Amar Aleksandra Taha

How to speak CSR to consumers? Cultural comparison
Case Fazer

Master’s Thesis in
International Business

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ABSTRACT

Approaching consumers with corporate social responsibility initiatives is a tricky road which can lead anywhere from total disasters to success stories. The more controversial the topic is, the more it requires situational awareness and consideration. Especially in the food industry, where there is lot of mistrust due to global diseases and their poor handling.

How to master the art of creating dialogue between the firm and its customers, when the topic varies from standard environmental reports to highly sensitive human right issues?

As an action research, this thesis studies consumer behavior from the perspective of CSR communication. The aim of this study is to find out about the consumers’ reaction towards CSR information that is communicated through corporate websites. The emphasis is on understanding culture’s role in responses, and the research field of global advertising offers basis for examining communication from cultural perspective.

As a methodological approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Swedish and Finnish consumers. The main findings support the literature and it is argued that consumers are rather skeptical towards CSR information that is communicated by the corporations. The findings suggest that the Finnish and Swedish consumers’ responses did not differ.

This study offers managerial implications towards the case company, as well as managers in similar firms. The analysis provides a better understanding of consumer response on proactive corporate social responsibility communication.

KEYWORDS: CSR communication, global advertising, corporate communication, consumer behaviour
1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between business and society can be explained with different concepts. There are terms such as corporate citizenship, corporate responsibility, or simply sustainability. (Ihlen, May & Bartlett 2014.) In this thesis, corporate social responsibility or shortly CSR is decided to use as a term, since most of the research literature uses it (Ihlen et al. 2014.)

1.1. Research background

Corporate social responsibility is increasingly seen as a priority around globe regardless of country, business or society. (Tench, Sun & Jones 2014.) Even though CSR communication is indispensable despite the business, especially the food and beverage industry has faced lot of pressure from consumers for transparency of the supply chain and traceability of the products. Due to massive media coverage of several food scandals, people are concerned for product safety and health issues (E.g. Karlsen, Dreyer, Olsen & Eldevoll 2013; Olsen, Petter and Borit: 2013). Along with product safety, people are more interested in product’s sustainability from environmental and social perspective (Rousseau 2015). Consumer’s behaviour nowadays is influenced by their ethical standards, and especially global trade with its social, environmental and economic consequences of agricultural production being questioned (Zander & Hamm 2010). Also, in the food industry, there is demand for organic and healthier options. Saba and Messina (2003) have investigated attitudes towards organic foods from the perspective of pesticide being used. They state in their article that during recent years, as environmental awareness has increased, people are more concerned about the food safety and they tend to question the modern agricultural practices. This has led to an increase in demand for organic food, as they are considered more healthy and environmental friendly.

According to Bielenia-Grajewska (2014), CSR in food industry can be divided into several fields of interest, transparency and traceability being one. Other perspectives are food quality, which includes concerns as nutritional composition and taste etc. CSR in food industry can be studied from food sovereignty point of view: rights of local communities or regions to produce their own food. Human welfare studies the conditions of the production area and on the other hand, the animal welfare monitors animal rights. Another field of interest is ecological
sustainability, which focuses on national resources being used in the food production. (Bielenia-Grajewska 2014.) This study focuses on how to communicate CSR from the food industry point of view.

Even though ethical attributes of a product are valued by consumers, the data regarding this is rarely shared with the customers by the corporations (Zander & Hamm 2010). Consumers are eager to know more about corporations’ responsibility, but on the other hand, they perceive firms who communicate widely their CSR activities, as self-serving, meaning that they are communicating only to profit from it (Coombs & Holladay 2012). This is a dilemma companies must address when planning CSR communication. Zander & Hamm (2010) argues that in organic sector, successful communication strategies increase the chance for bigger market shares. In Rousseau’s study (2015), conducted in Flanders (Belgium), they found out that consumers were ready to pay for organic chocolate nearly as much as for fair trade chocolate. That was almost twice as much as compared to a standard chocolate bar, the only difference between the products was that other one was considered more ethical, because it had fair trade qualification or organic. Therefore, it seems rather obvious that people are ready to pay premium for a brand they consider ethical and/or environmentally friendly.

The approach to CSR and its communication is shifting from reactive to proactive style, and firms are increasingly engaging themselves to sustainability. Sustainability trend in marketing means that instead of communicating only as a reaction to a certain situation or piece of news, firms are looking for ways to tell their approach on sustainability beforehand. This is one part of sustainable marketing, which is a widely-studied subject in modern business. The corporations are not the only party who has transformed from reactive to proactive. Capriotti (2011), who studied CSR communication through internet and social media, concludes that when it comes to communication in digital era, there is a shift from ‘passive receivers to active senders’. This means that due to technology, communication has experienced a major change in terms of how the parties are involved. Corporations can no longer send messages one direction and assume consumers’ role to be solely receive the message. Due to digital communication, messages go both directions, and corporate communication requires listening stakeholders. (Capriotti 2011.)
Even though CSR as a competitive advantage has received lot of attention, CSR and sustainability trend has also faced lot of criticism. Ottman (2011) writes about green washing, and how some companies are accused for using more money to look sustainable, than to be sustainable. According to Ihlen et al. (2014) CSR has received widespread criticism on several level. Firstly, being sustainable is not always acceptable reason to underperform in competition (Devinney 2009; Mintzberg 1983). Secondly, CSR is claimed to be a niche strategy, which works only on chosen industries in certain environments, and CSR is seen as an aspect that only comes after price and quality factors. CSR cannot seem to outperform these two factors except under certain circumstances. (Ihlen et al. 2014.) Markets do not seem to dismiss companies who are not engaged in sustainability, for example “unethical stocks” being still strong, is a clear indicator of this (Bendell & Bendell 2007). Ihlen et al. (2014) point out that in general, CSR is criticized, because corporations cannot be trusted with too much political power, and that their only concern should be following the rules and regulations, and making profit for the owners. Politics should be left for people designated to it. However, as Ihlen et al. (2014) state, which ever approach to CSR is chosen, communication is irreplaceable part of it.

1.2.   Research gap

As the Table 1. on the following page shows, there are various researches about the effectiveness of CSR communication towards consumers. What it lacks, is the international dimension on it. National culture differences are a widely-studied subject in the field of marketing, advertising and communication. However, there are not publications about national culture’s effect on CSR communication from consumer perspective.

Thus, the research gap that this study aims to fill, is further research of consumer response to CSR communication through websites in food industry, in international context. Out of all the product categories, food and beverage industry requires local adaptation. (Cheong, Kim & Zheng 2010.) Thus, it is important to find out whether CSR communication requires local adaptation or not, and in this thesis, there are two countries in comparison, Finland and Sweden. To limit the scope, consumers as a stakeholder are the context of this study.
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1.3. Research questions and objectives

Aim of this study is to describe Finnish and Swedish consumers’ reactions towards CSR communication of the case company through their websites, and to find out if the reactions towards it differs according to their country. In order to understand consumers in cultural context, global advertising and CSR communication are studied. Global advertising includes a lot of research about consumers’ response on corporate communication within global context and it creates a strong base for the study. CSR communication focuses on more specifically to this thesis’ topic and includes elements of effective CSR communication and consumers as a target group.

The primary objective of this study is to see if there are any cultural differences between Swedish and Finnish consumers when it comes to receiving corporate messages through internet, and how these messages are perceived. To meet the objective of this study, the research question is defined, as well as sub questions formed to create the framework for this thesis.

Thus, the research question and its sub questions are following:

What is the consumer response on CSR messages through corporate websites in Finland and in Sweden, and do they differ?

To find the answers to the research question, there are two sub questions:

- What is effective CSR communication?
- How does culture influence on consumer response on corporate communication?

![Figure 1. The approach to the topic](image)
These two questions are focused in the first part of the thesis, and the study as a whole, aims to answer the ultimate research question mentioned above. This research focuses on corporate communication, and therefore other parties, such as non-profit organizations or media, and other communication provider are excluded. Consumers as a stakeholder is another limitation, since all the other stakeholders are excluded from this study. Third point is that the corporate communication studied is about web communication and thus excludes other means of communication, such as print advertising, shopper marketing or any other media than the websites.

The figure above illustrates and concludes the approach to this study. The approach is proactive CSR communication by the company to the Finnish and Swedish consumers that is executed through their corporate websites is studied.

As a theoretical contribution, this study draws findings from global advertising, cultural studies and CSR communication. It concludes the main attributions from these business fields to gain deeper understanding of consumer behavior in the context of website communication. Even though, this subject is wide, it aims to contribute on theoretical level and discuss the importance of strategic communication alongside with cultural differences. Furthermore, this thesis contributes on managerial level by providing the case company deeper insight to their clientele.

1.4. Positioning the study within international business

This thesis is conducted at the University of Vaasa within the program of International Business. In order to get the ultimate result, the study requires an open mind and diverse platform with a global point of view. The case company is Finnish origin and has a strong local market capitalization. However, they are involved in international business, as they export to more than 40 countries, supply chain management that goes across the globe, and local production in neighboring countries like Sweden, Russia and the Baltic region.

Also, even though it is chocolate consumers in Finland and Sweden that are studied, the findings represent well other Scandinavian countries also. The basis for the consumer analysis is created with the help of Sustainable Brand Index 2016, a major study that investigates Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian and Danish
consumers’ opinions and attitudes of sustainable branding in Nordic countries. Literature review digs more into the topic within global context, and gives insight to the subject across borders around the globe.

It is also undeniable fact that due to globalization, even the most local companies must adjust to even more diverse population and their needs. Therefore, from the case company’s point of view, it would be important to understand consumers in a wider context: it is not just the locals anymore to please, but rather a larger amount of people with culturally diverse backgrounds.

1.5. Key definitions

**Corporate social responsibility (CSR)** is defined in Ihlen, May & Bartlett article (2014) as “the corporate attempt to negotiate relationships to stakeholders and the public at large”. Wehmeier and Schultz (2011) says CSR is about corporations and other parties taking stand on what is good and what is bad.

**CSR communication** is “the ways that corporations communicate in and about their CSR process; it is the corporate use of symbols and language regarding these matters” (Ihlen et al. 2014).

**Culture** has more than 160 definitions. Also, consumer behavior is profoundly affected by the respective culture. (Milenkovic 2009.) In this thesis, culture is limited to national cultures. Hofstede’s definition of culture (p. 24) creates a framework to understand differences between nationalities.

1.6. Research structure

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The first three chapters discuss the literature of the subject and create theoretical understanding of the topic. Fourth chapter explains the data and methods used in the empirical research. Two last chapters discuss the result and summarize the thesis, as well as suggest further investigations.

**Chapter 1:** First chapter sheds some light on the topic and leads further to the study. The chapter concludes the research question, and explains the research
gap it is targeted to fill. First chapter justifies this thesis’ academic approach and contribution within the field of international business.

Chapter 2: Second chapter introduces a holistic view on global advertising. It discusses the topic from cultural diversity point of view, to draw theoretical approach on the subject. It introduces different advertising appeals, how consumers respond to them and how does national culture influence on the responding. This enables the understanding of different perspectives on communicating to different cultural groups. Cultural differences are explained with Hofstede’s dimensions, Schwartz’s findings and the GLOBE study.

Chapter 3: Third chapter presents CSR communication from existing literature, and discusses what sustainability marketing is, and how consumers are as a stakeholder. CSR as a competitive advantage is introduced, and skepticism that arises when CSR is communicated is discussed. In the end, there are suggestions from the literature of what works in CSR communication.

Chapter 4: The fourth chapter explains the collection of data and the research methods chosen. To adapt the best practices and justify the empirical research, the choice of philosophy, approach, design and strategy are each explained. Furthermore, time-horizon of the study is presented as well as trustworthiness of the study explained. In the end, the overall research process and data collection are explained. Also, the case company is presented, to gain better understanding of the empirical research and the results in their context.

Chapter 5: In the fifth chapter the empirical findings are presented and discussed based on theoretical findings. Fifth chapter is divided into two regarding the structure of the empirical research. Firstly, the multiple-choice questions are opened and concluded. Secondly, the open-ended questions are analyzed.

Chapter 6: The sixth and last chapter of the thesis wraps up this study, and concludes the aim of the research. At the end, one can find the list of references used in this study, and the appendices, including material from the empirical research.
2. GLOBAL ADVERTISING

When talking about communicating internationally, global advertising studies as well as cross-cultural business studies offer a base to inspect the subject. Culture is referred to be “the symbolic dimension of human action” (Ayoko, Härtel, Fisher & Fujimoto 2004:158). Later in this chapter, theories based on cultural differences are presented.

There are 8 major modes of marketing communication; sales promotion, public relations & publicity, events & experiences, direct marketing, interactive marketing, word-of-mouth, sales force and advertising (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2009). Of these, advertising is chosen for a closer look in this thesis. Advertising as a topic is discussed since it gives an insight to the field of consumer behavior. Also, advertising responsibility, or CSR advertising, is a concept itself, and it is studied in the field of consumer behavior and advertising (E.g. Pomering, Johnson & Noble 2013). The mode of communicating the message is discussed, since it is a strategic part of communication also.

As it is pointed out in Pomering & Johnson article (2009), corporate advertising is used to boost the desired image of the company; to communicate the image they wish to send of themselves to others. The desired image can differ from the “actual identity”, because companies cannot control other forms of communication (Pomering & Johnson 2009). The focus in this thesis is on the communication that is executed by the company itself, thus other communicators such as media or social media influences are excluded.

As much as it matters who communicates the message, it is also crucial to whom it is communicated. At its best, advertising is effective when the values in the message match to the values of the receiver. Values differ regarding, for instance, a national culture (De Mooij 2005). Thus, it is important to study cultural differences in this thesis, to find out what makes the communication more effective in international business. What makes advertising one of the most challenging forms of communication, is high skepticism towards it by the consumers (e.g. Obermiller 2005).

On top of skepticism, the difficulty in today’s communication, regardless of its form, is not the lack of information, but the lack of proper targeting of the
message (Juholin 2004). Corporations should catch the attention of their audience across national borders, to communicate their message through. Advertising is widely used, and it is an important and effective tool for companies, especially when it comes to mass market products and reaching large amounts of people simultaneously (Keshari & Jain 2016). That is why global advertising is examined in this first theory chapter. It is investigated also because studying advertising in a global context gives insight to differences in consumer response among different cultures, which is in the interest of this study also. Thus, this first theory chapter discusses advertising appeals, cultural dimensions, and CSR as an advertising topic.

2.1. “There may be global products but there are no global people.”

As Percy & Elliot (2009) put it, when advertising globally, there is a constant struggle between cost efficiency and message effectiveness. There is no global business and communication without facing the global-local dilemma. Global-local dilemma refers to the difficulty to choose between standardization and adaptation of a certain process, entity, business, communication, an advertisement or basically any aspect that is or might be involved in doing business across borders (Dunning & Mucchielli 2002). To standardize a product or a process, it means choosing to remain with a standard version despite the geographical location. On the other hand, to adapt to local customs and conditions, means adapting the product/message/process etc. to match the local habits/values/traditions. Even though the adaptation of the message is important, standardization of the products has its benefits. Usually it has better scales of economies. The global-local dilemma is faced for example in a situation, where a decision between selling the identical product everywhere, or modifying them to meet the local requirements should be made. This does not exclude the possibility that the product would be the exact same everywhere: most global products are indeed the same despite the continent. Even though the product would be standard, usually the advertising message is customized. In order to do so, marketers can focus on tapping the motivations behind the use of the product. The motivation to use a product differs and identifying those motives hidden under cultural influence, marketers can reach the audience more effectively. As De Mooij (2005) says: “There may be global products but there are no global people.” According to Percy & Elliot (2009), there is some evidence that
consumer behavior could be converging across cultural borders, but at the same time it is also argued that it is increasingly diverging.

Still, instead of being market oriented, many of the global advertisers are rather product oriented. (De Mooij 2005:4). Products such as Coca-Cola, iPhone and Big Mac are often perceived as global products, and thereby the product users are considered to be the same. This might often be misleading thinking that leads to standardization of advertising. Even though the product is the exact same, the difference lies in the motivation to use it. People share the same needs universally, but the motivation behind the action distinct the consumers into different cultural groups. Thus, global brand is not equivalent to global motivations for buying those products. That is why global advertisers should understand the power of adapting the message locally. (De Mooij 2005). It is the context what matters when advertising (Percy & Elliot 2009).

To get the message through, consumers are in a key position. They are the ones who interpret and accept the advertisement in the first place. Therefore, it is crucial for advertisers to know their audience. (Oyedele & Dejong 2013.) In addition to knowing the audience, there are other challenges as well, information overload being one. Careful targeting to significant audience is the key to manage it. The more the message resonates with the receiver, the more the message affects them. This means that even the most global products and brands should be adapted to local conditions. (De Mooij 2005.) As Oyedele & Dejong (2013) point out, managers should be aware of the context in which the ads are shown, since the consumers tend to respond more to ads in a familiar context. They refer especially to the geographical context and the importance of taking it into account when designing the advertising. This means that communication should be designed according the target cultural group, even though the product would be the same.

2.2. Advertising appeals

In order to understand how consumers respond to advertising, the advertising appeals are explained. When advertising, different appeals are used to get the message through. According to Dix and Marchegiani (2013) advertising appeals are like the glue that sticks the message to the receiver. It is the connector between a brand and a consumer. There are rational appeals, for instance value, economy,
performance, popularity, durability, health and convenience. These values appeal to viewer’s rationality. Then there are emotional appeals, for instance, humor, sex, guilt, nostalgia, pride or joy that provokes emotions in a consumer. (Dix & Marchegiani 2013). Besides categorizing appeals into rational and emotional, literature suggest further approaches as well. When designing ads, also attributes like psychological differences between the consumers are becoming an important element (Ruiz & Sicilia 2004). On top of all these, culture has its effect on how consumers react to advertising appeals. In order to reach the target group, managers should acknowledge the advertising appeals that matches with local cultural values, because they have more tendency to generate success (Cheong, Kim & Zheng 2010).

Similar findings are drawn from other theorists too. In their study Keshari & Jain (2016) refer to Kotler (2003), who categorizes two types of advertising appeals to communicate with consumers: rational/informational and emotional/transformational. Rational appeals approach consumers who make their decisions based on functional, utilitarian or practical reasons. A message that appeals to rationality can be for instance about the quality, economy, value or performance. Vice versa, emotional appeals aim to provoke emotions, positive or negative, to result in action. Whether an advertisement is effective or not depends on how consumers react to these appeals. That is why these appeals and how consumers react to them is strongly in the focus of the advertisers worldwide. (Keshari & Jain 2016).

Petty and Cacioppo (1986) developed a model which explains two routes consumers respond to advertising appeals: central route and peripheral route. If the route to persuasion is central, the receiver is an active participant in the communication and takes the information in consciously, evaluates the arguments and is aware of the advertisement. The opposite route to respond to advertisement is peripheral route. It means that for a reason or another, mostly due to lack of motivation, the receiver does not process the information actively and they are not therefore engaged in cognitive information processing. Instead they react to peripheral cues, like the perceived quality of the source, catchy slogans, credibility and attractiveness of the source etc. Therefore, consumers taking the central route can be attracted with rational appeals, and consumers in peripheral route react more to emotional appeals. (Keshari & Jain 2016.)
Keshari & Jain (2016) found that rational appeals are more probable to evoking positive results than emotional appeals. They also found that age nor gender had effect on response to rational and emotional advertising appeals. This is a quite controversial finding, since demographic factors are often used by advertisers for segmenting and targeting in the markets. According to them, there are other studies supporting theory, that information is not processed differently regarding gender. When it comes to consumer good category, studies suggest that advertising appeals that would usually work, might not necessarily imply to food products. In other words, food as a product vary from other categories, and requires its own approach (Cheong et al. 2010) Cheong et al. (2010) also refer to James & Hill (1991) who say that non-durable consumer good are highly sensitive to local cultures, and that food, of all the product categories is the one most probably adapted to meet the requirements locally.

To conclude, consumers respond to two different appeals: rational appeals or emotional appeals, and they react to them in a central or peripheral way, in other words, consciously or unconsciously. Consumers can be active or passive towards the information, and processing the information varies. Also, variables like psychological or cultural differences influence how consumers take in these appeals and respond to them.

2.3. Cultural dimensions

“Translating advertising copy is like painting the tip of iceberg and hoping the whole thing will turn red”. (De Mooij 2005)

To understand advertising in a cultural context, the cultural dimensions are explained. There are three widely used dimensional models, Schwartz, Hofstede and GLOBE that study cultural differences. Even though these models find similar results in value differences, these models differ due to the number of countries analyzed, the number of dimensions and their structure, the subjects studied, and conceptual and methodological differences (De Mooij & Hofstede 2010).

Due to ethnocentrism examining cultures objectively is extremely challenging, if it is even possible in the first place. To be globally successful, international marketers should overcome the subjectivity of looking at things through their
own cultural lenses (Cheong et al. 2010). As De Mooij (2005) points out, comparing cultures is difficult due to ethnocentrism. No one can examine any culture without through the lenses of one’s own culture. De Mooij (2005) states that people share the same needs worldwide, but the reasons behind their actions vary due to their culture. For instance, The Sony Walkman, a global product, which was developed for global consumers, was considered being used for the same reasons worldwide. The product is the same around the globe, but whereas in the Western world the motive for using them was consumer not wanting to be disturbed by others when listening to music, in Asia the motive for developing the product was the exact opposite: they wished to listen to music without disturbing others. It is these kinds of values that guide consumers’ motives. Values are hard to be seen or even recognized, but they lie underneath every culture. By recognizing these values, and the driving force of a consumer, more accurate communication can be provided. (De Mooij 2005:5)

Undoubtedly the most well-known definition of culture in the field of business studies is Geert Hofstede’s (2005) definition: culture is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. In layman’s terms this can be explained to mean that culture is something that distinguishes groups of people due to different habits, customs, values and/or practices. This can be explained also with Hofstede’s onion model (2005:7): in the core of the culture, there are values. The next layer is rituals, and the next one is about heroes. The outer line is symbols. Practices can be seen all the way through these layers. This model explains the idea of how cultural practices originates from the values, but they reflect also more visible forms of culture such as rituals, heroes and symbols. By peeling layer by layer a culture, one can reach a better understanding of it and gain a more holistic view on it.

As De Mooij states (2005:72), the Hofstede model is most useful approach to cultural differences when it comes to consumption-related values. The Hofstede dimensional model of national culture has five approaches to distinguish national cultures; power distance, individualism vs collectivism, masculinity vs femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long/short - term orientation. The study was conducted in 75 countries and regions. The dimensions are measured on a scale 0-100. Hofstede’s model is widely used due to its applicability to marketing communication and consumer behaviour. (De Mooij 2005). Many studies have investigated advertising through Hofstede’s dimensions. For instance, Albers-
Millers and Gelb (1996) found that out of all the dimensions, power distance mattered the most in advertising appeals. In Cheong et al. article (2010) there are 8 advertising appeals gathered from different studies, which are linked to different cultural dimensions and explained with Hofstede’s model. Firstly, there are values such as independence, distinctive, family, community and popular, which are related to individualism. These appeals can be used when one is familiar with the extent of individualism of a certain culture. With the dimension of power distance there are two values attached to it; ornamental status and dear. Health and nutrition are attached to long-term orientation (Cheong et al. 2010)

To better understand these appeals and their connection to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, each dimension is presented first. Furthermore, examples of the appeals are provided.

To begin with, the first dimension is power distance (PDI). It measures the extent to which less powerful members of society accept and expect that the power is distributed unequally. It is measured by both the powerful members and less powerful members of the society. If the power distance is high, everyone in the society has their own place and “code of conduct” of how to behave. When there is lot of power distance between the members of a society, there is also a highly hierarchic culture. For example, in Japan there is high power distance, thus hierarchies come naturally, because the power is distributed unequally. Hierarchies lead to the need to distinguish oneself from others, and to boost one’s position and social status. Global brands, such as luxury products serve the purpose to this. For example, in high power distance cultures, the older people are appreciated due to the respect of their age. If the power distance is low, older people tend to try look younger, because there is no need to trying to distinguish oneself for social status purposes etc. (De Mooij 2005:61; Hofstede et al. 2005.)

Next dimension to look at a culture is through individualism. Individualism vs collectivism (IDV) is a matter of “we” spirit compared to “I” spirit; if the individualism is high, people are considered as individuals. People are treated as singular, and both achievements and failures are acknowledged as someone’s personal effort. In more collectivistic cultures on the other hand, values like belonging to a group is more important than being an individual. People are treated as groups rather than individuals. When a culture is highly collectivist, personal achievements are not valued but the power of group is appreciated, and the focus is more on the relationships. In individualistic cultures the approach is
more task-oriented, than relationship-oriented as in collectivist cultures. According to the De Mooij, between 70-80 % of world’s population is collectivist, and it is also said that individualism is seen to go hand in hand with wealth. (De Mooij 2005:61-65; Hofstede et al. 2005.)

Third dimension measures how masculine a certain culture is. Masculinity vs femininity (MAS) dimension is defined in the following way: “the dominant values in a masculine society are achievement and success; the dominant values in feminine society are caring for others and quality of life”. Thereby, in feminine societies, “good life” is preferred over winning and achievements, in opposite to masculine societies. In societies where masculinity score is low, people learn to sympathize the underdog or the less successful people, and they value modesty. When the masculinity is high, winners are appreciated and being strong is valued. (2005: 65-67; Hofstede et al. 2005.)

Fourth dimension measures how a certain culture deals with uncertainty. Uncertainty avoidance (UAI) means that how much do people tolerate uncertainty, and how much they feel they need to control everything that is happening around them. If the tolerance to stand uncertainty is low, plenty of rules and formality is created, to achieve more predictable culture, because people cannot deal with uncertainty and ambiguity. The opposite, when the uncertainty avoidance is low and the tolerance for uncertainty is high, it is accepted that nothing is certain and life is unpredictable. High avoidance leads to finding “the truth” and relying on experts telling these facts and truths.

Fifth dimension measures how the culture sees the future, whether they live with a long-term orientation or a short-term orientation. Long-term orientation (LTO) is “the extent to which a society exhibits a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historic or short-term point of view.” (Hofstede et al. 2005.) When it comes to long-term orientation, there are appeals such as health and nutrition which are linked to long-term orientation. In order to appeal to a national culture which is long-term orientated, these appeals can be used. (Cheong et al. 2005)

There are several examples mentioned in De Mooij’s book (2005) of the applicability of Hofstede’s study. To start with, power distance (PDI) is said to be attached to global brands. This is because if the PDI is high, social statuses are important element of differentiating oneself from others. Global brands and
luxury products serve this purpose. This could mean possibilities for luxury brands to seek for markets in high PDI nations. Also, when PDI is high, it means that there is clear distinction between different positions, e.g. between the teacher and students, the boss and subordinates, etc. This explains why Lego failed in France. Because in France, there is high PDI, and clear distinction between adults and kids, as grown-ups are considered superior to children. It means that children are expected to play by themselves and among their peers, and adults are not involved in playing, merely on supervising them. As the idea of Legos is to share the fun between a child and an adult, a possible explanation for failing could be this cultural difference in power distance. The idea of adults seen peers to children fails to understand cultural differences. On the opposite, if the PDI is low, there is no such distinction between different groups, and then adults playing among kids is culturally accepted. It is stated that the power distance tends to lower with higher level of education. (De Mooij 2005.)

According to Cheong et al. (2005), there are two advertising appeals that are related to power distance. Firstly, ornamental status, which is described as following: “Beautiful, decorative, adorned, embellished, detailed, designed, styled, Status Envy, social status or competitiveness, conceit, boasting, prestige, power, dominance, exhibitionism, pride in ownership, wealth (including the sudden wealth of prizes), trend-setting, to seek compliments.” Secondly, dear, “Expensive, valuable, highly regarded, extravagant, exorbitant, luxurious, priceless”. These appeals attract consumers in cultures where there is high power distance.

When talking about individualism as a dimension and how it distinguishes cultural groups, one approach is to take a closer look on work life. For example, in high IDV countries there is a clear division between work time and spare time. Public domain is separated from private life. This is the opposite when IDV is low. Also, when individualism is strong, people tend to believe into one universal truth about something. Besides individualism, long-term orientation gives insight how consumers behave according to their culture. If LTO is high, people are very pragmatic, like in East-Asia. This is illustrated in the book the following way: in individualistic countries, they believe that if $A$ is true and $B$ is the opposite of $A$, then $B$ cannot be true. In collectivistic countries on the otherhand, they believe that if $A$ is true and $B$ is the opposite, it does not mean that also $B$ cannot be true. They both can be true and by understanding both a greater enlightenment can be achieved. This difference in the way of thinking illustrated how differently
the world is approached regarding the surrounding culture. Furthermore, there is linkage between consumer behavior and Hofstede’s dimensions. In collectivistic cultures, it is easier to engage consumers with the corporate brand rather than product brands, because people there engage themselves and build trust between the consumer and the company, rather than an abstract product. Individualists tend to see product brands as individual features that reflect their personalities, and thereby distinct themselves from others. (De Mooij 2005.)

Advertising appeals that are attached to individualism, are independence (“Self-sufficiency, self-reliance, autonomy, unattached, to do it yourself, to do your own thing, original, unconventional, singular”), distinctive (“rare, unique, unusual, scarce, infrequent, exclusive, tasteful, subtle, esoteric, hand-crafted”), family (“nurturance within the family, having a home, being at home, family, privacy, companionship of siblings, kinship, getting married”), community (“relating to community, state, national publics, group unity, civic and community organizations, patriotism”) and popular (“commonplace, customary, well-known, conventional, regular, usual, ordinary, normal, standard, typical, universal, general, everyday”). (Cheong et al. 2005)

If the culture tends to be highly masculine, it is important to show off and expose one’s success. Status brands are therefore important and this can be applied to for example jewelry sales. Sales of real jewelry is connected to high masculinity in a society. If uncertainty avoidance, which is a dimension found in the GLOBE study also, is high, it means that communication is more formal and competitions are seen threatening. This is an important element to take into consideration. These societies hold in lot of anxiety that has followed from high uncertainty avoidance. The tension is released in various ways, such as showing emotions, talking loudly, driving cars more aggressively, embracing more emotionally etc. Vice versa if uncertainty avoidance is low, people do not show their emotions and there should be as few rules as possible. They believe more in generalists and common sense. (De Mooij 2005.)

Even though Hofstede’s dimensions are highly used all over the world, and probably the most famous and comprehensive cultural study, it has been criticized for its applicability on consumer level. For example, Brewer and Venaik (2012) argue that both Hofstede’s dimensions and the GLOBE study findings are misused on individual levels. They highlight the fact that these models should
only be used on national level, but never on individual level. However, Hofstede’s dimensions are the most used theory in cross-cultural comparisons (Tang et al. 2015.) Dimensions are very applicable to adapting communication: if for example the culture is highly hierarchical; the communication differ hugely from non-hierarchical society. With great power distances people only believe messages that comes from people that are on a higher level of hierarchy. Vice versa, if the power distance is low, communication flows much more freely and it is more like a discussion than orders. Therefore, it could be stated that communication is more like a dialogue when the power distance is low, and more of a one-way communication the power distance is high.

As comprehensive as Hofstede’s studies about national cultures are, another major researcher in the field, Shalom Schwartz, investigated the cultural values further. Partly to examine the same findings and partly to improve them with his further additions. Schwartz is a cross-cultural psychologist who conducted a study about the cultural differences within a nation compared to differences between nations. He focused to research the topic on culture-level rather than individual-level. (Schwartz 1999.) According to Schwartz’s findings, there are 9 universal values: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security.

First point to look at, is how individualism is seen in the society. He labels this one as conservatism vs. intellectual and affective autonomy. This dimension shares the same finding as Hofstede’s studies: national cultures can be compared due to fact if they are collectivistic or individualistic. According to Schwartz, this dimension is also described as contrasting individualism–communalism, independence–interdependence, autonomy–relatedness, and separateness–interdependence, as he refers to various researchers. Schwartz states that two major themes that this value dimension should answer is 1. whose interest is priority, individual’s or group’s? Secondly, to what extent are people autonomous in the groups? He highlights the latter to reveal more, and to be more fundamental. Hierarchy is described “A cultural emphasis on maintenance of the status quo, propriety, and restraint of actions or inclinations that might disrupt the solidarity group or the traditional order”. Whereas autonomy describes how individuals are seen as autonomous entities who create their own uniqueness and being. Autonomy is divided into intellectual and affective autonomy. Intellectual autonomy means encouraging the individuals to carry out their own
ideas and directions, values attached to this are for example, creativity, curiosity and broadmindedness. Affective autonomy highlights values such as pleasure, exciting & varied life, and it refers to individuals’ abilities to pursue positive experiences in life. (Schwartz 1999.)

Second issue is how the social fabric is comprised in the society. He discusses hierarchy vs. egalitarianism. This is about the power distances within a society, and people’s willingness to take others into consideration, to maintain the social fabric. So, there are two solutions to handle the issue. First one is hierarchy, which means that people trust in high power distances, they have roles in the society and they accept it. The power is distributed unequally. Another approach to this issue is egalitarianism. It means encouraging individuals to see each other’s as equals, as moral human-beings who share the same basic interests. It is about promoting the welfare of others. Values attached to this are for example, equality, social justice, freedom, responsibility and honesty. (Schwartz 1999.)

Third issue is human’s relation to the natural and social world. There are two orientations: mastery and harmony. Mastery refers to humankind considering itself superior to surrounding world, whereas harmony orientation considers human’s task in the world to fit in. Mastery approach can be described as a willingness to change the world, to perform, succeed and compete. Harmony on the other hand focus on finding the harmony with nature, discovering the beauty of the world, protecting the nature etc.

In order to carry out the empirical research and understand the cultural differences between Finland and Sweden, comparison between these two countries is made through Hofstede’s dimensions. The following picture (geert-hofstede.com 2016) illustrates the Hofstede dimension scores in Finland and in Sweden. The ranking is from 0-100. As it can be seen, the results represent quite similar values, but the biggest differences can be found in masculinity, where Finland scores 26 and Sweden only 5. This means that masculine values such as competitiveness, achievement and performance are more valued in Finland than in Sweden. However, Finland’s score of 26 is relatively low nevertheless, and its ranking globally is 68- of 74 countries.
According to the figure, Finland is slightly more hierarchical than Sweden, but it is only matter of two points. Thus, there is no significant difference in the power distance. When it comes to individualism, Finland is a bit more collectivistic than Sweden. The biggest difference after masculinity is uncertainty avoidance. It is relatively low in Sweden with the score of 29, and in Finland it is much higher, 59. This indicates that the Finnish relies more on regulations and they do not tolerate uncertainty as much as the Swedish. This reflects to long-term orientation too. The Swedish are more long-term oriented than the Finnish. What is interesting from chocolate factory point of view is that Sweden scores high rank in indulgence, which is a sixth dimension added later to Hofstede’s studies. It tells how children are taught to handle impulses and desires. So, it is not one of the original dimensions, but it tells about the society, how restraint they are (low indulgence score) or how indulgence they are. What makes this interesting in chocolate business is that, chocolate is mostly an impulse purchase. With high scores in both Finland and Sweden, it means that people tend to reply to their desires.

All in all, there is not much of a difference between the Finnish and Swedish when compared with Hofstede’s dimensions. However, when discussing the differences on general level with marketing professionals, it always comes up in
the discussion how “the Swedish are ahead in sustainability matters compared to Finland”. It seems to be mutually accepted truth that Sweden is a forerunner in CSR communication, as well as in overall sustainability approach also.

2.4. CSR as an advertising topic

“If consumer response to CSR was reliable and strong, most or all companies would have embraced the concept by now”. (Webb & Mohr 2005:24)

Advertising firm’s CSR initiatives is one channel of communicating actions and approaches towards CSR (Obermiller, Spangenberg & MacLachlan 1998). Companies are basing their advertisement more and more on communicating their corporate social responsibility, to meet consumers’ requirements of responsible acting in society. It is one tool among others to promote the wanted corporate identity. Boosting the pursued CSR image is claimed to have several benefits, for instance enhanced brand differentiation, brand equity, competitive advantage, and customer loyalty. (Obermiller et al. 1998.)

Consumers are craving for more information and facts about the products and companies when it comes to green and environmental advertising. It is a major attribute with increasing importance in the future. Facts provided by third parties are recommended, because they are usually perceived as more credible as information provided by the company itself. (Oyedele & Dejong 2013.)

As it is pointed out in Saat & Selamat article (2014) the goal of CSR communication is to provide stakeholders with transparent and truthful information about firm’s CSR activities. The issue mostly attached to CSR advertising / communication is skepticism towards marketing-orientated communication style, and some firms are accused of using more money on advertising their CSR than they use to the CSR itself (Saat & Selamat 2014) Similar findings are presented in Villagra, Cárdaba, & Ruiz San Román’s study (2016), that CSR communication does not always lead to positive results, because consumers’ perception on it can be skepticism and rejection. Thus, even though the firm would be CSR orientated, meaning that CSR is a strategic approach included in the core values, it is almost as important to communicate it right. If it is communicated properly, skepticism may be reduced, and on the other hand the consumer can be engaged better.
To conclude, CSR as an advertising topic has its own challenges due to its sensitivity, and skepticism is especially addressed.

2.5. Conclusions

In this chapter, global advertising has been discussed. Advertising as a form of communication was discussed as well as the appeals advertisers use to catch the attention of the consumers. As it was explained, pinpointing the wanted target group and their needs helps to designing the message to reach the wanted audience and their attention. Culture plays a major role when it comes to interpreting and accepting a communicational message. Therefore, cultural dimensions were discussed also, mainly relying on Hofstede’s studies of culture.

Finland and Sweden was compared with Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, and it was found out that there are not much differences between them, except in masculinity and uncertainty avoidance. The masculinity is much higher in Finland, but it is still relatively low. From marketing point of view, it means that statuses and showing off with luxury brands are more valued in Finland than in Sweden, but as both are relatively feminine cultures, values such as equality and solidarity are appreciated. Well-being is also a valued aspect in life. Individualism is high in both Finland and Sweden, thus using advertising appeals which boosts the opposite, “we spirit”, works there. Because uncertainty avoidance is higher in Finland, it indicates that more formal communication takes place there, and in Sweden where the uncertainty avoidance is quite low, the communication flows more freely.

CSR as an advertising topic was shortly addressed, and the main issue related to it, is that there is a lot of skepticism towards it, and it makes the message less acceptable. This is discussed further in the next chapter, which focuses on CSR communication.
3. CSR COMMUNICATION

“Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a discourse constructed through the constant dialogue and negotiation between corporations and their different stakeholders” (Tang, Gallagher & Bie 2015)

Even though CSR as a term relates its origin all the way to 1953 (Falck and Heblich 2007), in today’s business it is nowadays more important than ever for corporations to be responsible actors (Morsing, Schultz & Nielsen 2008). Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) point the same out in their article by saying that CSR is not in any sense a new phenomenon, but its volume in companies has increased greatly. They state that the shift in the debate about CSR have changed from “whether” to “how” (Bhattacharya et al.)

CSR itself is a wide concept and there are various definitions and dimensions of it, as Mohr, Webb & Harris (2001) point out. According to them, Carroll’s work has received most attention of them. He defines CSR to consist of four components: economic components (be profitable), legal components (obey the law), ethical components (be ethical) and philanthropic components (be a good corporate citizen) (Carroll 1991). Similar findings can be found in other studies, for instance, Birth, Illia, Lurati and Zamparini article (2008) discuss four categories of CSR to be economic, legal, ethical and discretionary. Furthermore, Esrock and Leichty (1998) describes four basic elements for CSR to be: 1. Fair and honest business activities 2. Product safety and reliability 3. Taking care of employees and 4. Improving environmental record. Berens and Popma (2014) define CSR actions to be companies’ social and environmental activities. According to Mohr et al. CSR is: “a company’s commitment to minimizing or eliminating any harmful effects and maximizing its long-run beneficial impact on society.” Andreau, Casado-Diaz and Mattila (2015) define CSR in the field of marketing to be creating corporal benefit by managing stakeholders’ concerns about environmental, social and ethical responsibilities.

To conclude these definitions, CSR is broadly firms’ attempts to actively improve their responsible acting as an influencing member of a society, to achieve more ethical approach on all their business aspects. It is about developing their businesses to be more environmentally and socially sustainable, compared to
today’s standards and policies. To be more precise, CSR in the field of marketing is to proactively have a dialogue with stakeholders about their concerns, to improve the business to match these inquiries.

To understand corporate social responsibility as a part of a bigger phenomenon from marketing point of view, this theory chapter begins by examining sustainability marketing, which is nowadays a widely-accepted concept among marketers. After that, CSR as a competitive advantage is explained. Then the factors behind successful CSR communication is discussed. At the end of the chapter, the main findings are concluded.

3.1. Sustainability marketing

Gordon, Corrigan and Hastings (2011) discuss in their article whether sustainability and marketing can co-exist. As it is stated, the purpose of marketing is to sell more goods, to make profit and increase consumption. This is not in line with the definition of sustainability, which has various definitions. OECD defines sustainability as following:

“(a) use of the biosphere by present generations while maintaining its potential yield (benefit) for future generations; and/or

(b) non—declining trends of economic growth and development that might be impaired by natural resource depletion and environmental degradation.”

Ottman (2011) states that green is now mainstream. It used to be so that “greener” product was somewhat just a bad version of a product. According to Ottman (2011) 83 % of all the Americans can nowadays be considered somewhat green. Or as she puts it “some shade of green”. She refers greener products to mean products that have lighter impact on the planet than alternatives, and for a product to be sustainable, besides environmental dimension it has other features to, such as fair trade. According to Ottman, markets will grow even greener in the future, “evolving the rules of engagement even further”. She suggests embracing sustainability, to act a way also future generation can meet their needs (2011:2). Excessive consumption and selling more goods conflicts with sustainability, so
Gordon et al. (2011) point out that marketing itself must develop sustainability. In the article, they address three ways to develop sustainable marketing. Firstly, green marketing, referring to producing more environmental friendly products and services and including the sustainability already in the core of the business. Secondly, encouraging more sustainable behavior upstream and downstream with the use of social media. Thirdly, critical marketing, which means having a more critical approach towards analyzing marketing, stimulating innovativeness with more sustainable approach, and especially challenging the dominant institutions of the capitalist and marketing systems to reach on more sustainable marketing discipline. (Gordon et al. 2011)

There is a risk of being claimed to greenwash / creating PR stunts to appear more sustainable than in the reality. They give an example of Toyota Prius, which was introduced to audience in late 90’s. It runs with both fuel and electricity, and the core idea is that it uses electricity in urban drive, because it is more sustainable, and on highways it runs with diesel. The problem is that no matter how sustainable the products get, if consumers do not play along, there is not much a company can do. For example, using Prius is not enough alone, if consumer thinks that the car is that sustainable it could be used endlessly. There is a mistake made that even though it is greener it does not mean that it would be green. Thus, they conclude in the framework that green marketing alone is not the answer. (Gordon et al. 2011)

3.2. CSR as a competitive advantage

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has interested both academics and managers during latest years (Waldman, Sully de Luque, Washburn & House 2006). There are several reasons why firms take CSR approach seriously now. It is at best a competitive advantage for a company, which distinguishes them from competitors. Gössling & Vocht (2007) argue that consumers increasingly consider attributes such as treatment of employees, community involvement and environmental approach, of a product rather than the traditional factors such as value for money, quality and financial performance. Consumers are not the only stakeholder putting pressure on companies to adjust more sustainable business models, it is also employees, investors, lenders, governmental agencies and other stakeholder groups that demand for more responsible acts by the company (Sprinkle & Maines 2010). CSR can be seen as a strategic marketing approach,
which creates unique competitive advantage for firms, and contributes to society with overall benefits (Lii, Wu & Ding 2011). According to Werther & Chandler (2005), strategic CSR works also as a global brand insurance. Therefore, CSR is a holistic approach for a firm that wants to achieve a good employer reputation, appeals to consumers and strengthen the brand. By linking the corporate strategy to their CSR actions, firms can achieve the added value that CSR can offer (Burke and Logsdon 1996). The benefits of CSR to companies are achieved rather in the long-run, as investments for the future to enhance the CSR activities, than with short-run activities such as donations or sponsoring popular events. CSR at its best is contributing to society on a regular and active basis with systematic actions, planned and carried out carefully, gaining the good reputation along with it. (Falck et al. 2007.)

Thus, it is argued, that CSR does not only create value and work as a brand insurance, but if it is done right, it can also increase the profitability of the firm, and be a win-win strategy for all, the firm, its stakeholders and the society entirely. According to Lombart & Louis (2013), food retailers seek to differentiate themselves with better CSR policies, because price, despite still being among the most important factors for buying decision, is no longer enough to differentiate.

The effectiveness of CSR activities can be improved with better CSR communication to consumers (Berens & Popma 2014). The goal of CSR communication is to provide stakeholders with transparent and truthful information about firm’s CSR activities (Saat & Selamat article 2014). There are several studies that has observed that consumers often lack knowledge of companies’ CSR activities, creating a gap between their attitudes and buying behaviour. Thus, improving the CSR communication, the CSR itself could be more beneficial. However, the question remains, how to communicate it. (Berens & Popma 2014). For example, the fields of consumer psychology, advertising, and consumer policy have studied the effectiveness of CSR communication. There is not however, a holistic approach that would conclude an overview of the results. (Berens & Popma 2014.) As Tang et al. (2015) state, as far as CSR is understood as a discourse, it is as important to examine what corporations communicate of their CSR, as what they actually do.

Term communication itself is a wide concept that includes various definitions. Kalla (2005) says in their studies that sometimes communication and effective
Communication are separated to mean two different things. The latter refers to a situation where the receiving side is considered in the process of communication, whereas solely communication means one-sided communication where the communication has happened when the one who communicated has sent their message. Usually however, communication is used to always mean effective communication, where both the sender and the receiver takes part in the process. (Kalla 2005.) Nowadays it is understood that corporate communication is not about solely informing stakeholders. It is about interaction between them, and having a dialogue, where listening is crucial part of successful communication. Communication is about reaching mutual understanding between the sender of the message and its receiver. The form of communication is as important as the message itself (Juholin 2004:16). Therefore, the focus should be on choosing the right channel for the communication as well as considering the audience / receivers of the message. The form of communication is as important as the message itself (Juholin 2004:16).

Tench, Sun and Jones (2014) introduce a framework for CSR communication in their article. Firstly, there are communicative subjects: senders and receivers. The communication happens between these two parties. Secondly, there is communicative content: perspectives of CSR, programmes/initiatives of CSR, strategic implementation of CSR, stakeholder/public concern. Thirdly, there are communicative forms/approaches/methods: CSR reports, media (incl. social media), advertising, direct dialogue and others. The link between CSR and its communication is illustrated in the following way:

![Diagram of CSR Communication](image)

**Figure 3.** CSR communication (Tench, Sun & Jones 2014)
Exchanged information includes intentional and unintentional information, true and false information and perceived and misperceived information. According to previous studies, CSR communication can be categorized into three types: mandatory, solicited and voluntary. Mandatory refers to obligations by third parties to communicate CSR actions, solicited a request by a certain stakeholder. (Tang et al. 2015.) According to Tench’s et al. (2014) communicative framework of CSR, when information is exchanged from corporation’s initiative, intentionally or unintentionally, there are two possible outcomes. Option one is that the message is interpreted as intended, and the outcome is positive: the CSR message is seen as positive and constructive, as the company’s message “convey sincere, reliable and transparent information to stakeholder’s and the public, which is perceived in the way it was intended”. Option two is that the CSR message is negative and destructive, because the message communicates “false, untrue, inaccurate or distorted information, or the message receivers misunderstand and misperceive CSR information. (Tench et al. 2014)

According to Snider, Hill & Martin (2003) three of the stakeholders are the most important for company’s success: owners, employees and the customers. People are nowadays longing for meaningful work, and they want to make the world better by their work. Therefore, a company that contributes to society with better environmental/social solutions appeals to employees. There is also demand for sustainable investing also, and investors are increasingly interested in investing to sustainable corporations. (Gössling et al. 2007.) Thus, the pressure to act responsibly comes from different stakeholders. From supply-side perspective, it is valuable to attract and keep quality employees, and from demand-side it enhances the value of the brand leading also to increased goodwill of the company (Falck et al. 2007).

3.3. Skepticism towards CSR

The issue mostly attached to CSR communication is skepticism towards marketing-orientated communication style, and some firms are accused of using more money on advertising their CSR than they use to the CSR itself (Saat et al.) Same is stated in Villagra, Cárdaba, & Ruiz San Román’s study (2016), that CSR communication does not always lead to positive results, because consumers’ perception on it can be sceptic and rejection. Thus, even though the firm would actually be CSR orientated, meaning that CSR is a strategic approach included in
the core values, it is almost as important to communicate it right. If it is communicated properly, skepticism may be reduced, and on the other hand the consumer can be engaged better.

However, consumers’ response on CSR advertising can be skeptical, and it diminishes the effectiveness of CSR communication. (Pomering and Johnson 2009.) Consumer skepticism is defined to be “tendency toward disbelief of advertising claims”. It is not necessarily only about the skepticism towards the claims itself but also towards the motives of the advertiser. (Obermiller & Spangenberg 1998.)

Stakeholders demand for more information about corporations’ responsibility. However, when a company communicates the data it can be perceived as overly self-promotional, and stakeholders remain skeptical about it. This dilemma is called CSR promotional communication dilemma. (Coombs & Holladay 2012:110.)

One can argue that when combining advertising, which itself is not the most trusted form of communication, and CSR, which as a topic is rather sensitive, it is very challenging to find the optimal way of communication. There are most certainly more ways to fail at it than to succeed, but next, I will discuss the things that works in CSR communication.

3.4. What works in CSR communication

When designing the communication, there are three approaches to it. One can examine what to say, and create a message strategy. Communication can be designed also by focusing on how to say it. That is called creative strategy. Thirdly, message source can be investigated, and thus focus on who should say it. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen 2009.)

According to Berens & Popma (2014) literature review, there are three different types of CSR messages. There is CSR information that is both constructed and verified by the firm (e.g. advertising). Then there is CSR information that is constructed by the firm but verified by a third party, for instance cause-related marketing and disclosures. Third option is that the information is constructed and verified by the third party. This means for instance consumer guides
The CSR message produced solely by the firm can be in many forms, such as print or television advertisement or claims made on company websites. These messages can focus on advertising a separate product as a responsible choice, or for example the company as a whole. Typical example is promoting environmental friendliness of the product. Berens & Popma (2014) literature review findings suggest that even though consumers are to some extent skeptical about environmental claims, they do not necessarily ignore them all. (Berens & Popma 2014.)

Factors making CSR-related messages more approachable for consumers is for example using more specific claims than general claims. According to Berens & Popma (2014) findings, for example promoting a product as “100% biodegradable” speaks more to consumers than general claims such as “environmental friendly”. However, combining both, a specific claim with a general claim is found to be even more effective than using a separate claim on its own. This is because general claims are not perceived as believable, due to difficulty of verifying them, and on the other hand specific claims may be hard to interpret without the context. Thus, the best result is achieved by combining both. (Berens & Popma 2014) The need for particularity is also found in other studies. According to Bielenia-Grajewska (2014), CSR communication is more fruitful when the company tells about concrete actions and how their input affect in real life. Communicating only about certificates or programs a company takes part in, is not seen as effective as telling about the actual results. Also, communicating the data that consumer find interesting: The difficulty in communicating CSR is to find the balance between the firm’s message and the extent to which it resonates with consumers (Werther & Chandler 2005). Thus, it is important to consider the message receiver, the consumer in this case, and provide them with material they can relate to, or otherwise find useful and/or interesting. Same findings apply not only on product promotion but also on corporate advertising. Pomering and Johnson (2009) found that communicating how firms’ actions affect in practice is far more effective than communicating about their policies or programs.
The CSR message can also be constructed by the firm but verified by a third party. Cause-related marketing is an example of this, say, company donates a fixed amount of money of sold products to a specific philanthropic case. This approach works the best if the case they are donating fits for the brand. Thus, the more accurate object for the company, the better it works. Even though consumers tend to be skeptical towards advertising in general, cause-related marketing is seen as rather sincere form of marketing. (Berens & Popma 2014.)

Berens & Popma (2014) argue which is the best way to communicate about CSR to consumers. They studied this from two points of view: firstly, who should construct and verify the message? It is concluded that a message constructed and verified by the company can be very effective if they are communicated in a credible way. Specifying the benefits for the consumers and highlighting the specific behaviours and/or outcomes in the message make the message itself more credible. If a message is constructed by the firm but verified by a third party, it is usually perceived more credible, but they risk including too much information, when it comes to disclosures. The most credible way of communication is through messages that are both constructed and verified by a third party, for instance, consumer guides, labels and certifications. However, they might be seen as PR devices for a firm. Secondly, they studied the topic from ethical perspective, there are two approaches, deontological responsibility and consequentialist responsibility. These two streams of thoughts represent different approaches to ethics. According to deontological perspective, things must be done right, to be ethical. Immanuel Kant represents this way of thinking: something is done right, if it can become a universal law. The other perspective to ethics is consequentialist, and it does not focus on how something is done, but what is the outcome of it. These views are applied to corporate world in a following way: deontological perspective is a firm conducting right things with the right motives. Consequentialist perspective focus on examining if the outcomes of a company are positive for the society or not. They conclude that outcomes of a company are usually more important to consumers than their actions, which are however important also. (Berens & Popma 2014.)

Villagra et al. (2016) investigate in their article the factors that make CSR communication effective and more persuasive. They discuss the “corporate fit” which is the traditional approach to this subject discussed by the literature, and added to that they study in addition their own dimension “personal fit” and how
these two affect the credibility of CSR communication. The term “corporate fit” refers to the extent that a firm’s actions are aligned with their CSR activities, and that they should not be. It is prerequisite for the CSR communication that it is line with the actual CSR activities. They found that whereas corporate fit may result in rather positive or negative results, personal fit contributes to better results. Combining these two a company can achieve more effective CSR communication. (Villagra et al. 2016)

3.5. Conclusions

As the theory part indicates, CSR communication is rather complex form of art, which requires both active listening of the audience as well as wisely chosen message and channel. It is however evident that CSR has a strong presence in today’s marketing approaches. It is at best a competitive advantage that engages stakeholders to the brand, especially employees and customers. But the only way to benefit CSR from marketing perspective is to properly communicate it. Actions that are left uncommunicated equals lost information.

Even though CSR needs communication to turn into advantage, it does not mean that it should be the company who communicates everything. As it is pointed out earlier, messages that are both constructed and verified by a third party, are the most trusted form of CSR communication to consumers. The CSR message needs to also “fit” to the company / its industry and / or brand to be more credible and relevant. Specific claims work better than general claims, but combination of both seems to be the best option to communicate CSR.

However, even though CSR would be communicated accordingly, and especially if not, the dilemma of promotional communication exists. It refers to a situation, where consumers are demanding for more facts and communication about CSR, but they perceive companies who do that suspicious.

All in all, the golden mean between communicating CSR properly, and not communicating in a way that makes consumer suspicious, should be found to succeed in CSR communication. The message and the channel are strategical choices, and it is critical to understand the receivers of the communication, in order to choose the message and the channel right. Culture is one major factor that affect the response of a consumer to a certain message, and adapting global
product’s message locally, communication can succeed better. Especially in food and beverage industry, which is closely tied to the local culture.

3.6. Summary and theoretical framework

In this subchapter the main theories are summarized into an illustrative picture, to present the theoretical framework.

**Figure 4.** Theoretical framework
Figure 4 framework presents how to examine CSR message interpretation from the consumer perspective. When a corporation is designing its CSR communication on strategic level, there are two dilemmas that define the guidelines within it has to operate. In international CSR communication, global-local dilemma asks whether to standardize the CSR message globally, or to adapt it locally (De Mooij 2005). The other dilemma that puts pressure on communication is the CSR promotional communication dilemma: stakeholders crave for CSR information, but they are sceptic towards too advertising-like communication (Coombs & Holladay 2012).

When a corporation sends a message “xyz” there are two possible outcomes. Whether the message is seen positive and constructive, and the consumer perceives it as intended. Or the message negative and destructive (Tench et al. 2012). In consumer’s eyes, the message is interpreted through their own cultural lenses. Also, the brand image effects how the message is seen. According to Juholin (2004) communication is a dialogue, and what matters in its performance is, who sends the message, what are the message and channel, and who the audience is. As the culture influences both how the message is send and received, this is examined with Hofstede’s dimensions. Also, what is important, is how the message fits the corporation.
4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

To answer the research questions, choice of research design and practices is rather strategic, since it determines the result. The research process begins with a broad assumption of the objectives and proceeds to more detailed methods of data collection, analyzing and interpretation. It is a plan that leads through the research, and which involves several decisions. In general level, the approach defines how the chosen topic is studied. (Creswell 2013:3).

To understand the choices in the research process, Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009: 106) suggest to ‘unpeel’ the research onion layer by layer. This onion is illustrated below in the picture, and it consists of six layers to go through.

![Research Onion Diagram](image)

(Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009).

**Figure 5.** The research onion
4.1. Research philosophy

The choice of a research philosophy indicates the way the researcher sees and examines the topic. There is not a philosophy superior to other, but they differ due to their purpose. Therefore, a study that focuses on facts requires a different approach for example a study that is interested in feelings and attitudes. There are four different philosophical positions that knowledge can be developed with. They are positivism, realism, interpretivism and pragmatism. (Saunders et al. 2009.)

**Positivism** as a research philosophy aims to develop hypothesis that are built on existing theories and then developed further. Reality is considered objective and observable, and only data that can be measured and observed is credible. Positivist research philosophy is traditionally used among natural sciences, where everything is considered measurable and objectivist.

**Realism** is similar to positivism, in a sense of scientific enquiry, but it acknowledges the truth beyond scientific methods. Therefore, realism as a research philosophy seeks for new methods besides the traditional ones, but aims to examine surrounding world as objectively as possible.

**Interpretivism** aims to interpret the situation from the actor’s point of view. Truth is believed to be socially constructed and it is believed to change and vary accordingly. Focus is on the details of a certain situation, and subjective meanings are sought. An interpretivist researcher would for example use unstructured interviews and gain deeper knowledge of the subject by aiming to understand the situational meanings, and the context in which the investigated phenomenon is studied.

**Pragmatism** allows to understand the topic from mixed data collection methods and from variety of different methods. Values are significant when interpreting results, and researcher may adopt both objective and subjective points of view. (Saunders et al. 2009.)

With a pragmatic philosophy, there is a free choice for the researcher to choose the methods, techniques and procedures that meet the purpose of the study the best, because use of mixed methods is preferred. World is not seen as a complete unity, rather than as a sum of different realities. Pragmatists seek for the context
of every situation, since every result is believed to be tied to its historical, political and social context. (Creswell 2013.)

This study follows pragmatic philosophy, and therefore seeks to understand the responses in their context. Also, researcher is believed to be part of what is being researched, and therefore the truth is seen both subjectively and objectively.

4.2. Research approach

In scientific research, there are two types of approaches, *inductive* and *deductive* approach. A combination of these two is considered to be the third approach, *abductive approach*. (Saunders et al. 2009: 124-127).

When the research aims to build a theory, the approach is called inductive. Then the data is collected first, and the theory is based on that. (Saunders et al. 2009:41.)

In deductive approach on the other hand, the objective is to *test* a theory instead of building one. Deductive research starts with a set of hypotheses and the process aims to test their validity. (Saunders et al. 2009: 124-127).

The approach of this study is not deductive nor inductive, but abductive, which means that there is continuous movement between the theory and the data collected and analyzed. Abductive approach begins with observation and seeks for simplest explanation while conducting empirical research. Therefore, no major theories are tested nor is a theory developed based on the findings, but the theory creates a pre-understanding for the empirical research, and the data collected completes the theoretical understanding. (Saunders et al. 2009).

4.3. Research design

First two layers, research philosophies and research approach, set the direction to the research, whereas the following layers, research strategies, research choices, and time horizon defines the research design. Researcher’s choices to answer the research question is shaped by research philosophy and approach. (Saunders et al. 2009: 136).

There are three main purposes for a study to distinguish from one another. Whether the purpose is to *explore* a certain phenomenon, to *describe* it or to *explain* it. Therefore, there are three main purposes to choose from. Once determining the purpose for the research, one can create the design for one’s research.
Descriptive research seeks to "portray an accurate profile of persons, events or situations" (Robson 2002:59). Descriptive research seeks to describe certain phenomenon and its characteristics precisely, and it should be seen "as a means to an end rather than an end in itself" (Saunders et al. 2009:140). Downside of descriptive research is that usually they lack sufficient analytics. (Saunders et al. 2009:140).

Explanatory studies explain causal relationships between variables. Therefore, an explanatory study seeks answers to situations or problems by examining the relation between the action and the result. An explanatory study answers the question *why.* (Saunders et al. 2009: 140)

Exploratory study is meaningful when the precise nature of the research question is not clear. In an exploratory study one seeks to explain ‘what is happening; to seek new insights; to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light’ (Robson 2002:59). To execute an exploratory study, one can 1) search the literature 2) interviews experts 3) conduct focus group interviews. Exploratory study is literally an exploration, which at best allows great flexibility to make changes along the research. (Saunders et al. 2009: 140).

The nature of this study is descriptive, since it seeks to describe the consumer response on CSR communication.

4.4. Research strategies

Each of the three purposes mentioned in the previous chapter can be applied to research strategies. There are five main strategies, experiment; survey; archival; history; and case study (Yin 2009: 8-10). The purpose of choosing the right strategy for the research, is to have a coherent research plan throughout the process from defining the paradigm, throughout choice of methods until analyze of the results. (Saunders et al. 2009.)

As Saunders et al. (2012) point out, case study "explores a research topic (or phenomenon) within its context, or within a number of real-life context"

4.5. Time-horizon

When conducting an empirical research, time-horizon can be either longitudinal or cross-sectional (Saunders et al. 2009). In a longitudinal study, the data tells
changes in time and compares results within a time-period. On the contrary, cross-sectional study takes a chosen period time and describes the situation at that time. In this study, the time horizon of the data is cross-sectional, i.e. collected at a certain point of time, during July and August of 2016.

4.6. Data collection

Data source for the empirical part of this thesis is primary data collected from the consumers, to meet the requirement of this study. Primary data can be collected as an experiment, observations or communication (Ghauri & Gronhaug 2005), and the mean of collecting the data here is communication with the consumers, in form of an online questionnaire. Saunders et al. (2007) define questionnaire as a set of same questions asked in a predetermined order from various people. Within survey strategy, questionnaires are most used data collection technique. In this study, there is a self-administered questionnaire online used.

The main advantage in using primary data is that it is collected for particular project (Ghauri & Gronhaug 2005). Moreover, when aiming to understand consumer behavior and their response on a certain product, only primary data can provide us answers. Through primary data the motives behind actions can be understood. It is hardly possible to learn about someone’s opinions and behaviors without asking the consumers directly. The challenges in use of primary data is that it can be very costly, and difficult in the sense of finding the right people to interview and getting answers from them. Another challenge is maintaining the reliability and applicability of the study, because researcher might jeopardize it if using wrong tools, procedures or methods of analysis. (Ghauri & Gronhaug 2005).

The main difficulty, as Ghauri & Gronhaug (2005) point out too, was to find the right people for the study. At the beginning, it was planned that the researcher would go to grocery stores and recruit people to answer the questionnaire and familiarize themselves with the websites there on point. However, as it was discussed with the researcher Hakala (2016), it would have been difficult to get people to stay that long in a grocery store to really focus on the questionnaire. As it was stated, the starting point to use the websites at all is when someone gets interested in knowing more, and starts googling. The situation when the chosen websites would be used, is rather at a calmer place, e.g. at home, thus it was
decided that the circumstances should be as close to that as possible. Therefore, it was decided that the people could be found through social media. With the help of social media channels, researcher recruited around 40 people to answer the online questionnaire. Respondents consist of both Finnish and Swedish consumers, as well as some international people too.

As the websites are chosen to be the platform through which the research material is collected and conducted, it is necessary to understand the surroundings. World Wide Web has its own specific features compared to other forms of media, for instance accessibility, availability and features related to user interaction (Madeja & Schoder 2002). The quality of websites is very crucial when it comes to attracting consumers (Tang & Huang 2006), and CSR communications is still an emerging field, when it comes to websites and corporate reports (Saat & Selamat 2014). Therefore, corporate websites offer an interesting case to investigate.

4.7. Trustworthiness of the study

To evaluate the trustworthiness of a research, there are requirements that are usually concluded into three core ideas: reliability, validity and generalizability (Moisander & Valtonen 2006). However, as Moisander & Valtonen (2006) put it:

“Cultural marketing and consumer research tends to go against the conception of knowledge as a value-free search for causal accounts of phenomena, which can be empirically tested and confirmed against observation using all available or representative evidence”

Thus, instead of evaluating the trustworthiness with reliability, validity and generalizability, qualitative analysis can be evaluated with Lincoln and Guba’s dependability, transferability, credibility and conformability (Shenton 2004). Dependability means that the research process itself is fully documented from inception until the end, in a logical order, without adding or deleting anything, as it refers to the ability of the process to provide accurate information. Transferability refers to the applicability of the findings to other contexts. In this case there is an exception, because this is a case study, and therefore it is tied to its context. Credibility means that the findings represent the “truth” of what has been studied.
4.8. Overall research process

This is an action research conducted for Fazer Group, which belongs to a Finnish food industry, introduced later in this chapter. Fazer group websites are used as the object of this study. In action research, researcher’s role is rather consultative and the focus in on the managerial implications for the case company. However, despite the company interests and bias, the researcher is conducting this thesis to finalize her degree, and her contribution to the academic community. Thus the focus is to conduct a proper research, which fulfils the requirements of an academic study.

The view for this thesis is **subjectivist**. It means, that the reality is believed to be constructed in social phenomena. In addition, term social constructionism is used to describe a view where meanings behind actions are searched for in individual situation. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2007). Therefore, it is believed that there is not a single truth to be found, but rather multiple realities created in individual situations (Moisander & Valtonen 2006). This applies to findings also.

4.9. Data collection

The factors that influence the choice of questionnaire are for example the importance of reaching a particular person, the importance of respondents not being contaminated or distorted, and types and number of the questions (Saunders et al. 2007) In this study, the importance of reaching a particular person / group is really low, because the target group is fairly large: chocolate consumers that represent moderates and smarts, and percentage of them is 71 % in Finland and in Sweden 73 % (Sustainable Brand Index 2016). Therefore, the choice of respondents does not play a big role in recruiting them.

4.10. Case FazerGroup.com

Fazer can be claimed to represent “Finnish-hood” and high-quality, and its importance in Finnish food industry is incontrovertible. Fazer’s all-time best-seller, Fazer Blue, has been awarded to be the most valued brand in Finland seven years in a row (Markkinointi & Mainonta 2015). One can argue that Fazer’s competitive advantage lies in strong corporate responsibility, which has its roots in the core activities. Kuusela (2015) investigated in her thesis, Fazer’s CSR as
their competitive advantage. She chose to examine Fazer because of its high-valued brand among Finnish consumers, and came to conclusion that Fazer is an example of how to create added-value by acting responsibly. According to her findings, the area that required improvement was found to be sustainable innovativeness. According to Rep Trak survey (April 2016), of their current reputation, they are exceptionally trusted brand in Finland, Sweden and Russia.

Without taking a stand on Fazer’s CSR policy or actions, this study focuses solely on the communication. Fazer is increasingly interested in communicating the CSR data with consumers and to provoke for discussion. (Laaksonen 2016; Eerola 2016; Fazer Group 2016). Fazer Group consists of three business areas, Fazer Confectionery, Fazer Bakery and Fazer Food Services, and two business units, Fazer Cafés and Fazer Mill & Mixes. This thesis aims to investigate chocolate consumers; thus, the case study focuses mostly on Fazer Confectionery, which is the leading confectionery company in Finland, has a strong presence in Sweden, Russia, and Baltic Countries, and sales roughly in around 40 countries globally. However, the websites that are used for the consumer survey represents Fazer Group not just Fazer Confectionery.

The corporate websites are in three languages, Finnish, Swedish and English and they are the exact same in each language. Thus, any modification or cultural adjustments are not proceeded. The goal of the pages is to inform stakeholders, mainly consumers. According to Sustainable Brand Index (2016) there are four kinds of consumers in Scandinavia, when it comes to interest towards sustainability: those who do not care about it, called egos (26-35%), those who are somewhat interested but price sensitive, moderates (48-53%), those who are interested and not price sensitive, smarts (12-17%) and then there are the small minority of people (5-7%) who are dedicated to sustainability and it is their priority, called dedicated. There are some differences between Finland and Sweden according to this study. The percentage of egos is slightly smaller in Sweden, with 21 %, whereas in Finland it is 25 %. There are 48 % of moderates among Swedish consumers and 50 % of Finnish consumers, whereas smarts cover 25 % of the Swedish and 21 % of the Finnish. The percentage of dedicated is almost double in Sweden, 7 %, compared to Finland’s 4 %. Thus, they do not differ that much, but there are differences.
According to the communications director in Fazer confectionery L. Eerola (2016) Fazer’s current communication style has been relevant mostly for this latter group of dedicated, the information is out there for those who are interested, but the approach has been reactive rather than proactive. Now the new approach for corporate responsibility communication is to target the majority of the chocolate consumers, and to stimulate interest towards sustainability, provoke for discussion of the topic, and proactively present Fazer’s operations model. Thus, the aim is to reach the majority of the consumers: moderates and smarts.

The aim of the questionnaire is to focus on five dimensions of the websites: **discoverability** (how easy it is to find accurate information?), **readability** (are the articles easy to read and consistent?), overall **clarity**, **attractiveness** of the sites and **divisibility** of the content. These five dimensions were discussed with M. Hakala, who is experienced in consumer studies in Fazer Group.

To understand the results better, the websites are now described as thoroughly as possible.

### 4.10.1. Responsibility as a theme in different websites

Fazer Group has nine different websites because of different language areas: fazergroup.com, fazer.se, fazer.com, fazer.ru, fazer.lt, fazer.ee. fazer.fi, fazer.no, fazer.dk. The focus here is mainly on fazergroup.com, because it includes the CSR information. Fazer.fi and .se are also quickly discussed, because they are the main sites one ends up when googling Fazer in Finland or Sweden, and the Finnish and Swedish consumers are investigated. Even though fazer.fi and fazer.se are quite similar, fazer.se is a narrower entity than fazer.fi, with the same contents, i.e. articles and pictures, but fewer. Noteworthy difference between them is that “företagsansvar” (=corporate responsibility) is one of the five head titles of the front page of fazer.se whereas in Finnish version there is not such head title at all.

Fazer.fi can be read whether in Finnish or in Swedish. There are three headlines: recipes and ideas, products, and cafés & bakeries. When scrolled down, the footer consists of four sections. In the first one, there are contact number and opening hours, search engine for product specs and possibility to give feedback. The second section has six head titles: chocolate, confectionery, xylitol products,
biscuits, bread and pastries. The third section includes links to different Fazer pages, and sites for B2B-customers. In the fourth sector the responsibility is mentioned first time. The head title is “Fazer yrityksenä” (=Fazer as a company), and below it there are five links (translated here by the researcher): “Visit Fazer”, “To media”, “Open job positions”, “Corporate responsibility” and “Sponsoring and partnerships”. When clicked “corporate responsibility”, the reader is directed to fazergroup.com.

Fazergroup.com consists of five head titles: ‘about us’, ‘responsibility’, ‘well-being’, ‘careers’, and ‘for businesses’. Of these, ‘responsibility’ and ‘well-being’ can be considered to be CSR communication. ‘Responsibility’ consists of six subtitle: ‘our approach’, ‘ethical principles’, ‘responsibility program’, ‘reports and figures’, ‘management and organization’ and ‘sponsoring and partnerships’. Well-being consists of five subtitles. They are ‘health and nutrition’, ‘responsibility and trust’, ‘sharing and caring’, ‘traditions and culture’ and ‘taste sensations and pleasure’.

If compared to other chocolate companies’ websites, similar themes can be found. Ferrero is third biggest chocolate producer and confectionery company in the World. According to their websites and an interview conducted by Bhattacharya (2015) their approach to CSR is strategic and it is built upon two values: People and Planet. They are two of out of three values that World Cocoa Foundation have defined to their sustainability principles, profit being the third one.

Besides its ferrero.com websites, Ferrero has their own sites solely for sustainability. In ferrero.com, one of the six headlines is social responsibility. It consists of six subtitles: Share value to create value, People, Planet, Code of Ethics, Code of business conduct, and Ferrero advertising and marketing principles. Their separate CSR web pages, www.FerreroCSR.com, consists of seven headlines: Our commitment, Ferrero group, People, Planet, Focus on, Our CSR reports, and News.

Mondelez International web sites consists of six headlines: About us, Brand Family, Well-being, Investors, Newsroom, and Careers. Well-being section consists of following subtitles: sustainable resources and agriculture, Well-being library, Well-being snacks, Safety of our people and products, Community partnerships, Our progress, The call, and The voice. Marabou, which is originally
a Swedish chocolate brand, nowadays owned by Mondelez, has its own websites in Finland, marabou.fi. The websites consist of three head titles ‘suklaamme’, ‘Maraboun tarina’ and ‘kestävä kehitys’. They can be translated into ‘our chocolate’, ‘history of Marabou’ and ‘sustainable development’. Mars Incorporated has seven headlines on their websites also: Who we are, Press Center, Careers, Our Brands, Doing Our Part, Sustainability, and Science + Innovation. Mars defines its core values into five principles: quality, responsibility, mutuality, efficiency, and freedom. Finnish candy brand Panda does not have a head title on their websites about sustainability, but there is a link that directs to corporate websites, orkla.fi (Orkla confectionery and snacks Finland), and out of six head titles, responsibility is one.

To conclude, all the major chocolate companies investigated here include corporate responsibility as a theme on either their brands’ websites or at least on their corporate websites, and some has their own pages for them. In the end, all the companies’ websites pretty much copied the same pattern of representing their product and business model as sustainable.

4.10.2. Appearance and content

Fazer Group websites are in line with their other home pages when it comes to their appearance. Fonts, colors, pictures and the layout resembles the same. Main color used is the blue color Fazer is known for, and has a patent in Finland. Lots of pictures are used and they are rather big, as well as the font. When browsing the websites with different devices, one can notice that the outlook remains the same. Only about one third is shown at once, thus even with a big screen one cannot have a look on the entire page, but needs to scroll down at least two thirds.

Despite the vast use of colors and pictures, the borders of the sites are made to look simple. There is white background, and outside of the ‘boxes’ of which the sites consist of, there is nothing added.

One might argue that Fazer’s websites appeals to rationality, because they include lots of information and facts of their business. On the other hand, the way they write about themselves in a “we”- form, indicates their appeal to emotions. For example, “we always consider”, “We also want to develop the business--”, “We believe--” etc. As mentioned before, it is argued that Fazer has a special role in
Finnish consumers hearts and heritage, and thereby it seems rather unavoidable to purely appeal on rationality of the consumers. Titles, for instance, “People matter” or pictures of smiling people including children, are clear indicators of emotional appeals.

Above a screen capture of Fazer Group’s Responsibility page. As said before, it consists of six different articles. I will next evaluate the length, content and appearance of these, to gain more understanding of the results explained later in the next chapter.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Navigation</th>
<th>Figures, pictures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reports and figures</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Three new articles: “How we report” (158), “Global compact”, “Corporate responsibility view 2015” (61 + PDF file of the review, 42 pages)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management and organization</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>On the sidebar: “Quality, environmental and occupational safety systems”, “Responsibility program” and “Reports and figures”</td>
<td>Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical principles</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>On the sidebar “Global compact”</td>
<td>Bullet points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsoring and partnership</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>“Sponsoring principles” (436), and “Product donations in Finland” (96)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2. Length of the posts**

Above the main articles are summarized. Navigation lacks a clear sidebar, so one cannot follow constantly where one is at the pages. Instead, the web pages consist
of articles that follows one another. When scrolling down there are two different titles “in discussion now” and “discover more” and below them one can find many more articles. There are for example, “Palm oil FAQ” (923 words), “EAT – When health and sustainability meet on a plate” (383), “Responsible sourcing” (656), “Reduce carbon footprint with Fazer” (320), “Waste and resource efficiency” (733), “Energy and climate” (473), “Recycling tips for the home and the office” (495), “Food safety” (541), “Responsible packaging” (708), “The Baltic Sea Commitment” (280).

There is also a headline “Cocoa” which leads to broader entity of cocoa related articles: “Our approach in cocoa sourcing” (771), “Follow our progress” (135 + a table of their ‘road map’), “Village project in Ivory Coast” (472), “Autumn 2014 in the Junior High School in Biéby” (232). There are also videos, “The first secondary school in Biéby opened its doors in 2013” (3:14 minutes), “Developing traceability and responsibility in the cocoa value chain” (3:06 minutes), “Jason Clay/WWF: The future of cocoa farming” (3:04 minutes), “Fazer's trip to Ghana” (5:56 minutes),

To summarize the responsibility pages: the average word count for the articles, 27 of them analyzed in total, is 396 words, and the length varied from small few line texts (36 words) to longer articles, 923 words at its longest. There is also a PDF file of the corporate responsibility, which is 42 pages long.

Concerning the topics that Fazer communicates on their responsibility sites, they have articles that focus on responsibility in general, for example ‘our approach’ (“Fazer for responsible taste sensations”), their program e.g. ‘part of environment’, ‘for health and well-being’, ‘running business’ and ‘fair value chain’. Then they have more specific topics, e.g. ‘FAQ Palm Oil’, ‘WWF Finland’s Jussi Nikula shares his tips for responsible eating.’ All in all, the diversity in the sites is huge, and there are lots of articles from recipes to tips and strategy, and Fazer’s history.

To conclude the fourth chapter, the Fazer corporate websites were described to understand the responses better. The choice of research design was also justified and explained. In the next chapter the questionnaire and the findings are presented.
5. FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings from the questionnaire are described and discussed. As it has been mentioned, a questionnaire was used to collect the answers and find out about the consumer response on proactive CSR communication through websites. Fazer Group websites were used as an example of proactive CSR communication, due to few reasons. Firstly, because Fazer is considered to be one of the most responsible and trusted brands in Finland (e.g. Kuusela 2016), and secondly because their approach to CSR communication is proactive. Proactive in this study means the opposite of reactive, i.e., the company communicates their CSR initially (Eerola 2016).

The questionnaire was shared through different channels to reach respondents, mainly with the help of social media. The questionnaires were shared on Facebook group for international business students, as well as on a mailing list of a company X from bank industry. Therefore, the respondents represent different backgrounds and do not have much in common despite some demographic factors. The questionnaires itself was completely in English, but the respondents were asked to answer whether in Finnish, English or Swedish, to facilitate the best possible answers by letting them answer with their mother tongue.

There are few variables that need to be considered when analyzing the results. Firstly, Fazer has an extraordinary good reputation and they are considered as a responsible actor. Therefore, one might argue that the respondents were more trustful towards the company and its communication than on average, possibly leading to reduced skepticism. All the respondents were asked in the beginning of the questionnaires if they are familiar with Fazer, and 100 % of them answered positively. Secondly, the respondents got to answer the questionnaire by themselves at home, thus the presence of the researcher’s influence was eliminated. Thirdly, since Fazer does not have their own websites for responsibility, but instead a section for it in their corporate websites, the respondents have looked at huge variety of articles, focusing possibly in different sections. Thus, the overall impression is affected by the websites as whole, not just the responsibility section. As one respondent put it:
“Content is partly interesting, but there is a lot of things in the website. Too much, I hardly have the energy to check them all.”

Respondents were asked to focus on the responsibility section, but as it turned out from the answers, many ended up reading other sections too, and besides the corporate sites, also the consumers’ sites (www.fazer.fi or .sv).

5.1. The analytics and structure of the questionnaire

The form was live around one month and it was reviewed 242 times and got 40 responses. According the analytics that the software (JotForm) offers, the average time people spent answering it was 22 minutes. 62 % of the views were in Finland, 28 % in Sweden, and the rest somewhere else. 19 of the respondents were Swedish, 19 were Finnish and 2 other. The age of the respondents varied from 21 to 61, and the average age was 28,7 years.

The questionnaire consisted of both open- and closed-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were multiple choice questions consisting of four options from 1 to 4. This scale was chosen, because the researcher wanted to eliminate the possibility to answer something from the middle. When the scaling is from 1-4, the respondent needs to take a stand on the asked question. The only exception was the final question, which was to give a general grade for the websites with 1-5 stars.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first task was to try out the search engine, i.e., come up with a question related to Fazer’s responsibility and trying to google the answer. Second part consisted questions about the appearance of the websites. The third part was about the content of the sites, and fourth part asked about the overall impression after the visit on the websites.

To ease the evaluation of the appearance of the websites, respondents were asked to evaluate the simplicity of the websites, quality of the photographs, use of graphics (e.g. pictures, charts, etc.), the use of colors and the easiness to read the texts. Also, overall impression was asked to evaluate. The aim of these questions was to help the respondent to pay attention on the outlook of the sites, and to specify what aspects of the websites were functional and what were not. Multiple choice questions about the functionality asked to evaluate how the scrolling
works; if one should scroll too much or too slowly, how logical the navigation on websites is, how descriptive are the titles/headlines of the articles, and how is the layout like, in general.

Final task was to evaluate the trustworthiness of the websites, and the completeness, the relevance and the personalization of the information on the websites. Comments were asked at every point of the questionnaire, to find out the reasons behind the answers. When analyzing the results, no major differences between respondents in Finland and in Sweden were found. Vice versa, the answers resemble each other, both numerically and verbally. One might argue that this indicates a rather small role of national culture in Fazer’s CSR communication when it comes to Finland and Sweden.

In the table below the most important multiple choice questions are concluded and put in a comparison by country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average age</th>
<th>Overall impression (mean)</th>
<th>There is enough information</th>
<th>Trustworthiness of the websites (mean)</th>
<th>General grade (mean)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finland</strong></td>
<td>24,7</td>
<td>3,3/4</td>
<td>75 % yes</td>
<td>3,6/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25 % partly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sweden</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3,3/4</td>
<td>87 % yes</td>
<td>3,3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 % no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19 % partly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the sample

As it can be seen, the answers do not differ much. Even though 6% of the Swedish respondents said that there is not enough information on the websites, and in Finland no one answered so, the general grades and happiness with the sites seems to be higher in Sweden than in Finland. In Finland, the sites are perceived
slightly more trustworthy (3.6/4) than in Sweden (3.3/4) but both are high results anyway.

As the answers do not give differentiate between both countries, the open-ended questions were decided to analyze as one entity without separating the answers accordingly. However, when reading through the responses the attention was kept in the nationality also. There was not notable difference in the open-ended questions either, in a general level.

5.2. Open-ended questions

The first part of the questionnaire that was asked to be completed before entering the websites, was to test the search engine optimization. Respondents were asked to think of Fazer products and what might worry them about their manufacturing or selling. Then try googling the first 2-4 questions that comes to mind concerning its ethics, environmental impact or social influence, etc. regarding Fazer. Then answer the questions below. An example was given, "where does the cocoa come from + fazer" or "fazer palm oil", headwords can vary from very general level for instance "fazer fair trade" to very specific ones "how traceable is fazer’s cocoa?". Questions can concern Fazer Group’s all businesses, e.g. bakery, confectionery, cafés etc. and all the aspects or responsibility: legal, ethical, economic and/or philanthropic. The reason for this first task was to lead the respondents to think of responsibility of the firm, and to find out what might worry them. It also gave some information of how effortless it is to look for information of this matter or do they even find enough information at all, and if they do, form where.

In general, respondents googled vast topics, and only few googled something more specific than Fazer plus a topic, like child labor. There can be found seven different topics that people googled. The majority googled something about the origin of cocoa beans and/or concerns of the supply chain. This might be due to fact that this example was given in the instructions. The second most googled issue was concerns about the calories / content / healthiness of Fazer chocolate and/or products. Thirdly most googled was child labor + Fazer. Other topics were environmental issues, use of palm oil, fair trade + Fazer, Fazer and vegan products / organic production.
The majority, almost 80% ended up reading Fazer’s own webpages when googling the issues mentioned above. Roughly 43% read only Fazer’s own websites and 35% read other websites besides Fazer’s. Only around 22% ended up reading information solely from other sites. When asked if they found enough information to answer their questions, 38% of the respondents in Finland said yes, 6% said no, and the rest, 56%, found answers to some of their questions but not to all. In Sweden, 50% of the respondents said that they found enough information, 19% did not, and 31% partly.

Next I will go into details of the answers to the open-ended questions.

As it was analyzed before, the average length of the posts in the websites was around 400 words. When asked about the length of the posts, in total six out of 39 comments stated that the articles were too long. One comment concluded:

“I think some posts are too long. When clicking on a post, the page includes multiple other links related to the topic, making it somewhat difficult to get a good overview on the topic. That being said, I think that most post are attractive and a reader can find information to multiple possible questions.”

The navigation got other comments too. Few claimed that too many clicks were needed to get the information. The diversity in the use of photos, graphics, texts etc. was considered very good. Overall more people claimed the posts to be too long than too short. The clear majority of the comments said the length to be not too short nor too long. Improvements were suggested:

“Some of the posts are very long and some extremely short. Reading is quite okay but it seems to me like it would be somehow unbalanced. Too long posts are always unattractive (takes too much time to read them) and short ones seem to me like they are still in progress.”

Overall impression of the photos was positive: many commented how they liked the photos and their high quality. There were negative comments also, saying that they are too big and irrelevant. One respondent commented that they have nothing to do with responsibility.

As the trustworthiness scored 3.3 out of 4 in Sweden and 3.6 out of 4 in Finland, one can argue that the sites are considered very trustworthy. When analyzing the comments there can be found four points that comes up. Firstly, respondents
have high trust on the company and therefore they have also high trust on their websites.

“For me Fazer has always been something familiar, something you can trust and something with good quality.”

Even though Fazer is a highly-trusted brand, many comments indicated that the respondents do not fully trust responsibility communication that is communicated by the company itself, and perceived the information as advertising / marketing.

“3 / 4, I would never trust a corporates own info in CSR, but I am positively surprised so many initiatives are available - seems this is high on the agenda.”

Some answers included skepticism towards the information:

“There is perhaps a little too little ‘actual’ info regarding the products and methods of Fazer. Many of the pages are irrelevant and therefore feel like filling”

Lastly, the websites were considered professional, which made them more trustworthy in the eyes of the respondents.

When asked the respondents if they find the content interesting, 54 % of the answers indicated that they found them interesting:

“The posts were interesting, because they show how seriously Fazer takes the issue of communicating social responsibility.”

37 % found them partially interesting:

“Yes, most of the content was interesting. However, I do feel that some topics such as ‘Responsibility Programme: People Matter’ is something that can be found in all the web pages no matter what the truth. Meaning that I cannot be sure how the company actually acts.”

Only 10 % did not find the content interesting:

“Personally, not very interested in the content in the way it is presented now. Anyhow I would look for this kind of information from a non-related third party.”
There are four factors that can be clearly spotted from the open-ended questions. Firstly, people liked the use of graphics, pictures and bullet points. It makes the reading more interesting and easier.

Some negative comments about the pictures were said also, but a clear majority found them attractive. Secondly, navigation was found difficult and even though the respondents found the articles interesting and informative, they were also considered as corporate speak and advertising. Lack of personality were mentioned in the comments too.

“Pages seem trustworthy but I never simply just trust it fully when company is talking about itself. I think it is always marketing, selling the best sides of you.”

“I understood a lot of it as advertising ("look how good we are") rather than info.”

Thirdly, unclear navigation and too much scrolling were perceived slightly problematic.

“I think that the pages could be clearer in navigating, now the information is kind of ‘all over the place’”

Fourthly, people are longing for more concrete things than corporate speak and general promises and principles.

“Best: Practical examples of what Fazer has already done”

All in all, most the comments were neutral or more positive than negative. There were some negative comments also, but surprisingly few. This indicates the good reputation that Fazer has; even though the topic is somewhat sensitive, the reactions towards the sites were not strong or controversial. So, one might argue that the consumer response on Fazer’s CSR communication was more positive than negative. Even though general trust in corporate communication about responsibility is not good, it is surprising how well the consumers took the websites of Fazer’s responsibility. One might argue that most of the responses indicated genuine interested towards the topic and the websites, and the overall impression after browsing the websites was that the respondents were satisfied with them. Some respondents were even impressed with the content and the way it was presented. Also, some respondents were not so interested in the topic
before visiting the websites, than after the visit. One might argue that the websites therefore managed to cause interest.
6. CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, this master’s thesis is concluded, practical implications are discussed and further research ideas suggested. This chapter begins with a research summary, which takes a look on what have been done.

6.1. Research summary

The aim of this thesis was to find out about the consumer response towards CSR messages communicated by the company itself. The research question that was defined in the first chapter is:

*What is the consumer response on CSR messages through corporate websites in Finland and in Sweden, and do they differ?*

Therefore, there were various issues to investigate before the empirical research. Firstly, what is CSR communication, what is consumer response and how do they differ across the globe, does the Finnish and Swedish consumers differ in this sense, and what kinds of websites attract consumers.

When analyzing the responses, many findings were found in the theory proved to be true in this case, for example that people are rather skeptical towards CSR information that is provided by the company itself. This was effortless to note from the empirical research. Also, people get more interested when concrete issues are communicated, instead of, for example presenting the approach on a strategic level. General claims are not as appreciated as more specific examples of what the company is doing for a better tomorrow. Even though straightforward facts and concrete issues are appreciated, they need to be in an accessible and fast-to-read way presented. Therefore, pictures, charts and bullet points were found attractive by the consumers.

The response did not vary according the culture, even though the researcher’s pre-assumption was that the Swedish are more demanding when it comes to CSR information and its availability. However, even though the response did not differ remarkably, it is notable than ‘Responsibility’ is a head title in the Swedish [www.fazer.sv](http://www.fazer.sv) but not in the Finnish [www.fazer.fi](http://www.fazer.fi). This indicates that CSR communication is still more priority in Sweden than in Finland.
6.2. Practical implications

Due to researcher’s experiences conducting this research, studying the theory and analyzing consumer responses, some practical implication based on what has been learnt are presented here.

Firstly, consumers are skeptical towards CSR information that is communicated by a corporation itself. The information provided for example in the websites are easily perceived as self-promotional or advertising. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to both what to say and how to say it. The audience should be well considered to get the message through. When planning CSR communication, companies need to think the channel, the content and the audience they are targeting.

To succeed in CSR communication, companies should avoid the “corporate gibberish”. The more the message is personalized, and fits the brand image, the more it resonates with the receiver. Therefore, companies should pay attention to the originality of their communication: as with marketing in general, also CSR communication needs to stand out, and be more personalized than just another code of conduct full of corporate speak. Also, balancing between open communication and communicating excessively, is a challenge managers should address. This dilemma is known as the CSR promotional communication dilemma. Communicating excessively can cause suspicion and mistrust towards the brand.

Even though people are the same across the globe, their own cultural manners and approaches varies due to their cultural background. Therefore, as planning and implementing communication, national culture is a major factor to consider. The way to speak to audience should be found, and the way to get the message through can be one in another place and a total opposite in a different place. A choice between standardization and adapting the message must be made. Even though standardization might be faster and less expensive in the beginning, it conflicts with the fact that the message should be accustomed according to the audience. However, as the empirical research showed, the national culture did not play a vital role in the responses. There might be other variables that have a greater impact on how the information is perceived, for instance, sub cultures: how do college students perceive the communication compared to middle aged
blue collar workers? How to reach the audience in different countries in addition to just translating the language? Also, it is vital to acknowledge if the consumers are interested in CSR initiatives in the first place, or not.

6.3. Suggestions for further research

As this research was limited to consumers as a stakeholder, websites as a communication channel and corporation as a communicator, there are various ways to continue with this research. Firstly, other stakeholders such as employees or suppliers and their responses to CSR communication could be investigated. Secondly, other channels for CSR communication, for example social media could be researched.

Fazer as a case company represents well trusted brand. If this research would be executed with another brand, findings might differ remarkably. Especially, if the company does not enjoy a high trust rate as Fazer does. Also, another industry besides food industry might affect the results, as food industry has its own characteristics that affects how corporate responsibility is seen.

Focusing solely on Finland and Sweden, this research could be conducted in another country as well. If research would be continued with Fazer, other countries like Russia or Japan could be investigated. With more global company the research could be conducted anywhere else.

All in all, as a topic CSR communication, as mentioned in the beginning, is a growing research field, which requires further investigation from various angles. This study aimed to fill the research gap that there is when comparing the Finnish and Swedish consumers.

6.4. Final word

This thesis was conducted as a project for the case company, and it was the researcher’s first empirical research. This was a process of learning, a journey to independent researching, which eventually led to a written master’s thesis. As the research was being conducted, the researcher gained project management skills, stress management skills and persistence to work systematically throughout the summers 2016–2017.
REFERENCES


APPENDIXES

Appendix 1. Online questionnaire

FazerGroup.com questionnaire

Please read this carefully and try to think of what might worry you about chocolate (or some other Fazer product), its manufacture or selling. Then try out googling 2-4 first questions that come to mind concerning its ethics, environmental impact or social influence, etc. regarding Fazer. Then answer the questions below.

For example, “where does the cocoa come from?” or “how many crops are involved?”

Questions can concern Fazer Group’s business, e.g. coffee, chocolate, cocoa and all the steps in responsibility, legal, ethical, economic and philanthropic.

What did you google? Was it easy to come up with the questions? Why / why not?

Did you find the answers / accurate information?

Which pages did you visit to find the information?

Is there enough information to answer your googling?

2. Appearance of the website (view here in Finnish or here in English)

Kindly evaluate the following aspects of the websites, from scale 1-4.

1. Navigation

2. Usability

3. Informational

4. Functional

Simplicity of the website

Quality of the photographs

Use of graphics (e.g. pictures, charts etc.)

Good use of colors

Ease of reading the texts

Overall impression

Comments about the appearance:

3. Content of the websites and the functionality

Evaluate the length of the posts, their readiness / attractiveness
Do you find the content interesting? Why / why not?

What do you like the best/least about the pages? What is the most / least interesting article?

Minimal scroll

Logical navigation

Descriptive link text / titles

Page layout

What kind of device you were using to browse the pages?

4. Overall impression after the visit

How trustworthy do you consider the pages?

Why?

How would you evaluate the relevance of the information?

Why?

How would you evaluate the completeness of the information?

Why?

How would you evaluate the personalization of the information?

Why?

How much time did you spend browsing the websites?

Would you share any of the content in social media? Why / why not? In which channel(s)?

What kind of posts do you normally like or share?

Would you visit the sites again? Why / why not?

Did you get enough information? If not, why?

General grade for the Fazer Group websites

Fill in your name and address in order to receive a thank-you-pack-of-chocolate (answering to the questionnaire itself is anonymous)