. Btw loving the gelatin free Percy pigs tried them first time last week, already hooked :)

Eddie: First for customer service, too! Manager Angela in the food dept at [store name] was a gem yesterday helping us with some superb wines for our fundraising dinner for World Child Cancer. ‘Pointing out award-winning wines at big discounts. Finding money-off vouchers to give us excellent bargains. Five star service!’

In emphasising the interdiscursive nature of the SNSs, intertextual connections (Fairclough, 1995; Kristeva, 1980) are identified between M&S and its interlocutors. In the posts below, the malleability of the term ‘quality’ is demonstrated, relating it to a ‘better’ product (in food and clothing), higher price (reinforcing the luxury image of the store in food retail), consistency (“*don’t ever change*”), and ethicality (British produce is higher quality). M&S is seen as being synonymous with quality (“*M & S is quality*”). Furthermore, embodied organisational discourse is apparent in Kas’s post, which reinforces one of M&S’ most iconic adverts (“*its not just food its M&S food*”). Mythologisation in the M&S SNS is vividly tied to the organisation’s core values and builds upon existing and *past* accomplishments, contrasting with the organisation’s lack of retrospective normalisation (see 6.3.1).

Ramesh: *I love M&S good quality food, My family trust you and the products you sell, the quality has always been wonderful*

Jane: *M & S is quality. I tend to wait for the sales to get my clothes and i am never disapointed with my purchases.*

Greg: *Great food and please don’t ever change the quality cos i love it*

Kas: *food its not just food its M&S food ,you can not beat it for quality,taste*

Lily: *M and s is a great quality store..its ethical and the food is top notch and mostly british..*

6.4.2.4 Sainsbury’s

Despite Sainsbury’s scale as the UK’s second largest supermarket (after Tesco), interlocutors in Sainsbury’s SNS mythologise around the retailer as

being smaller and distinct from the ‘other big supermarkets’ (predominately Asda and Tesco) and thus performing above industry norms. Across Sainsbury’s dialogues a moral hierarchy is alluded to with retailers such as M&S, the Co-op and Sainsbury, occupying the higher moral rungs; low cost retailers such as Netto, Lidl, Morrisons and Asda inhabiting the lower rungs. Tesco is most often represented as the industry ‘villain’, and interlocutors discursively juxtapose Tesco’s (unethical) actions with Sainsbury’s (ethical) actions. This reflects the discursive comparative techniques and the benchmarks interlocutors use to judge ‘good’ organisational performance. As seen in the posts below on animal welfare, interlocutors and Sainsbury’s narrativise around notions of trust and transparency. The interlocutors discursively normalise Sainsbury’s as the industry ‘hero’ and evidence their claims with reference to newspaper reports (external intertextuality) and Sainsbury’s own organisational artefacts (internal intertextuality):

***Nishal:** Sainsbury’s meat is not halal. Only Taiba brand meat which is only sold in select stores. Tesco and possibly Asda however **do without telling you** as mentioned.*

<http://help.sainsburys.co.uk/help/products/halal-meat>

***Isabelle:** I trust Sainsbury’s meat over Tesco and Asda. Sainsbury’s was one of the few supermarkets not caught up in Horse meat saga I learned today. <http://news.sky.com/story/1066638/horsemeat-free-sainsburys-sees-sales-boost>*

***Jan:** Thnak god Sainsbury’s food does not contain horse! Tesco should be ashamed of themselves.*

Through narrativisation, Sainsbury’s and the interlocutors creatively engage in processes of legitimation in the SNSs. For example, poetry is a popular tool used by interlocutors, (e.g. “I’ve got a campaign song for a potential line of

clothing that doesn't use gender stereotypes to dictate to small children their choices in life....") and personal storytelling is encouraged (e.g. "It's World Environment Day, so tell us, what are your top tips to make the most of your leftovers and avoid the waste bin?"). Interlocutors also narrativise around their trust of Sainsbury's (in comparison to retailers such as Tesco), rewarding the organisation for its unique values and supporting the organisation in legitimisation processes. Below, Sara uses storytelling to document her moment of in-store reflection:

Sara:** This morning as I was coming out of Sainsbury's [name of store] I noticed a little boy studying the magazine display, presumably while waiting for a parent at the checkout. I looked at all the magazines, top shelves and all, and thought, **that's a major reason I shop in Sainsbury's rather than Tesco - no porn, aka "lads' mags". Thank you, Sainsbury's

6.4.2.5 Mythologisation Summary

Akin to moralisation, mythologisation is also a highly heterogeneous strategy across the SNSs, being related to citizenship in dialogues at the Co-op, safety at Lidl, quality at M&S and small-scale at Sainsbury's. As identified previously, Lidl, M&S and Sainsbury's draw on more instrumental discourses, whereas the Co-op's discourses are tied more to the moral than the commercial context. Whilst the ways in which narrativisation occurs differs by organisational 'text', there is homogeneity in the dialogic features of organisation-stakeholder interaction and reciprocity in storytelling (e.g. embodied organisational discourse) through organisation-stakeholder legitimisation processes across the SNSs. Therein, mythologisation and the use of

the SNS space for personal reflection and narrativisation represents harmony between organisations and interlocutors and contributes to our understanding of the features of discourse as part of centripetal forces.

6.4.3 Organisation-Stakeholder Discourse: Summary

Through exploring how both organisations and stakeholders engage in processes of legitimation, this section has revealed how the actors discursively (and reactively) *normalise* CSR actions through a focus upon consistency and/or conformity, and *mythologise* activities through constructing narratives around organisational activity. This section has thus examined the interactive context within which legitimation takes place through centripetal forces, characterised by shared organisation-stakeholder values and embodied organisational discourse. When questions do arise, they are often quickly resolved (see Jackie's interaction with Lidl in Section 6.3.1) or deflected with the blanket response appearing across the SNS ("*thanks for your comments, I've passed them on to the relevant team*"), suggesting evidence of 'symbolic management' in the organisational 'texts' (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). However, given alignment and unification of organisation-stakeholder discourse, this section has also provided crucial insight into the texture of discourse in SNSs; most specifically discursive processes of normalisation and mythologisation.

6.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has analysed how legitimisation takes place through organisational (6.3) and organisational-stakeholder (6.4) discourse, drawing upon examples from the SNSs and processes of (reactive) normalisation (6.3.1/6.4.1), moralisation (6.3.2) and mythologisation (6.4.2). In doing so, the chapter has analysed how discursive processes of legitimisation are managed between organisations and stakeholders and has identified a range of discursive and dialogical techniques utilised in the SNSs in line with Bakhtinian (1986) dialogism (Chapter 4). At the most basic level, evidence of questions and answers is present in all four of the SNSs demonstrating reciprocity and interaction. There is also evidence of language being used *performatively* through symbolic ‘management’ of legitimisation (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990) and embodied organisational discourse (Fairclough, 1995), for example when stakeholders reinforce organisational texts (internal intertextuality). Furthermore, in discussing CSR across retrospective, existing and prospective domains, *perpetuality* has been unveiled, and through reference to a broad range of stakeholder voices, *polyphony* is a key feature of the SNSs. In this chapter, dialogue largely resides around centripetal forces (Bakhtin, 1986; Baxter, 2004), building upon shared organisational frames and themes of unity, homogeneity and centrality. Table 17 summarises the key themes of normalisation, moralisation and mythologisation, emphasising similarities and differences between the retailers. Most specifically, the table presents the values of each organisation (discussed in Chapter 5) and the discursive process through which legitimisation is constituted in the SNSs. This provides a foundation upon which to explore centrifugal processes (Chapter 7).

| Retailer | Core Values | Organisational Discourse | | Organisation-Stakeholder Discourse | |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| | | Normalisation | Moralisation | Normalisation | Mythologisation |
| The Co-operative <i>Build a better society by excelling in everything we do</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness • Honesty • Social responsibility • Care | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrospective, Existing & Prospective Exemplarity • Non-conformist E.g. <i>'founded by the Rochdale Pioneers'</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic engagement • Supportive statements from range of stakeholders E.g. <i>'We would love to know...'</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceive future challenges and protect past / present accomplishments E.g. <i>Plan Bee dialogue</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect societal and civil rights E.g. <i>NMP3 dialogue</i> |
| Lidl <i>Where quality is cheaper</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer satisfaction • Outstanding value • Growth through expansion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing Exemplarity • Conformist E.g. <i>"comply with all EU and country specific regulations"</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent for low price • Few supportive statements E.g. <i>'Click 'Like' if you wouldn't mind saving a few pounds!'</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect present accomplishments E.g. <i>Animal welfare dialogue</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value for Money E.g. <i>Fireworks dialogue</i> |
| Marks & Spencer <i>Making aspirational quality accessible to all</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality • Value • Service • Innovation • Trust | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing & Prospective Exemplarity • Non-conformist/ Conformist E.g. <i>'we were the first retailer able to offer Non-GM products across all our range'</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent for quality and price • Supportive statements from celebrity role models E.g. <i>'Take part on our One Day Wardrobe Clear-Out and get a £5 voucher...'</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceive future challenges and protect present accomplishments E.g. <i>Animal testing dialogue</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent Quality E.g. <i>Animal testing dialogue</i> |
| Sainsbury's <i>Being the most trusted retailer where people love to work and shop</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best for food & health • Sourcing with integrity • Respect for environment • Difference to community • Great place to work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing Exemplarity E.g. <i>'Sainsbury's has a rigorous system of checks'</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British • Few supportive statements E.g. <i>'Please donate food to food banks, poverty in the UK is growing and this is Christmas. Celebrate with a gift to the poor'</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect present accomplishments E.g. <i>Local sourcing dialogue</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Values E.g. <i>Animal welfare dialogue</i> |

Table 17: Centripetal Forces in Organisation-Stakeholder Discourse

Chapter 7: Findings & Analysis

Legitimation: Centrifugal Forces

7.1 Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the discursive processes of legitimation engaged in by external stakeholders and broader interlocutors in response to Research Question 2: *how do stakeholders/interlocutors engage in discursive processes of legitimation through online CSR dialogue?* Through building insight into *how* stakeholders discursively disrupt processes of legitimation across the SNSs through centrifugal forces (difference, dispersion, decentring) (Bakhtin, 1986; Baxter, 2004), this chapter investigates discursive processes of *authorisation* (7.2), *demythologisation* (7.3) (contrasting with ‘mythologisation’ discussed in Chapter 6) and *carnivalisation*, building upon Bakhtin’s (1986) work on carnival (7.4). Whilst Chapters 6 and 8 are structured by organisation, this chapter discusses *stakeholder/interlocutor* strategies only and is thus organised by stakeholder approaches. This is due to distinct similarities being unearthed in the stakeholder strategies utilised across the SNSs. Distinctions are, however, made between organisational contexts where possible. The chapter concludes with a summary (7.5).

7.2 Authorisation

This section illuminates the processes through which interlocutors discursively authorise their voices within the polyphonic SNS environments. Through authorisation, legitimation occurs by reference to tradition, custom, law or institutional figures (respected members of society) (van Leeuwen, 2007) and in the SNSs of the Co-operative, Marks and Spencer, Lidl and Sainsbury's, interlocutors employ *personal authorisation* (7.2.1), using language to build credibility and *expert authorisation* (7.2.2) to assert discursive power around their assertions (Vaara et al., 2006, Vaara & Tienari, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2007). These form part of centrifugal (dividing) forces that act to destabilise the centripetal (unifying) forces discussed in Chapter 6. Each section is now discussed in turn, providing examples from each of the organisational 'texts' and a section summary (7.2.3). Further examples are also illustrated in Appendix 3.

7.2.1 Personal Authorisation

Personal authorisation draws upon individual identities, behaviours and experiences in a number of ways. Posts frequently begin with statements such as, "*As a customer...*", "*As an employee...*", "*As a farmer...*", "*As a woman...*" or "*As a Dad...*" to illustrate authoritative social roles and display an explicit connection between interlocutors and the organisation (e.g. "I shop at your stores" or "I work for your company"). This creates insight into the broad social roles of interlocutors in the SNSs and reflects how interlocutors

have access to multiple identity positions, in comparison to retailers whose identity positions are much less flexible. Personal authority is even averred through connection to others in positions of influence, e.g. “*my dad is a farmer*” and “*my parents are committed muslims*”, further illuminating the relational nature of personal authorisation. The following posts provide examples of this approach from each of the SNSs, with interlocutors discursively authorising their identities and affirming their ‘stakes’ in legitimisation processes:

Daniel: *As an ethical shopper...* (post to M&S from an interlocutor who asks for enhanced in-store information regarding ‘*animal cruelty free items*’)

Beverly: *As a concerned consumer...* (post to M&S from a consumer who expresses disappointment in the retailer terminating its non-GMO food range and demands more transparency on product labelling)

Geraldine: *As a British consumer...* (post to Lidl from an interlocutor who wants to make ‘*informed choices*’ about the meat she buys, requesting clearer labelling from Lidl around which meat products are Halal certified).

Rik: *As a committed and fervent islamist...* (post to Sainsbury’s which highlights the interlocutor’s objection to seeing magazines which display, “*women in short skirts and low cut tops in family friendly areas*” and asks for “*this sleaze [to be] eradicated from your stores*”)

Faye: *As an ordinary parent and woman...* (post to Co-op which states that ‘*lads mags*’ are porn and so should be placed on the ‘*top shelf*’, away from view).

In constructing individual credibility, rational requests are made for enhanced organisational CSR action (e.g. in providing more information), relating to commercial roles (e.g. as ‘consumers’ or ‘shoppers’) as well as broader social roles (e.g. ‘mother’ or ‘woman’) between organisations and interlocutors. These posts envelope social categories (such as gender or religion) in processes

of legitimisation, whereby purchasing products from particular retail outlets either supports or compromises the interlocutor's beliefs. The posts also convey a sense of interdependency and reciprocity in organisation-stakeholder interactions. In the case of the Co-op, interlocutors discursively draw upon the democratic governance model of the organisation and their roles as 'members' or 'shareholders', alongside their commercial and social roles. This grants further opportunities for discursive authorisation, as capturing in the post below, which reflects how authorisation is used as a lever to solicit action from the Co-op around the 'No More Page 3' campaign:

Jeannie: I am a Co-op member, I have a joint Co-op mortgage, smile more internet current account, smart saver a/c, Co-op ISA, Co-op car insurance, Co-op house insurance and because of my influence, my husband has a Co-op ISA and pensiojn scheme and my sons have Co-op ISAs and current a/c's.

In short I am a very loyal Co-op fan. Why? Because they are one of the main ethichal banks and financial organisations in the UK and a Co-op.

I do not agree with page 3 images of young naked women in The Sun. I think this undermines the respect and equal treatment that women deserve - and is part of everyday sexism against women.

The Co-op risks losing its credibility and customers like me who are with the Co-op mainly because of their ethical stance, if it continues its alliance with the Sun.

As exemplified in this post from Jeannie, personal authorisation is often utilised as a building block upon which a complaint can be made (e.g. "*I do not agree with page 3 images of young naked women in The Sun*") and an implicit or explicit request can be presented. In this case, the request is that the Co-op should stop selling 'The Sun' newspaper, with the added sanction that if the organisation does not listen to this request, its 'ethical credibility' will be tarnished and the retailer will lose customers. This approach, most often seen

in dialogues that require a substantive change in organisational practice (e.g. stopping the sale of GMO food, preventing sexism, etc.), demonstrates a clear disconnect between interlocutor expectations and current organisational practice. In this instance, through personal authorisation, the interlocutors build credibility or ‘ethos’ (e.g. Higgins & Walker, 2012), discursively constructing themselves as moral ‘expert’ subjects. Furthermore, Jeannie’s post appeals to the ‘right thing to do’, providing evidence of moralisation (as discussed in Chapter 6). Indeed, ethically and politically charged dialogues surrounding sexism and female objectification are littered with discursive reference to credible moral guardians. Here, interlocutors juxtapose their own (superior) moral evaluations with organisational (inferior) perceived moral activity, through legitimation processes. Alice’s post from the Sainsbury’s SNS below epitomises this approach. Alice authorises her stance (“*I am a woman, mother and wife*”), building a ‘balanced’ voice in the dialogue through reference to her female qualities (“*I have breasts*”) and ‘male’ traits (“*I can do DIY*”). From here, Alice’s opinion is embedded within broader societal debates surrounding gender, asserting her role as a mother with strong moral standards as her aim to “*fight for equality*”. Furthermore, in articulating her ambition to “*educate my children properly*”, Alice’s relationship with Sainsbury’s reflects traditional familial relations (mother-son/daughter) as opposed to organisation-consumer relations, reinforcing the nexus of Sainsbury’s responsibilities beyond the commercial domain.

Alice: ‘I am a woman, mother and wife..I have breasts, I work, can do basic maintenance on a car, DIY and everything a man can do. I can read a news paper and not be offended by a semi naked model who is always over the age minority and can be a student, a lawyer or any

*other professional showing that not only are they attractive but also intelligent. There can be a balance and these women prove it. **Fight for equality if these soft porn pictures of women offend then fight for the men too. Do not try and speak for all mothers as I for one have and will continue to educate my children properly about these things so that they are neither seen as smutty or oppressive.***

Whilst evidence of personal authorisation is visible across the SNSs, the approach is not always uniformly applied. At times, interlocutors discursively challenge individual authority positions to convey more normalised identities. This is seen through the use of the word ‘ordinary’ in Faye’s post above and a post to Sainsbury’s on the topic of gender representation in its stores which is signed off by, ‘*Mr Average Consumer x.*’ Here appeals are made from ‘mainstream’ (everyday) consumers, as opposed to an ethically sensitive niche minority. This approach is also indicative of a more collective form of personal authority, which is further exemplified through posts that replace the personal pronoun with ‘we.’ Indeed, interlocutors regularly assert a voice of similitude that is representative of a collective of individuals, e.g. “*Dear Mr Sainsbury, we as UK farmers...*”, refer to the number of people supporting a particular cause, e.g. “*Childs Eyes has over 6,000 supporters*”, or suggest that that they are a ‘representative’ of a marginalised voice e.g. “*I am an animal activist and I will always be a voice for all animals*”. This collective form of personal authority suggests that on occasion, posts are representative of an interlocutor majority that is absent from the online communicative environment. This approach also reinforces the broader, civic duties of interlocutor ‘citizens’ in acting as spokespeople for ‘the greater good.’ In building their personal authority in this way, interlocutors discursively assert their ‘rights’ to be

listened to by the retail organisations, and thus democratic principles of engagement (Habermas, 1984, 1996).

More rationalised approaches to personal authorisation are also visible in the dataset. For example, a technique popular across the SNSs is that of the ‘letter.’ Immediately at odds with the informal dynamics of social media interaction, these lengthy posts adopt the stylistic cues of more formal communication (e.g. *Dear Mr Sainsbury*) in an attempt to promote reasonable and logical arguments, around somewhat complex political contexts (e.g. the eradication of Page 3 in the Sun newspaper, or supporting British farmers). Ivor’s post below highlights this approach as he lists ‘facts’ in constructing his case, clearly stipulates desired actions (*‘show your support to UK agriculture by supporting logos that work’*), works against industry conformity (*“Stand out and be DIFFERENT”*) and alludes to mutual dependence (*“we support you, please support us”*). This post thus constructs a sense of interdependency between the retailers and the interlocutors and the point of ellipsis, or suspension point, perhaps suggests that this relationship is fragile or about to be altered in some way if his demands are not met.

*Ivor: Dear Mr Sainsbury, we as UK farmers working very hard to supply **the very best** home grown produce for you and other large retailers, we are very **dissappointed that you have dropped the Red Tractor logo** which was one one the few logos that married UK agriculture with the consumer. You state that you will continue to use the Union Flag as a guide but this is flawed - you or me can buy cheddar from Ireland/Canada/China (you get the picture) and so long as we cut and pack it here we are allowed to use the Union Flag on the product and call it British. Bacon, ham, cheese, other dairy produce can all carry the flag under current UK law. **Stand out and be DIFFERENT and show your support to UK agriculture by supporting logos that work** - in 20 years you will not be able to afford*

*the transport costs for fake UK foods but in the meantime your UK farmers will have thrown the towel in and the nation will wonder where their next meal is coming from. **Fact:** 1 in 3 meals we eat are imported! **Fact:** Family Dairy farms in the UK are at their lowest number ever! **Fact:** 26 million tonnes of food finds itself in landfill every year! Please reconsider and stand out from the rest, we support you, please support us...*

Conveying cooperative social roles, here personal authorisation functions to challenge organisational activities at scale (the organisation as a minority vs. interlocutors as a majority), but also allows reference to traditional markers of community activity, e.g. shared cultural property and beliefs (Cova & Dalli, 2009). In discursively strengthening individuals as societal spokespeople, posts espouse an, ‘us and them’ mentality, disrupting the centripetal forces discussed in Chapter 6. They also work to illuminate disconnections between the organisation and *society* (rather than a particular individual). This form of collective authorisation appears to be particularly prevalent in discussions of GMO, which occur across the SNSs. These posts from the M&S and Lidl SNSs highlight this dynamic, suggesting that disconnections between organisational strategies (GMO is an inherent part of the food chain) and societal expectations (GMO should not be part of the food chain) are a focal element of legitimisation processes. Posts such as these are regularly repeated and often use large amounts of text to enhance their physical presence (see Appendix 3):

***Angela:** I want to live!*

***We the undersigned** want you to supply food which is GMO free*

***We want you** to supply meat, fish, eggs and dairy products from animals fed a GM free diet*

***We want you** to source products from animals fed a natural, wholesome diet which is not genetically modified in any way*

***We don't want** transgenic DNA in the human food supply chain. Not anywhere.*

***We say No to GM** ingredients, derivatives, enzymes and animal feed*

*If you want **us** to buy food from **you** then listen to us & tell your suppliers. Angela.*

Dominic: I speak for everyone whether they want me to or not because I, and millions of others like me, are fighting to save this planet from the wilful destruction being caused by Monsanto and the other biotech companies. Fighting to ensure that **our children and their children** have a future that they can grow up **safely in...** So you see we, who are campaigning to prevent this happening before it is too late do speak for you and one day those of you that say we don't speak for you may be glad that we did.

Elise: I would just like to ensure that your food products still are, and will remain, free of genetically modified ingredients? This is very important as I, just like most of UK consumers, do NOT want GM-food.

***Please keep Britain GM-free!**
Thanks!*

7.2.2 Expert Authority

By reference to a range of human and non-human actors, interlocutors demonstrate their expertise in constructing arguments against organisations through processes of expert authorisation (van Leeuwen, 2007). Looking first at human actors, interlocutors discursively construct themselves as ‘experts’ in the SNSs through personal authorisation. Here, interlocutors draw upon academic achievements (e.g. *“I am a regular Sainsbury’s shopper and a professional woman (I have a PhD in mathematical logic and I am a Fellow of the Institute of Actuaries)...”*) and the ethical activities that they are engaged in (e.g. *“I recycle paper, cardboard, waste food ,plastics, clothing, newspaper, tins, glass and anything else possible, it make me feel that i have done my bit”*) to illuminate experience and construct themselves as informed, rational, trustworthy and credible individuals. In emphasising levels of education and

ethical behaviours in this way, traditional organisational authority positions are discursively contested. In the post below we see Melissa's intention to 'educate' not only her employer, but also "any customer who's willing to listen" to do "the right thing" on the topic of veganism:

Melissa: *Trust me Bella, every time I sell the leg off a defenceless lamb, or a slice of pig, I feel it. And the customers know it. I re-educate any customer who's willing to listen. I am in fact hoping to get a job in a local vegan shop, fairtrade of course. Unless of course you are willing to support myself and my family, because of course we can only do what we can do, and as a vegan I'm surely doing as much as I can. What are you doing to protect animals and your environment I wonder? Its often those who judge who are doing jack shit...And surely there is nothing wrong with encouraging my employer to do the 'right thing'...*

The notion of the interlocutor 'expert' is prevalent across the SNSs. The posts below from Lidl, M&S and Sainsbury's SNSs conjure up the sense of a research active interlocutor audience that are informed of the risks of GMO, know the 'facts' (e.g. GMO is, "only grown on 3.4 per cent of the world's agricultural land...") and are aware of the institutional frameworks within which the organisations are situated (e.g. legal mandates). Whilst posts such as these serve to provide recommendations on preferred courses of action, they also illuminate interlocutor expectations and the intricate ways in which discursive power struggles play out in processes of legitimation in the SNSs:

Sami: *... I would like to post you a film I have watched this morning about the use of GMOs. Its a documentary and after watching it I am horrified that we are allowing America to dictate to us. GMOs have not been properly tested and its plain from what I read daily that we are taking huge risks consuming it. Will see if I can forward it to you.*

Rinat: *I am very disappointed in your recent policy change to supply meat, fish, eggs and dairy products from animals fed GM food. Your*

*statements say there are problems with contamination and supply. **Having done some basic research** it seems clear there is enough GM free food to go around, after all, it is only grown on **3.4 per cent of the world's agricultural land...***

***Derek:** ...As a customer and a parent I do not understand why you have taken steps to screen the covers of mens lifestyle magazines that can cause controversy amongst customers (ref: **Mumsnet campaign re: lads mags**) however you still display newspapers with images as Ive uploaded on here, and inside containing further porn, which children can easily turn over to see as displayed at their height and not at all screened. **I know that you are legally within your rights to display newspapers as indeed you are to display lads mags,** but surely your approach with these newspapers is in not in the spirit of what a family friendly organisation should be doing. I am very much looking forward to your response...*

A popular approach through which interlocutors discursively construct 'expert' authorities is through reference to tradition. Building upon personal authorisation techniques, interlocutors use past and conditional tenses to reinforce their long-standing experiences with the organisations and work against approaches to retrospective exemplarity discussed in Chapter 6. This discursive process is seen only in the Co-op, M&S and Sainsbury's SNSs (see posts below), suggesting that with Lidl being a slightly newer player in the UK retail industry, there is less ethical heritage to build upon:

***Troy:** **M & S I have done my main shop once a week at m & s for about 10 years and also go about twice a week for odds and ends,** in [store name] we have a great recycling service but I am finding that, apart from cardboard most of your packeting is non recyclable... come on m& s we are doing our bit why you not doing yours, to much stuff non recyclable.*

Janet:** Dear Sainsburys, **I have done the bulk of my family shopping in your supermarket for about 20 years now,** however I shall be **transferring to the Co-op** until such time as you decide to exert some social responsibility and stop exposing young children and women to the Sun newspaper in your cafes. I can honestly say that I am extremely disappointed in the stance you have taken on this subject. **I expected

considerably better from a shop that has been heavily invested in other social developments.

Glen: It's weird really - I've always recommended the Co-Op as a bank as well, due it's ethical investment policy but having just read this today, I think I'll be withdrawing my support until they've seen sense...

http://www.atoshealthcare.com/news/news_coop_chooses_atos

Alongside building themselves as expert authorities, the interlocutors also refer to external human actors in the construction of expert authority. This relates to the notion of 'role model authorisation', whereby opinion leaders, as van Leeuwen (2007:95) argues, "adopt a certain kind of behaviour, or believe certain things [and this] is enough to legitimise the actions of their followers". Interlocutors discursively align with 'idealised' institutional figures such as sports stars, celebrities, academics and politicians in support of their assertions against organisational discourse. Whilst Chapter 6 identified the importance of celebrities in organisational framings, an alternative range of role-model individuals and institutions are offered by the interlocutors in the Co-op, M&S and Sainsbury's SNSs. There is, however, little evidence of expert authorisation by human actors in the Lidl SNS. Nevertheless in the three SNSs, contemporary moral 'heroes' represent a range of values across social and environmental issues and interlocutors reference academics (e.g. Dr Suzanne Wuerthele, US Environmental Protection Agency), members of the royal family (e.g. Prince Charles), journalists (e.g. Lucy Ann Holmes) and celebrities (e.g. Jessica Ennis-Hill) as symbolic resources to strengthen centrifugal forces:

Hugo: We are confronted with the most powerful technology the world has ever known, and it is being rapidly deployed with almost no thought whatsoever to its consequences." — Dr Suzanne Wuerthele, US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) toxicologist... (post to M&S

which encourages the organisation to cease its sale of products which include GMOs)

***Vicky:** DO you guys even Know what FOIE GRAS IS? How can you say you will pass somebodies enquiry to have it sold in your stores to the buyers....??? I am horrified at your response...I shall be withdrawing my support if this ever occurs.....(((... **HRH Prince Charles has banned it from the Royal Household,....** Would you like me to post some info for you and videos on this barbaric so called delicacy... It is banned from being produced in the UK, it can be imported , which is an outrage !! (post to Sainsbury's on the topic of animal welfare)*

***Jenny:** No more page 3 is not 'a front for a feminist organisation'. **It was set up by Lucy Ann Holmes when the day after Jessica Ennis Olympic success still the largest and most prominent image of a women in the sun was a topless woman. This sends out a message to girls (and boys) that women's only value is their appearance. It's rare to see a sexualised image of a man in the media but there are endless examples of sexualised women. See page3stories.org for some of the real harm this does** (post to Sainsbury's and interlocutors encouraging all to support the NMP3 movement).*

Additionally, non-human actors are constructed as 'expert' authorities. Reference is made to non-governmental organisations (e.g. Childs Eyes), countries (e.g. Sweden), newspapers (e.g. The Guardian), legislation (e.g. the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986) and consumer labels (e.g. RSPCA Freedom Food Labelling scheme) (see posts below) both explicitly and implicitly. Indeed through intertextuality including: direct/indirect reporting, narrative summarising, paraphrasing and providing website links, interlocutors personally authorise their experiences. We also see interlocutors negotiate 'accepted' sources of expert authority (e.g. The Guardian newspaper) and those that are more 'contentious' (e.g. The Daily Mail newspaper), further illuminating the resources that support legitimation and reflect the rich social tapestry within which the SNSs are embedded:

Belinda: *Childs Eyes are calling for the removal of the Sun Newspaper in the Sainsbury's cafes because children eat there and can be exposed to pornographic images. Sainsbury's have said that it does not plan to remove the Sun from it's cafes as it doesn't believe the customer wants this. Please let Sainsbury's know if you think that children should not have access to sexualised images of women. (Post to Sainsbury's encouraging the retailer and interlocutors to support NMP3)*

Johnny: *I'm worried re the health effects from supermarkets selling food that has GM ingredients ...including M&S now !!!!!*
"In Sweden, GM feed is no longer used at all, due to consumer pressure. In 2012, Turkey announced that GM-fed meat, milk and dairy products would be labelled"... (Post to M&S to encourage the retailer to cease the sale of GMO products)

Brent: *So are we going to trust pro GM companies like Monsanto who made the charming chemical weapons Agent Orange which has killed/maimed many hundreds of thousands of people, see **Guardian article***
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/feb/24/monsanto-agent-orange-west-virginia> (post to M&S on GMO)

Donna: *Claire, I would really suggest that you try and **source your information from reliable, neutral sources rather than believing what is posted in the Daily Mail.** The fact that they posted that article doesn't make it true. In fact, a **quick Google** shows that the Daily mail was the **ONLY** major newspaper to cover that story...* (Post to interlocutor in the Sainsbury's SNS in a discussion on animal welfare)

Faye: *The selling of Halal meat is **going against the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986.** It's a vile, depraved, and sadistic way to slaughter animals that doesn't belong in any Christian country. **When I became a Co-op member it was because of all the good Christian things they stood for !...*** (Post to Co-op on the topic of animal welfare, encouraging the organisation to ensure adequate meat labelling)

Frank: *rspca and earth nature should be included itsnot enough to **have red tractor** only says its british farmers and ive seen first hand how some of the animals are treated !!* (Post to Lidl in support of alternatives to Lidl's Red Tractor scheme)

7.2.3 Authorisation Summary

This section has demonstrated that personal authority is visible across the SNSs, highlighting how interlocutors discursively draw upon individual and

collective identities to illustrate informed and authoritative social positions in processes of legitimation. Credibility is built through constructing arguments around idiosyncratic moral value systems, as well as more normalised interlocutor identities, alongside their commercial relationships with the organisations (e.g. as consumers) and their broader social roles (e.g. as mothers, partners, etc.). Upon this foundation, rational claims are made to solicit organisational action, emphasising the rhetorical nature of personal authorisation in the SNSs. This section also illuminates how expert authorisation discursively levels organisational authority in the SNSs, overcoming the information asymmetries that have traditionally characterised organisation-interlocutor relationships. Interlocutors discursively construct themselves as expert educators, drawing upon their own moral credence, as well as external intertextuality, through reference to human and non-human symbolic resources throughout legitimation processes. Here a distinct organisational difference comes to light as reference is made to the heritage and ‘tradition’ of interlocutor relationships with Co-op, M&S and Sainsbury’s. The lack of reference to expert authorisation by tradition at Lidl suggests a much more recent organisation-interlocutor relationship. Authorisation thus provides a valuable discursive mechanism to fuel centrifugal forces across the SNSs.

7.3 Demythologisation

Whilst Chapter 6 has explored processes of mythologisation, this section unpicks the idiosyncratic approaches through which organisational myths are

deconstructed and dialogue is destabilised. Building upon the heterogeneous ‘myths’ surrounding the Co-op (protecting societal and civil rights), Lidl (ensuring value for money), M&S (providing consistency in quality) and Sainsbury’s (reinforcing British values), stakeholders discursively contest these positions through *demythologisation*; employing interpretative strategies and narratives to devalue marketplace myths (Thompson & Arsel, 2011). This is largely achieved by disrupting processes of normalisation, moralisation and rational discussion (centripetal forces) through storytelling (7.3.1); injecting emotion into discussions (7.3.2); constructing self-other relations (7.3.3); and drawing comparisons between ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’ behaviour (7.3.4). Each of these strategies is now discussed in turn and a summary is provided (7.3.5).

7.3.1 Storytelling

It has been argued that, “in moral tales, protagonists are rewarded for engaging in legitimate social practices, or restoring the legitimate order” (van Leeuwen, 2007:105). Interlocutors throughout the SNSs conjure up descriptive tales of ‘heroes’ and ‘villains’, which include individuals (e.g. Rupert Murdoch, David Cameron); organisations (e.g. Tesco, Monsanto); and media outlets (e.g. The Sun, The Daily Mail). The posts below reveal the personal nuances of storytelling and highlight how narrativisation plays out across the SNSs. Largely based on experiences, interlocutors convey happy endings (“*Good times!*”); heroes (e.g. other retailers, such as Morrisons) and villains (e.g. the Co-op: “*all you do is vomit propaganda!*”); moral crusades (e.g. “*So, as much*

a *I would like to help - I won't!*") and personal triumphs ("...so she put her shopping on the floor and left):

Emily: *Went to sainsburys in [store name]... what was there, looked like the remains of a dog's breakfast... all the chavs and 'yummy mummies' who think theyre something they arent had grabbed all the best stuff. I blame Jamie Oliver for turning Sainsburys into a Jeremy Kyle buffet clientele. Instead, I Went to MORRISONS and got a fantastic 2 for £10 with better pud selection and Lindt premium big box of choccs included. Good times!* (Sainsbury's)

Zoe: *I love the idea but when it comes to Oxfam it becomes a no no for me! I was once in the Oxfam opposite and an elderly lady came in looking for a coat and asked if the (ridiculous) price could be dropped as she couldn't afford it and was told categorically NO - I wanted to buy it for her but she was too proud to accept my charity! My mum went into an oxfam and bought my son a racing track which she ended up paying an enormous amount for batteries to make it work and it was basically broken she took it back and had abuse hurled at her from an employee there! Moreover, most of the money from oxfam does NOT go to good causes but to the bigwhigs who run the 'company' as a business! So, as much a I would like to help - I won't!* (M&S)

Jeff: *A bit long drawn out and appears more as an advertisement for NMP3 than a case for removing the image commonly appearing on Page 3 of The Sun newspaper. The Co-operative MOVEMENT may well have a strong history as you say but I'll bet you cannot provide for me dates and places. The Co-operative Group has only been in existence since the mid-90's. My late Grandad's favourite phrase was, "The only thing that can be done with mutineers is string 'em up." Does that mean that I have a strong history of stringing up mutineers? Your overall lack of knowledge of the business you're appealing to is astounding. But that will happen when all you do is vomit propaganda!: That's illustrated by your use of the word "objectify"! Overall, propaganda and Pedantry. Not good!* (Co-op)

Phil: *My wife went to Lidl [store name] this morning to pick up some shopping got to the till to find a long queue at the 1 and only open checkout so she kinkley asked deputy manager if he could open another till ,his reply was "do you expect me to magic someone from thin air then"? so she put her shopping on the floor and left Nice customer services dont you think?* (Lidl)

These personal accounts build upon a succession of events to convey an introduction, plot and conclusion, and crucially provide insight into

relationships between the interlocutors and the organisations. Storytelling thus provides a novel way in which interlocutors demythologise organisational narratives across the SNSs in processes of legitimation.

7.3.2 Emotivisation

The discursive strategy of emotivisation diverges from rational stakeholder appeals by drawing upon emotive reasoning or ‘pathos’ (Higgins & Walker, 2012) to further evidence centrifugal forces in legitimation processes. Interlocutors discursively draw upon descriptive imagery to trigger emotions including anger, frustration, shock and contempt, and challenge rational discourse. Throughout the SNSs interlocutors assert powerful statements such as, “*BAN ALL GMO’S FROM YOUR PRODUCTS IN ANY FORM*”, and “*stop adverts in The Sun*”, often using capitals and punctuation (e.g. “????”) to draw attention to their assertions. Whilst goal directed, these posts relate to ‘ethical blindness’ on the part of the retailer (Palazzo et al., 2012) and further strengthen the authorisation approaches aforementioned by aligning with a view of ‘we know better.’ Frequently, the interlocutors also begin their posts with descriptive nouns to capture the essence of their sentiment and discursively strengthen their views in legitimation processes:

Dani: Disappointed that The Co-operative have decided to cover up lads magazines as a moral decision. If this is truly a moral decision do not stock the magazines rather than just cover them up. This is not really a decision more of a dithering idea (Co-op)

Francis: I am just completely appalled, shocked, scared & very frustrated with UK Supermarkets and I am flummoxed, baffled & perplexed as to why they are taking such an unbelievably disinterested

*stand on GMO Products with **no regard** as to their customers wants & needs!!! (Lidl)*

***Joan:** Your idea of shwopping **disgusts me!** There are so many worthwhile charities/causes in the UK/worldwide! (M&S)*

***Franca:** Dear Sainsburys, **saddened and shocked** to find out that you supply free copies of the sun newspaper in your cafe, I certainly won't be visiting soon with or without my granddaughter who does not need to be exposed to that sort of thing. and neither do I. (Sainsbury's)*

Posts such as these create descriptively rich and emotive backdrops against which themes of struggle and resistance are constructed against the ostensibly powerful organisational myths. Drawing upon broader societal discourses of anti-commercialisation and corporate irresponsibility, interlocutors feed into macro-societal and political debates regarding the exploitative role of business in society (Matten & Moon, 2008) and provide alternative narratives of harm and violence. Analysis of implicit content (e.g. presupposition, implicature and assumption) and intertextuality in these posts illuminates 'given' or 'common sense' perspectives (Fairclough, 1995) and normalised views of corporate-society relations beyond those espoused by the organisations. Through metaphors of war (e.g. "*fighting to save the bee population*"), representations of collectivism and social cohesion (e.g. "*we don't want...*") and strategic campaign discourse (e.g. "*Boycott the Sun newspaper!!*"), the interlocutors discursively construct a view of 'us' (stakeholders) vs. 'them' (retailers) and the implicit assumption that retailers are facilitating social/environmental harm in their activities. This highlights a powerful approach to stakeholder discourse in legitimisation processes, as part of centrifugal forces.

7.3.3 *Self-Other Relations*

Interlocutors rhetorically construct self-other relations through their discourses, revealing power dynamics in the SNSs. By commenting on behalf of voices not present in the SNSs, for example, animals, objectified women and the environment, the polyphonic nature of the online environment is emphasised (Bakhtin, 1986). In each case the ‘other’ is represented as ‘vulnerable’, ‘innocent’ and ‘at risk’, and the function of these emotive appeals is to blur the boundaries of the retailers’ accountability and undermine legitimisation processes. This strategy is particularly visible in the dialogues on ‘lads mags’ and the NMP3 campaign where discourse is abstracted into broader societal and political discourses. The ‘other’ is presented as a fluid and subjective construct, at times being related to the children/family members who have to see ‘indecent’ images whilst shopping; at other times to the young glamour models who are conversely *both* exploited and empowered, as well as to the male population who are also ‘exploited’ in society, but seemingly receive less attention. This approach, visible in the Co-op dialogue below, problematises the Co-op’s discursive legitimisation processes by suggesting that the organisation is complicit in harmful behaviours and fails to protect vulnerable members of society. The dialogue here involves just interlocutor voices; the Co-op’s voice is absent from the discussions, allowing legitimisation processes to play out between interlocutors solely.

Laura: I want to ask the Co op, why, when they have a **family friendly , equal rights image**, do they still sell **disgusting lads mags** and "Sunday comic newspapers" on shelves **in full view of children and families?** If they insist on selling these degrading images, they should do so under the counter, under wraps. I find these publications offensive, a relic from the 1970s, and I have made my views known to my local branch
Be warned, Co op, there is a growing movement against this high street pornography so you better clean up your act!

Jordan: What is that rumble I hear? Oh yes another band waggon. I see **you aren't objecting to mags like 'Men's Health' which have half naked men on the front - double standards are shining through.**

Aoife: The point is, Jordan, that obscene images of women are everywhere on the High Street and the Media. **The images of men are not, and can never be assessed as, obscene. Do men now actually feel that women are exploiting them?? That is a bit of hoot!** not without its humour!!

Jordan: Laura, neither can the images on the covers of any lads mag be assessed as obscene. titillating but not ever obscene. you still have not attempted to answer my questions and **if you ask the women who have been paid generously for their work if they feel exploited?**

Phil: Double standards again, images of men in tight speedos showing everything he has can be seen a **obscene by some.**

Jordan: BTW I am **NOT disagreeing with you that they should be out of the eyeline of children** as should 'men's health' and the like. I simply disagree with singling these particular mags out when there are many others which are just as bad.

Laura: Hello Jordan... Of course the women are **not going to admit to feeling exploited!** For one thing **they have to eat, and they are too vulnerable to jeopardise the employer (publishers) / employee) relationship by this disgraceful exploitation.**
In addition, **alot of these girls / women are "trafficked" from war torn areas of the world.**

Barry: Get a grip...sex is a fact of life and is a massive money making industry. **Top shelf means children shouldnt be able to see them.!!**

Laura: The Co op did not even have them on the top shelf! **They were on the lower shelf fairly near all the kids sweets.** Children bombarded with these images every day will not equate sex with love. They, especially the males, will grow up without respect for women and will join all the other intellectual pygmies in viewing them as sex objects, and with contempt.

7.3.4 Analogisation

Finally, through binary distinctions, such as rational vs. emotive discourse, and self vs. other relations, interlocutors discursively analogise desired ‘legitimate’ qualities (e.g. openness, natural, protection, compassion, local, quality, truth and ethics) with ‘illegitimate’ qualities (e.g. secrecy, manufactured, harm, global, poor quality, dishonesty and immoral behaviour). For example in the ‘No More Page 3’ and ‘lads mag’ dialogues, interlocutors juxtapose discourses of ‘fairness’, ‘equality’ and ‘family’ with ‘degrading’, ‘pornographic’ and ‘offensive’ imagery. Across the SNSs, analogisation occurs in relation to three key processes. The first relates to analogisation of an historical (high) level of moral activity with a current (lower) level of moral activity. This occurs most readily in the Co-op, M&S and Sainsbury’s SNSs, perhaps because Lidl is a newer player in the UK retail market. It also works against those retailers that engage in normalisation through retrospective exemplarity, primarily the Co-op. As the Co-op builds upon retrospective exemplarity (see Chapter 6), disconnects are identified between past and present values to question the consistency of the Co-op’s CSR approach. As seen below, Jemima utilises intertextual fragments from the Co-op’s organisational artefacts (e.g. statements from the organisation’s ‘Ethical Plan’), in an attempt to influence the organisation to campaign against Page 3. Once Jemima has identified with the Co-op (“*I’ve just read your ethical plan...*”), she analogises her comments, making reference to the Co-op’s complicity in exploiting women. Furthermore, desired legitimate qualities are universalised, as the dialogue is abstracted

within broader macro-societal debates surrounding fairness and equality (e.g. female objectification), to add further weight to the cogent appeals:

Jemima: Dear Co-op, I've just read your 'Ethical Plan', and I like it a lot. I see that included in the list of values that you see as central to your organisation are 'democracy, equality, equity and solidarity'; that you are proud of your 'radical heritage' and that your tag line is 'join the revolution'. Could you consider joining the campaign to remove Page 3 from The Sun? As the campaign No More Page 3 has highlighted, Page 3 encourages the objectification of women, it is a telling reminder that the fight for gender equality is not over yet. By advertising in the Sun, the Co-op is implicitly supporting the mind-set that says 'it's ok to have a woman's naked breasts on show in a national newspaper'. Please Co-op, support No More Page 3: remove your advertising and place The Sun on your top shelves until Page 3 is no more. Thank you.

The second approach to analogisation relates to drawing contrasts between what the organisation says it is doing and what it is actually doing. Occurring across the SNSs, we see interlocutors discursively deconstruct intent (talk) with behaviour (action), presenting evidence of organisations as inconsistent, and thus 'illegitimate', subjects. In the post below, Cheryl responds to Lidl's announcement of a cause-related marketing with scepticism, analogising Lidl's 'talk' ("where quality is cheaper") with 'action' (high prices). This approach is also seen in Nat's post which challenges Sainsbury's on its meat sourcing given the discovery of horse DNA in the beef supply chain. Here Nat analogises Sainsbury's 'talk' (a key value is "sourcing with integrity") and 'action' ('blaming' suppliers for their mistakes). Here we see interlocutors discursively challenging 'aspirational talk' (Christensen et al., 2013):

Cheryl: It is nice you are doing this- but the price has gone up 10p. And it says in store amazing offer or deal or something and it isn't! It especially isn't when the same product in Aldi is 99p.

*Nat: Sainsbury's: It's your **responsibility to sell what you say you're selling**. Don't blame your suppliers for **not doing your own checking**.*

As seen in Cheryl's post, comparison strategies are also pervasive in the SNSs. Here we see a third approach to analogisation, where comparative techniques are used in legitimisation processes. Organisations are accused of operating below moral benchmarks, analogising organisational behaviour against that of their industry counterparts. In the M&S SNS, interlocutors discursively construct the retailer as an 'illegitimate' subject by aligning the organisation with (ethically inferior) 'competitors', including other retailers (e.g. Asda) or those outside the grocery retailer realm (e.g. Lush cosmetics). In analogising normative perceptions of M&S (*"I'd have thought better of a chain likes yours!"*) with behaviours of those of the industry (e.g. *"gm stealth tactics"*), it is suggested that M&S is conforming to low moral values. M&S is normalised as a 'lying', 'disappointing', 'let down', 'hypocritical', 'sham' with legitimisation seen as 'green/blue washing'. Here, centrifugal forces relate to social change at an individual organisational level, as well as field-level change (Lounsbury et al., 2003) in demythologisation processes:

*Harry: Let's cut the corporate speal, and let's cut to the chase,**if you were so committed to using non gm fed animals you would be making every effort to source non gm irrespective of the costs...** If you can do it with organic you can do it with the non organic foods, **tbh I'd have thought better of a chain likes yours! Who I thought prided itself on quility rather than following in the footsteps of the other supermarket chains!** So your going to be labelling the foods with gm labels are you? or is it going to be (gm stealth tactics) like **all your competitors are adopting!***

*Bill: TY We used to trust M&S when it came being GM free, but now M&S sells unlabeled GM meat in stores and in its restaurants. **May as well shop at Asda or Tesco. GM food is slowly killing us and the planet. M&S was our last hope now its called 'Monsanto & Spencer' Killing your customers just for greater profit?***

Fran:** Whatever - they can fly the BUAV flag - but they don't and can't be certain - it's such "Greenwash" and most of the products contain derivatives of Palm Oil that is awful to the environment, deforestation and the the survival of the Orangutans. **Go to Lush Cosmetics... or <http://inikacosmetics.co.uk/>

7.3.5 Demythologisation Summary

This section has illuminated how through discursive processes of storytelling, emotivisation, self-other relations and analogisation, interlocutors demythologise organisational myths as part of legitimation processes in the SNSs. Through providing 'alternative' narratives of harm and violence, these descriptive strategies reveal exploitative perceptions of organisational roles in society (Matten & Moon, 2008), with significant implications for legitimation as part of organisational 'texts.' Indeed, discourses build upon themes of struggle and resistance, suggesting a significant power dynamic at play in centrifugal forces in the SNSs. Whilst Lidl's lack of historical credence in CSR is once again unearthed, most enlightening in this section is disdain for organisational inconsistency. Indeed interlocutors discursively unveil instances where organisational intention (talk) is not equal to behaviour (action) as a key demythologisation strategy. Herein, stakeholders and interlocutors align with centrifugal forces as part of legitimation processes in the SNSs.

7.4 Carnivalisation

Bakhtin's (1965) notion of the 'carnavalesque' relates to the fostering of freedom from contextual constrictions and is characterised by mockery of all serious and 'closed' attitudes about the world (Kristeva, 1980; Morson &

Emerson, 1990). In the context of the SNSs, carnivalisation is used to rebalance power dynamics, disrupt traditional markers of authority and trivialise legitimation. This section draws upon three discursive approaches that inductively emerged from the data: profanity (7.4.1), sarcasm (7.4.2) and humour (7.4.3), as part of centrifugal forces. A summary (7.4.4) concludes the section.

7.4.1 Profanity

Strong emotions are expressed through derogatory terminology and the use of profanities in the SNSs. In moving away from harmonious dialogue, characterised by consensual frames of reference (Chapter 6), here interlocutors' dysfunctional discourses challenge normalisation strategies. Pejorative terms such as, 'idiots', 'scumbags', 'smart arses', 'bastards', 'shits' and 'toe rags,' are regularly levied against the retailers, with responses being met with phrases such as, *'talking crap'*, *'this is rubbish'*, *'your reply stinks'* and the inventive, *'blah blah blah blah blah....'* Retailers are further ridiculed by scathing comments, such as, *"M&S is now just Asda in an ugly dress"*, and insulting posts regarding communication of moral activities, *"I hate being spammed by companies like Sainsbury. Go on piss off"*, *"This is simply a daft gimmick"*, and *"Bloody silly name - shwop couldn't they have come up with something more sensible?"* Posts such as these build interlocutor presence in the SNSs and disrupt rational conversation through capital letters (e.g. *"MARKS AND SPENCER FEED THERE (sic) ANIMALS WITH GM FOOD!!!"*) punctuation and repetition to emphasise the strength of feeling.

Conversely, these posts rarely receive a response, and when they do, the posts contrast greatly with the strategies at play:

Emily: KANGAROO MEAT IN LIDL? NO NO NO
!!

Lidl: Hi Emily,
Thanks for getting in touch - I'll pass your comments on to the relevant team.

Emotive posts metaphorically convey a sense of warfare operating within the SNSs. Reference to ‘militants’, ‘wars’, ‘struggle’ and ‘fighting a battle’, invoke a more aggressive and confrontational tone, with explicit reference being made to verbal duels, e.g. *“She wiped the floor with the lot of you. Well done Anna”* (in response to discussions surrounding NMP3 in the Co-op SNS). In this vein, reference is mythically made to winners and losers, life and death, resistance and persistence, building upon mythologisation and analogisation in the contest between retailers (and their allies, e.g. NGOs who partner with organisations) and the interlocutors. Comments such as, *“All of them.. Tesco,Co op, Sainsburys... Nowhere is safe!”* and descriptive accounts of grim future scenarios such as, *“When your kids have organ failure or get cancer from eating GM foods”*, convey a sense of suspicion in legitimisation processes.

Further strands of Bakhtinian (1986) ‘carnavalesque’ strategies are also seen across the SNSs as interlocutors discursively contest organisational discourse (as presented in Chapter 6). The notion of the ‘grotesque body’ is built upon in Bakhtin’s (1984) work on Rabelais to explore conceptions of birth/renewal and death/decay, and we see interlocutors discursively drawing upon narratives of

harm to construct organisations as murderous characters (e.g. “*MEAT IS MURDER*”). In dialogues around the ethicality of fireworks in the Lidl SNS, Patrick implicates Lidl as being complicit in supporting “*maiming and deaths*”, discursively constructing the retailer as an immoral subject engaged in unethical practices. Similar techniques are seen in posts surrounding GMO. Sally’s post below highlights the risks of GMO by drawing upon expert authorisation. Through punctuation, capital letters, repetition and the informal adjective “*GODDAMN*”, Sally utilises discourse which aligns with centrifugal forces as part of legitimation processes in the SNS.

Patrick: Disgraceful!!! I concur with Shauna the sale of fireworks should be totally banned and organised displays only allowed and I’m horrified to see supermarkets selling them already! What a disgrace these supermarkets are when so many animals and humans are maimed and killed every year from fireworks! It’s almost as if they condone the maiming and deaths??

Sally: M&S, you say "I can, though, assure you our commitment to only using non-GM food ingredients remains the same".

Okay, how is a food ‘non-GM’ if *that food* has eaten GM...??

I’ve seen the pictures of the tumour ridden rats, NO THANKS. I can honestly say I don’t want to eat anything that has eaten GMO, I don’t even want to eat organic food that is grown within 100 miles of GMO produce being grown.

GET GMO OUT OF OUR GODDAMN FOOD CHAIN NOW.

Stop focusing purely on PROFITS, and start refocusing on CUSTOMER SATISFACTION. If you don’t, you’ll just lose more.

Further examples of the ‘grotesque body’ and ‘rebellious’ discourse are seen across the SNSs as interlocutors discursively reference the primary ‘needs’ of the body, such as eating (e.g. “*Pudding looks alright, but who sicked up next to it?*”), defecating (e.g. “*Mate tried one of these and had the shits alweekend (sic)*”) and sex (e.g. “*Whilst breasts might not be primarily a sexual organ they do have a sexual role*”). Juxtaposing obscene descriptions with the normalised

and rational discourses of the organisations, interlocutors' focus upon bodily functions leads dialogues into political territory, particularly in relation to the NMP3 dialogues. In arguing the case for more liberal attitudes towards nudity in society, Andy suggests that he *may* be 'mental' for believing that "sex & the naked body are to be celebrated", and highlights more damaging consequences of certain societal attitudes to the body (e.g. alcohol consumption, obesity) in this post from the Co-op SNS:

*Andy: Late comer.....what do we tell our kids when they see **US not respecting our own bodies? We drink, smoke, lay on sofas, pig out on fast food, etc etc.** Male or female the world is full of variety. Respect is something we instill in our children by helping them make the right choices for the right reasons. I personally think that Page 3 should have gone a long time ago, but as a Dad with 3 kids aged 12-15 (male and female) I know for fact that if **sex & the naked body are to be celebrated**, not hidden away somewhere until our children are deemed "ready" to discover it.....they will grow up respecting not only YOU for your approach, but also their partners of the future. **Or I could just be mental. I'm only out for 1 day :)***

In abstracting discourses into broader domains in this way, interlocutors also discursively apply notions of the grotesque body to animals. In dialogues surrounding animal welfare, scores of emotive descriptors conjure up imagery of 'cruel', 'vile', and 'torturous behaviours' between the powerful villain (the retailer) and the 'vulnerable' and 'innocent' victims (the animals) in order to paint desolate pictures of organisational activities. Jana's post from the Sainsbury's SNS is indicative of this approach:

*Jana: Cat - in case you are not able to view the quick run down is the **animal is very much alive when its head is half cut off then turned upside down to bleed to the point you can see its wind pipe convulsing as it struggles to breath - open wind pipe as its head is half off - the goats that are strung up bleating by one leg, taking minutes to die - the standard UK method of dispatch is stunning properly - not this long drawn out method - you really need to see it then you can comment with understanding - or perhaps like to sign this petition against it** <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/37206>*

7.4.2 Sarcasm

The use of sarcasm is pervasive and explicit throughout the dialogues as interlocutors discursively belittle interactions taking place in legitimisation processes. To some extent the use of mild irony implies ambivalence and apathy amongst the interlocutors, with interlocutors creating banter around issues such as the corporate tone of retailer messages (e.g. *“Another cut and paste job here”*) and the individuals who speak on behalf of the retailers (e.g. *“Karl is a Co-op bot”* and *“I think he might have M&S tattooed on his left buttock”*.) Sarcasm is, however, also used in a more destructive way. Comments such as *“great topic :)”* and *“well thanks for that fantastic piece of advice there...”* cast light into the distrust harbouring between organisations and interlocutors in the SNSs. To further build their cases, interlocutors discursively mock the commercial fundamentals of the retailers’ businesses, joking about products, e.g. *“Because nothing says ‘I love you’ more than a meal of processed horse meat”*, and advertising campaigns, *“Talk about recipes, talk about causes, post pictures of Jamie Oliver surrounded by kittens. But don’t make offers. Sheesh!”* Whilst to some the sarcasm is explicit, to others the sarcasm goes unnoticed, and this process creates confusion and ambiguity. This obtuseness further creates a sense of the carnivalesque in the SNSs. This dynamic is visible in the following posts surrounding a dialogue on ‘No More Page 3’ taken from the Co-op SNS, where explicit reference is made to the use of sarcasm:

Josh: *dear co-op please can you put the guardian on the top shelf i find their left wing wishy-washy do-gooding offensive and i don't want my children subject to such rubbish propaganda.*

Kristan: *You should want your children to have the intelligence to have their own opinion and respect that rather than brainwash them with yours. Maybe they will think like yourself but maybe if they are allowed all options then they may not but if they do not then surely they should have the choice and of course people can rebel and even if they do not agree will disagree just because they can*

Emma: *Well said, Kristan.*

Oscar: *Erm 'sarcasm'*

Josh: *Thanks oscar I was beginning to think I was the only one with a sense of humour*

Oscar: *No no some of us got it ;)*

This dialogue provides just one example of the descriptive discourse that takes place *between* interlocutors in the SNSs (without an active organisational voice). As seen in the interaction below taken from the Lidl SNS, Kay uses sarcasm to highlight a disconnect between Lidl's low price promise and her moral value system (not buying GMO food). This type of interaction is commonplace across the SNSs and contrasts significantly with the centripetal forces explored in Chapter 6:

Kay: *I am concerned about meat milk and eggs will come from animals raised on a GM diet. All the other supermarkets are going to do it because normal feed is hard to get a hold of (nonsense I reckon) I use the [store name] and want to know exactly what these animals are eating... can u help?*

please don't write me off as mad, Monsanto in America are destroying all crops and GMO's are everywhere. Lidl's is the only supermarket I use and I want to be certain Lidl are not involved in this.

George: *why dont you buy from a health food shop instead of a budget store?*

Kay: well thanks for that fantastic piece of advice there george, i'd never thought about that!! idiot. who asked you to chip in your tuppence worth?

George: Sorry just thought that was blantent. didnt realise you would get out your pram about it

Kay: it's blatant by the way. blatant. and what's the point in asking why I don't shop at a health food store instead of a budget store. could it be because, perhaps, I AM ON A BUDGET????!!! your pram is obviously parked on your head and your brain is getting squashed.

7.4.3 Humour

Moving away from the negative implications of carnivalesque behaviours, humour is ubiquitous amongst the interlocutors as jovial and friendly posts inject a lighter tone into dialogues. Whilst the camaraderie aids in building a sense of a shared community, it also performs a valuable function in demonstrating a more level playing field between the retailers and interlocutors. In this way we see how traditional organisational hierarchies are unbalanced and organisational authority is further disrupted. Inane comments, e.g., “*date a fat bloke. Nothing left over for the bin*”, in relation to discussion of food waste; puns which make light of organisational artefacts, e.g. “*What about a Lidl less conversation a Lidl more action:-0)*” in relation to a product recall at Lidl; and frequent use of ‘lol’ and emoticons to convey happy emotions, e.g. “*Well done! love m&s <3*” and “*I love the plan A....gold star to M and S :D*” create an air of harmonious relationships and the view that the organisation is truly open for all kinds of discussion. Authorisation strategies become less pervasive, as instead, interlocutors build upon this liminal space to explore their discursive freedom. Carnivalisation through humour is visible

through the use of jokes, which make light of controversial situations and undermine the seriousness of legitimization processes. For example, following the discovery of horse DNA in the beef supply chain, interlocutors in all of the SNSs provoked laughter through equine jokes:

Findus lasagne walks into a pub, the pub landlord says "why the long face"?

Sure to give you the trots!

Whys everyone so BLINKERED

Wanna try the MANE..

mmm, equine! DIVINE, I meant divine, soz.

Taste the Difference between horse and cow? :)

Looks like a STABLE diet!!

Yum. I'm starving, I could eat a horse.

I might trot down and check it out

Breaking news !! A man has been rushed into hospital after dining in Tesco cafe he had a burger and lasagne he was rushed in within an hour seriously ill A representative from the hospital says he is in a STABLE condition.

The use of humour most often occurs between the interlocutors, and sees cliques develop around what does, and what does not, constitute humour. In the extract below taken from Lidl's SNS we see Arianna and John's discussion around the ethicality of Lidl selling reindeer meat occur tangentially to Lauren, Carol-Anne and Zoe's insertion of jokes and responses. With cues of friendship, such as kisses (x), exclamation marks (!!!), internet slang phrases such as 'lol' (laughing out loud) and 'lmao' (laughing my arse/ass off), nicknames ("little old Laur's..."), and expressions of laughter ("hahaha"),

Lauren, Carol-Anne and Zoe belittle “*true die hard Lidl fans*”. We see evidence here of how interlocutors discursively undermine rational dialogue in the SNSs and use humour to contest legitimisation processes:

Arianna: Think it's vile you sell Reindeer legs at Christmas. MONSTERS.

Lauren: oh really looks like rudolph will need wheels this year lol

Carol-Anne: Haha Lauren this is toooooo funny x

Zoe: Lauren u make me wee!!! Xx

John: reindeer meat is good for you less fat, its only meat, why be so sensitive, you eat all the other meats

Arianna: You might aswell eat the cat in your display pic with that attitude

Lauren: I eat kitty all the time, and I love to shoot deer & eat it.

Arianna: John, I'm going to tell your son/daughter that Rudolph isn't coming this year because daddy has slaughtered and eaten him.

John: I'm veggie and it doesn't bother me. Eating reindeer is exactly the same as eating chicken. They're both living animals so if it bothers you that much don't eat any animal.

Carol-Anne: Lauren this is the funniest thing ever. It's a shame some people have no sense of humour, your one liners are wasted on them!

Zoe: Carol-Anne I totally agree!! It's so funny people actually taking it serious because they dont get the sense of humour little old laur's displays lmao x

Lauren: Lmaoo thanks Carol-Anne hahaha!!! They must be true die hard Lidl fans!!! X

7.4.4 Carnivalisation Summary

This section has revealed that the use of profanities, sarcasm and humour is pervasive across all four of the organisational ‘texts’, suggesting that dysfunctional, carnivalisation strategies are commonplace in SNSs. Whilst

these interjections may be seen to be tangential to the CSR content of discussions, carnivalesque discourse in fact performs a powerful role in discursively disrupting rational discourse and injecting polyphonic texture to SNSs (Bakhtin, 1986). This is perhaps achieved given the anonymity of user identities in SNSs. Moreover, carnivalisation presents a descriptive strategy through which interlocutors build more critical discourse in the organisational ‘texts’ as part of legitimation processes characterised by centrifugal forces.

7.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined how interlocutors discursively disrupt traditional communication hierarchies in the SNSs to affirm discursive control of the communicative ‘space’ in processes of legitimation. Most specifically, the chapter has provided descriptive insight into *how* interlocutors authorise (7.2), demythologise (7.3) and carnivalise (7.4) discourses. In doing so, it has highlighted three key ways in which interlocutors utilise centrifugal (dividing) forces in the SNSs. Firstly, through disruptive and conflictual discursive strategies, stakeholders’ posts pertain to *performativity* and the construction of emotivised, politicised and carnivalised realities through an ‘us vs. them’ narrative. This is seen most vividly in examples of intertextuality (Fairclough, 1995; Kristeva, 1980) where, instead of drawing upon organisational texts and shared resources, the stakeholders insert fragments of text from wider social discourses of harm, objectification and social irresponsibility. A second approach sees the inclusion of a range of distant voices (e.g. marginalised ‘others’) in posts, to further destabilise dialogues and emphasise *polyphony*. In

this sense, there is no ‘authority’ in the SNSs as stakeholders assert their voices in the forum by justifying their (superior) expertise and knowledge on CSR.

Finally, the stakeholders emphasise the *perpetuality* of dialogues through abstracting discourse into broader social domains. In this sense, the organisations are held to account for not just their own approaches to CSR, but also those of competitor retailers and other industries more broadly. Therein, dialogues are never finalised but instead represent on-going organisation-society relations. Table 18 brings these insights together in an attempt to summarise key inferences from this chapter. Against this backdrop, Chapter 8 explores the interactional context in which on-going centripetal and centrifugal forces form part of legitimation processes between organisations and stakeholders.

| Contestation Strategy | Discursive Process | Evidence from Organisational ‘Text’ |
|---|--|--|
| Authorisation: <i>Legitimation by reference to tradition, custom, law or institutional figures</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Authority • Expert Authority | Sainsbury’s: ‘... <i>As a customer and a parent I do not understand why you have taken steps to screen the covers of mens lifestyle magazines that can cause controversy amongst customers...</i> ’ (Personal Authority) |
| Demythologisation: <i>Interpretative strategies and narratives which devalue marketplace myths</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling • Emotivisation • Self-Other Relations • Analogisation | Lidl: ‘ <i>I am just completely appalled, shocked, scared & very frustrated with UK Supermarkets and I am flummoxed, baffled & perplexed as to why they are taking such an unbelievably disinterested stand on GMO Products with no regard as to their customers wants & needs!!!</i> ’ (Emotivisation) |
| Carnivalisation <i>Fostering of freedom from contextual constrictions, characterised by mockery of all serious and ‘closed’ attitudes about the world (Bakhtin, 1965)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profanity • Sarcasm • Humour | M&S: ‘ <i>GET GMO OUT OF OUR GODDAMN FOOD CHAIN NOW. Stop focusing purely on PROFITS, and start refocusing on CUSTOMER SATISFACTION. If you don’t, you’ll just lose more.</i> ’ (Profanity) |

Table 18: Centrifugal Forces in Stakeholder Discourse

Chapter 8: Findings & Analysis

Legitimation: Centripetal/Centrifugal Forces

8.1 Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to build upon the discursive processes that form part of *centripetal* forces (unity, homogeneity, centrality) (Chapter 6) and *centrifugal* forces (difference, dispersion, decentring) (Chapter 7), to examine how organisations and stakeholders engage in legitimation through on-going dialogic interaction in the SNSs. This chapter addresses Research Question 1: *how do organisations and stakeholders engage in discursive processes of legitimation through online CSR dialogue?* The chapter is structured as follows. Section 8.2 builds upon the notion of *reactive normalisation* to explore how centrifugal forces are discursively challenged by organisations and stakeholders in the SNSs. Section 8.3 then explores the discursive processes through which centrifugal processes are further compounded through *reactive authorisation* techniques. This chapter extends research that has explored discursive processes of legitimation (Vaara et al., 2006, Vaara & Tienari, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2007) by examining both organisational and stakeholder discourses. In line with Chapter 6, this chapter is also structured by organisation to provide insight into the idiosyncrasy of individual retail cases. The chapter concludes with a summary (8.4), which compares and contrasts discursive approaches across the four organisational ‘texts.’

8.2 Reactive Normalisation

This section identifies the reactive processes through which specific actions or phenomena are rendered ‘normal’ or ‘natural’ in relation to societal expectations (Vaara & Tienari, 2008). Whilst processes of reactive normalisation were addressed in Chapter 6, the point of departure for this section is a focus upon pacification, and identification of the centripetal forces that challenge centrifugal forces, highlighting the interactive and temporal nature of the SNSs. Most specifically, the section builds upon strategies for legitimation outlined by Ashforth and Gibbs (1990) and Suchman (1995) to examine apologies, confessions, denials, excuses, explanations and promises of reform (as seen in the coding tables in Chapter 6). These ‘post event’ speech acts (Spencer-Oatey, 2008) attempt to provide remedial responses and build rapport with stakeholders during processes of legitimation, in line with centripetal (unifying) forces. As there is considerable evidence of stakeholders discursively defending organisational action, stakeholder approaches are thus examined alongside organisational strategies for the Co-op (8.2.1), Lidl (8.2.2), M&S (8.2.3) and Sainsbury’s (8.2.4) SNSs. The section concludes with a summary (8.2.5).

8.2.1 The Co-operative

There is little evidence of the Co-op ever apologising, ‘confessing’ wrongdoing, denying or excusing actions to pacify centrifugal forces in the SNS. Instead the Co-op attempts to (re)normalise its values by either justifying

actions (explanation) or aligning with societal expectations (reform). Looking first at explanation, the Co-op regularly repeats posts that provide detailed information on its CSR approach. Following Alistair's post below, which draws upon processes of carnivalisation (capital letters) and emotivisation, the Co-op discursively normalises its CSR approach through referencing the societal norms adhered to, the external organisations worked with, the accolades received and the traditions upon which the actions are built. Using an approach akin to 'symbolic management', the organisation simply portrays that it is consistent with social values and expectations without making any substantive change (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). Here the Co-op displays evidence of 'aspirational CSR' (Christensen et al., 2013), alluding to the potential of a future commitment (intention) and abstracting the discourse into a futurological scenario (prospective exemplarity) through legitimisation processes. The Co-op's post receives no further response:

Miriam: AS WELL AS YOUR FAIR TRADE GOODS ETC..CAN YOU CONFIRM YOU HAVE ANIMAL WELFARE AS A MAIN CONCERN...DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR SLAUGHTER HOUSES HAS CCTV INSTALLED TO STOP THE ABUSE AND TORTURE OF YOUR ANIMALS?

The Co-op: There has been quite a bit of discussion about this topic on our wall recently Miriam, but just in case you haven't seen our other responses we've posted it again here for you...

All the meat and poultry sold under our brand is produced to very strict standards of animal welfare. Official veterinary surgeons and meat hygiene officers are permanently in attendance at all processing plants during the slaughter of livestock to ensure the plant is working in accordance with the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995. In addition, we require each processing plant to have trained Animal Welfare Officers in attendance, who are there to specifically monitor welfare standards in the lairage and slaughter hall.

Our suppliers can also expect to be audited not only by farm assurance scheme inspectors, but also by a registered veterinary surgeon, our own welfare specialist, independent auditors and even the RSPCA.

We source all our meat and poultry from partner suppliers here in the UK (with the exception of seasonal New Zealand lamb). It is this level of commitment we expect from our suppliers that helps us to be voted the RSPCA Peoples Choice Supermarket winner for the second year running.

We are not opposed to the use of CCTV within processing sites, indeed it has been used for a number of years to monitor standards within further processing factories. If any of our suppliers wished to install a system to monitor welfare standards, we would see this as a positive step in further ensuring our high welfare standards were being maintained.

However we are reviewing our current situation the result of which will be announced in the new year.

Looking secondly at reform, also termed ‘substantive management’, defined as a “real, material change in organisational goals, structures, and processes or socially institutionalised practices”, (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990:178), there is also evidence to suggest that the Co-op actively alters practices and changes its activities in relation to societal expectations. Whilst it cannot be suggested that discourses in the SNSs *cause* the change in approach, data reveal a discursive trajectory of interlocutor influence. This is exemplified in the dialogues surrounding animal welfare that occur throughout the Co-op’s SNS and encourage the organisation to install CCTV in its slaughterhouses. The extract below sees the Co-op confirm a commitment to installing CCTV by using internal intertextuality to confirm its approach and receive positive reinforcement from interlocutors (e.g. “*thank you for agreeing to...*”):

The Co-op: *For everyone who has been awaiting an update on our intentions with regards to CCTV in slaughterhouses - you can take a look at the discussions area of our Facebook page for the latest: <http://www.facebook.com...>*

Alicia: *Love the co-op!! the best shop in notts. :-)*

Ben: *I just want to **thank you** for making animal welfare a priority and agreeing to install CCTV in your slaughterhouses. Brilliant news :))*

These dialogues provide key examples of the Co-op's discursive conformity to societal expectations and work, to some end, to reinforce the Co-op's values as a 'listening, 'caring' and 'open' entity. We also see this approach supported by interlocutors. The dialogue below between Bruce and the Co-op exemplifies discussion before and after the announcement of CCTV in slaughterhouses and illuminates Bruce's belief that "*Co-op will do the right thing*". Consequently, we see how Bruce supports the Co-op in contributing to the discourses aligned with centripetal forces, providing insight into how legitimation is engaged in by interlocutors in the Co-op's SNS:

Bruce: *That is the reply we got from Lidl when we wrote re installing CCTV in the stun and kill area of slaughterhouses...**come on Co-op...give us the same answer please!!!** Hurrah for Lidl.*

The Co-op: *Animal welfare is a priority to us - in 1994 we were the first retailer to adopt the RSPCA Freedom Food scheme, which seeks to improve welfare standards for animals at all stages of the food chain. In 1998 we were the first retailer to be awarded the right to use the new international cruelty-free 'rabbit and stars' symbol on toiletry packaging. In 2008 we received CIWF 'Good Egg' Award for phasing out branded cage shell eggs and for commitment to go free-range on all own-brand products containing egg by 2010.*

You can read more about our commitment to animal welfare on our website: <http://www.co-operative.coop/corporate/ethicsinaction/animal-welfare/> and in our Sustainability Report:

<http://www.co-operative.coop/corporate/sustainability/downloads-and-archives/>

With regards to this issue we are reviewing our current situation and we'll have an update in the new year.

Bruce: *We know all this Co-op which is why we know you will take the next step with the CCTV in slaughterhouses. Great news that Morrisons and Lidl have isn't it? Tesco say they have no plans to put in CCTV...can you believe that??? Myself and many others are doing a 'Boycott Tesco' campaign...we also all know that you Co-op will do the right thing. Looking forward to a speedy reply so we can relax!!!*

The Co-op: *We will speed the announcement to you as soon as it arrives in the new year!*

The Co-op: *In case you haven't already seen it we have put the announcement in the discussions area of our Facebook page:*

<http://www.facebook.com/topic.php?topic=13721&uid=312183814581>

Bruce: *You have done us proud Co-op. Thank you for doing the right thing...we knew you would.*

8.2.2 Lidl

Reactive normalisation at Lidl takes place through a broader range of approaches than those utilised at the Co-op. Unlike the Co-op's informative approaches to legitimisation, Lidl closes down posts, instead asserting instrumentalised and rational forms of discourse akin to a customer service function. For instance, emotive interlocutor posts around concern on the sale of Kangaroo meat in Lidl stores are met with muted responses of *"Thank you for getting in touch and for sharing your feedback"*, and *"We will pass this on to the relevant team"*. Statements such as these appear to close off the dialogues and bound the organisational 'texts', however it is unknown from the datasets if the discussion did in fact end here, or if it was deleted by the organisation. Lidl also attempts to avoid discussion of contentious topics in its SNS by providing excuses and apologising (e.g. *"please accept my sincere apologies..."*). This dynamic is seen in the interaction below, where Lidl

apologies for Rowan's offence at a Lidl advertising campaign ("sorry to hear"), reassures Rowan through expressing that Lidl is well-meaning ("this was not our intention") and provides some form of symbolic management ("I will pass your comments to our Advertising team for their consideration"). Lidl's rational tone contrasts with Rowan's emotivised post, particularly in pacifying Rowan's 'religious' offence and implicature of Lidl's immoral treatment of animals, as a sharing of 'feedback':

Rowan: I am absolutely disgusted by your new billboard advertising campaign. As a non meat eater I think it's a deeply moronic move to single out and push away your animal loving customers. I have one of your stores local to me which I used to use regularly but now will not. This vegan will indeed look away and will be spending my money elsewhere. As far as I'm concerned the moral treatment of animals is my religion, so you have effectively offended my religious beliefs.

Lidl: Hi Rowan, Thank you for getting in touch and for sharing your feedback. I am sorry to hear that you have been offended by this advert and would like to assure you this was not our intention. I will pass your comments to our Advertising team for their consideration.

This form of reactive normalisation is common across Lidl's SNS, with interlocutor questions being deflected to an offline customer service team. Whilst this may suggest a more enhanced form of customer service, it also attempts to shield the SNS from 'live' discourse, which contests and undermines legitimation processes. Lidl's response to Robbee's post below provides an example of this approach in action. In drawing on polite and formal language (e.g. "Thank you for getting in touch - I'm afraid...") and providing contact details of their extended teams, Lidl reactively normalises its customer service credentials as part of legitimation processes in an 'offline' (less transparent) capacity:

Robbee: Was looking at your frozen veal livers and noticed they are produced in the EU. Can I ask you to confirm that the veal is not crate reared as I understand a lot of EU veal appear to be.

Lidl: Hi Robbee, Thank you for getting in touch - I'm afraid we're not able to help with this via our Facebook page but please contact our Customer Services Team with your enquiry and they will be able to find out for you

They can be reached on 0870 444 1234 or via the online contact form here: www.lidl.co.uk/cps/rde/SID-A1A19762...

Whilst there is little evidence of Lidl outright denying customer concerns, there is evidence of confession and explanation in a number of Lidl posts. Lidl are prompted in the interaction below to 'confess' the sale of kangaroo meat and explain their actions by Faith and Janet. Aligned with the instrumental focus of the organisation and the prevalence of commercial/marketing discourse, Lidl excuses its decision by explaining a rational driver; the provision of a range of products in store, and uses internal intertextuality to support its assertion. In this way, the value promise of Lidl is reinforced and normalised in an attempt to support centripetal forces as part of legitimation processes:

Faith Ole: Your selling Kanagroo meat! Time to swap Supermarkets!

Lidl: Hi Faith Ole, Thank you for your feedback.

Janet: I totally agree with Faith Ole, why on earth are you selling Kanagroo meat? What is it with supermarkets horse meat now Kanagroo meat for god sake get a grip!
We want British meat please

Funda: Can you explain your decision to sell this?

Laura H: Good for you Janet and Faith Ole xx

Lidl: Hi Faith, Hi Janet,
We aim to offer our customers a diverse variety of food products in stores, which has recently included Kangaroo meat. This product went on sale during one of our special 'whilst stocks last' weeks and has since sold out. We do offer a wide range of fresh British meat and

poultry in all our stores, of which details can be found here: http://www.lidl.co.uk/cps/rde/www_lidl_uk/hs.xsl/meat.htm.

Faith Ole: Very sad :0(

At times, interlocutors also support the organisation in mediating legitimacy. For instance, Lidl's 'Like' campaign for children's charity CLIC Sergeant ("if we reach 250,000 fans on Facebook we'll donate an extra £10,000 to our official charity partner CLIC Sargent!"), was met with criticism that the organisation should "do the right thing and donate it anyway", amid claims that the campaign was, "about marketing, promoting the business and ultimately making profit in the name of charity. These are capitalist money making machines.... come on!". A number of interlocutors, however, jumped to Lidl's defence as the posts below capture. This illuminates how interlocutors discursively normalise Lidl's approach and support legitimisation processes in the SNS:

***Philippe:** Those who say why don't you just donate? Maybe because each time we share this at least one new person gets to see that Clic Sargent exists and it **raises awareness and may encourage more people to donate** - seems like a win win situation to me - much better than just donating. :)*

Jane:** ...Wouldn't it be refreshing if a company said - We have donated an extra £10,000 please click like if you think this was a good thing to do....**anyway I don't want to stop this getting around I shop at Lidl and support Clic. At least they are doing something!!

8.2.3 Marks and Spencer

Mirroring Lidl's approach to reactive normalisation, there is evidence of 'customer service' speak at M&S, with CSR-related posts often being offered

apologies to deflect discussions away from discourses of contestation and centrifugal forces. Here M&S posts empathise with interlocutors, and crucially offer some indication of reform, with comments pointing to positive futurological scenarios and the utilisation of comments and ‘feedback.’ Indeed, in line with symbolic forms of legitimation (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990), M&S suggests that some kind of substantive change *may* occur as a result of the interlocutor post, as indicated in the posts below which show criticism of M&S’ Shwopping campaign. Once again this reinforces an example of ‘aspirational CSR’ (Christensen et al., 2013) and constitutive CSR communications through legitimation processes:

M&S: Hi Jermaine, sorry you feel that that we have poorly executed this, do you have any feedback so that I can feedback to the relevant teams in our head office. Thanks, George

M&S: Not good Kim, sorry you’re not a fan of our clothing and sandwiches. I’ve left you a link to our Summer outfit ideas and a M&S Stories article. Your comments are very helpful and will be heard in the right departments. Thanks again, Ben

Whilst M&S does provide some qualification and explanation of its activities, particularly around posts where some form of assurance is required (e.g. GMO), it appears that reactive normalisation through deflection to ‘offline’ discussions is frequently used by M&S. By avoiding discussion of issues in the SNS, M&S attempts to neutralise critique in a less transparent manner. This suggests that there is a dialogue taking place ‘behind the scenes’, which visitors to the SNS are not party to. The dialogue between Eleanor and M&S below is indicative of this approach, which seems to pacify interlocutor discontent. Indeed, Eleanor’s concerns around M&S’ sale of GMO foods are

not only mediated by M&S by being physically removed (receiving an apology from M&S), but also are responded to through a separate interaction, illuminated through Eleanor's use of paraphrasing (“...I did get a response from M&S, as follows “Hi, as I’m sure you’re aware...”). Through techniques discussed in Chapter 7, such as personal authorisation (e.g. “I, for one, am an M&S shopper...”), expert authorisation (e.g. links to newspaper reports) and demythologisation, wherein Monsanto is constructed as the industry villain (e.g. “Monsanto is trying to confuse people”), Eleanor contests the sale of GMO at an industry level (referring to field level rather than to organisational change [Lounsbury et al., 2003]). This discursively constructs M&S as a potential ‘hero.’ Lindsey and Daniel, rather than berating M&S for its obtuse approach to responding to Eleanor, also protect future accomplishments (e.g. “I may even start shopping for food here myself!”, “Let’s hope they take them off the shelves, eh?”). This dialogue then, reinforces interlocutor roles in discursively challenging centrifugal forces as part of legitimation processes in M&S’ SNS:

Eleanor: I’m a little upset that my post has been deleted, related to Monsanto products on the shelves. It seems that M&S perhaps have been told to remove them, perhaps by Monsanto; if you see any fresh food items with a registered trademark associated with it, such as the organic tenderstem broccoli, please leave it in the store... this is a very complex arena, Monsanto is trying to confuse people, and farmers especially, into thinking that GMO is the only way to feed the expected 9 billion people that will live on this planet by 2050. Unfortunately, their message isn’t being believed by the majority of their target market... We are far more likely to feed 9 billion people with organic farming methods, and as such, I do not think that anything that has a registered trademark associated with it (and is probably Monsanto) should be on your shelves. You could advertise as such, and just watch your shoppers flock into M&S stores. I, for one, am an M&S shopper, as I believe in your ethical goals. maybe this might help you make a decision, as there are many others who think along the same lines.’

M&S: *Awfully sorry, due to my error I accidentally deleted your original post. We'll get back to you about this as soon as we can. Thanks, Gemma*

Eleanor: *Just to clarify, I did get a response from M&S, as follows "Hi, as I'm sure you're aware the Beneforté broccoli isn't GMO and is proven to enhance health and well being. **Monsanto are involved in GMO activity, however M&S don't work with them in this arena. We're working with many plant breeding companies to improve our products using the latest natural selection technology.** Hope this information helps, Gemma"*

I could post many incidents, but this is one of the most recent. http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2011/10/03/monsanto-india-biopiracy-farmers_n_992259.html

M&S: *Thanks very much for your **feedback**, Eleanor. **I've passed it on to the relevant teams.** Thanks again for highlighting this, Gemma*

Lindsey: *Well said Eleanor, if Marks and Spencer remove products like this and are vocal about why, **I may even start shopping for food here myself!***

Daniel: *Let's hope they take them off the shelves, eh?*

Interlocutors discursively and reactively normalise M&S' approach in the SNS on regular occasions. Comments such as "M&S you are leading the way", "Wish more companies cared like M&S do!" and "i LOVE that m&s are one of the few big companies that have signed up to BUAV", illustrate admiration and trust for the M&S brand and support legitimisation processes. In the post below we see M&S naturalise the altruistic values that underpin its 'Shwopping' initiative (e.g. "...in general", "we're simply...") and normalise the organisation's consumer facing recycling activity. Here M&S alludes to its perceived role in the broader economic and market system, for instance, rather than advocating the reduction of consumption in light of sustainability concerns, M&S assumes a more modest objective; "rais[ing] awareness of donating clothes". The onus is placed very much on the role of the consumer here, potentially advocating responsibility away from M&S in a somewhat

defensive pursuit. This approach is, however, supported by interlocutors who suggest that M&S shouldn't be "*knocked for trying*", and actively encourage support for the campaign ("*Just be happy that a great big organisation like M&S is trying to do something positive*”):

M&S: *Hi Kim, we introduced Shwopping to raise awareness of donating clothes to charity in general. We appreciate people will always buy new clothes and we want to encourage people to take their old clothes back to us, Oxfam or to any other charity shop. We're simply happy if people are donating clothes :) We know Shwopping might not be for everyone and we really appreciate your feedback on this. Thanks for getting in touch, Scott*

Callum: *But M&S are trying to help reduce the amount of clothing that goes to landfill every year, I'm not saying it will work, but you can't knock them for trying. People who usually donate their clothing to other charities will probably continue to do so, this will hopefully reach people who don't generally donate them to charity.*

Carly: *I watched the Joanna Lumley video footage of what's happening in Senegal as a result of the M&S initiative and I think it's amazing. If you want to hand in unwanted items of clothing to Barnardos or Age UK, that's great - all charities could do with the support, especially when government funding is being reduced in so many areas - but don't knock other groups who are also trying to do some good in the world. Just be happy that a great big organisation like M&S is trying to do something positive.*

8.2.4 Sainsbury's

Reactive normalisation at Sainsbury's occurs in relation to three discursive strategies: apology, deflection and rationalisation. In relation to apology, Sainsbury's regularly draws upon markers of customer service to offer condolences on behalf of the organisation (e.g. "*...really sorry about this*", or "*sorry if it wasn't made clear*"), as well as expressions of self-justification (e.g. "*Sorry you feel that's the case...*"). As seen in the Lidl and M&S SNSs,

such statements are often qualified with some indication of reform (e.g. *“I’ve logged your comments which will be shared with our team and we’ll certainly take your feedback on board for next year”*), which excuses the organisation and neutralise approaches to discursive contestation. They also reveal the importance of symbolic ‘management’ (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990) in pacifying interlocutors and normalising organisational action through processes of legitimation.

Turning to deflection, the dialogue below reveals how the organisation attempts to refract conversation away from contentious issues. While Sainsbury’s provides evidence of reform (e.g. *“I would like to feed this back to our supplier”*) to reassert futurological constructions through reference to the organisation’s ‘2020’ goals, Nickil suggests that the organisation is ‘greenwashing’ and references existing activity to delegitimise the organisation as ‘greedy’ and ‘tyrannical.’ Nickil even goes so far as to present a cautionary tale, *“I won’t be shopping with you until I’m satisfied you have changed your ways”*, drawing upon narrativisation. Whilst displaying markers of dialogue, e.g. turn taking, questions and answers, this extract sees Sainsbury’s pacify Nickil through deflecting concerns and normalising discourse within organisational boundaries (e.g. internal intertextuality by reference to the organisation’s goals). This example emphasises how organisations discursively protect their authoritative ‘texts’ (Kuhn, 2008) through legitimation processes in the fluid online space:

Nickil: *Why does your meat taste of water and your fruit and vegetables taste of nothing? What exactly are you doing with the vast sums you make? Paying lobbyists?*

Sainsbury's: *Hi Nickil, I would like to feed this back to our supplier. What meat and veg products have you found this with? Thanks, Jeremy.*

Nickil: *Bananas are meal and have no banana flavour they are green one moment and brown the next. Chicken vanishes as you cook it, apples at best taste sour. Carrots, peas and parsnips are interchangeable. I would like you to be honest and tell people what it is you put in your meat and how long you keep your fruit and veg dehydrated before you decide to grow them again.*

Sainsbury's: *Thanks for getting back to us Nickil! I'll get these comments fed back to our team. Have a great day, Gerri*

Nickil: *This is a very common complaint with supermarket food. Tell me exactly what you intend to do. Growing food naturally would be a good start. Stop flying sweetcorn in from abroad and messing about with nature. I won't be shopping with you until I'm satisfied you have changed your ways. A press release detailing why your food is so bad and an apology for putting profit before taste would be a good start. Your slogan used to be "Good food costs less as Sainsbury's". You should work towards that. Until then I will be supporting local and independent retailers as they are usually cheaper and always taste better.*

Sainsbury's: *Hi Nickil, Jonathan here. You may be interested to learn of our goals for 2020, one of which includes Sourcing with Integrity. Check out this link for more information on the actions we're taking <http://bit.ly/175qIaw>. I hope you find this information can go some way to restoring your faith in us. Thanks for posting and enjoy your day*

Nickil: **Boring.** *Why fly in sweetcorn from Kenya? In Kenya they buy sweetcorn that was grown in South Africa. Seems like you are actually part of the problem. The pressure British farmers are under are from greedy tyrannical companies like yours. A vague promise that you will be doing something seven years from now is absolutely meaningless.*

Finally, evidence of rationalisation as a normalisation process is seen in the interaction below between Sainsbury's and Hazel. In response to Hazel's emotionally charged post on animal slaughter, Ben seeks to restore order in the dialogue through encouraging civility in interactions ("Morning Hazel"). His post also shows evidence of intertextuality through reference to earlier

conversations (“as I’ve already noted”) and reifying animals as objects or resources to be “dealt with” in order to suppress emotive discourse. Ben also draws upon prospective exemplarity (“...the first major retailer to achieve this”) to highlight organisational intention and support centripetal forces. The dialogue neatly represents legitimation processes between Sainsbury’s and interlocutors through discursive normalisation:

Hazel: Disturbing footage of day old male chicks being put alive through industrial mincers prompts me to ask what lies behind Sainsbury’s eggs? Is this a common practice at hatcheries everywhere? For every laying hen, an unwanted male sibling went through a mincer? If not this horrendous practice, what actually happens to the chicks who can’t grow up to be layers? We should know what we are buying. It’s our money that keeps the egg business going.

Sainsbury’s: Morning Hazel, as I’ve already noted; animal welfare is of utmost importance to Sainsbury’s. We are the largest retailer of RSPCA approved Freedom Food products. We have only sold eggs from hens kept in a cage free environment, from either barn or free range units since February 2009 and were the first major retailer to achieve this. Unfortunately, there are not currently any ways of separating male and female chicks before birth which unfortunately means that the male chicks produced from egg laying breeds are killed as they do not produce eggs and cannot be used to produce meat. Male chicks cannot be placed on laying farms as there would be a risk of the hens laying fertilised eggs. It is therefore necessary to deal with the male chicks using a method approved by DEFRA and monitored by the Government’s Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratory Agency... I hope you are reassured that Sainsbury’s are committed to, and take animal welfare extremely seriously, and we continue to look at ways we can tackle these difficult issues. Thanks, Ben

8.2.5 Reactive Normalisation Summary

Through exploring how both organisations and interlocutors engage in (reactive) discursive normalisation as part of legitimation processes, this section has revealed similarities in the approaches utilised by the organisations.

Whilst the Co-op is alone in offering detailed explanations of its actions, Lidl, M&S and Sainsbury's most often apologise for actions and deflect contestations, thus neutralising concern. Therein, dialogues are encouraged to stay upon rational ground and within organisational boundaries. All organisations utilise symbolic forms of management (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990) through pointing to positive futurological scenarios and reform akin to 'aspirational CSR' (Christensen et al., 2013). Once again, the Co-op is the only organisation that shows evidence of any substantive management in its SNS, with posts reflecting on actual changes that have been made to CSR activities (e.g. the introduction of CCTV in slaughterhouses). Consequently, legitimisation processes through normalisation appear to be largely uniform across Lidl, M&S and Sainsbury's and very much in line with marketing and 'customer service' speak. Dialogue that challenges organisational discourse (Chapter 6) takes place 'offline.' The Co-op, in comparison, displays much more evidence of open dialogue through more informative approaches to discursive engagement, and 'online' dialogue. Herein we see valuable empirical examples of centripetal forces at work in countering the centrifugal forces enacted by stakeholders/interlocutors explored in Chapter 7.

8.3 Reactive Authorisation

Reactive authorisation also occurs across the SNSs, predominantly by the organisations, in order to challenge centrifugal forces in legitimisation processes. Here organisations assert their discursive control in the SNSs, presenting themselves as 'expert' authorities on issues of social and environmental

concern. In comparison to the approaches to reactive normalisation, authorisation strategies are much more defensive and this section explores the discursive struggles taking place across the Co-op (8.3.1), Lidl (8.3.2), Marks and Spencer (8.3.3) and Sainsbury's (8.3.4) SNSs. A summary (8.3.5) concludes the section.

8.3.1 The Co-operative

The Co-op attempts to challenge centrifugal forces and assert its authority position in the SNS through defending its approach, diverting dialogues into new territory and 'ignoring' comments. In doing so, the Co-op problematises legitimisation processes, encouraging confrontation and undermining the 'democratic', 'open' and 'listening' values asserted in Chapter 6. Looking first at the Co-op's defence strategy, the dialogue below reveals how the Co-op deflects criticism to protect centripetal forces around legitimisation. Following Gavin's post, which accuses the Co-op of being sexist and hypocritical regarding its policy to cover up 'lads mag' covers, Jay's formal response authorises the democratic values of the organisation (e.g. "...we've listened to the concerns of our customers and members...We are in constant dialogue"). Yet, the Co-op's response, regularly repeated in discussions surrounding 'lads mags', dismisses the opportunity to provide a tailored response, instead reinforcing the organisational power dynamic. Through espousing a discourse of control ("*we will review the policy as necessary*"), the post is met with scepticism by Gavin and Fran, who allude to an information asymmetry existing between the Co-op and its members. Authorisation in this instance

does little to pacify contestation and centrifugal forces in Co-op's SNS:

Gavin: *Why aren't Co Op asking magazines that show half naked men also be covered up? Same with the gay men's magazines. **Why are Co Op discriminating against straight men on this issue? Is Co Op's decision to ask lads magazines to cover up being pushed by the feminist and Muslim lobby amongst the Co Op board of directors? Go and take a look at the magazine shelves and see the amount of half naked men on them. Why aren't you asking those magazines to do the same and have black covers? It is sexism of the worst kind Co Op and you should be ashamed!***

The Co-op: *Hi Gavin, As a **community-based retailer**, we've **listened to the concerns of our customers and members** and these are the four titles that have been specifically mentioned. We are in **constant dialogue** with our customers and members, and **will review the policy as necessary**, on matters such as whether to include other titles – Jay*

Gavin: *I have no arguments on your stance on lads mags if you **do the same also** on gay magazines and magazines with semi naked men on them-of which there are many-. Co Op should be treating this issue **with fairness and equality and they are not**. Tell me the difference between a scantily clad woman in Zoo and a semi naked man on Attitude or a female magazine? **There is no difference.***

Amy: *Translation of co-op's response 'we firmly believe that the opinions of some of our members are vastly more important than those of others.'*

Fran: *Who are these "customers and members"? I don't remember a vote on this and also I haven't seen any published statistics related to any survey.*

In failing to respond to Gavin's aggressive line of questioning, the Co-op allows this particular dialogue to fade out, however accusations of hypocrisy continue to resurface around the Co-op's policy on 'lads mags' throughout the SNS. As shown in Ali and John's posts below, this hypocrisy relates to a disconnect between the Co-op's moral claims (intention) and actions. We thus see evidence of the Co-op's response (both verbal and physical) not only failing to pacify interlocutors, but actively encouraging further contestation in legitimation processes:

Ali: Co Op are being so hypocritical on this. What Co Op are effectively saying is that half naked men are acceptable in magazines in sexual poses but not women...

Jon: If uz feel that strongly about lad mags covers why dont u ban them??.....o I forgot profit.....hypocrites

This inconsistency fails to be mediated in the SNS with little or no response being provided by Co-op. On the few occasions where the Co-op does provide a response to the ‘lads mag’ debate, the organisation utilises the text highlighted above (“*As a community-based retailer...*”). Consequently, the notion of hypocrisy becomes an on-going subject of debate, with interlocutors even discursively abstracting negative perceptions of the organisation’s subjectivity into core product and service offerings, as illustrated by Dave’s post below. Here, Dave relates the Co-op’s approach to ‘lads’ mags to censorship and human rights abuse, and threatens the organisation with a boycott. This post receives no response from the Co-op, suggesting a selective response to listening (or responding); ‘we will respond as and when we wish’. This reinforces the control narrative within centrifugal forces of legitimation:

Dave: I’m very much unhappy about the way you are running as a business and honestly, the bank should have collapsed with no bailout and I don’t trust you with my money any longer and now that it seems you’re making lads magazine covered up, how about womens magazines? no of course you wouldn’t because you like to oppress men! I’m boycotting the co-op shops as I don’t agree with your view on supporting Censorship and human rights abuse

At other times, the Co-op does ensure that its ‘presence’ is felt and respected in the SNSs. Posts such as, “*we just wanted to let you know, we are monitoring this very closely*”, in response to comments surrounding the ‘No More Page 3’ campaign enact conceptions of the ‘all seeing eye’ or panopticon (Foucault,

1972) and reassert the organisational power dynamic. However, these comments reflect a strategy of ‘avoidance’ (Whelan, 2013) by failing to provide any substantive response to interlocutor queries. They also encourage scepticism and fuel and exasperate conflictual interactions and contestation as part of centrifugal forces. Interlocutor responses do, however, vary quite dramatically; some agree with the Co-op’s policy to cover up lads mags, whereas some vehemently disagree. The dialogue below illustrates the on-going negotiation of the Co-op’s policy on this issue, as whilst Jamie congratulates the organisation, Jade uses the policy to question the Co-op’s focus on “*fairness and equality*”. The stark contrast provides insights into the difficulties in balancing the centripetal (Chapter 6) and centrifugal forces (Chapter 7) between organisations and interlocutors as part of legitimation processes:

Jamie: I would like to say that I agree with Co Ops policies on "Lads Mags". In my opinion they have done the right and ethical thing and I hope other shops follow Co Ops example. Thank you.

Co-op: Hi Jamie, thanks for the feedback :-) – Kirstie

Jamie: and thank you for being then first supermarket for listening to your customers wishes!

Jade: Disagree. What about fairness and equality? The shelves are full of half naked men with muscles and six packs and also gay mens magazines so why not treat those magazines the same?

8.3.2 Lidl

In line with the Co-op, Lidl also defends, diverts and ignores interlocutor discursive contestation processes, however unlike the Co-op, the retailer

explicitly asserts its authority position in the dialogues on a frequent basis. During periods of contestation, Lidl seeks to regain control of discussions by asserting principles for productive behaviour (e.g. what is “*not acceptable*” in relation to the “*house rules*”), and penalties for inappropriate action (e.g. “[*posts*] will be deleted and this may also result in users being banned”). The posts below provide examples of Lidl authorisation in the SNS, emphasising how the organisation creates stringent rules for engagement. The posts thus reveal the inherent power dynamics at play and how organisations attempt to repair and protect their organisational ‘texts’ through the control of the tone and content of dialogues in SNSs. This provides evidence of centrifugal processes as part of legitimisation processes:

Lidl: Hi guys,

Just a reminder to please follow the house rules as set out by this page. Personal comments and abuse are not acceptable on this page. (In response to dialogues around animal welfare)

Lidl: Hi all,

Although we like to see our fans chatting on this page I would like to quickly remind you about the house rules - please don't post anything on this page that is intended to offend or upset other users.

We like to hear everyone's opinions however we do not tolerate these sorts of comments on this page - they will be deleted and this may also result in users being banned. Thank you. (In response to discussions around the ethicality of selling fireworks)

Many questions remain unanswered in the Lidl SNS, suggesting that the organisation uses ‘silence’ strategies to avoid extended dialogues with interlocutors on particular topics. Lidl’s approach to defending and diverting discursive contestation is, however, seen vividly in the dialogue below. In line with the reactive approaches to normalisation aforementioned, Lidl tempers and rationalises Linda and Claire’s reference to the ‘slaughter’ and ‘killing’ of

kangaroos, instead using the euphemism ‘harvesting.’ Whilst Linda and Claire personally authorise their voices in the interactions through formality (e.g. “Dear Lidl” and “Yours ever hopefully”) and expert knowledge (e.g. links and reference to “field data”), as well as carnivalesque techniques, such as emotivisation (e.g. “2 babies die needlessly”), Lidl responds rationally with reference to the societal expectations against which it aligns. Here Lidl asserts its credibility on the issue of kangaroo meat (e.g. “...complies with all EU and country specific regulations”) to defend its approach and attempt to divert and deflect conversations offline. Lidl also provides normative markers for dialogue with ‘fans.’ Herein, Lidl asserts its power position in an attempt to challenge centrifugal forces in legitimation processes:

Linda: *Dear Lidl,*

*I have just read Viva’s article on your intention to start selling Kangaroo meat. Please Please think again. Maybe you will say, we sell all kinds of meat why not Kangaroo? **I would like to think that you care about the welfare of the animals whose flesh you sell before and during their slaughter, and after reading what Viva has to say on this disgusting and cruel trade you might just think twice and decide to do the decent thing and not stock it.***

Yours ever hopefully,

Linda Hughes

Lidl: *Hi Linda,*

*We can assure you that **Lidl take animal welfare extremely seriously and the meat we offer our customers complies with all EU and country specific regulations.** Furthermore we can confirm that the kangaroos are only being harvested by professionally trained hunters. Each kangaroo harvester must be **licensed and undergo training delivered by government accredited agencies, which includes animal welfare controls, hygiene controls as well as their competency with their firearms amongst others.** These hunters are **monitored** by the veterinary office and each kangaroo that is **harvested** must be reported to the authorities. **The number of kangaroos to be harvested is strictly monitored to ensure the harvest in any one area does not exceed the quota.** For further details please contact our **Customer Services Team on 0870 444 1234.***

Claire: <http://thinkkangaroos.uts.edu.au/faqs>

Is the killing of kangaroos humane?

*The prescribed method for **killing kangaroos** is with a shot to the brain. Kangaroos are killed in the field and the objective is to achieve an **instantaneous death**. However, there are two key welfare issues with the commercial killing of kangaroos.*

Firstly, every year 855,000 dependent young die as a waste product of the commercial kill..

Secondly, field data suggests that anywhere from 120,000 to over a million kangaroos are miss-shot and processed annually...

Lidl: Hi Claire,

*We ask that fans post according to the topic of threads so that **everyone on this page can easily join in discussions with other fans and learn their thoughts and opinions on shared interests**. Similarly, if a statement has been made by Lidl UK on a specific topic, we would like that **all fans' comments are in one place and can therefore be easily accessed by all**.*

Claire: *I do apologise if this is not the way you like to handle your facebook, but this is where I saw that you had responded to Linda's comments - and I merely wished to refute your company's claims about the humane slaughter and the idea of "harvesting" of live animals as in any way being ethical and justifiable when for each animal killed for meat, up to 2 babies die needlessly and in what cannot possibly be a humane manner.*

Would you like to then start a Lidl initiated post/thread on the issue please?

Lidl: Hi Claire,

We can only comment on the suppliers used by Lidl, which are all accredited and comply with all EU and country specific regulations. For further details please contact our Customer Services Team on 0870 444 1234, who will be happy to provide you with our full statement.

Claire's response, which draws upon the carnivalesque approach of sarcasm (e.g. "I do apologise if this is not the way you like to handle your facebook"), undermines Lidl's formal response, suggesting that Lidl's approach to authorisation in this context may have failed to pacify interlocutor centrifugal forces. Furthermore, whilst Lidl's post closes down the dialogue, contestation around the sale of kangaroo meat remains an on-going issue in the SNS. The posts below from Debbie, Bradley and Derrick represent the on-going

negotiation surrounding the ethicality of kangaroo meat in Lidl's SNS and range from outright disgust (*why on earth are you selling Kangaroo meat?*), to a balanced point of view (*But providing that the kangaroo is killed humanely what does it matter?*), to support (*Thank you LiDL for supporting an industry in Australia*). The posts thus reveal the problematic nature of competing discourses and centrifugal/centripetal forces in process of legitimation between organisations and stakeholders. This also emphasises the polyphonic nature of SNSs.

***Debbie: ...why on earth are you selling Kanagroo meat? What is it with supermarkets horse meat now Kanagroo meat for god sake get a grip!
We want British meat please***

Bradley: Not that I'm saying I'd like to eat it. But providing that the kangaroo is killed humanely what does it matter? If people in another country kept sheep as pets should we not eat lamb?

Derrick: Hope they continue to sell them too, Kangaroos are in plague numbers in Australia. Thank you LiDL for supporting an industry in Australia. We should sell Kangaroo to the world, tastes lovely, very much like beef, nice when marinated. Good source of protein, despite the 'meat is murder' brigade.

8.3.3 Marks and Spencer

Within M&S' SNS, discursive authorisation occurs through diversion, defence and repetition strategies. Taking each strategy in turn, as interlocutors anti-normalise discourse in the SNS and bring in centrifugal forces, M&S often tries to shift discussions into new terrain and reinforce centripetal forces. This approach is seen vividly in the dialogues surrounding GMO. As interlocutors discuss concerns surrounding the use of GMO and implicate M&S as being

complicit in the use of ‘unsafe’, ‘dangerous’, ‘deadly’ and ‘contaminated’ food, M&S attempts to reassure interlocutors that, “*this is not a food safety issue and will not affect the quality or provenance of the food that you buy from M&S*”. Regularly repeated in the GMO dialogues is the phrase, “*our principles are simple; we trace it, so you can trust it*” as seen in the interaction between Mia and M&S below:

Mia: i will no longer be shopping in your stores now you are to use GM fed meat

M&S: Hi Mia, our principles are simple; we trace it, so you can trust it. And even when we have to make difficult decisions, you can be totally confident that we will tell you about them. Alongside many other retailers, we have written to our suppliers to tell them that we will no longer stipulate the use of non-GM feed in our supply chain. However our commitment to only using non-GM food ingredients remains unchanged. This change in policy is absolutely necessary because there is now a much reduced supply of non-GM animal feed available to UK farmers. As such we can now no longer guarantee the integrity of supply to ensure that our fresh meat, poultry, eggs and dairy has been fed on a non-GM diet. Our organic fresh meat ranges will still be available to customers who want an alternative option. We can assure you that this is not a food safety issue and will not affect the quality or provenance of the food that you buy from M&S which will continue to be produced to the high standards that you expect from us. Thanks, Barbara

M&S’ response here illuminates how the organisation attempts to divert the issue to an industry level, highlighting how the retailer is conforming to industry norms (“*Alongside many other retailers...*”). Yet, whilst this approach seeks to restore the ‘natural order’, M&S’ narrative of consistency appears to be somewhat confused. In ‘assuring’ consumers that “*our commitment to only using non-GM food ingredients remains unchanged*”, the retailer also discusses a change in policy which is “*absolutely necessary*” due to factors outside of the organisation’s control. This inconsistency does not go unnoticed

and discursive contestation processes proliferate on the back of organisational hypocrisy; once again a disconnection between intention and action and a source for centrifugal forces in the SNS:

***Simon: All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing. Your failure to stand against the flow in this situation is precisely that. You are falling very very short on "delivering excellent standards consistently", oh dear M&S, your mission statement doesn't agree with your actions,
http://corporate.marksandspencer.com/mscareers/careers_about/our_values. It would seem it is just hypocrisy and empty words...***

The dialogue below between M&S and Bradley evidences the perpetuation of contestation through more defensive organisational techniques. In disagreeing and deflecting Bradley's concerns ("*this is not a food safety issue*"), M&S attempts to assert its expert authority position, drawing upon retrospective exemplarity ("*We've spent several years monitoring and reviewing the scientific evidence*") and societal markers ("*licensed as safe by the European Food Safety Authority*"). However, the response prompts a defensive authorisation strategy by Bradley, who asserts NGO reports on the safety concerns of GMO. This introduces a new 'expert' authority, to challenge the retailer and threaten its future ("*when the world wakes up to the truth...*") as part of legitimisation:

Bradley: M&S, you must not stock & sell meat & dairy produce fed with GMO, it is Deadly!

M&S: Hi Bradley, this is not a food safety issue. We've spent several years monitoring and reviewing the scientific evidence, in particular the findings of the independent European Food Safety Authority and the Food Standards Agency, which has shown that there no associated health risks with the genetic modification used in animal feed. In addition any GM crops used in the supply chain will have been licensed as safe by the European Food Safety Authority. Thanks, Maddy

Bradley: <http://www.greenmedinfo.com....>

Bradley: <https://www.facebook.com/photo....>

Bradley: *M&S, with all due respect, stating this is NOT a good safety issue is foolhardy to say the least. There is no available information to prove that it is safe to eat. There are no papers released, or trials carried out that categorically prove it to be safe, there is however, plenty of info to suggest that it is not. Think of all the claims for compensation you might be up against when it all goes belly up when the world wakes up to the truth and realises what the likes of Monsanto are really doing to our food chain!*

M&S regularly repeats its ‘corporate line’ throughout the GMO dialogues in an attempt to reinforce consistency in its CSR approach and communications, to further assert its authority position in the SNS. These corporate responses adopt a similar formula; align with industry norms, state the challenge, reassure consumers that the food quality is sound, and reinforce M&S’ values. This approach is visible in the post below, embodying diversion (“like many other food retailers”), and defence (“...no way impacts the quality of our salmon..”) in legitimisation processes:

M&S: *Hi Pearl, like many other food retailers and the rest of the High Street, we recognised that maintaining a non-GM animal feed policy was impossible due to the increasing lack of reliable non-GM raw material; therefore, we now no longer stipulate the use of non-GM animal feed. This in no way impacts the quality of our salmon, or our commitment to maintain a non-GM ingredient policy. It is important to us that we are at all times transparent and have credible policies in place so that our customers can trust the M&S brand. I hope this helps. Thanks, Barbara*

The repetition of posts is, however, met with interlocutor scepticism. Posts such as, “Just repeating these same words doesn’t help or make them correct”, “This stock reply is getting boring now”, “Another cut and paste job here” and

“*Lies!*” in response to M&S’ corporate response highlight how mediation may lead to further contestation, expanding centrifugal processes. When M&S fails to respond to these comments, further challenges ensue and this dynamic is particularly pervasive in the GMO dialogues. Exemplified in the posts below, evidence is provided of the on-going contestation surrounding GMO in the M&S supply chain, illuminating the challenges of consistency as part of legitimation processes in M&S’ SNS:

*AJ: I notice that M&S make **no response** to posts about GMOs, how **very rude** of them.*

*James: Doesn’t look like you’re going to get a **reply** Everlyn.*

Ricky: Do M&S listen or even care about our concerns?

*Ellen: M&S are **very selective** about the postings regarding GM foods and what they don’t want the public to read!*

*Athene: No Response ? Maybe the link is **invisible** to M & S people ?*

8.3.4 Sainsbury’s

In line with the other three retailers, Sainsbury’s also authorises its voice in the SNS through reasserting centripetal forces, diverting attention away from topics that do not align with this centripetal focus, and allowing comments to die out through ignoring posts. These strategies are highly visible in the Sainsbury’s dialogues around British values, wherein the retailer works hard to reinforce its ‘Britishness’ in response to discursive contestation. The dialogue below highlights how Sainsbury’s attempts to normalise its stance on British sourcing through a shopping list of achievements, which draw upon

retrospective (*Over the last five years*”), existing (“*we are actually stepping up our commitment*”) and prospective exemplarity (“*We aim to double our sales of British food by 2020*”), as well as non-conformity (“*...well above what is defined by Red Tractor*”). The retailer also diverts responsibility for its actions, stating that the decision to remove the ‘Red Tractor’ logo on packs is actually consumer driven, deflecting responsibility away from itself back towards the consumer stakeholders. This post is regularly repeated throughout the SNS to further assert Sainsbury’s authority position. Adrian however, challenges the retailer, and the industry more broadly, demanding ‘answers’, highlighting power imbalances and ‘confusing’ and ‘misleading’ organisational actions, to promote his patriotic (British vs. ‘foreign’) values. In challenging and contesting Sainsbury’s Britishness in this way, Sainsbury’s defence and diversion strategies fail to be acknowledged, highlighting a challenge within legitimisation processes:

Adrian: Why are you dropping the little Red Tractor?

Sainsbury’s: Hi Adrian, customers have told us that too many logos are confusing, so we will be phasing out the use of the Red Tractor logo on pack. We will still use the Red Tractor standards as part of our wider sourcing standards. Suggesting this is a step back from supporting British farmers couldn’t be further from the truth; we are actually stepping up our commitment. We aim to double our sales of British food by 2020. Over the last five years we’ve invested £40 million into British farming, for example paying our Dairy Development Group farmers a premium for good animal husbandry and environmental practices well above what is defined by Red Tractor. In August we led the way in paying our dedicated pork producers a premium to reflect rising feed costs. Only last month we announced a new £1 million agricultural fund to support British farmers, and we were recently awarded for our leadership and innovation in retail by Compassion in World Farming. Thanks.

Adrian: Obviously the marketing budget of a company such as Sainsburys far exceeds that available to farmers. British Agriculture has

spent a considerable amount of money getting the consumer to understand the red tractor and look for it on packs as an assurance they are buying a high animal welfare product with complete traceability. I believe you are removing it so in the near future you can import cheap food from lower welfare systems.

Holly: *Surely Sainsburys this post has enough interest to warrant a reply?*

Sainsbury's: *Hi Adrian, we will still use the Red Tractor standards as part of our wider sourcing standards. Both country of origin and the Union Flag are clearly visible on pack. Thanks.*

Adrian: *Anyone with a degree of common sense and patriotism would not be touching foreign imports of meat, milk or indeed any other dairy product. We all know the dire straits farmers are in with particular attention to the dairy farmer. If supermarkets would just stop the confusing and at times misleading labeling then we would all know exactly where we stand, as things are this is simply NOT the case. If it is British farmed and produced then then the labeling should clearly say so as it also should with foreign imports regardless of the country. I for one will only buy British farmed products and if the labeling is unclear I make a point of demanding answers, as we all should do.*

Whilst there is evidence of dialogue between Adrian and Sainsbury's (as seen above), Sainsbury's also appears to 'ignore' interlocutor comments, adopting a 'silence' strategy. In not responding to posts, Sainsbury's employs reticence to allow the interlocutors to debate the issues in the absence of an organisational 'voice.' In failing to engage in debate, here Sainsbury's assumes a role of a passive defendant, granting discursive power to active and resistant interlocutors. Contention is thus conflated as questions remain unanswered and frustrations rise (e.g. "*Why hasn't this had a reply? I would also like an answer for this*"), speculation builds (e.g. "*Still no comment from Sainsburys to the Pig Industry - I'm really starting to wonder what they have to hide?*"), with stringent consequences (e.g. "*We will be giving sainburys a wide berth..!*"). Whilst allowing free and transparent interaction, this silence strategy fuels contestation and centrifugal forces, problematising legitimation processes.

Discursive normalisation and authorisation also backfires in Sainsbury's SNS as the post below illustrates. Sainsbury's responds to Carrie's criticism of its lack of British beef in store through apologising and displaying prospective exemplarity ("*...make sure the amount of British food we sell is doubled in stores by 2020*"). However, Carrie's carnivalesque use of capital letters, extended punctuation, sarcasm and reference to death emotivises the dialogue, undermining the post and the organisation's attempts to bring in centripetal forces to discursive processes. Whilst Phil's post supports Sainsbury's, he suggests that more needs to be done, and this encourages André's assertion that Sainsbury's is a, "*cash guzzling supermarket*", advocating local butchers on both local and cheaper grounds. Herein, through defending, diverting and ignoring interlocutor comments, issues remain contested, highlighting on-going centripetal and centrifugal forces:

Carrie: HI WHY ARE YOU SELLING IRISH illegitimate FULL....IN [store name] BIGGEST PRODUCERS OF BEEF ARE IN CUMBRIA...WHY SELL LOCAL EGGS..THEN BEEF FROM IRELAND...LETS ALL SHOP AT MORRISONS !!!!!

Carrie: NO RESPONCE YET ????

Sainsbury's: Hi Carrie, Robert here. Sorry you can't find any locally sourced beef in your store at the moment. We do think that sourcing local products is really important and we're committed through our 20 by 20 plan to make sure the the amount of British food we sell is doubled in stores by 2020. I'll make sure this is fed back.

Carrie: Are u joking ??2020 i will be dead by then .why not make a big thing of local beef in wake of all the horse scandal

John: so 8 years to sort British PRODUCTS long time scale

John: 7 years i mean

Luciana: No wonder goverment cant sort horse in a week if it takes sainburys 7 years to go to a local farm and buy british

Carrie: LOOK WHAT THEY SAID 2020...

Phil: to be fair the reason the shelves are full is nobody wants Irish beef. Sainsburys are good at sourcing British , my wife work with them so visits about 500 cumbrian farmers that supply beef into the taste the diffrence range. There ethos is good and the packets fully explain where it comes from. our local sainsburys had ran out of british this week. A good sign Sainsburys please continue to listern to your customers. your 20 x 20 statements say you want to increase british produce, now is that time. dont get left behind.

André: If you really want to support local produce, then go to a local Butchers instead of a cash guzzling supermarket. It'll be fresher a better deal and local!

8.3.5 Reactive Authorisation Summary

This section has identified how the retailers assert their authority positions in the SNSs through discursive techniques, which involve defending and rebuffing interlocutor discursive contestations, diverting discussions into new territory, repeating corporate messages and ignoring interlocutor posts. While the response strategies differ by organisation, the discursive approaches are largely similar across the SNSs, bar Lidl who adopts the most authoritative tone in reminding interlocutors of sanctions for posts that break the ‘house rules’. Therein Lidl is most active in adopting prescriptive markers for dialogue in the SNS. The unanswered nature of many of the questions across the SNSs highlights the on-going nature of organisation-interlocutor interaction and the challenge of mediating legitimacy amongst a multitude of voices (polyphony). Consequently, as posts remain unanswered and interlocutor and organisational actors fail to strike an appropriate balance between centripetal and centrifugal forces as part of discursive legitimation processes, the perpetual nature of online dialogue comes further to the fore.

8.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a discussion of reactive normalisation (8.2) and authorisation (8.3) as discursive strategies through which organisations and stakeholders engage in both centripetal and centrifugal forces through interactive dialogue as part of legitimation processes. Section 8.2 has highlighted similarities and differences across the SNSs in relation to evidence of ‘customer service speak’ and more dialogical forms of interaction. Section 8.3 has revealed how through asserting authority positions and defending centripetal forces, contestation through centrifugal processes may continue, ensuring the on-going nature of dialogue. The *perpetuality* of dialogue is thus evident in this chapter, as through having no concrete outcome, but rather focussing upon process and the *polyphonic* range of responses that may be consensual, dissensual or indeed ‘allosensual’ (Nikulin, 2006), the on-going and irreconcilable nature of dialogues is illuminated. Furthermore, in deflecting dialogues into an ‘offline’ context, we see the lengths to which organisations will go to protect their online ‘texts’ from contestation where possible. This perhaps further alludes to the *performativity* of language and the influential nature of positive and negative discourses in the SNSs. Table 19 brings these insights together, summarising the key discursive strategies interrogated in this chapter and dialogical observations. Chapter 9 now provides the discussion and conclusion to this thesis, exploring the consequences of the centripetal and centrifugal forces identified in the data, to present explicit interconnections between the findings and literature review chapters.

| Retailer | Core Values | Centripetal/Centrifugal Forces | |
|---|--|---|--|
| | | Reactive Normalisation | Reactive Authorisation |
| The Co-operative <i>Build a better society by excelling in everything we do</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness • Honesty • Social responsibility • Care | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbolic & substantive management • Explain • Conform/Reform • ‘Open’ (online) dialogue <i>E.g. Animal welfare dialogue</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defending • Divert • Ignore <i>E.g. NMP3 dialogue</i> |
| Lidl <i>Where quality is cheaper</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer satisfaction • Outstanding value • Growth through expansion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbolic management • ‘Closed’ (offline) dialogue • Apologise • Confess • Conform • Rationalise <i>E.g. Charity dialogue</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorise • Defends • Divert • Ignore <i>E.g. Animal welfare dialogue</i> |
| Marks & Spencer <i>Making aspirational quality accessible to all</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality • Value • Service • Innovation • Trust | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbolic management • ‘Closed’ (offline) dialogue • Apologise • Deflection • Conform/Reform <i>E.g. GMO dialogue</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divert • Defend • Repeat <i>E.g. GMO dialogue</i> |
| Sainsbury’s <i>Being the most trusted retailer where people love to work and shop</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best for food & health • Sourcing with integrity • Respect for environment • Difference to community • Great place to work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbolic management • ‘Closed’ (offline) dialogue • Apologise • Deflect • Rationalise <i>E.g. Local sourcing dialogue</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defend • Divert • Ignore <i>E.g. Local sourcing dialogue</i> |

Table 19 Centripetal/Centrifugal Forces in Organisation-Stakeholder Discourse

Chapter 9: Discussion & Conclusion

Unfinalisable Processes of Legitimation

9.1 Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to offer an overall discussion of the research findings and to draw conclusions from this PhD research project. In doing so, the chapter summarises key arguments, contributions and implications, and highlights opportunities for further research. The chapter is structured as follows. Section 9.2 presents the thesis discussion, building upon the conceptual framework presented in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 and the findings and analysis presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. The section outlines core findings in relation to the nascent understanding of *CSR as on-going and emergent from unfinalisable legitimation processes* in SNSs through discussing Bakhtinian (1986) conceptions of performativity, polyphony and perpetuality (9.2.1). Legitimation processes are summarised as being made up of ‘centripetal’ and ‘centrifugal’ forces (Baxter, 2004), and this section details the discursive and dialogical cues within SNS contexts across the four organisational ‘texts’ (9.2.2). Section 9.2.3 then summarises the core contention of the thesis, highlighting the implications for CSR literature and legitimacy theory (Suchman, 1995), offering a graphical framework for unfinalisable processes of legitimation. Moving onto conclusions, Section 9.3 provides a thesis summary (9.3.1), outlining three core contributions of the research with regards to theory, methods and practice (9.3.2). A discussion of further research avenues ensues (9.3.3) and the chapter closes with a summary (9.4).

9.2 Discussion Overview

The core contribution of this thesis is in its focus upon *how* legitimisation occurs between organisations and stakeholders in SNS contexts. Through examining the discursive and dialogical processes through which legitimisation takes place across the four organisational ‘texts’ between organisations and stakeholders, this discussion ties empirical observations back into theory to examine how the findings confirm and challenge previous work on discursive legitimisation (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Suchman, 1995; Vaara & Tienari, 2008). In doing so, the discussion asserts CSR as being on-going and emergent through unfinalisable legitimisation processes in SNS contexts and uses the research questions as well as the theoretical framework identified in Chapter 4 to guide the discussion (Section 9.2.1). Section 9.2.2.2 then discusses ‘centripetal’ forces (9.2.2.1) and ‘centrifugal’ forces (9.2.2.2) (Baxter, 2004) and most importantly, brings these two competing discourses together to discern how centripetal/centrifugal forces play out in the interactional context of organisation-stakeholder dialogue (9.2.2.3). This emphasises the perpetual nature of CSR communication in SNSs. A summary is provided in Section 9.2.3.

9.2.1 Unfinalisable Processes of Legitimation

Through examining the discursive features of dialogue across the Co-operative, Lidl, Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury’s SNSs, legitimisation is engaged in by both organisations *and* stakeholders. While this suggests that SNSs may

harbour centripetal forces (unity, homogeneity, centrality) and discourses in support of organisational CSR activities (explored below), inherent tensions are unveiled between these discourses, presenting a more complex picture for CSR as in fact being characterised by on-going centrifugal forces (difference, dispersion, decentring). Particular organisational idiosyncrasies are also identified in how centripetal and centrifugal forces play out in SNS settings and the next sections offers key findings in relation to the research questions: Section 9.2.1.1 examines Research Question 1 and Section 9.2.1.2 examines Research Question 2. Finally, Section 9.2.1.3 summarises key findings in relation to the theoretical framework of performativity, polyphony and perpetuality.

9.2.1.1 Research Question 1

How do organisations and stakeholders engage in discursive processes of legitimisation through online CSR dialogue?

CSR communication supports instrumentality (Schultz et al., 2013) in many occasions at Marks and Spencer's, Sainsbury's and most markedly at Lidl in an attempt to bridge competing centrifugal discourses through more centripetal forces. These organisations utilise a high-level of strategic discourse in their SNSs, tying CSR to commerciality (product and service attributes) akin to marketing communication. In doing so, they discursively normalise their existing approaches to CSR and moralise and mythologise around their core values of quality, 'Britishness' and value respectively (Chapter 6). When

centrifugal processes challenge these discourses through the stakeholder approaches discussed in Chapter 7, the organisations draw on symbolic forms of management (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990) through protection of their authoritative organisational ‘texts’, deflecting conversation to ‘offline’ spaces (Chapter 8). In eschewing active dialogue around conflict and dissensus, Lidl, Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury’s appear to use their SNSs as opportunities to suppress centrifugal processes, revealing the intricacies through which legitimation is negotiated between organisations and stakeholders. Where dialogue does occur, it appears to be driven by centripetal forces, premised upon rational engagement and consensus; a critical hermeneutic approach to dialogue (Deetz & Simpson, 2004; Habermas, 1984) aligned with political-normative framings of CSR communication (Schultz et al., 2013). Yet, centrifugal forces continue to challenge and decentre centripetal forces, reinforcing the difficulty of ‘managing’ legitimacy (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Suchman, 1995) (as discussed in Chapter 2) in these fluid online contexts. These insights shed light onto Research Question 1.

The Co-operative, on the other hand, unveils the democracy-building potential of SNSs and a more constitutive view of communication (Schultz et al., 2013), as identified in Chapter 3. Aligning with discursive approaches to legitimation (Erkama & Vaara, 2010; Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Tienari, 2008), stakeholders are actively ‘involved’ in legitimation process in the Co-op’s SNS (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Arguably premised upon the Co-op’s values of honesty and openness, alongside the organisation’s democratic governance model, the Co-op normalises and moralises a citizenship discourse,

constructing the organisation as a protector of social and civic rights (Matten & Crane, 2005) (Chapter 6). This significantly contrasts with the marketing discourse utilised in Lidl, Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's SNSs as the Co-op provides a liminal, temporal space in which polyphonic voices are engaged in truly on-going legitimation processes. With evidence of both symbolic and substantive management (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990), or 'aspirational' CSR (intention and action) (Christensen et al., 2013), the Co-op and stakeholders discursively mediate discordant as well as concordant discourses through open dialogue, embracing centripetal as well as centrifugal forces most readily.

However, as seen in Chapter 7, processes of contestation are ostensibly more pervasive at the Co-op, with the organisation also adopting authorisation strategies including diversion and deflection at times, in order to pacify discursive conflict (see Chapter 8). In presenting more dissensual, alongside consensual, forms of engagement, dialogue here adopts a more postmodern (Deetz & Simpson, 2004) or Bakhtinian flavour (1986) in exploring, rather than eliminating, difference. These insights offer empirical confirmation of the democracy-building and dialogical nature of SNSs (Whelan, 2013; Whelan et al., 2013) reflecting how CSR communication adopts a more political-normative and constitutive approach in online settings (Schultz et al., 2013). They also shed further light onto Research Question 1 in revealing idiosyncratic organisation-stakeholder interactions.

9.2.1.2 Research Question 2

How do stakeholders/interlocutors engage in discursive processes of legitimisation through online CSR dialogue?

Stakeholder contestation processes show little variation across the SNSs. Utilising the discursive processes of authorisation, demythologisation and carnivalisation (Chapter 7), stakeholders discursively disrupt traditional communication hierarchies in the SNSs to affirm discursive control of the organisational ‘texts.’ Here power dynamics and discursive struggles in the SNSs reveal the power of centrifugal forces in challenging ‘monolithic’ organisational texts and centripetal forces. CSR communications within this vein adopt a more constitutive approach (Schultz et al., 2013), seeking organisational ‘responses’ as well as active ‘involvement’ in organisational processes (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). They thus align most readily with critical hermeneutic and postmodern forms of dialogue (Deetz & Simpson, 2004) and reveal the indeterminate, disintegrative and conflictual character of CSR communication (Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010; Schultz et al., 2013; Castelló et al., 2013). These insights provide rich insights into Bakhtinian dialogism (1986), particularly the notion of ‘allosensus’ (Nikulin, 2006) and the presence of ‘dissensual’ CSR (Whelan, 2013) in online CSR communications. The findings also confirm the active role of stakeholders in co-constituting CSR (Schultz et al., 2013), challenging corporate-centrism, and providing insights into stakeholder and interlocutor strategies as part of Research Question 2. However, as identified in Chapters 6 and 8, at times

stakeholders and interlocutors also provide crucial discursive support for centripetal forces, offering some positive influence and balance in the SNSs.

9.2.1.3 Theoretical Framework: Performativity, Polyphony and Perpetuality

The four organisational ‘texts’ cast light onto the discursive features of Bakhtinian dialogue (1986) in differing ways. Indeed, observations garnered from the findings and analysis can be aggregated into the three core elements of Bakhtinian dialogism explored in Chapter 4: performativity, polyphony and perpetuality (see Table 5).

Taking each in turn, *performativity*, which relates to the performative nature of discourse (Austin, 1962) in line with constitutive models of CSR communication (Golob et al., 2013; Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013; Schultz et al., 2013), this thesis has asserted that SNSs are organisational ‘texts’ constructed by internal and external actors at the *level of discourse*. In the same way that CSR research has utilised discourse and critical discourse analysis to explore organisational language (e.g. Castelló & Lozano, 2011; Cho & Roberts, 2010; Livesey, 2002; Siltaoja & Vehkaperä, 2010), the more interactive online context permits exploration of the *construct-ed* and *construct-ive* nature of organisational and stakeholder language (Potter & Wetherell, 2001) through fluid, naturally occurring conversations (Bruce, 1999). The findings have revealed how language is used symbolically (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990) to present ‘aspirational’ views of CSR in processes of legitimation (Christensen et al., 2013), which span temporal domains (past,

present and future) and most often align with talk (intention) as opposed to behaviour (action). Whilst at times the SNSs reveal inconsistencies, or disconnects between talk and action as part of centrifugal forces, the organisations work hard to shield their (internal) authoritative ‘texts’ from the (external) intertextual influence of other social texts in an attempt to maintain ‘monolithic’ CSR framings (Kuhn, 2008, 2012). This approach alludes to the influential nature of discourse within the SNSs, yet also challenges the constitutive potential of SNSs and dialogue in creating something ‘new’. Indeed, whilst processes of legitimation play out through dialogue and discourse in the SNSs, the organisational focus around *reconstruction* of organisational narratives through centripetal forces illustrates a ‘consistency bias’ (Schultz et al., 2013) and also limits the transformative and performative nature of language in the SNSs.

Secondly, *polyphony* relates to a plurality of voices and the conception of the ‘other’ as being fluid, dynamic and responsive in dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981). Through discursive processes of internal (from within the organisation) and external (outside of the organisation) intertextuality (Fairclough, 1995; Kristeva, 1980) a range of *organisational and stakeholder* voices both present (online) and not present (offline), as well as human (e.g. celebrities) and non-human (e.g. CSR reports), are visible within the dynamic SNSs. Given the permeable boundaries of the SNSs, this multi-vocal context reveals that whilst both the organisations and stakeholders discursively authorise their voices in the SNSs (Vaara & Tienari, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2007), there is no averred discursive ‘authority’ on matters of social and environmental concern. Therein,

polyphony suggests a view of ‘dispersed authority’ in SNSs. This reinforces the argument that, “CSR is a fluid and discursive field of contestation amongst a multitude of stakeholder voices” (Crane & Glozer, 2014:29), and illuminates processes of social construction around CSR at the organisational and stakeholder interface.

However distinct in the SNSs is a form of ‘weighted polyphony’ that challenges the applicability of this concept. This relates to the inherent power dynamics and voice inequality in organisation-stakeholder interaction. While symbolically engaging in ‘open’ and ‘transparent’ online communications (through operating a SNS), displaying markers of dialogue (questions and answers) and providing evidence of ‘listening’ (symbolic management [Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990]), all organisations appear to align with a stakeholder ‘involvement’ approach to communication (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Yet, through continually (re)asserting ‘control’ and ‘consensus’ (Schultz et al., 2013) around centripetal forces through deflecting, ignoring and deleting comments, polyphony is somewhat bounded within the organisational sphere. Even the Co-op, arguably the most dialogical and polyphonic ‘text’ observed, holds onto its core framing of democracy, by harbouring and managing stakeholder critiques, assertions and affirmations set against it.

It is in relation to the final element of Bakhtinian (1986) dialogue that the contribution of the thesis becomes most lucid. *Perpetuality*, relating to ongoing unfinalisable processes (Bakhtin, 1986) *between centripetal and centrifugal forces and discourses* (Baxter, 2004), or consensual, dissensual and

'allosensual' dialogical interactions (Nikulin, 2006), is an inherent feature of CSR communication in SNSs. Given the plurality of voices (polyphony) and the range of opinions and topics within the SNSs, dialogues are rarely finalised but are, instead, representative of cacophony, confusion, and fragmentation (Crane & Livesey, 2003), which fuel on-going processes of legitimation through never-ending discursive cycles. Therein, whilst centripetal forces are continually inserted into dialogues by both organisations and stakeholders, continual stakeholder and interlocutor discursive contestation through centrifugal forces requires frequent mediation; a process enacted by both organisations and stakeholders. Returning to the discussion of Bakhtin (1986) provided in Chapter 4, Bakhtin views social life as a fragmented and disorderly interweave of opposing forces characterised by multivocality and the interdeterminancy, within which order is a task to be accomplished, rather than a given (Baxter, 2004). These 'opposing' centripetal (unity, homogeneity, centrality) and centrifugal (difference, dispersion, decentring) forces of dialogue (Baxter, 2004) are broadly related to consensus and dissensus, but instead of focussing upon the finality of dialogue in agreement or dissension, instead these forces permit the on-going restoration and renewal of dialogue in SNSs. This discussion now turns to examining the discursive features of centripetal and centrifugal forces in the organisational SNSs and the core contribution of this thesis around perpetuality; unfinalisable processes of legitimation in online CSR communication.

9.2.2 Centripetal and Centrifugal forces: Discursive Features

This section discusses the discursive features of on-going and unfinalisable processes of legitimation between organisations and stakeholders in *centripetal* (9.2.2.1), and *centrifugal* (9.2.2.2) forces. In doing so, the chapter builds upon understanding of the dialogic potential of SNSs in CSR contexts (Chapter 3) and constructs these two competing discourses not as distinct binaries, but as forming part of an *unfinalisable dialogical process* (Bakhtin, 1986) that is never ending, but perpetual and continually reconstitutive of conceptions of CSR (9.2.2.3). Each section reflects on empirical nuances to provide texture into the idiosyncratic organisational ‘texts’, as well as industry-level observations, and stakeholder and broader interlocutor voices.

9.2.2.1 Centripetal Forces

Building upon themes of unity, homogeneity and centrality (Bakhtin, 1986; Baxter, 2004) the notion of centripetal forces align with popular conceptions of ‘consensual’ CSR (Whelan, 2013). Broadly focuses upon the notion of organisation-civil society accordance in CSR contexts, ‘consensual’ views of CSR in management literature have espoused assumptions that organisation-stakeholder engagement processes can democratically ‘legitimate’ organisational activity (Schultz et al., 2013; Whelan, 2013). In privileging consent over dissent, the legitimacy literature is also premised upon a view of congruence, wherein societal expectations and organisational activity must be aligned for legitimacy to occur (Suchman, 1995).

Turning to the empirical context of this study, it is evident that centripetal forces are, at times, operating between organisations and stakeholders in the SNSs, however as opposed to conceptions of consensus, there is a distinct absence of a finite congruence ‘outcome’ across the SNSs. In fact, in aggregating the discursive processes explored in Chapters 6 and 8 into a broad understanding of centripetal forces, three characteristics emerge: shared language through aligned *discursive resources* (9.2.2.1.1), evidencing through similitude in *artefacts* referenced (9.2.2.1.2) and goal congruence demonstrated through Facebook functionality and ‘liking’ (9.2.2.1.3). Each of these markers of centripetal forces is now discussed in turn to illuminate the intricacies of organisation-stakeholder legitimation processes within SNSs and the view of CSR as on-going and emergent through discourse.

9.2.2.1.1 Discursive Resources: Shared Language

At the most basic level, the findings have presented levels of reciprocity in organisation-stakeholder interaction and evidence of erotetic and apocritic engagement (questions and answers) (Bakhtin, 1986). Questions most often occur from stakeholders, who either receive responses from other stakeholders (more frequent) or the organisations themselves (less frequent). The organisations also encourage and initiate dialogue through posts that ask, “*Did you know...?*” “*What do you think of...?*” and vehemently urge stakeholders to “*Tell us what you think*”. This strongly contrasts with the corporate-centric and managerialist focus on dialogue in the CSR literature (e.g. Burchell & Cook, 2008; O’Riordan & Fairbrass, 2008; Payne & Calton, 2002, 2004). In

reflecting turn-taking and ‘inter-party’ moves (Brennan et al., 2013), the SNSs fulfil the fundamental markings of ‘dialogue.’

However, shifting away from the sequential nature of the interactions, the findings also unveil shared language cues. Common linguistic markers not only reflect the consensual nature of dialogue in representing complimentary discursive resources as part of centripetal forces, but also illuminate the specifics of harmonious legitimation processes in SNS contexts. For example, stakeholder statements such as, “*every Lidl helps*” (playing on Tesco’s price promise of ‘every little helps’), “*I hope Co-op will bee part of this once more...*” (building upon the Co-op’s ‘Plan Bee’ campaign), “*its not just food its M&S food*” (referencing M&S’ advertising slogan in relation to food quality) and reference to Sainsbury’s British values (reinforcing the organisation’s values), embody organisational language and reflect a shared lexicon between the organisations and the stakeholders. These posts also emphasise the intertextual nature of the SNSs (Kristeva, 1980; Fairclough, 1995), where fragments of organisational discourse appear in stakeholder posts. Furthermore, the collective pronoun ‘we’ is often utilised to reflect inclusivity, with more idiosyncratic approaches seen at Lidl (“Lidlers”) and the Co-op (‘members’). Moreover, emoticons and shorthand expressions are used by all actors in the SNSs to convey happy emotions (e.g. 😊, 😊, ‘lol’), as are kisses to express affection or friendship (xx). These discursive resources create a sense of community around centripetal forces and suggest that legitimation, is at times, a collaborative pursuit in SNS contexts. They also highlight the performative nature of dialogue (Bakhtin, 1986) in constructing positive

associations as part of constitutive models of CSR communication (Golob et al., 2013; Schultz et al., 2013), discussed in Chapter 3.

9.2.2.1.2 Artefacts: Tangible Evidence

A distinctive characteristic of online dialogue is that actors are able to support their arguments and assertions with tangible, third party ‘evidence.’ Alongside discursive resources, centripetal forces are evidenced through a range of material and non-material ‘artefacts’, which form part of a shared frame of discursive reference between organisations and stakeholders. These artefacts seek to discursively affirm and authorise both stakeholder and organisational voices in the SNSs, and signify social concern from a range of media ‘texts.’

Looking first at material artefacts, all actors in the SNSs provide ‘non-human’ website address links which embody ‘internal intertextuality’ (Fairclough, 1995); the referencing of authoritative organisational knowledge. Across all retailers, reference is made to organisational websites, CSR strategies, position statements, press releases and additional social media sites through direct reporting and paraphrasing. Therein, both stakeholders and organisations construct the organisation as an, ‘expert’ authority. This is evidenced most markedly in posts that paraphrase earlier discussions and provide a sense of an on-going and perpetual dialogue between the organisations and stakeholders. The Co-op and stakeholders are particularly active in this approach, as exemplified in the posts below, which emphasise co-operation and centripetal forces between the organisation and its stakeholders:

The Co-op: Congratulations to the latest 'trainees' from our Plan Bee campaign's Urban Bees training course in London. They're now flying solo with their own hives! Kylie said, "the bees were incredibly calm, obviously productive and healthy. I'll do my best to keep them that way." Whilst Eleanor said, "It will be amazing to see a hive of bees in my garden after dreaming of it for two years!"

Angela: Here's the Sustainability Report, James and others <http://www.co-operative.coop/corporate/sustainability/> Apparently, the Co-op reduced single-use plastic bag usage by 65% from 2006 to 2011 saving 'over one billion carrier bags' <http://www.co-operative.coop/Corporate/sustainability-report-2011/downloads/sustainability-report-2011.pdf>

Turning to non-material artefacts, we see further evidence of embodied organisational discourse in the form of reference to shared moral value systems. These more transient artefacts appear in the Co-op SNS through stakeholder posts which highlight expectations of being *listened to*; in Sainsbury's SNS through reference to *British is best*; and instrumentally in M&S and Lidl's SNSs where stakeholders discuss the importance of *quality* and *value for money* respectively. Shared values and norms suggest fertile ground for discursive legitimation through centripetal forces. Indeed, in continually reinforcing values through regular posts and dialogue, the retailers convey a sense of symbolic management of legitimation; *appearing* consistent with social values and expectations (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). This, once again, reinforces the performative nature of organisational 'texts' in SNSs.

9.2.2.1.3 'Liking': Goal Congruence

As consensual dialogue and centripetal forces are normalised in the SNSs, goal congruence between the organisations and stakeholders becomes apparent. Be it voicing support for M&S 'Shwopping' initiative, 'liking' Lidl's posts on

charitable giving, or posting pictures of British jubilee celebrations to Sainsbury's Facebook page, these actions highlight how reciprocity is aided by Facebook functionality that allows more 'passive' and less text-based forms of exchange. These features are exploited by the organisations that wish to promote the quantity of stakeholder interactions (e.g. "*Give us a LIKE to celebrate British Food Fortnight*", [Sainsbury's]), as well as stakeholders who seek to build sentiment around campaigns (e.g. "*Like if you support this, and share if you're a woman!*" [stakeholder comment in the NMP3 dialogues]). These resources reflect the unique mechanisms for 'voicing' perspectives in SNSs and shared norms of engagement. They also represent active stakeholder involvement in CSR (Morsing & Schultz, 2006), providing insight into how legitimisation occurs through more consensual and democratic forms of dialogue. A shared vision for CSR is unearthed in these instances, with evidence of more 'substantive' forms of legitimacy management (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990) suggesting that organisations are fusing talk with action (Christensen et al., 2013) (e.g. the Co-operative introduction of CCTV in slaughterhouses). While in traditional media settings positive stakeholder responses to such developments would be concealed, in the SNSs, this stakeholder 'win' is visible for all who visit the Facebook page. Moreover, given the archival nature of Facebook, the dialogue forms part of an omnipresent and consensual legacy for the Co-op, of significant value to future legitimisation processes. This reinforces the perpetual nature of CSR communication in SNSs.

9.2.2.2 *Centrifugal Forces*

Building upon themes of difference, dispersion, decentring (Bakhtin, 1986; Baxter, 2004), centrifugal forces relate to the burgeoning interest in dissensus, disagreement and organisation-civil society discordance in CSR communication (Schultz et al., 2013). Whelan (2013) highlights that the vast majority of CSR research has been premised upon examining reasoned accordance between organisations and stakeholders; a consensual view of CSR. Yet, a critical light has also been placed upon the ‘relationship’ metaphor, pervasive in marketing literature, which depicts a harmonious and somewhat idealised view of organisation-stakeholder interaction (O’Malley et al., 2008). This undue focus on building social bonds through consent has not only constructed dissensus as a risk to organisational legitimacy and an obstacle to be avoided, but has also eschewed understanding of the productive role of ‘dissensual’ CSR (Whelan, 2013). As highlighted in Chapter 4, Nikulin’s (2006) notion of ‘allosensus’ celebrates contradiction and the “inerasable difference of otherness” (p. 222), which is inherent in any form of dialogue, including that between organisations and stakeholders in online CSR contexts. The applicability of these dialogical insights to the CSR literature becomes apparent as a result of the empirical investigations of this thesis.

Perhaps counter-intuitive from the received wisdom surrounding ‘effective’ forms of stakeholder engagement and communication (see Chapter 3), a focus upon the liberating nature of dialogue akin to the Bakhtinian (1981) view of the ‘carnavalesque’ (Chapter 4), embraces pluralism in processes of legitimation.

something more sensible?"); and simple requests (e.g. "*STOP THE ABUSE AND TORTURE OF YOUR ANIMALS*") receive lengthy replies, which are scattered with evidence of adherence to societal norms (e.g. legislation, NGO guidelines) in attempt to pacify stakeholder comment and reassert organisational authority. The ubiquitous nature of Facebook facilitates open and free discussion (albeit when discordant stakeholder posts are not deleted), permitting the 'democratisation' of knowledge creation (see Roper et al., 2013) as part of centrifugal forces. It also reveals a stark contrast between descriptive stakeholder posts, which are littered with personal anecdotes, colourful details and emotive language, and the reserved informative and somewhat prescriptive nature of many organisational posts:

***M&S:** Today we've launched www.marksandspencer.com/recycle to encourage recycling of unwanted electrical items in exchange for M&S vouchers. We're hoping this will help reduce the one million tonnes of electronic waste the UK produces on average each year.*

The on-going battle between centripetal and centrifugal forces typifies dissensual dialogue with some stakeholder posts explicitly promoting *illegitimation* rather than legitimation. As opposed to the creation of an online 'community', here posts metonymically convey a sense of warfare (as aforementioned). Given the anonymity of stakeholders in SNSs, online dissensual dialogue and centrifugal forces thus represent an online 'dialectical space' (Cova and Dalli, 2009) characterised by stakeholder empowerment (e.g. Denegri-Knott et al., 2006), resistance (e.g. Krishnamurthy & Kucuk, 2009) and activism (e.g. den Hond and de Bakker, 2007). We thus see strong evidence of Bakhtinian (1981) 'carnavalesque' behaviours, as polyphonic

dissenting voices exploit the SNSs to challenge the status quo. Whilst the organisational response to this phenomenon is most usually to avoid providing a direct reply (silence) or reauthorise the organisational ‘expert voice’ through (re)inserting centripetal forces, expectations of professional practice constrain retailer responses. Retailer approaches do vary from explanation and reform at the Co-op (akin to markers of successful dialogue [Payne & Calton, 2002]), to apologies and deflection of issues at Lidl, M&S and Sainsbury’s (akin to legitimation management strategies [Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Suchman, 1995]). The impact of polyphonic voices upon language use and the discursive and performative qualities of stakeholder disquiet as an active part of legitimation processes are made lucid here.

9.2.2.2.2 Artefacts: Tangible Evidence

The provision of third-party evidence also occurs in organisation and stakeholder dissensual dialogue and centrifugal forces, however here the material and non-material artefacts are designed to work against organisational ‘texts’. Looking first at material artefacts, stakeholders draw on a broad range of ‘non human’ materials by providing URL links through to campaigns, NGO reports and websites, academic research, newspaper articles, industry examples, YouTube clips, additional social media sites and e-petitions. In comparison to consensual dialogue and centripetal forces, ‘human’ materials are less pervasive, bar a few cursory references to campaign heads (e.g. Lucy Ann-Holmes in the NMP3 dialogues). Therein, the stakeholders arm themselves with tangible proof to contradict organisational CSR talk and

action, compete against one another and crucially undermine organisational ‘myths’ in legitimation processes. The high prevalence of discordant posts in the SNSs creates a core challenge for legitimation as dissensual dialogue and centrifugal forces capture the attention of even the most ardent of organisational stakeholders:

***Bill:** We used to trust M&S when it came being GM free, but now M&S sells unlabeled GM meat in stores and in its restaurants. May as well shop at Asda or Tesco. GM food is slowly killing us and the planet. M&S was our last hope now its called ‘Monsanto & Spencer’ Killing your customers just for greater profit?*

Most illuminating is, however, stakeholders’ use of non-material artefacts in their focus upon demythologisation. Whilst the organisations continue to draw upon internal intertextuality (reference to their own artefacts), stakeholder posts adopt a broader vernacular through explicit ‘external’ intertextuality (Fairclough, 1995; Kristeva, 1966). Moving away from the confines of the organisational SNSs, stakeholders abstract organisational talk and action into wider societal discourses of organisational harm, objectification, inequality and coercion, metaphorically conjuring up images of the retailers as tyrannical, capitalist entities. Accordingly, stakeholders analogise desired ‘legitimate’ qualities (e.g. openness, natural, protection, compassion, local, quality, value, truth and ethics) with ‘illegitimate’ qualities (e.g. secrecy, manufactured, harm, global, poor quality, expense, dishonesty and immoral behaviour), countering organisational values and myths through storytelling, emotivisation and self-other relations. Visible across the SNSs, these artefacts appear most markedly at the Co-op, perhaps given the organisations’ prominent ethical positioning. The presence of these fragments of material and non-material artefacts in

stakeholder posts highlights the polyphonic nature of SNSs (Bakhtin, 1986) and intertextuality (Fairclough, 1995; Kristeva, 1980). Indeed dialogues occur not just between individuals present in the SNSs, but between a range of distinct ‘other’ societal voices, illuminating the all-encompassing nature of online interaction and the polyphonic nature of the SNSs.

9.2.2.2.3 *‘Disliking’*: Goal Incongruence

Facebook functionality does not celebrate centrifugal forces in the same way that it celebrates centripetal forces through permitting ‘likes’ and ‘shares.’ Instead, stakeholders adopt more creative ways to capture attention as part of centrifugal forces through the use of capital letters, emotive language, elongated punctuation and continual repetition of posts, as well as explicitly stating “*DISLIKE*”. It can be surmised that the core purpose of these posts is to contest centripetal forces and perpetuate processes of legitimation; the goal of the organisations on the other hand is to protect the centripetal forces. Dissensual dialogue is then characterised by discursive struggles for control in the SNSs with stakeholders discursively vying for attention through resources and artefacts, and organisations exploiting Facebook functionality by ignoring and even deleting posts. Deetz (1992) explains this by drawing on Habermas’ (1970) theory of distorted communication, where discursive closure exists and diverse views are obstructed in order to divert and block understanding. In this way, topics are avoided and particular discourses attempt to be marginalised (Deetz, 1992). Yet this suppression of conflict only fuels dissensual engagement in the SNS, further perpetuating centrifugal forces:

***Sainsbury's:** Hi Carrie, Robert here. Sorry you can't find any locally sourced beef in your store at the moment. We do think that sourcing local products is really important and we're committed through our 20 by 20 plan to make sure the amount of British food we sell is doubled in stores by 2020. I'll make sure this is fed back.*

***Carrie:** Are u joking ??2020 i will be dead by then .why not make a big thing of local beef in wake of all the horse scandal*

In ignoring and deleting posts, organisations propagate centrifugal forces, leaving vast discursive lacunas in the SNSs and a suspension of reality. These voids are often filled with further criticism and hostile feedback. Yet as Ihlen et al. (2011) highlight, these voids also represent opportunities for more active engagement, as stakeholders talk amongst themselves and rethink the relationship between the corporations and society in new ways (akin to Nikulin's [2006] view of 'allosensus'). In these instances we do not know who is listening into the dialogues, as whilst the organisational voice is not present, organisational actors may still be monitoring dialogues through 'social listening.' Given the public nature of SNSs, dissensual dialogue and centrifugal forces then become characterised by covert operations and a level of obtuseness surrounding who is participating and also observing the dialogue. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 5, the disembodied nature of online data can be problematic in ensuring 'true' understanding of participant identities. This lack of transparency extends dissensual dialogue and centrifugal forces further, problematising legitimation processes in the SNSs.

9.2.3 Unfinalisable Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces: Implications

Bakhtin's (1981; 1986) conception of dialogue as an unfinalised, perpetual process, highlighted in Chapter 4, suggests that 'completing' dialogue through reaching a complete balance between centripetal (unifying) and centrifugal (dividing) forces is problematic within open-ended exchanges between polyphonic voices (the interaction between self and 'other'). It is posited, in fact, that there is an impossibility of exhausting relations between the self and the other as disagreement permits the restoration of dialogue and vice versa (Nikulin, 2006). Nikulin's (2006) concept of 'allosensus' also builds upon this assertion to suggest that reaching universal consensus (total agreement) or discordance (total dissension) is a highly problematic assumption in dialogues given the inherent role of discordance in fluid interactions. These interpretations map well onto the SNSs contexts empirically studied in this thesis, yet in identifying unfinalisable processes of legitimation in dialogic organisation-stakeholder CSR communication, this thesis has also shed light on the *discursive* and textural features of dialogical interaction. Indeed in identifying juxtapositions between shared language/dissenting voices (discursive resources), internal/external references (artefacts) and legitimating/illegitimizing goals ('liking'/'disliking'), this thesis has posited that binary distinctions between centripetal and centrifugal forces are unrealistic to uphold in today's networked societies.

These findings have valuable ramifications for developing understanding of CSR, and indeed 'legitimacy'; focal constructs of this study. Indeed, in

appreciating that CSR is socially constructed (Campbell, 2007; Dahlsrud, 2008; Gond & Matten, 2007) (Section 2.2.1), this thesis posits that CSR is ongoing and emergent through unfinalisable legitimation processes. While conventional studies that have espoused a functionalist understanding of legitimacy as a fixed and manageable ‘reality’ (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Suchman, 1995) are valuable in understanding the idealised outcome of organisation-societal deliberation, this thesis has developed empirical understanding into the dialogical and discursive *process* of legitimation within fluid and dynamic SNSs, problematising traditional assumptions in today’s fluid and interconnected networked societies. Indeed the SNS context reveals the context-specific and nuanced interplay of (inter)discursive properties of organisation-stakeholder communication, providing empirical understanding for management and CSR scholarship (van Leeuwen, 2007; Vaara et al., 2006, Vaara & Tienari, 2008). As explored in Chapter 3, this builds theory within a constitutive conception of communication (Castelló et al., 2013; Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013; Schultz et al., 2013), capturing the more disintegrative, discordant and dissensual (centrifugal) features of communication, alongside the integrative, concordant and consensual (centripetal). Furthermore, the inherent (albeit ‘weighted’) polyphonic nature of SNSs in permitting dialogue from a range of present and non-present, material and non-material actors emphasises the fragility of authoritative ‘texts’ (Kuhn, 2008) and relevance of a constructionist approach to communication in SNSs (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

In capturing sentiments of both Research Questions 1 and 2, discursive and dialogical legitimation then brings together unfinalisable processes of normalisation/authorisation/moralisation/mythologisation (centripetal forces) with carnivalisation/authorisation/demythologisation (centrifugal forces), suggesting that there is no clear ‘outcome’ of dialogue (as in Bohmian [1990] or Habermasian [1984] conceptions), but more that dialogue celebrates pluralism (Bakhtin, 1986; Nikulin, 2006). In addressing fixed ‘states’ or perceptions, consensus and dissensus can be established or agreed upon. Yet the dataset within this study has revealed that there is no common agreement or opposing interest. While in perpetual and on-going flux, processes may temporarily overlap and/or align, the presence of polyphonic voices and internal/external ‘texts’ is only temporal and flickering. Thus, rather than position dialogues in relation to binary classifications then, this study then suggests that centripetal and centrifugal forces comprise on-going and unfinalisable legitimation processes, offering a framework for legitimation as depicted in Figure 14. The circle runs between centrifugal forces, encapsulating the discursive legitimation processes unearthed in Chapters 6 and 8 and centrifugal forces, incorporating Chapters 7 and 8.

9.2.4 Discussion Summary

Section 9.2.1 has presented a discussion of the discursive and dialogical nature of unfinalisable processes of legitimation. In doing so, the section has aligned findings with theory and provided summaries in relation to the core research questions of this thesis. Section 9.2.2 has examined the texture of centripetal

(9.2.2.1) and centrifugal (9.2.2.2) forces across the four SNSs in relation to discursive resources, material and non-material artefacts and the functionality of the Facebook settings. It has thus identified that centripetal and centrifugal forces do not exist as binary classifications, but act in unison as part of unfinalisable processes (9.2.2.3). Table 20 provides a summary of these three conceptualisations of discourse and dialogue, detailing the discursive processes alongside the discursive resources, artefacts and functionality mechanisms utilised in the SNSs.

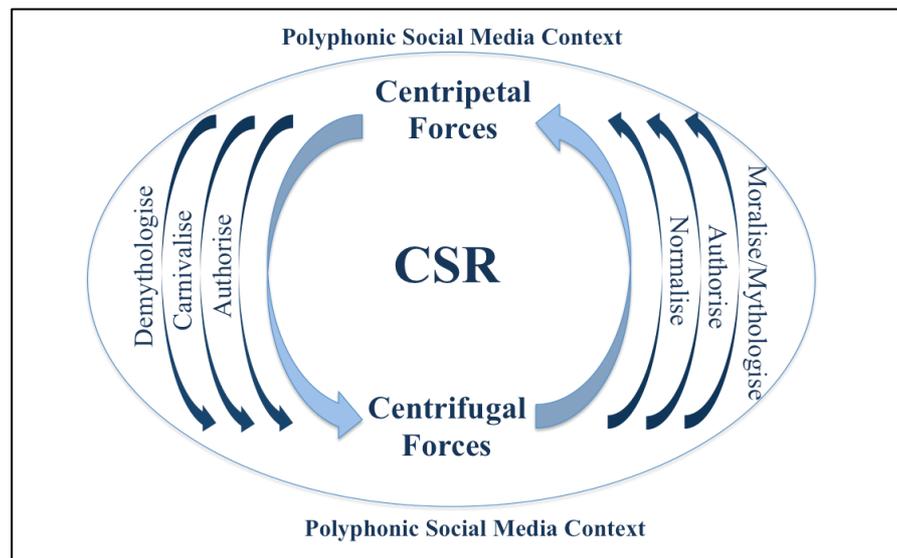


Figure 14: Unfinalisable Processes of Legitimation

| | Centripetal Forces Chapter: 6/8 | Unfinalisability Chapter: 6/7/8 | Centrifugal Forces Chapter: 7/8 |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|
| Discursive Processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normalisation • Moralisation • Mythologisation • Authorisation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normalisation • Moralisation • Mythologisation • Authorisation • Carnivalisation • Demythologisation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorisation • Carnivalisation • Demythologisation |
| Discursive Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Language | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Language/ Dissenting Voices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissenting Voices |
| Artefacts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Intertextuality (Organisation Discourse) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal/External Intertextuality (Organisation/ Societal Discourse) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Intertextuality (Societal Discourse) |
| Functionality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like • Share • Emoticons | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like • Share • Emoticons • Ignore • Delete • Covert monitors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ignore • Delete • Covert monitors |

Table 20: Characteristics of Unfinalisable Processes of Legitimation

9.3 Conclusions

In order to tackle the overarching research question of *how legitimisation is constituted through discursive and dialogical processes in online CSR communication*, this thesis has presented the findings of a three-year research project. The purpose of this section is now to bring the inferences of this thesis together and provide conclusions. Consequently, a summary of the thesis is provided (9.3.1), followed by a discussion of the core contributions of the research (9.3.2) in relation to theoretical contributions to the CSR communication literature (9.3.2.1), methodological contributions to social media research (9.3.2.2) and contributions to practice (9.3.2.3). Finally avenues for further research are provided (9.3.3).

9.3.1 Thesis Summary

In exploring how organisational and stakeholder discourse in online CSR communication, this thesis has provided empirical insight into how CSR is ongoing and emergent through unfinalisable processes of legitimation (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). In building upon the idea that CSR is a social construction (Gond & Matten, 2007) forged between organisations *and* stakeholders, Chapter 2 presented legitimacy as a core principle for defining CSR and the success of CSR activities (Lee & Carroll, 2011). The chapter highlighted Suchman's (1995) influential conception of legitimacy as congruence between organisational activity and societal expectations, yet critiqued functionalist conceptions of legitimacy 'realities' to orientate a focus upon legitimation processes, characterised around plural realities, and forged through communication (Dowling, 1983). In doing so, the chapter aligned with research that has examined the role of organisation discourses in legitimation processes (e.g. Alvesson, 1993; Brown, 1998; Castelló & Lozano, 2011; Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010; Erkama & Vaara, 2010; Higgins & Walker, 2012; Vaara et al., 2006; Vaara & Tienari, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2007). Yet it also emphasised the role of stakeholder discourses in legitimation processes, supporting an ontological orientation towards social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The chapter also identified the core research gap surrounding how (inter)discursive processes, practices and strategies constitute legitimation in management research (Vaara et al., 2006), the core aperture upon which this thesis builds.

Chapter 3 developed an understanding of conceptualisations of, and the context for, CSR communications in research and practice. In illuminating how communication has been theorised in CSR research, the chapter outlined distinctions between functionalist and constitutive conceptions of communication. Therein, the chapter utilised Schultz et al.'s (2013) tripartite framework to map CSR communications into instrumental, political-normative and constitutive approaches and highlighted the burgeoning interest in the view that CSR *is* communication (building upon the perspective that 'communication constructs organisations' [CCO] [Craig, 1999]). Yet, the chapter identified that the empirical context for understanding *how* CSR is constituted in communicative processes is currently lacking (Castelló et al., 2013; Christensen et al., 2013; Schultz et al., 2013), particularly in 'new media' environments (Whelan et al., 2013). Consequently, the chapter reviewed literature surrounding CSR communication in new media contexts, highlighting the intention of the thesis to explore the increasingly dialogical nature of CSR communication within the dynamic SNS context, particularly by shifting away from the dominance of positivistic studies, to provide descriptive and interpretive insight into social media settings such as Facebook.

The thesis then turned to the dialogical research within communication studies in Chapter 4, to introduce dialogue as a valuable lens through which to explore discursive legitimation processes between organisations and stakeholders in social media settings. In discussing traditions of dialogical research, the chapter aligned with Deetz and Simpson's (2004) postmodern conception of dialogue, particularly the notion of Bakhtinian dialogism (1986). The chapter

offered three core interpretations of Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) research to detail concepts of performativity (how we 'do' things with words [Austin, 1975]), polyphony (reference to multiple voices), and perpetuality (the on-going and unfinalisable nature of dialogue). Having related CSR communications research to this conceptual framework, the chapter summarised the literature review chapters to present the research questions for this thesis: (1) How do organisations and stakeholders engage in discursive processes of legitimation through online CSR dialogue? (2) How do stakeholders/interlocutors engage in discursive processes of legitimation in online CSR dialogue?

Chapter 5 contextualised and rationalised the qualitative research design and philosophy guiding the thesis, emphasising a focus upon social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), introspective reflexivity (Finlay, 2002) and interpretivism given the interest in *processes* of legitimation. Most markedly, the chapter provided a detailed discussion of the methodology of discourse analysis, building most specifically upon Potter and Wetherell's (2001) notion of 'discursive constructionism', which conceptualises language as both a *constructed* and *constructive* phenomenon, as well as the interest of this thesis in the discursive features of dialogue. The chapter also detailed the research design adopted in the study, detailing how the SNS data was contextualised, gathered and analysed, as well as ethical considerations and core limitations. A core contribution of the chapter is in the outlining of the inductive and deductive coding processes which guide the findings and analysis chapters. Finally, the chapter justified the choice to focus upon the 'Facebook' SNS and

how the four case retail organisations of The Co-operative Group, Marks and Spencer, Lidl and Sainsbury's were selected.

Upon this basis, the findings and analysis ensued in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. Chapter 6 examined the organisation-stakeholder discursive processes of (reactive) normalisation, moralisation and mythologisation that supported centripetal forces in the SNS in relation to Research Question 1. Chapter 7 explored the stakeholder discursive processes of authorisation, demythologisation and carnivalisation that supported centrifugal forces in relation to Research Question 2. Chapter 8 focused squarely upon how competing discourses of (reactive) normalisation and authorisation formed part of the on-going negotiation of centripetal and centrifugal forces in organisation-stakeholder interaction in relation to Research Question 1. These chapters encapsulate the key discursive and dialogical dimensions that construct legitimation processes in SNSs and extend research that has explored the discursive construction of legitimacy (Vaara et al., 2006, Vaara & Tienari, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2007). They also provide micro-level observations of the retail contexts to illuminate more progressive approaches to legitimation and CSR communication at the Co-operative and more instrumental approaches to legitimation management at Lidl, M&S and Sainsbury's. At this juncture, the key contributions of this research project can now be discussed.

9.3.2 Research Contributions

The contributions of this research project are three-fold. Firstly, the thesis provides a theoretical contribution to the CSR communications and legitimacy literature (9.3.2.1). Secondly, the thesis offers a methodological contribution in its novel analysis of organisational social media sites as organisational ‘texts’ (9.3.2.2). Finally, the thesis provides insight for practice communities around social media management (9.3.2.3). Each contribution is now discussed in turn.

9.3.2.1 Theoretical Contribution: CSR Communications

In building upon constitutive models of CSR communication (Golob et al., 2013; Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013; Schultz et al., 2013), this thesis suggests that understanding of CSR is on-going and emergent through unfinalisable legitimisation processes between organisations and stakeholders in SNSs. The thesis contributes to the CSR literature by challenging conventional definitions of legitimacy (Suchman, 1995), which suggest that objective, legitimacy ‘realities’ are espoused from ‘transmission’ (sender-orientated) models of communication (Axley, 1984), to offer interpretations of legitimisation processes rooted within discursive and dialogical constructionism (Bakhtin, 1986; Potter & Wetherell, 2001). While the extant legitimacy literature has attributed external actors with agency to ‘give’ legitimacy to organisations, this thesis empirically demonstrates and conceptually analyses how legitimacy is not ‘given’, but continually and discursively (re)constituted by internal (organisational) and external (stakeholder) voices.

Findings capture not only the ‘centripetal’ (unifying) forces at play in organisation-stakeholder dialogue across the SNSs, but also the ‘centrifugal’ (dividing) forces (Baxter, 2004), illuminating the indeterminate, disintegrative and dissensual character of CSR communication (Castelló et al., 2013; Schultz et al., 2013; Whelan, 2013). Within a Bakhtinian (1981, 1986) conception of dialogue, the findings most markedly reveal perpetuity in CSR communication and the impossibility of exhausting relations in polyphonic SNS environments, characterised by ‘dispersed authority.’ Furthermore, in conceptualising SNSs as interactive, agential organisational ‘texts’, findings also illuminate the performative nature of SNSs in organising and (re)constructing CSR through organisation-stakeholder dialogue.

9.3.2.2 Methodological Contribution: Social Media Sites as Organisational ‘Texts’

Building upon the ‘linguistic turn’ in social sciences, this research provides a discursive interpretation of legitimation utilising a combination of immersive, online observational techniques (Kozinets, 2010) and discourse analysis to consider the purposive use of language in legitimation processes (Potter, 2003). Whilst the utilisation of a discursive lens to examine CSR communication in organisational ‘texts’ such as advertorials (Livesey, 2002), reporting (Campbell, 2000; Castelló & Lozano, 2011) and websites (Cho & Roberts, 2010) is well established in CSR research, the application of discourse analysis to social media ‘texts’ reflects originality in this thesis. Furthermore, the unique way in which social media data were distilled down into core CSR

dialogues through thematic analysis (Spiggle, 1994) and online observation techniques (Cova & Pace, 2006) (see Chapter 5) ensured that the researcher was true to interpretivism and constructionism by allowing data to be bounded by inductively-generated thematic ‘codes.’ This methodology contrasts with the dominant, positivistic approaches to exploring CSR communication in social media (e.g. Eberle et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2013), to offer more descriptive insight into the phenomena of study.

9.3.2.3 Practical Contribution: Social Media Strategies

Developments in information and communication technologies (ICT), particularly SNSs, have transformed the way in which organisations and stakeholders interact by encouraging organisations to adopt more bi-directional tools to engage stakeholders in CSR (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Rather than focusing on how to communicate *to* stakeholders, organisations are now increasingly concerned with how to communicate *with* stakeholders in social media settings, yet many organisations may not be utilising social media to its full potential. Indeed as Capriotti (2011) argues, many organisations continue to manage their CSR communication following the traditional one-way model of information dissemination and control, and attempt to apply ‘new’ digital tools in the same ways as ‘older’ media. This thesis has revealed evidence of this, identifying more strategic and transmission approaches to communication at Lidl, Marks and Spencer’s and Sainsbury’s, yet also reveals the more democratic and dialogical nature of communication at the Co-operative. The findings thus illuminate inherent tensions between marketing (commercial) and

CSR (democratic) discourses (seen most evidently through the theme of moralisation; Chapter 6) and provide insight into how organisations are reconciling these differences given the heterogeneous nature of audiences in SNSs. The thesis advocates that organisations should avoid treating social media as traditional media (in *informing* and *responding* to stakeholders) and should increasingly *involve* stakeholders in CSR communication (Morsing & Schultz, 2006) in order to stimulate positive social change (Christensen et al., 2013). To achieve this, organisations need to develop stringent codes of conduct so that they can engage with stakeholders without entering into ‘slanging matches’ with unreasonable stakeholders who draw on carnivalesque behaviours (particularly profanity and sarcasm) (Bakhtin, 1981) in SNSs. Indeed, if stakeholders are able to constructively air their views in open and collaborative online spaces, new insight can be garnered into a range of organisational as well as societal issues.

This thesis thus provides insight for both policy maker and practitioner audiences, asserting that SNSs provide valuable containers of cultural knowledge. Organisational Facebook pages present vast repositories of information not only at the organisational ‘micro’ level, but also with regards to ‘meso’ industry levels, and broader organisation-society dynamics at the ‘macro’ level. This suggests that SNSs should be managed not just at the periphery of CSR communications platforms, but should indeed form part of broader CSR communications strategies. Additionally, the findings have illuminated the potential for non-antagonistic conflict as part of ‘allosensual’ engagement (Nikulin, 2006). An undue focus upon creating control,

consistency and consensus by closing down stakeholder dissent in organisational SNSs (see Schultz et al., 2013) may be stifling more creative and transformative dialogues. Whilst providing spaces within which discordant communications can be realised may seem risky, the accelerating pace through which new technologies are being embraced suggests that the appetite for social media communications will only proliferate in years to come. As communication channels become more and more fragmented and stakeholder voices become increasingly disparate, a broad range of organisations and institutions can build descriptive understanding of the idiosyncrasies of their stakeholder audience through participating in their SNSs more frequently.

9.3.3 Further Research

Three further research avenues are identified as follows. Firstly, given the focus upon discursive interpretations of legitimacy in this context, scholars may choose to adopt additional qualitative research techniques to provide further clarity into processes of legitimation and the influential data sources that provide the intertextual cues (Fairclough, 1995; Kristeva, 1980). These may include interviews with social media/CSR managers in organisations to offer further insight into if and how legitimation processes are instrumentalised into wider decision-making processes, document analysis of materials such as CSR reports, organisational websites and newspaper articles to explore intertextuality further, or perhaps netnographical analysis (Kozinets, 2010) of the nexus of social media platforms through both observational and participatory methods. This may also be focussed more at the

stakeholder/interlocutor level to reveal more about the identities and motivations of those participating in the SNSs. Secondly, this research project has focussed upon day-to-day 'naturally occurring data' (Bruce, 1999), however future research may seek to explore communicative events (e.g. crisis communications) and the impact these events have on organisation-stakeholder discourse (see Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010). In doing so, researchers may wish to observe one organisational social media setting through longitudinal analysis, or provide a comparison of approaches across industries akin to this research project. Research within this vein would complement the existing study by shedding further empirical light upon how dialogical and discursive practices are altered when legitimacy 'mismatches' occur (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007).

Finally, while this study has identified tensions operating in the contestation of legitimacy, building upon the Bakhtinian (1981) conception of 'carnival', the power dynamics and discursive struggles operating between organisations and stakeholders could be a fruitful avenue for further research. The rationalisation of the choice to avoid applying an explicit critical lens to the data was provided in Chapter 5, however additional research may seek to build upon the intricate processes through which discourse in the SNSs embody themes of control and resistance to cast further light into postmodern perspectives of dialogue (Deetz & Simpson, 2004). Critical and Foucauldian discourse analysis (Wetherell, 2001) would be particularly influential here to illuminate the discourses that are both celebrated and suppressed in organisation-stakeholder legitimisation processes. This would further elaborate on the indeterminate, disintegrative and conflictual character of CSR communication (Castelló et al., 2013; Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010; Schultz et al., 2013).

9.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a sound closure to this thesis by providing a discussion of the research findings and key conclusions. Most specifically, the chapter has provided a discussion (9.2) of the empirical insights offered in the findings and analysis chapters to illuminate how CSR is on-going and emergent through unfinalisable processes of legitimation between organisations and stakeholders in SNSs. This section elucidates the discursive and textural features of SNS settings in supporting centripetal (unifying) and centrifugal (dividing) forces and provides a framework for conceptualising unfinalisable legitimation processes. The chapter has also offered core conclusions to this research project, providing a thesis summary to outline the narrative of the research (9.3.1), as well as discussing the theoretical contribution of the research to the CSR communications literature (9.3.2.1), the methodological contribution of the discourse analytical approach and the characterization of SNSs as ‘organisational texts’ (9.3.2.2) and the practical contributions of the study to practitioner and policy maker audiences (9.3.2.3). This thesis aims to provide fertile ground upon which additional conceptual and empirical research can build and has concluded the chapter by identifying potential future research avenues (9.3.3). All in all, this thesis hopefully presents an original and novel contribution to the CSR communications literature and the author hopes that the ideas presented here will ignite further research in the months and years to come.

Chapter 10: Appendices

Social Media CSR Dialogues

Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to provide additional examples of data to support the methodology and findings. The chapter is structured as follows. Appendix 1 provides a review of the social media platforms analysed across Facebook (1.1), Twitter (1.2) and blogs (1.3), supporting Chapter 5. Appendix 2 then provides additional data to support the thematic analysis in Chapter 5. Finally, Appendix 3 provides data to support the discourse analyses discussed in Chapter 6 (3.1), Chapter 7 (3.2) and Chapter 8 (3.3).

Appendix 1: Social Media Immersion

1.1. Facebook Observations

| Organisation | Facebook Name | URL | Industry | Facebook Launch Date | No. of Likes | No. Talking about this | Time Since Last Corporate Post | Time Since Last Stakeholder Post | Total No. of Corporate Posts in Last 24 Hours | Highest No. of Posts to 1 Corporate CSR Post |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---|--------------------|----------------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|
| American Apparel | American Apparel | http://www.facebook.com/americanappareluk?fref=ts | Clothing | 10/05/2012 | 1,356,310 | 27,801 | 2 days | 11 hours | 0 | 7 (0) |
| Applied Materials | Applied Materials Inc. | http://www.facebook.com/AppliedMaterialsInc | Semiconductors | 05/10/2009 | 2,227 | 28 | 2 weeks | 2 weeks | 0 | 5 (1) |
| Aviva | Aviva | http://www.facebook.com/Aviva | Insurance | 22/09/2010 | 77,335 | 264 | 5 months | 35 minutes | 0 | 40 (3) |
| Avon | Avon UK | http://www.facebook.com/AvonUK | Beauty | 07/08/2009 | 314,263 | 10,919 | 19 hours | 30 minutes | 1 | 12 (0) |
| Barclays | Barclays UK | http://www.facebook.com/BarclaysUK | Banking | 16/09/2011 | 78,146 | 3,197 | 2 days | 8 hours | 0 | 0 |
| Bayer | Bayer | http://www.facebook.com/Bayer | Pharmaceuticals | 10/07/2010 | 77,979 | 1,242 | 2 days | 1 day | 0 | 18 (1) |
| Ben & Jerry's | Ben & Jerry's UK | http://www.facebook.com/benjerryuk?ref=ts&fref=ts | Food | 26/03/2009 | 818,186 | 4,322 | 2 days | 12 hours | 0 | 13 (2) |
| Boots | Boots UK | http://www.facebook.com/BootsOfficialUK?fref=ts | Pharmacy | 26/08/2009 | 441,093 | 3,981 | 2 days | 14 minutes | 0 | 11 (1) |
| BP | BP America | http://www.facebook.com/BPAmerica?fref=ts | Oil & gas | 29/06/2009 | 362,205 | 2,244 | 17 hours | 4 hours | 1 | 71 (3) [420 (0) for Deepwater] |
| BT | BT UK | http://www.facebook.com/BTUK | Telecommunications | 08/12/2010 | 92,699 | 376 | 3 days | 3 days | 0 | 126 (46) |
| Captain Morgan | Captain Morgan USA | http://www.facebook.com/CaptainMorganUSA?fref=ts | Alcoholic beverage | 20/08/2009 | 1,247,471 | 27,965 | 3 days | 5 hours | 9 | 123 (1) |

| Organisation | Facebook Name | URL | Industry | Facebook Launch Date | No. of Likes | No. Talking about this | Time Since Last Corporate Post | Time Since Last Stakeholder Post | Total No. of Corporate Posts in Last 24 Hours | Highest No. of Posts to 1 Corporate CSR Post |
|-----------------------|-----------------|---|-----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Centrica | Centrica | http://www.facebook.com/centricapl | Utilities | 23/06/2009 | 619 | 7 | 7 months | 7 months | 0 | 3 (1) |
| Cisco | Cisco | http://www.facebook.com/Cisco | Networking equipment | 20/02/2008 | 367,842 | 3,553 | 4 days | 6 hours | 0 | 50 (0) |
| Coca Cola | Coca-Cola | http://www.facebook.com/cocacola?fref=ts | Drinks | 15/12/2008 | 57,300,152 | 698,888 | 16 hours | 44 minutes | 1 | 160 (0) |
| Colgate Palmolive | Colgate | http://www.facebook.com/Colgate?fref=ts | Household goods | 18/01/2012 | 2,453,816 | 6,028 | 4 days | 21 minutes | 0 | 109 (0) |
| Danone | Danone | http://www.facebook.com/group.danone | Food products | 23/07/2012 | 25,365 | 414 | 3 days | 3 days | 0 | 3 (1) |
| Dell | Dell | http://www.facebook.com/DellUK | Computer technology | 19/05/2009 | 4,630,031 | 60,704 | 3 days | 14 hours | 0 | 0 |
| Disney | Disney Post | http://www.facebook.com/DisneyPost | Mass media | 2011 | 7,658 | 572 | 3 days | 17 hours | 0 | 2 (1) |
| EDF Energy | EDF Energy | http://www.facebook.com/edfenergy?fref=ts | Gas & electricity | 2011 | 7,870 | 123 | 4 days | 14 hours | 0 | 22 (3) |
| FedEx | FedEx | http://www.facebook.com/FedEx?rf=112061345480493 | Courier | 05/11/2010 | 449,824 | 6,104 | 13 hours | 13 hours | 1 | 65 (3) |
| General Electric (GE) | GE | http://www.facebook.com/GE | Energy, Tech, Finance, Industrial | 30/03/2011 | 919,081 | 13,052 | 2 days | 9 hours | 0 | 135 (34) |
| Google | Google | http://www.facebook.com/Google?fref=ts | Internet | 23/07/2009 | 11,954,767 | 55,517 | 5 days | 1 hour | 0 | 2,928 (0) |
| Green and Black's | Green & Black's | http://www.facebook.com/GreenandBlacks?fref=ts | Confectionery | 2009 | 65,728 | 188 | 6 days | 4 days | 0 | 19 (0) |
| GSK | GlaxoSmithKline | http://www.facebook.com/GlaxoSmithKline | Pharmaceuticals | 21/01/2011 | 72,199 | 686 | 6 days | 6 days | 0 | 18 (3) |
| H&M | H&M | http://www.facebook.com/hm | Clothing | 2009 | 13,450,890 | 212,532 | 18 hours | 31 minutes | 1 | 159 (0) |
| IBM | IBM | http://www.facebook.com/pages/IBM/168597536563870 | Technology | 26/10/2011 | 189,003 | 3,547 | 4 days | 2 days | 0 | 64 (0) |

| Organisation | Facebook Name | URL | Industry | Facebook Launch Date | No. of Likes | No. Talking about this | Time Since Last Corporate Post | Time Since Last Stakeholder Post | Total No. of Corporate Posts in Last 24 Hours | Highest No. of Posts to 1 Corporate CSR Post |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Innocent | Innocent drinks | http://www.facebook.com/innocent.drinks | Food & drinks | 2009 | 311,852 | 32,819 | 1 hour | 3 minutes | 15 | 74 (2) |
| Kenco | Kenco | http://www.facebook.com/kenco?fref=ts | Coffee | 14/09/2009 | 64,090 | 474 | 1 day | 20 hours | 0 | 7 (0) |
| Kimberly Clark | Kimberly-Clark Corporation (US) | http://www.facebook.com/KimberlyClarkCorp | Consumer products | 15/07/2010 | 6,543 | 157 | 8 days | 18 hours | 0 | 11 (0) |
| L'Oreal | L'Oreal Paris USA | http://www.facebook.com/lorealparis?fref=ts | Beauty | 07/08/2009 | 1,720,030 | 8,979 | 11 hours | 1 hour | 1 | 11 (0) |
| Levi's | Levi's | http://www.facebook.com/Levis?fref=ts | Clothing | 26/06/2009 | 16,566,375 | 77,375 | 2 hours | 1 hour | 1 | 60 (0) |
| Lloyds Bank | Money for Life | http://www.facebook.com/moneyforlifeuk | Banking | 2010 | 234 | 3 | 5 days | 2 weeks | 0 | 3 (1) |
| Lush | Lush Fresh Handmade Cosmetics | http://www.facebook.com/freshlush | Health & Beauty | 21/11/2007 | 254,456 | 4,840 | 5 days | 3 hours | 0 | 280 (0) |
| M&S | M&S | http://www.facebook.com/MarksandSpencer | Consumer goods & Retail | 2009 | 1,176,197 | 19,295 | 20 hours | 13 minutes | 2 | 282 (33) |
| McDonald's | McDonald's Corporation | http://www.facebook.com/mcdonaldscorp | Fast food | 2009 | 8,413 | 296 | 20 hours | 12 hours | 2 | 3 (0) |
| Microsoft | Microsoft Citizenship | http://www.facebook.com/microsoftcitizenship?ref=ts | Software | 11/05/2009 | 93,925 | Unknown | 14 hours | 14 hours | 2 | 25 (1) |
| Mondelez | Mondelēz International | http://www.facebook.com/mondelezinternational?fref=ts | Food products | 2010 | 55,443 | 710 | 4 days | 18 hours | 0 | 9 (1) |
| Nestle | Nestle | http://www.facebook.com/Nestle | Food | 12/04/2008 | 805,652 | 8,998 | 51 minutes | 5 minutes | 2 | 65 (1) |
| Patagonia | Patagonia | http://www.facebook.com/PATAGONIA?fref=ts | Clothing | Unknown | 226,794 | 5,376 | 2 days | 22 hours | 0 | 32 (0) |
| PepsiCo | PepsiCo | http://www.facebook.com/PepsiCo | Food & Beverages | 20/01/2010 | 74,597 | 1,969 | 13 hours | 8 hours | 1 | 30 (11) |

| Organisation | Facebook Name | URL | Industry | Facebook Launch Date | No. of Likes | No. Talking about this | Time Since Last Corporate Post | Time Since Last Stakeholder Post | Total No. of Corporate Posts in Last 24 Hours | Highest No. of Posts to 1 Corporate CSR Post |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|----------------------|----------------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Pfizer | Pfizer | http://www.facebook.com/Pfizer?fref=ts | Pharmaceuticals | 24/12/2010 | 60,606 | 948 | 16 hours | 1 hour | 1 | 16 (0) |
| SABMiller | SAB Miller | http://www.facebook.com/sabmiller?fref=ts | Alcoholic beverages | 25/05/2010 | 6,795 | 130 | 5 days | 4 days | 0 | 4 (0) |
| Sainsbury's | Sainsbury's | http://www.facebook.com/sainsburys?sk=timeline&fref=ts | Retail | 30/03/2009 | 614,412 | 16,739 | 5 days | 44 minutes | 0 | 251 (0) |
| Shell | Shell | http://www.facebook.com/Shell | Oil & Gas | 23/05/2011 | 2,929,689 | 13,583 | 2 days | 1 hour | 0 | 1,794 (0) |
| Siemens | Siemens | http://www.facebook.com/Siemens?rf=103130559726825 | Consumer electronics | 13/08/2012 | 63,608 | 2,779 | 3 days | 1 hour | 0 | 16 (3) |
| Starbucks | Starbucks | http://www.facebook.com/Starbucks?fref=ts | Coffee houses | Unknown | 33,455,465 | 239,628 | 1 day | 11 minutes | 0 | 680 (0) |
| Strauss Group | Strauss Group | http://www.facebook.com/StraussGroupGlobal | Food products | 30/10/2011 | 116,613 | 3,152 | 3 days | 5 days | 0 | 1 (0) |
| Tesco | Tesco | http://www.facebook.com/tesco?fref=ts | Retail | 29/09/2010 | 1,102,363 | 97,991 | 10 hours | 16 minutes | 1 | 82 (5) |
| Tetley | Tetley's Farmers First Hand | http://www.facebook.com/TetleysFarmersfirsthand | Beverages | 14/02/2011 | 78,734 | 1,465 | 1 day | 4 hours | 0 | 67 (0) |
| The Body Shop | The Body Shop International | http://www.facebook.com/TheBodyShopInternational | Beauty | 2010 | 546,121 | 6,041 | 2 days | 23 hours | 0 | 15 (3) |
| The Co-operative | The Co-operative | http://www.facebook.com/TheCooperative | Retail | Unknown | 26,594 | 1,640 | 2 days | 23 hours | 0 | 46 (3) |
| The Redbush Tea Company | The Redbush Tea Company | http://www.facebook.com/RedbushTeaCompany?fref=ts | Beverages | 05/07/2010 | 1,062 | 183 | 12 hours | 1 hour | 1 | 5 (0) |
| Tiffany | Tiffany & Co. | http://www.facebook.com/Tiffany?fref=ts | Jewellery | 09/02/2009 | 3,575,490 | 264,041 | 3 days | 4 hours | 0 | 17 (0) |
| Timberland | Timberland | http://www.facebook.com/timberland?fref=ts | Clothing | Unknown | 1,063,344 | 42,945 | 3 days | 48 minutes | 0 | 23 (0) |

| Organisation | Facebook Name | URL | Industry | Facebook Launch Date | No. of Likes | No. Talking about this | Time Since Last Corporate Post | Time Since Last Stakeholder Post | Total No. of Corporate Posts in Last 24 Hours | Highest No. of Posts to 1 Corporate CSR Post |
|---------------------|----------------------|---|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Toyota | Toyota USA | http://www.facebook.com/toyota?fref=ts | Automobiles | 25/11/2009 | 1,257,973 | 59,598 | 3 days | 1 hour | 0 | 6 (0) |
| Unilever | Unilever | http://www.facebook.com/unilever?fref=ts | Consumer products | Unknown | 1,224,744 | 14,629 | 7 hours | 4 days | 0 | 27 (0) |
| UPS | UPS | http://www.facebook.com/ups?fref=ts | Courier | Unknown | 641,914 | 119,690 | 2 hours | 4 minutes | 1 | 306 (15) |
| Vital Farms | Vital Farms | http://www.facebook.com/pages/Vital-Farms/251279500546?fref=ts | Food | 2010 | 3,667 | 246 | 3 days | 2 days | 0 | 13 (0) |
| Walmart | Walmart | http://www.facebook.com/walmart?fref=ts | Retail | 23/10/2009 | 26,265,184 | 424,617 | 55 minutes | 3 minutes | 3 | 408 (72) |
| Whole Foods | Whole Foods Market | http://www.facebook.com/wholefoods?fref=ts | Retail | 11/06/2008 | 1,158,674 | 14,124 | 21 hours | 13 minutes | 1 | 140 (0) |

1.2. Twitter Observations

| Organisation | Twitter Handle | URL | Industry | Twitter Launch date | No. of Tweets | No. Following | No. Followers | Time Since Last Corporate Post | Time Since Last Stakeholder Post | No. of RT for Last Post | No. of Favourites for Last Post | No. of Comments about Last Post | No. of Corporate Posts in Last 24 hours | Longest Corporate-Stakeholder Chain |
|-------------------|--------------------|---|--------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Allianz | (@AZ_Knowledge) | http://www.knowledge.allianz.com/ | Insurer | 03/02/2009 | 3,704 | 1,991 | 3,717 | 3 months | 3 months | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| American Apparel | (@americanapparel) | https://twitter.com/americanapparel | Clothing | Unknown | 2,391 | 14,394 | 586,262 | 13 hours | 13 hours | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Aviva | (@avivacf) | https://twitter.com/avivacf | Insurance | Unknown | 566 | 1,681 | 8,211 | 1 month | 1 month | 14 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Avon | (@AvonInsider) | https://twitter.com/Avoninsider | Health & Beauty | 23/02/2009 | 3,105 | 613 | 45,304 | 2 days | 2 days | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Bayer | (@Bayer_SD) | https://twitter.com/bayer_sd | Pharmaceuticals | 04/11/2009 | 310 | 94 | 1,483 | 3 months | 2.5 months | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Ben & Jerry's | (@benandjerrysUK) | https://twitter.com/benandjerrysUK | Food | Unknown | 2,609 | 2,942 | 11,566 | 3 days | 3 days | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| BP | (@BP_America) | https://twitter.com/BP_America | Oil & Gas | 12/08/2008 | 10,110 | 335 | 48,212 | 2 days | 2 days | 9 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Campbell Soup Co | (@CampbellCSR) | https://twitter.com/CampbellCSR | Food & Drink | 18/10/2011 | 881 | 1,957 | 1,791 | 2 days | 2 days | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Cisco | (@CiscoCSR) | https://twitter.com/CiscoCSR | Networking | 16/02/2010 | 3,050 | 458 | 1,889 | 16 hours | 18 hours | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| Coca Cola | (@CocaColaCo) | https://twitter.com/CocaColaCo | Soft drinks | 09/03/2009 | 3,101 | 35,506 | 56,921 | 2 hours | 2 hours | 7 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| Coca Cola | (@CocaCola) | https://twitter.com/CocaCola | Soft drinks | 26/03/2009 | 68,036 | 67,757 | 651,727 | 20 hours | 20 hours | 460 | 52 | 9 | 5 | 2 |
| Colgate Palmolive | (@ColgateSmile) | https://twitter.com/ColgateSmile | Household products | 24/02/2009 | 1,304 | 4,186 | 13,978 | 4 days | 4 days | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 |

| Organisation | Twitter Handle | URL | Industry | Twitter Launch date | No. of Tweets | No. Following | No. Followers | Time Since Last Corporate Post | Time Since Last Stakeholder Post | No. of RT for Last Post | No. of Favourites for Last Post | No. of Comments about Last Post | No. of Corporate Posts in Last 24 hours | Longest Corporate-Stakeholder Chain |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Danone | (@danonecommunity) | https://twitter.com/danonecommunity | Food | 11/07/2008 | 812 | 1,100 | 2,640 | 18 days | 1.5 months | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Danone | (@DownTo_Earth_) | https://twitter.com/DownTo_Earth_ | Food | 08/07/2009 | 5,020 | 964 | 3,169 | 11 days | 11 days | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Dell | (@Dell4Good) | https://twitter.com/Dell4Good | Computer Tech | 29/11/2010 | 1,349 | 980 | 2,880 | 5 days | 5 days | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Diageo | (@Diageo_News) | https://twitter.com/Diageo_News | Alcoholic beverages | 04/01/2011 | 128 | 0 | 7,650 | 1 month | 1 month | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| General Electric (GE) | (@GEHealthcare) | https://twitter.com/GEHealthcare | Energy, Tech, Finance, Industrial | 10/07/2008 | 5,044 | 2,452 | 24,792 | 1 hour | 1 hour | 1 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 3 |
| General Electric (GE) | (@ecomagination) | https://twitter.com/ecomagination | Energy, Tech, Finance, Industrial | Unknown | 16,174 | 38,533 | 106,758 | 15 hours | 15 hours | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| General Electric (GE) | (@generalelectric) | https://twitter.com/generalelectric | Energy, Tech, Finance, Industrial | 16/03/2011 | 61,452 | 14,042 | 118,920 | 1 hour | 18 minutes | 15 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 6 |
| Google | (@google) | https://twitter.com/google | Internet products and services | 10/02/2009 | 3,931 | 376 | 5,491,397 | 21 hours | 21 hours | 261 | 123 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Green and Blacks | (@greenandblacks) | https://twitter.com/greenandblacks | Confectionery | Unknown | 2,163 | 649 | 11,224 | 13 days | 13 days | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| GSK | (@GSK) | https://twitter.com/google | Pharmaceuticals | 21/04/2007 | 1,127 | 269 | 17,550 | 3 days | 3 days | 3 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| IBM | (@SmarterPlanet) | https://twitter.com/SmarterPlanet | Technology | 18/11/2008 | 6,729 | 1,960 | 24,370 | 2 days | 2 days | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Innocent | (@innocentdrinks) | https://twitter.com/innocentdrinks | Food & Drink | 31/03/2008 | 16,403 | 19,421 | 99,842 | 15 hours | 15 hours | 158 | 69 | 5 | 3 | 5 |
| Intel | (@Intelinvolved) | https://twitter.com/Intelinvolved | Semiconductor chip maker corporation | Unknown | 1,739 | 718 | 10,337 | 4 hours | 4 hours | 4 | 1 | 2 | 27 | 5 |
| Kenco | (@KencoCup) | https://twitter.com/KencoCup | Coffee | Unknown | 571 | 204 | 6,693 | 21 hours | 20 hours | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 0 |

| Organisation | Twitter Handle | URL | Industry | Twitter Launch date | No. of Tweets | No. Following | No. Followers | Time Since Last Corporate Post | Time Since Last Stakeholder Post | No. of RT for Last Post | No. of Favourites for Last Post | No. of Comments about Last Post | No. of Corporate Posts in Last 24 hours | Longest Corporate-Stakeholder Chain |
|----------------|--------------------|---|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Kimberly Clark | (@KCP_UK) | https://twitter.com/KCP_UK | Personal care | 14/07/2011 | 1,604 | 808 | 596 | 17 days | 17 days | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Kraft Foods | (@kraftfoods) | https://twitter.com/kraftfoods | Food | 01/09/2009 | 8,225 | 6,084 | 43,428 | 9 days | 15 hours | 3 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| L'Oreal | (@Loreal) | https://twitter.com/loreal | Beauty | 05/05/2009 | 4,414 | 792 | 13,385 | 2 days | 3 days | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 4 |
| Levi's | (@LeviStraussCo) | https://twitter.com/LeviStraussCo | Clothing | 24/06/2009 | 213 | 82 | 2,450 | 2 days | 2 days | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Lloyds Bank | (@moneyforlifeuk) | https://twitter.com/moneyforlifeuk | Banking | Unknown | 518 | 836 | 337 | 2 days | 2 days | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lush | (@LushLtd) | https://twitter.com/LushLtd | Cosmetics | Unknown | 14,872 | 1,174 | 64,421 | 4 hours | 4 hours | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| M&S | (@marksandspencer) | https://twitter.com/marksandspencer | Retail | 05/05/2009 | 25,258 | 2,684 | 157,721 | 13 hours | 13 hours | 7 | 5 | 0 | 6 | 3 |
| Mars | (@MarsGlobal) | https://twitter.com/MarsGlobal | Confectionery/ Pet foods | 17/05/2011 | 394 | 101 | 2,001 | 1 day | 3 days | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| McDonald's | (@McDonaldsCorp) | https://twitter.com/McDonaldsCorp | Fast food | 05/02/2010 | 10,529 | 11,576 | 36,820 | 4 days | 4 days | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Microsoft | (@msftcitizenship) | https://twitter.com/msftcitizenship | Software | 28/09/2009 | 3,722 | 19,173 | 25,316 | 21 hours | 21 hours | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Mink | (@Minkshoes) | https://twitter.com/Minkshoes | Fashion - shoes | 16/11/2009 | 64 | 258 | 235 | 2 weeks | 4 months | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Patagonia | (@patagonia) | https://twitter.com/patagonia | Clothing | Unknown | 3,954 | 2,024 | 82,036 | 41 mins | 41 mins | 5 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Pfizer | (@pfizer_news) | https://twitter.com/pfizer_news | Pharmaceuticals | 13/07/2009 | 1,108 | 2,076 | 36,411 | 3 days | 3 days | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| SABMiller | (@SABMiller) | https://twitter.com/SABMiller | Brewing & Beverages | Unknown | 938 | 2,825 | 6,240 | 22 hours | 22 hours | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |

| Organisation | Twitter Handle | URL | Industry | Twitter Launch date | No. of Tweets | No. Following | No. Followers | Time Since Last Corporate Post | Time Since Last Stakeholder Post | No. of RT for Last Post | No. of Favourites for Last Post | No. of Comments about Last Post | No. of Corporate Posts in Last 24 hours | Longest Corporate-Stakeholder Chain |
|------------------|--------------------|---|----------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| Sainsburys | (@SainsburysPR) | https://twitter.com/SainsburysPR | Retail | 23/02/2009 | 8,517 | 2,990 | 17,608 | 10 hours | 10 hours | 5 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| SAP | (@sustainableSAP) | https://twitter.com/sustainableSAP | Software | 12/02/2009 | 2,369 | 846 | 8,739 | 2 days | 2 days | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| SC Johnson | (@SCJGreenChoices) | https://twitter.com/SCJGreenChoices | Household products | 30/06/2011 | 5,545 | 582 | 7,485 | 23 minutes | 3 hours | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 3 |
| Shell | (@Shell) | https://twitter.com/Shell | Oil & Gas | 12/02/2009 | 781 | 128 | 113,048 | 18 days | 4 hours | 33 | 7 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| Siemens | (@SiemensUSA) | https://twitter.com/SiemensUSA/wit_h_replies | Consumer electronics | 03/10/2008 | 1,224 | 131 | 15,204 | 2 days | 2 days | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Starbucks | (@Starbucks) | https://twitter.com/Starbucks | Coffee houses | 29/11/2006 | 13,709 | 79,575 | 3,302,249 | 3 days | 3 days | 666 | 631 | 16 | 0 | 3 |
| Strauss Group | (@StraussGroup) | https://twitter.com/StraussGroup | Food products | 23/02/2009 | 2,764 | 1,340 | 12,997 | 14 hours | 2 days | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Telafonica | (@tefdigital) | https://twitter.com/tefdigital | Telecommunications | Unknown | 1,625 | 597 | 6,225 | 10 hours | 10 hours | 3 | 1 | 0 | 12 | 2 |
| Tesco | (@TescoMedia) | https://twitter.com/TescoMedia | Retail | Unknown | 910 | 571 | 8,198 | 3 days | 2 days | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| The Body Shop | (@TheBodyShopUK) | https://twitter.com/TheBodyShopUK | Beauty | 01/02/2009 | 6,688 | 2,827 | 24,016 | 18 hours | 18 hours | 5 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| The Co-operative | (@TheCooperative) | https://twitter.com/TheCooperative | Retail | 05/03/2009 | 2,262 | 352 | 13,943 | 2 days | 2 days | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Timberland | (@Timberland) | https://twitter.com/Timberland | Clothing | Unknown | 4,978 | 4,430 | 25,443 | 11 hours | 11 hours | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Toyota | (@Toyota) | https://twitter.com/Toyota | Automobiles | Unknown | 4,126 | 19,041 | 114,333 | 12 hours | 12 hours | 15 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Unilever | (@Unilever) | https://twitter.com/Unilever | Consumer goods | Unknown | 3,519 | 2,792 | 23,729 | 2 hours | 2 hours | 7 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 |

| Organisation | Twitter Handle | URL | Industry | Twitter Launch date | No. of Tweets | No. Following | No. Followers | Time Since Last Corporate Post | Time Since Last Stakeholder Post | No. of RT for Last Post | No. of Favourites for Last Post | No. of Comments about Last Post | No. of Corporate Posts in Last 24 hours | Longest Corporate-Stakeholder Chain |
|--------------|-----------------|---|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| UPS | (@UPS) | https://twitter.com/UPS | Package delivery company | Unknown | 10,779 | 1,389 | 29,237 | 5 hours | 10 hours | 21 | 9 | 3 | 6 | 0 |
| Vital Farms | (@vitalfarms) | https://twitter.com/vitalfarms | Food | Unknown | 1,063 | 343 | 649 | 4 days | 6 days | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Walmart | (@WalmartGreen) | https://twitter.com/WalmartGreen | Retail | Unknown | 1,966 | 198 | 7,640 | 4 days | 4 days | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Whole Foods | (@WholeFoods) | https://twitter.com/WholeFoods | Retail | Unknown | 46,312 | 552,641 | 3,127,794 | 14 hours | 12 hours | 21 | 28 | 1 | 4 | 3 |

1.3. Blog Observations

| Company | Blog name | URL | Industry | Blog Age | Time Since Last Corporate Post | Time Since Last Stakeholder Post | Total No. of Corporate Posts in Last 24 Hours | Highest No. of Stakeholder Posts to 1 Corporate post (CSR) |
|---------------------------|--|---|----------------------|------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Adidas | Adidas Group Blog | http://blog.adidas-group.com/ | Sportswear | Unknown | 3 days | 1 month | 0 | 2 (0) |
| Allianz | Allianz Knowledge Site | http://knowledge.allianz.com/ | Insurance | Unknown | 3 weeks | Unknown | 0 | 247 (0) |
| American Express | CSR Now! | http://about.americanexpress.com/csr/csrnow/csrn001.aspx | Finance | 2011 | 1 day | Unknown | 0 | 0 |
| Applied Materials | The Applied Materials Blog | http://blog.appliedmaterials.com/ | Tech | 02/09/2009 | 1 day | Unknown | 0 | 0 |
| Aviva | Corporate Responsibility Team Blog | http://www.aviva.com/corporate-responsibility/cr-blog/ | Insurance | 09/2010 | 2 weeks | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Avon | Avon's Calling | http://crblog.avoncompany.com/ | Beauty | 06/2012 | 2 weeks | 2 weeks | 0 | 2 (1) |
| Best Buy | Kathleen Edmond, Best Buy's Chief Ethics Officer | http://www.kathleenedmond.com/ | Consumer electronics | 02/2011 | 2 weeks | 2 weeks | 0 | 5(2) |
| Cadbury Dairy Milk | No name | http://blog.cadburydairymilk.co.uk/ | Confectionery | 01/2010 | 3 weeks | 5 months | 0 | 2(1) |
| Centrica | Centrica | http://www.centrica.co.uk/index.asp?pageid=1042 | Utilities | 2008 | 1 week | 9 months | 0 | 1(0) |
| Cisco | Cisco Blogs: Corporate Social Responsibility | http://blogs.cisco.com/csr | Networking equipment | 07/2011 | 1 week | 1 month | 0 | 8(4) |
| Coca Cola | Coca Cola Conversations | http://www.coca-colaconversations.com/ | Drink | 04/2012 | 1 week | 1 week | 0 | 2(0) |
| Danone | Down to Earth | http://downtoearth.danone.com/ | Food & Drink | Unknown | Today | 2 months | 1 | 0 |

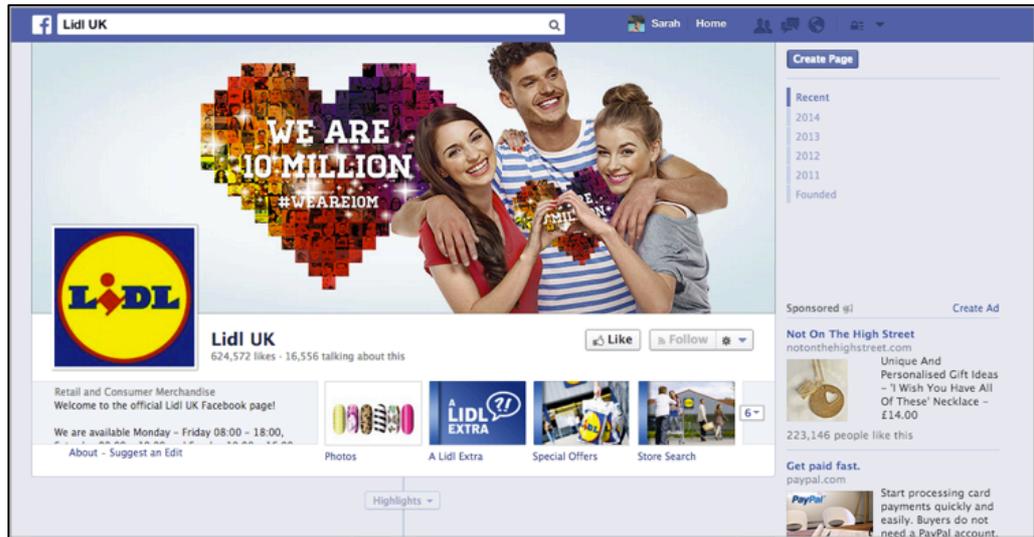
| Company | Blog name | URL | Industry | Blog Age | Time Since Last Corporate Post | Time Since Last Stakeholder Post | Total No. of Corporate Posts in Last 24 Hours | Highest No. of Stakeholder Posts to 1 Corporate post (CSR) |
|------------------------------|---|---|--------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Delhaize | Feed Tomorrow | http://blog.delhaizegroup.com/ | Retail | 03/2012 | 4 days | 2 weeks | 0 | 1(1) |
| Dell | DellShares | http://en.community.dell.com/dell-blogs/dell-shares/default.aspx | Tech | 2008 | 1 month | 3 months | 0 | 0 |
| Disney | Disney Citizenship | http://thewaltdisneycompany.com/citizenship | Mass media | Unknown | 3 months | 6 months | 0 | 1(0) |
| FedEx | FedEx | http://blog.van.fedex.com/ | Courier delivery service | 01/2008 | 1 week | 1 week | 0 | 23(2) |
| Ford Motor | Ford Social | http://social.ford.com/ | Automobile | 03/2011 | 1 day | 4 days | 0 | 10(0) |
| GE | Ecoimagination | http://www.ecoimagination.com/ | Energy, Tech | Unknown | 1 month | 2 months | 0 | 18(0) |
| GE | GE Citizenship Blog: Thoughts from Stakeholders | http://www.gecitizenship.com/about-citizenship/thoughts-from-stakeholders/ | Energy, Tech | 07/2012 | 1 day | 1 week | 0 | 1(1) |
| Green and Black's | Green & Blog | http://www.greenandblacks.co.uk/sitecore/Content/GreenAndBlacks/uk/Website/blogs | Confectionery | Unknown | 6 months | None | 0 | 0 |
| GSK | American Health: More than Medicine Blog | http://www.morethanmedicine.us.gsk.com/blog/ | Pharmaceuticals | 01/2009 | Today | 7 months | 1 | 1(0) |
| IBM | Building a smarter planet | http://asmarterplanet.com/ | Tech | 11/2008 | Today | 2 weeks | 1 | 2(0) |
| Innocent | Daily thoughts | http://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/blog | Food & Drink | 30/06/2006 | 2 days | 7 days | 0 | 14(0) |
| Intel | CSR@Intel | http://blogs.intel.com/csr/ | Tech | 06/2007 | 1 week | 3 weeks | 0 | 6(0) |
| Johnson & Johnson | JNJ BTW | http://www.jnjbtw.com/ | Pharmaceuticals | 2006 | 2 weeks | 2 weeks | 0 | 34(0) |
| Levi's | LS & Co. Unzipped | http://www.levistrauss.com/blogs | Clothing | 2010 | 4 days | 1 day | 0 | 10(5) |

| Company | Blog name | URL | Industry | Blog Age | Time Since Last Corporate Post | Time Since Last Stakeholder Post | Total No. of Corporate Posts in Last 24 Hours | Highest No. of Stakeholder Posts to 1 Corporate post (CSR) |
|----------------------|---|---|----------------------|------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Lloyds Bank | Money for Life Challenge | http://www.moneyforlifechallenge.org.uk/news/category/blog/ | Finance | 10/2011 | 3 weeks | None | 0 | 0 |
| Lush | The Lush Blog | https://www.lush.co.uk/blog | Beauty | 15/06/2011 | 4 months | 6 months | 0 | 31(7) |
| M&S | M&S Stories | http://social.marksandspencer.com/ | Retail | 08/2010 | 2 days | 1 month | 0 | 10(3) |
| Marriot | Marriot on the Move | http://www.blogs.marriott.com/ | Leisure & Tourism | Unknown | 4 days | 3 weeks | 0 | 2(0) |
| McDonalds | Let's Talk | http://community.aboutmcdonalds.com/t5/Open-for-Discussion/bg-p/blog1 | Food & Drink | Unknown | 2 weeks | 3 weeks | 0 | 12(6) |
| Microsoft | Microsoft Corporate Citizenship Blog | http://blogs.technet.com/b/microsoftupblog/ | Tech | 02/2008 | 3 days | 3 days | 0 | 16(0) |
| Patagonia | The Cleanest Line | http://www.thecleanestline.com/ | Clothing | 02/2007 | 2 days | 2 days | 0 | 14(5) |
| PepsiCo | The Pepsico Portal Blog Hub | http://pepsicoblogs.com/ | Food & Drink | 06/2010 | 3 months | 2 months | 0 | 98(0) |
| SABMiller | Views & Debates | http://www.sabmiller.com/index.asp?pageid=1766 | Drink | 06/2010 | 9 days | 3 months | 0 | 1(0) |
| Sainsburys | J Sainsbury Plc. Blog | http://www.j-sainsbury.co.uk/blog/ | Retail | 06/2011 | 5 days | 4 days | 0 | 14(0) |
| Shell | David Hone Climate Change Advisor for Shell | http://blogs.shell.com/climatechange/ | Oil & Gas | 12/2008 | 4 days | 3 days | 0 | 12(3) |
| Siemens | Siemens Global Weblogs | https://blogs.siemens.com/ | Consumer electronics | Unknown | 5 days | 94 days | 0 | 3(1) |
| Starbucks | My Starbucks Idea | http://mystarbucksidea.force.com/ | Coffee houses | 2008 | Unknown | 2 hours | Unknown | 7(5) |
| Strauss Group | Food for Thought | http://blog.strauss-group.com/ | Food & Drink | Unknown | 5 days | 9 months | 0 | 1(0) |
| Telafonica | Public Policy Blog | http://www.publicpolicy.telefonica.com/blogs/ | Telecommunications | Unknown | 3 days | 3 weeks | 0 | 2(1) |

| Company | Blog name | URL | Industry | Blog Age | Time Since Last Corporate Post | Time Since Last Stakeholder Post | Total No. of Corporate Posts in Last 24 Hours | Highest No. of Stakeholder Posts to 1 Corporate post (CSR) |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| The Body Shop | Beauty with Heart | http://blog.thebodyshop.com/ | Beauty | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | Unknown | 0 |
| The Co-operative | Join the Revolution | http://www.co-operative.coop/join-the-revolution/our-blog/ | Retail | 09/2011 | 2 days | 3 days | 0 | 13(6) |
| Timberland | The Bootmakers Blog | http://blog.timberland.com/ | Clothing | 2008 | 2 weeks | 1 month | 0 | 1(0) |
| Toyota | Toyota Blog | http://blog.toyota.co.uk/home | Automobiles | Unknown | 3 days | 3 days | 0 | 127(18) |
| UPS | Upside | http://blog.ups.com/ | Courier delivery service | 11/2009 | 3 days | 6 days | 0 | 3(0) |
| Vital Farms | The Vital Voice | http://vitalfarms.com/blog/ | Food & Drink | 11/2011 | 3 days | 2 months | 0 | 1(0) |
| Walmart | The Green Room | http://www.walmartgreenroom.com/ | Retail | 01/2012 | 6 days | 3 weeks | 0 | 106(13) |
| Whole Foods | Whole Story | http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/blog/whole-story | Retail | 07/2006 | 1 day | 5 days | 0 | 78(7) |

2.2 Lidl

2.2.1 The Lidl Facebook Page

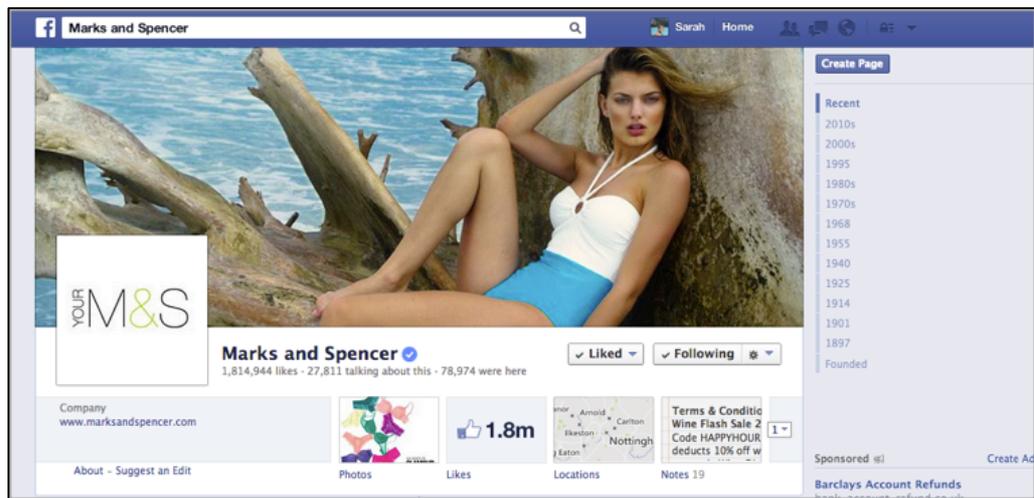


2.2.2 Collection of Images from the Lidl Facebook Page

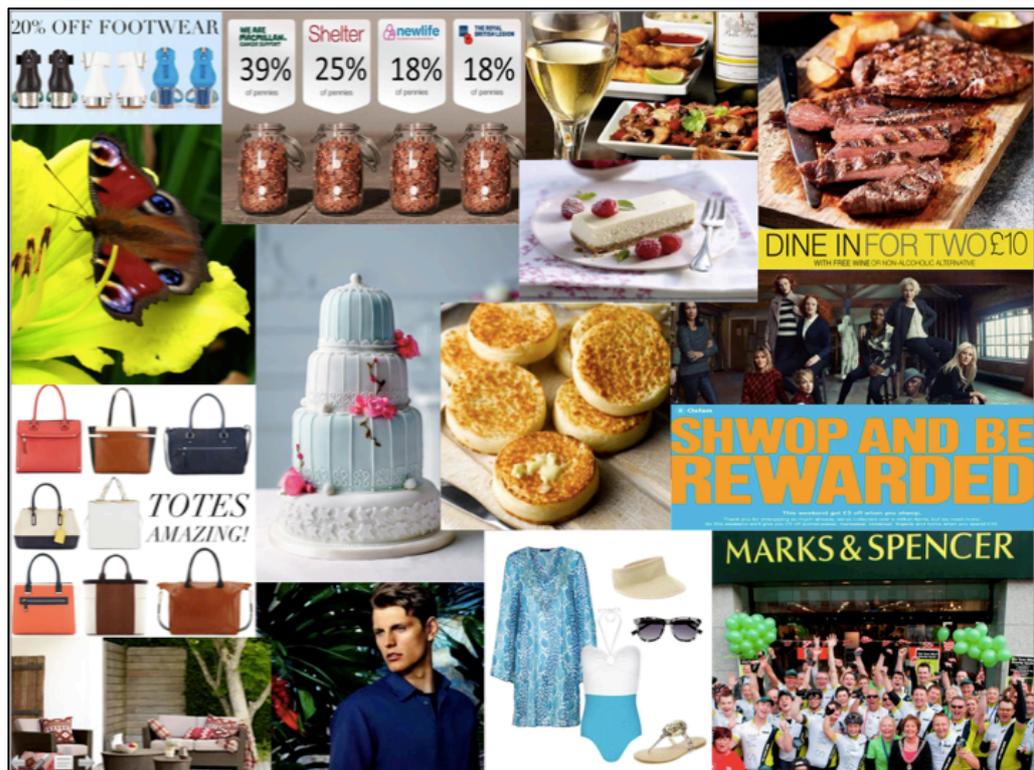


2.3 Marks and Spencer

2.3.1 The Marks and Spencer Facebook Page

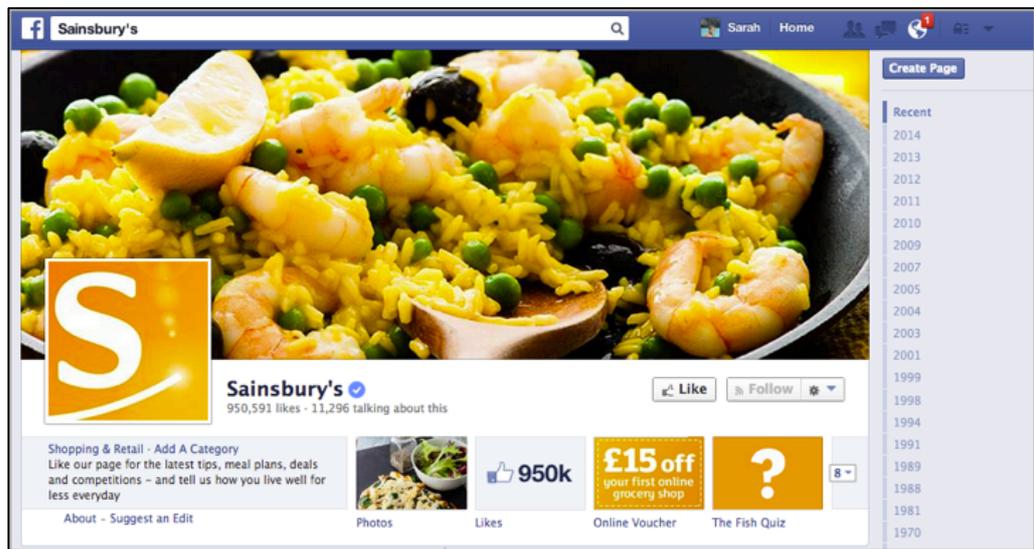


2.3.2 Collection of Images from the Marks and Spencer Facebook Page



2.4 Sainsbury's

2.4.1 Sainsbury's Facebook Page



2.4.2 Collection of Images from Sainsbury's Facebook Page



Appendix 3: Supporting Data for the Discourse Analysis

3.1 Legitimation: Centripetal Forces (Chapter 6)

3.1.1 Normalisation (Marks and Spencer)

M&S: *Your Green Idea is now open for entries! If your green idea gets picked, your favourite green cause gets to pick up £100,000.*

As part of our commitment to be the world's most sustainable major retailer by 2015, we've launched a big competition with an even bigger prize. Just think of a green idea that could help our customers shop for the better and, if yours is the winning idea, we'll give £100,000 to an organisation of your choice to spend on its green initiative. To enter, simply tell us about your idea at <http://bit.ly/greenidea> Terms and conditions apply.

Armit: *switching the lights off in your head office at night would be a start*

M&S: *Hi Armit. Lights at Head Office work on motion sensors. In fact, they're always cutting out in the middle of meetings and we walk about to get them going again. Fun when it happens in pitch dark afternoons in winter!*

M&S: *Everyone, please click through to the link to enter your ideas. Entries must comply with the terms and conditions - your idea won't be entered just by posting here!*

Joan: *dry cleaning that didn't cost more than buying a replacement!*

Billy: *unless you're working a night shift....*

Alison: *use paper bags instead of plastic*

Andrea: *Use paper bags instead of plastic, take the paper out of your knicker packs, insist your suppliers use less packaging, sell your juices in biodegradable cups instead of those small bottles, give some kind of reward to shoppers who reuse bags.*

Cheryl: *food packagin..like tomatoes n mushrooms n anythin in thoses aggravatin plastic boxes with that tight polythane wrappin.n that polythingy wrapped round boxes ov teabags...allsorts ov waste packagin no need 4 it in my day it was newspaper or a humble brown paper bag. we say this n it gets us nowhere anyway. so be green on our idea's aswell cuz there all wasted loll*

Zara: *Mmmm, bit like taking a dustpan and brush to a volcano if the corporates won't do it too :(*

Phillip: Agree with two previous comments Always read labels so never buy anything dry clean only. Packaging terrible on everything Can never open those awful clear plastic surrounds My bin is junk mail and packaging

Paula: Discount for recycling M&S food containers instore, or somewhere convenient nearby. We don't have plastic recycling where I live.

Jane: How about rolling some of these ideas into one! Ask customers to donate all used or unwanted items of old but good quality clothing (M & S of course!), and then reward customers who recycle their carrier bags, plastic bottles, packaging, etc by offering them donated clothing items. Or would this logistically not work?

Kim: Dispose of plastic bags completely and use only recyclable paper!

Alison: Jane - good idea, but would you really want to receive clothing from someone you didn't know? Cos I'm sure I Wouldn't, no matter which shop it originated from!

3.1.2 Moralisation (The Co-operative)

The Co-op: On Monday, our Plan Bee campaign launched another seed giveaway. With over half the seeds snapped up, we thought we'd give you some pollinator-friendly gardening tips. To start with, did you know the messier the better? The less you mow your grass, the more it allows flowers such as daisies and dandelions to grow which are loved by pollinators, especially hoverflies! Do you have your own tips for

The Co-op: You can still claim your free seeds at <http://bit.ly/seedgiveaway>

Ellie: give me bees please

Dave: My garden is full of flowers until late in the year. I have hundreds of honey bees, bumble bees and butterflies visititing. ;)

Jess: bees love herb plants, so grow your own (saving money) and help the bees too

Luiz: Its very Nice & Interesting job. Well struggle & keep it up. Carry on

Brendan: *I like my dandelions, but my landlords don't and insist I keep the grass mown short, so I'm hoping that planting wild flowers will change their views!*

Chris: *My Solitary Bee refuge has been very busy, and is now about half full!*

The Co-op: *Hi Chris - this is fantastic. Please can you take a photo and post on the Plan Bee campaign wall? Antonia*

Tommy: *My grass is now white with daisy and as my tortoise loves dandelions the grass is not getting cut for at least another 12 days until hubby comes home to cut it, its been 3wks and 2days since last cut. I do not like the electric mower so the grass just grows and grows. I like my flower bed nice though so that the bees can live in there!*

Jules: *Tommy- where is the best place to put one?*

Fran: *have I sited mine badly? I only get one or two bees using mine. :(*

The Co-op: *Hi Fran - I've just found this useful page on the BBC website about the best place for putting bee boxes. Hope it's useful: <http://on.coop/jIHXiA> - Antonia*

Fran: *Brilliant- thank you!*

3.1.3 Reactive Normalisation (Lidl)

Bella: *hI LIDL i would much rather shop with you than any other supermarket, but what is your stance on GMO's? As you are no doubt aware there is a growing voice demanding labeling and transparency, so that people can make an informed choice about the food they buy for their families. Are there any GMO products in your range, and if so, are you prepared to label them as so? many thanks, Bella*

Lidl: *Hi Bella, Thanks for gettin in touch.*

*Lidl UK has agreed with our suppliers that genetically modified foods or products that contain genetically modified ingredients are not to be supplied to us. In relation to this, the Regulatory Standards for Food state that it must be declared on the label whether a food product has been genetically modified, they contain genetically modified ingredients or the product is manufactured from genetically modified materials.
Hope that helps :-)*

Bella: *Great! thank you for your reassurance. i will continue to happily shop at LIDL! that's great =O)*

Barney: German company Tess they don't support GMO
<http://southweb.org/lifewise/germany-bans-monsantos-maize/>

Fran: Thank you, Lidl rep. This is very good to know. Hat's off to you.

George: thanks chaps xx

3.1.4 Mythologisation (Sainsbury's)

Arg: Just wanted to check i ate a beef lasagne this evening .. Which was very nice, its ok i hope x

Felicity: HORSE LASAGNE*

Arg: please dont say that! i havnt heard if Sainsburys took lasagnes off the shelves? please let me know cheers x

Edward: None of Sainsbury's products have been found to contain any horse meat :)
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-21412590>

Kyle: if you check sainsburys are the only retailer NOT to be instigated in the horsemeat scandal

Benjamin: That is great, Thank you :-)

Lauren: We went to shopping at Sainsbury's last Friday. Love it... fresh fruit and meat

Tracey: Sainburys is the best supermarket around by a mile!

3.2 Legitimation: Centrifugal Forces (Chapter 7)

3.2.1 Authorisation (Marks and Spencer)

Levi: *****
We want you to supply meat, fish, eggs and dairy products from animals fed a non-GM diet
We don't want transgenic DNA in the human food supply chain. Not anywhere. Not ever
We want you to source animal products from animals that are fed a natural, wholesome diet which is not Genetically Modified in any way

*We say No to GM ingredients, derivatives, enzymes and animal feed
We say Yes to clear labelling about Exactly what's in our food and we
demand labels on animal products fed a Genetically Engineered diet*

*If you want us to buy food from you then listen to us & tell your suppliers
Why is this important?*

*“We are confronted with the most powerful technology the world has ever
known, and it is being rapidly deployed with almost no thought
whatsoever to its consequences.” — Dr Suzanne Wuerthele, US
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) toxicologist*

*GM foods have not been shown to be safe to eat
No long term human feeding studies have been done. Ever. There is Zero
evidence that demonstrates GM food, or produce derived from GM fed
animals is safe for humans to eat. Food Standards Authorities are
ignoring their own, and independent scientific research and failing to
acknowledge numerous studies which prove GM food and animal feed is
definitely not ‘substantially equivalent’ and is in fact, potentially un-safe
for human and animal consumption. UK and European food standards
agencies are failing the public by relying on biased, short term data from
the companies who manufacture GM crops & animals and stand to
benefit financially and commercially from regulators turning a blind eye.*

Biotech-Accidents Happen

*We don't want to be a GM feeding experiment especially in light of 2012
European food safety research documenting how a biotech “accident
happened” After years of GM crops being on the market, a viral gene
with serious potential to harm human health has been ‘discovered’ in 54
commercially available GM crops. Apparently, this was an ‘unintended
accident.’ New genes and gene products, mostly from bacteria, viruses
and other non-food species are being introduced. There is potential for
transgenes, viruses & antibiotic resistance markers to spread out of
control causing damaging & un-intended consequences to humans,
animals and the environment.*

Health

*Independent scientific research has shown GM foods to cause tumour
growth, damage the reproductive system & digestive tract and
detrimentally affect the liver and kidneys of animals fed a GM diet.
Research in 2012 demonstrated that rats fed GM maize died prematurely.
No-one seems to know what damage GM foods are doing to humans,
although there are unexplained increases in allergies, especially to soya,
since the introduction of GM foods.*

GM and non-GM cannot co-exist.

GM contamination of conventional and organic food is increasing.

Consumers want GM free food...

3.2.2 Demythologisation (Sainsbury's)

Ben: *Why are you dropping the little Red Tractor?*

Sainsbury's: *Hi Ben, customers have told us that too many logos are confusing, so we will be phasing out the use of the Red Tractor logo on pack. We will still use the Red Tractor standards as part of our wider sourcing standards. Suggesting this is a step back from supporting British farmers couldn't be further from the truth; we are actually stepping up our commitment. We aim to double our sales of British food by 2020. Over the last five years we've invested £40 million into British farming, for example paying our Dairy Development Group farmers a premium for good animal husbandry and environmental practices well above what is defined by Red Tractor. In August we led the way in paying our dedicated pork producers a premium to reflect rising feed costs. Only last month we announced a new £1 million agricultural fund to support British farmers, and we were recently awarded for our leadership and innovation in retail by Compassion in World Farming. Thanks.*

Ben: *Obviously the marketing budget of a company such as Sainsburys far exceeds that available to farmers. British Agriculture has spent a considerable amount of money getting the consumer to understand the red tractor and look for it on packs as an assurance they are buying a high animal welfare product with complete traceability. I believe you are removing it so in the near future you can import cheap food from lower welfare systems.*

Ben: *Surely Sainsburys this post has enough interest to warrant a reply?*

Alan: *I agree with you, Ben. I will only buy food produce with the red tractor on it. I am a teacher and my class are currently studying food and farming and part of their learning introduces the red tractor and the importance of it in ensuring we are consuming produce which meets certain standards. Taking this symbol from your products will have an impact on how people buy. Have Sainsburys published anybody these initiatives they mention? How do we know which food stuffs are part of their schemes?*

Beverly: *I also agree, the red tractor is a logo that the consumers now know & identify. You say that too many logos are confusing which I agree with but why take something off that people understand? why take the quality british element of the sourcing? after building up the reputation of the little red tractor you are now throwing away all that has been created!*

Destiny: *So you want to drop the only logo that really matters!!!*

Sainsbury's: *Hi Ben, we will still use the Red Tractor standards as part of our wider sourcing standards. Both country of origin and the Union Flag are clearly visible on pack. Thanks.*

Matt: *So you're still only buying farm assured stock?*

Jack: *Its so you can shaft the british farmer again*

Ben: *And what percentage of the foods you buy after the tractor is cut will still be British???*

Daisy: *The union jack can be put on food if is imported from another country and packed in Britain*

Julian: *Anyone with a degree of common sense and patriotism would not be touching foreign imports of meat, milk or indeed any other dairy product. We all know the dire straits farmers are in with particular attention to the dairy farmer. If supermarkets would just stop the confusing and at times misleading labeling then we would all know exactly where we stand, as things are this is simply NOT the case. If it is British farmed and produced then then the labeling should clearly say so as it also should with foreign imports regardless of the country. I for one will only buy British farmed products and if the labeling is unclear I make a point of demanding answers, as we all should do.*

3.2.3 Carnivalisation (The Co-operative)

Anna: *Please can you follow Morrisons and M&S and install CCTV in all areas of all your slaughterhouses. Those filmed undercover by Animal Aid were chosen at random, in fact one was supposed to be above standard. Out of the 7 filmed, 6 had serious problems (including the one that was supposed to be above standard). Regulations, inspectors, vets etc DO NOT stop the abuse. CCTV footage would be available to a third party and is recommended by RSPCA, CIWF, FSA and Animal Aid.*

Anna: *This is what Animal Aid filmed and the reason why CCTV needs to be installed as soon as possible. The co-op are good on so many other issues, please don't ignore this one.....*

Animal Aid secretly filmed:

- *Animals being kicked in the face, slapped, stamped on, picked up by fleeces and ears, and forcibly thrown across or into stunning pens*
- *Animals screaming and struggling to escape*
- *Animals going to the knife without adequate stunning*
- *Animals stunned and then allowed to come round again*
- *Electric tongs used maliciously on the snouts, ears, tails, bodies and open mouths of pigs, resulting in the animals being given painful electric shocks*
- *Pigs being jabbed viciously in the face with the electric tongs*
- *Ewes being stunned while a lamb*

suckled them• A sheep too sick to stand – or possibly already dead – being brought to slaughter in a wheelbarrow• A pig bleeding after being deliberately hit in the face with a shackle hook• Improperly stunned animals being stood on to keep them still while shackles were attached• Pigs falling from the shackle line into the blood pit and then being dragged through groups of live pigs• Animals being decapitated before the appropriate statutory time had elapsed, and while the animals may still have been alive• Long periods elapsing between electrical stunning and ‘sticking’ (throat cutting), which increases the likelihood that animals regain consciousness.

Anna: Well, I don't know about you Co-op but that list above has made me feel physically sick. Please tell us you are going to ensure that this will never happen again in any of the slaughter houses you use. Myself, and my family, are ‘shareholders’ with you and have always supported the Co-op, but until we know for sure that you are going to put CCTV in all areas of slaughterhouses (including kill and stun areas) then we will not be able to shop with you any longer. Until the Animal Aid secret filming I had no idea this was happening. Now we ALL do know...then it must be time for change.

The Co-op: We have passed all the comments on this issue over to the relevant department and as soon as we get a response we will post it up.

Anna: Thankyou

3.3 Legitimation: Centripetal/Centrifugal Forces (Chapter 8)

3.3.1 Reactive Normalisation (Marks and Spencer)

M&S: Cast your vote! M&S has been shortlisted for the RSPCA People's Choice Supermarket Award which is part of the RSPCA Good Business Awards. These recognise the very best businesses that go the extra mile to ensure animal welfare is a top priority. Find out more about why we've been shortlisted and vote here
www.independent.co.uk/voterspca

Charlotte: What has M&S done to get my vote??

Anne: M&S you have my vote!

John: Yes, is there a statement from M&S about their commitment to animal welfare standards? Do you only stock free range eggs? I've seen your freedom pork sausages. Anything else? At the moment I'm more aware of The Co-op's commitment.

Isla: All products that have egg in are from free range And all the chickens are too

Annabelle: M&S only stock free range eggs that much I do know. I am also aware of the high standards they expect from the farmers supplying their meat.

April: If you follow the link above, there is a list of company icons in the article. - under the list is another link to a list of each company's achievements. It takes no more than a click to get the info ladies :)

Polly: Yapping again...love it....NOT. Why are you fans of the page if you have nothing productive to say???

Frank: Thank you April, I read the Indy article and didn't learn anything, will look at the icons. Cheers.

Sheila:

- Free range eggs - All whole and ingredient eggs are free-range
- Higher welfare Oakham chicken - Since 2002 M&S has offered barn and free-range chicken. Oakham is slower grown in spacious barns with enriched environment
- Outdoor bred and free-range pork - All fresh pork is neither tail-docked nor castrated, outdoor bred and some free-range
- Milk - All liquid and Café milk are from producers in M&S Dairy Health & Welfare programme.

Robert: nice one.

Terry: What about all that packaging that pollutes their habitat. it should be sustainably sourced. we find more packaging can be recycled but very little new packaging is produced from recycled materials. meat, fish and poultry however, very responsible, what is expected from such a reputable store which to me is slightly wavering its charm in recent years.

Sally: On the website they say "The four key targets we've set ourselves are:

- * to reduce our non-glass product packaging by 25% by 2012;
- * to use only recyclable or compostable packaging by 2012;
- * to use more sustainable raw materials in our packaging; and
- * to put clear and honest labelling on our packaging, telling you about its recyclability."

All this information is here:
http://corporate.marksandspencer.com/howwedobusiness/our_policies/waste/w_overview

Sheila: <http://plana.marksandspencer.com/>
Check that out terry...

Scott: M and s has something in store called plan a where they recycle everything ! Even all the food, that's why they make you pay for a bag because they want you to bring your own personally if your Gunna be negative don't be on this page called m & s fans for a reason !

Janice: I work for Markies, and we have old nothing but free range eggs, and had nothing but free range in our quiches and sandwiches etc for

yeas. We were the first. And we were the first to give you fair-trade coffee as standard in our coffee shops without paying any extra. and tea (and its organic). and we have done that for 6 years at least, I've worked in the coffee shop for 6 years. and now our coffee is fair trade, organic AND rainforest alliance certified. And NOW, I sound like a total suck-up!! I am not, but I am proud of certain aspects of the company. Not all, though!!

Debbie: *I think M&S is the beste ever!! Do most of my food shopping there!*

Gary: *M&S get my vote for everything ... keep making nice sweets... pretty models and of-course Myleene. Hehe*

Jasmine: *Waitrose-get-my-vote--ANYDAY!*

Scott: *Get off this site then!!!*

3.3.2 Authorisation (Lidl)

Linda: *I have been banned from the LIDI NI page for asking this question,
Could you please tell me why your staff are not aloud to wear a Poppy?
mother of a young fallen hero KIA '09..
Am i also going to have my post removed and be banned from this page
?? I will be taking this matter further,if this is the case...*

Linda: *Would someone like to answer my question please.....*

Linda: *you can email myself and my team at
fairness.for.our.forces@googlemail.comI feel a public reply would be
better for your sale's.....*

Bertie: *I'm gona go in my local lidl and ask same thing*

Lidl: *Hi Linda,
No staff at Lidl UK have been instructed not to wear a poppy.*

Linda: *Thank you for getting back to me.So why have LIDL NI been so hostile ? I feel they have been disrespectful,deleting post's and also banning people from their page,for simply asking a question.I have been told (i'm sure you can see the comment,for yourself) that LIDL NI were contacted and a councilor was told it was true,their employees were not aloud to wear poppies? Can you confirm this either way please ?*

Linda: *Why has it taken so long for a reply ?*

Joyce: *Just do not shop at Lidl*

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