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On Relational Capital in Social Media

Stakeholder relationships become increasingly important as new communication technologies en-able interest groups to communicate their demands, organize themselves and voice their concerns with ease. In this changing stakeholder environment, the creation and maintenance of relational social capital relies not only on communication in classical media alone but also on the various online channels summarized by the term "social media." Utilizing a literature study and expert interviews, this article explores how organizations engage in creating and maintaining relational social capital by communicating their corporate social responsibility efforts through social media channels.

Keywords: CSR, Web 2.0, online communication, social capital.

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1. Introduction

Organizations are becoming increasingly engaged in corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the communication of their efforts in this sector (Du, Bhattacharya & Sen 2010; Bhattacharya, Sen & Korschun 2008; Morsing & Beckmann 2006; Sen, Bhattacharya & Korschung 2006). Stakeholder skepticism toward these efforts represents one of the primary challenges for organizations as they attempt to overcome skepticism via various communication efforts (Forehand & Grier 2003; Yoon & Gurhan-Canli 2006). To date, corporate websites have been one of the predominant instruments used to communicate CSR in a more or less unidirectional way (Insch 2008). With the advent of new communication technologies and channels, commonly termed Web 2.0 or social media, the effectively passive audience gained new opportunities to engage in dialogue with organizations regarding CSR issues.

This development has important implications for the way CSR is conceived and communicated; however, from a research point of view, little systematization has been undertaken in order to relate the interaction between organizations and stakeholders to academic literature. For this reason, this article examines the mechanisms of CSR communication in social media and potential enhancements of organization-stakeholder relationships. The remainder of the article is structured as follows: First, current research regarding online CSR communication and research questions are presented in greater detail. Subsequently, a literature review examines the concept of social capital, with special emphasis on relational capital, a specific subset of social capital research. Propositions from the literature on social capital and social media are then developed and tested with practitioners actively participating in online CSR discussions from both corporate and stakeholder sides. The methodology and sampling techniques are described, and findings are presented and discussed in the final section.

1.2. Online CSR Communication

From both the academic (Morsing & Beckmann 2006; Ingenhoff 2004; Dawkins 2004; Bruning & Lendingham 1999; Manheim & Pratt 1986) and the practitioner's perspective (Birth et al. 2008; Hartman et al. 2007; Hooghiemstra 2000), the communication aspect of CSR is gaining traction in mainstream CSR research. Online communication is becoming one of the most important information channels for relating CSR issues (Moreno & Capriotti 2009; Dawkins 2004; Ryan 2003; Taylor et al. 2001; Birth et al. 2008; Rolland & Bazzoni 2009).

In the past, research on online CSR communication was almost exclusively focused on corporate Websites (Jahdi & Acikdilli 2009). Studies have revealed that businesses communicate their CSR efforts online to influence the traditional media's agenda-setting role and gatekeeper function (Pollach 2005; Esrock & Leichty 1998). Furthermore, organizations use the Internet to distribute CSR content to establish leverage against the advantages Websites hold over regulated reporting in some countries (Maignan & Ralston 2002). Several studies have shown that the possibility of creating a dialogue with stakeholders regarding CSR, and thus the opportunity to establish relationships and social capital, is rarely exploited (Cooper 2003; Insch 2008). The dialogic functions of Websites are seldomly implemented by organizations to create stakeholder dialogue regarding CSR-related issues (Moreno & Caprioti 2009; Ingenhoff & Koelling 2009). To date, little research has been performed regarding CSR communication in the social Web, also termed Web 2.0, which has enabled new kinds of social interaction through the participative empowerment of users. Here, a profoundly changing communication environment with new rules and peculiarities can be observed. For example, Fieseler, Fleck & Meckel (2009) found that corporate CSR blogs may serve as a tool for micro-dialogues with opinion leaders and well-informed customers. Social media provides access to stakeholders who could not have been reached with the same intensity before and thus enables more dialogue and personalized interaction.

This article takes into account that social media tools enable new ways of interaction with stakeholders, whereas traditional corporate Websites related to CSR are a genre of communication that addresses a rather "broad and discerning audience" (Coupland 2005). Furthermore, it is argued that the loss of control over CSR-related content in a (ceteris paribus) more egalitarian Internet increases the need for companies to actively create social capital to facilitate the favorable exchange of information and to influence and create solidarity with stakeholders. This article contributes to a better understanding of the creation and maintenance of relationships between organizations and stakeholders in social media. Considering the aim of the research, this article investigates how CSR communication via social media enhances stakeholder relationships and, therefore, creates social capital.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility has become a popular topic among companies, politicians, activists and the media (Bowen 1953; Carroll 1979, 1999; Harrison & Freeman 1999; Waddock 2002). Despite its recent popularity, CSR has always been a somewhat ambiguous concept (Votaw 1973; Friedman 1962; Reich 2007). One controversy surrounding companies' CSR efforts is whether these efforts lead to profitable gains. Hence, recent studies regarding CSR practices have focused on the economic benefits that stem from such efforts (Hansen & Schrader 2005; Carmeli & Cohen 2001; Griffin & Mahon 1997; Miles & Covin 2000; Orlizky, Schmidt & Rhynes 2003). Margolis & Walsh (2001, 2003) reviewed more than 120 studies of the economic benefits of CSR efforts, reaching inconclusive results. Research has suggested that the correlation between CSR efforts and financial payout may be positive, negative or even insignificant depending on the approach and methodology used. Regardless, a range of studies have indeed reached the conclusion that CSR may actually enhance profitability and, therefore, be financially profitable for companies (Hart, Ahuja & Arbor 1996; Moore 2001). Based on the assumption that businesses can profit economically from their CSR efforts, there are many reasons for engaging in socially responsible business practices. The positive effect that CSR programs can have on a company's bottom line could be less distinct than their effects on its intangibles. Therefore, some research focuses on relevant intangibles, such as a company's stakeholder relations (Jones 1995).In terms of internal stakeholders, several studies have found that an ethical work climate leads to more trust within employees in the company, less absence, increased contributions, greater profitability and productivity, a more positive work attitude and good conduct (Sims & Keon 1997; Treviño, Butterflied & McCabe 1998; Weaver & Treviño 1999). The ethical climate of a company has also been shown to affect job satisfaction (Sims & Keon 1997; Viswesvaran & Ones 2002). For external stakeholders, CSR efforts have been shown to induce a sense of loyalty among customers (Maignan, Ferrell & Hult 1999; Riordan, Gatewood & Bill 1997), to improve product evaluations and facilitate buying decisions (Brown & Dacin 1997; Alexander 2002). Finally, CSR serves as a goodwill buffer in times of crisis and safeguards against attacks from either activists or regulators on a company's license to operate (Hansen & Schrader 2005; Klein & Dawar 2004).The improvements of relationships with external stakeholders can be considered a gain of relational social capital based on the idea that the interaction among networked actors creates and maintains social assets. Within this context, CSR takes the role of an investment in which socially responsible business practices may help achieve a longterm payback, for example enhancing a firm's reputation, creating a favorable climate of opinion toward it and possibly attracting reciprocal favors. In the next chapter, the concept of relational social capital is outlined.

2.2. Relational Social Capital

By engaging in dialogue with stakeholders regarding CSR issues, organizations aim to create social capital. Social capital is a metaphor that explains the processes and outcomes of interactions in networks. It is the result of social structure, individual agency and personal literacy either opening or denying opportunities for individual and organizational actors. Social capital has been extensively investigated in organizational settings, where it has been linked with benefits like the ability to obtain information, influence and solidarity within a group (Adler 2001; Darr 2003; Dore 1983; Ferrary 2003; Sandefur & Laumann 1998; Tsai & Ghosal 1998). The benefits derived from the possession of social capital allow individuals and organizations to achieve ends that would not otherwise be possible or would incur additional costs (Adler & Kwon 2002; Baker 1990; Field 2003; Fine 2000; Jackman & Miller 1998; Portes & Sensenbrenner 1993; Woolcock 1998).

The creation of social capital is based either on personal or impersonal sources of cooperation. Impersonal sources of cooperation, such as external authority, social norms and values, are largely given and can only be indirectly altered. In contrast, personal sources can be influenced because they arise in specific, personalized interactions. Thus, social capital results from an investment in social relations by individuals or organizations through which they gain access to embedded resources in order to enhance expected returns of instrumental or expressive actions (Lin 1999).One branch of social capital research locates the source of social capital in the formal structure of the ties that make up social networks, the *structural* dimension. A second branch based on *cognitive* and *relational* dimensions focuses on the content of those ties.

The structure of networks has been the focus of network theoretic approaches in the study of social capital, and this research illustrates the important effects of structure features such as closure and structural holes (Burt 1992; Scott 1991; Wasserman & Faust 1994). At the heart of the structural dimension is the presence or absence of network ties between actors, both in the sense of the possession of direct and indirect ties and the configuration of the focal actor's network.

In contrast, research in other disciplines has emphasized the role of tie content (i.e., the most commonly shared norms, beliefs and abilities) in determining the social capital embodied in a social network. The *cognitive dimension* provides shared understanding among parties and relates to those resources that provide shared meanings and interpretations (Cicourel 1973; Nahapiet & Ghosal 1998). The *relational dimension* describes the specific content of these ties; specifically, it describes how individuals value their contacts over and above the quantity and configuration of ties (Granovetter 1992). Relational social capital influences three of the conditions for exchange and combination in a number of ways. The three influenced conditions are as follows: access to parties for exchange, anticipation of value through exchange and combination, and the motivation of parties to engage in knowledge creation through exchange and combination (Nahapiet & Ghosal 1998). These conditions concern the personal relationships people have developed through a history of interaction. Relationships enable organizations to access more informational, physical and emotional support in the business process, which in turn is a precondition for gaining competitive advantage (Lechner & Dowling 2003; Liao & Welsch 2005).

Here, the focus lies on the *relational* dimension of social capital; thus, this study explores how CSR communication in social media can have an impact on the "relational embeddedness" of organizations, described as relationships that are developed through a history of interactions (Granovetter 1992).It is through ongoing personal relationships that people fulfill social motives such as sociability, approval, and prestige. Those assets are created and leveraged through relationships, and they are parallel to what Lindenberg (1996) describes as behavioral (as opposed to structural) embeddedness and what Hakansson & Snehota (1995) refer to as "actor bonds."

2.3. Social Capital in the Web 2.0

By applying the concept of social capital to the Internet, early studies posed the question of whether the Internet decreases or increases social capital (Haythornthwaite 2001). Research indicates that the Internet leads to larger social networks with weaker ties (Wellman et al. 2001; Kavanaugh et al. 2005), which it helps to maintain (Hampton 2003). Furthermore, the Internet enables the capitalization of existing social networks and the introduction of new participants to the online dialogue (Kavanaugh & Patterson 2001).However, similar to CSR communication research, these studies have only considered the Internet during the early stages of its evolution; the aim of the present study is to determine the impact of CSR communication on social capital in the Web 2.0.

The term Web 2.0 is used to describe not only developing forms of Web-based cooperation and data exchange, but also changing social dynamics (O'Reilly 2005, 2006). In brief, Web 2.0 embodies a network of services and individuals in which content and knowledge, as well as social contacts, are created, edited and managed with low technical and social barriers. Such services foster new kinds of social interaction, creativeness and economic activity. Different platforms, such as weblogs, social networking sites, folksonomies, wikis and virtual worlds, allow users to create, modify and distribute digital content and thus lead to new social and economic phenomena. Interaction with a variety of individuals and groups through social software applications is an effective means of creating and maintaining networks of formal and informal relationships (Fieseler et al. 2009). This can create social events within those relationships that emerge from such communities and social networks (Muniz & O'Guinn 2001).

For corporate communication, this change can be described in three evolving trends: communication processes accelerate, familiar orders and hierarchies decline, and information becomes a collective and collaborative good (Meckel 2008). If organizations wish to take part in this participatory communication process, there are certain particularities that must be considered. The enhancement of stakeholder relationships and, thus, the increase of relational social capital rely on the type of communication that occurs. Frequently, organizations fail to adopt the style or tone of social Web communication, which is more informal, casual, and sometimes humorous (Bucher, Fieseler & von Kaenel 2009). Therefore, organizations must engage with stakeholders in an appropriate tone, particularly if actors in social media criticize organizations, their products or services. Furthermore, it is important to integrate Web 2.0 communities in media monitoring, constantly delivering new content, communicating in an honest way and presenting a company within social media with qualified employers (Stanoevska-Slabeva 2008). A transparent and honest dialogue between equal partners serves the mutual understanding between a company and its stakeholders. Therefore, it is advantageous if the spokesperson appears as an individual who talks with the stakeholders, rather than talking toward them (Bucher et al. 2009). Aside from these considerations, social media should be used to monitor ongoing dialogues in Web 2.0 to detect criticism or measure public opinion. Developed relationships within social media and social capital are therefore valuable for detecting issues.

In this article, it is argued that the effective use of social media in CSR communication can positively influence stakeholder relationships by influencing trust and trustworthiness (Fukuyama 1995; Putnam 1993), norms and sanctions (Coleman 1990; Putnam 1995), obligations and expectations (Burt 1992; Coleman 1990; Granovetter 1985; Mauss 1954), identity and identification (Hakansson & Snehota 1995; Merton

1968). By drawing from these four concepts, the following propositions are assumed.

Proposition 1: Communication of CSR in social media creates relational social capital by building trust among organizations and their stakeholders.

Social capital research posits that where relationships are high in trust, people are more willing to engage in social exchange in general and cooperative interaction in particular (Fukuyama 1995; Gambetta 1988; Putnam 1993, 1995; Ring & Van de Ven 1992, 1994; Tyler & Kramer 1996). Trust is a multidimensional concept that indicates a willingness to be vulnerable to another party. This willingness arises from confidence in four ways: (1) belief in the good intent and concern of exchange partners, (2) belief in competence and capability, (3) belief in reliability, and (4) belief in perceived openness (Mishira 1996). Furthermore, trust facilitates cooperation, and cooperation itself breeds trust. Over time, this may lead to the development of generalized norms of cooperation, which may further increase the willingness to engage in social exchange (Putnam 1993).

Proposition 2: Communication of CSR in social media creates relational social capital by establishing norms between organizations and their stakeholders. Norms are not determined by organizations but rather by their stakeholders.

Social capital research defines norms as the socially defined rights to control actions that are held not by the actor but by others. Thus, it represents a degree of consensus in the social system (Coleman 1990). Coleman suggests that "where a norm exists and is effective, it constitutes a powerful though sometimes fragile form of social capital" (1988: 104). Norms of cooperation can establish a strong foundation for the creation of social capital. Good norms are a willingness to value and respond to diversity, an openness to criticism, and tolerance toward failure (Leonard-Barton 1995). Norms may also have a darker side: capabilities and values that are initially seen as a beneficial may become, over time, pathological rigidities (Leonard-Barton 1995).

Proposition 3: Communication of CSR in social media creates relational capital by raising certain obligations and expectations between organizations and their stakeholders.

Social capital research defines obligations as commitments or duties to perform some activity in the future. Coleman (1990) distinguished obligations from generalized norms, viewing the former as expectations developed within particular personal relationships. He suggests that obligations operate as a "credit slip" held by one party to be redeemed for some performance by another party. Such obligations and expectations are likely to influence both access to parties for exchanging and combining knowledge and the motivation to combine and exchange such knowledge. The notion that "there is no such thing as a free lunch" represents a commonly held view that exchange brings with it expectations regarding future obligations; this view has been described in great detail by Mauss (1954), Bourdieu (1977), and Cheal (1988).

Proposition 4: Communication of CSR in social media creates relational capital by creating identification of stakeholders with organizations.

For social capital theorists, identification denotes the process in which individuals see themselves as united with another person or group of people. This may result either from their membership in that group or through the group's operation as a reference group "in which the individual takes the values or standards of other individuals or groups as a comparative frame of reference" (Merton 1968: 288). Likewise, Kramer et al. (1996) found that identification with a group or collective enhances concern for collective processes and outcomes, thus increasing the chances that the opportunity for exchange will be recognized.

3. Methodology and Sample

Given the topicality of the subject, an interpretative, qualitative research approach was chosen to explore how CSR communication in social media can impact relational social capital. A more interpretative perspective offers the advantage of facilitating the understanding of complex, ambiguous, and paradoxical phenomena (Lewis & Grimes 1999). Experts in the field of social media and CSR communication were asked to evaluate these propositions through open-ended questions to facilitate the open exchange of ideas and to minimize the risk of guarded answers (Podsakoff & Organ 1986).

The target group for this research project consisted of communication managers of Swiss companies representing the corporate side, NGOs representing the critical stakeholder side and, as a third group, CSR-bloggers and specialized communication agencies representing experts in CSR-communication in social media. These different groups were chosen to obtain a broad perspective on this new subject of research. In total, 16 interviews were conducted between January and May of 2010. Eight communication managers of major Swiss companies employing over 5000 people, four representatives of Swiss NGOs and four representatives of specialized communication agencies and CSR-bloggers were chosen for the study. Upon conclusion, all of the interviews were transcribed. These were subsequently analyzed through structured qualitative content analysis as described by Gläser & Laudel (2006) and Meuser & Nagel (1991).

4. Results

In this chapter, questions asked of the experts and their respective answers are outlined.

Q1: Can communication of CSR in social media build trust among organizations and their stakeholders and, if yes, how?

Experts agree on the proposition that CSR communication in social media can build trust between stakeholders and organizations, but only if organizations consider and follow certain rules. The dialogical functions and possibilities of Web 2.0 are seen as valuable prepositions for building trust as "CSR thrives within the reciprocal dialogue of social media and therefore trust." Organizations should, as one expert stated, "be sure to dialogue and not just tell people what to think." According to the experts, a trustworthy dialogue can only be established if authenticity in the dialogue is given. Therefore, authenticity is seen as a key success factor in

CSR communication, particularly in social media, where "lies or wrong communication are discovered very fast," as a CSR blogger commented. For this reason, the experts recommended that only people "who really speak for the company" should engage in dialogues and build stakeholder relationships. Furthermore, the experts agreed that "fake engagement from corporations will face a community backlash," and, therefore, communication regarding CSR efforts should always be based on real engagement. In addition, the experts considered transparency in communication a success factor of CSR efforts: "In order for Corporate Social Responsibility programs to be trustworthy, they must possess all the elements of transparency." Transparency, and thus the willingness to be vulnerable, is seen as a primary factor for establishing and maintaining of trusting relationships: "The more transparency a company embodies and takes as principle for its CSR communication, the less problems it will have regarding stakeholder relationships."

Q2: Does communication of CSR in social media establish norms between organizations and their stakeholders? Does it put the stakeholders in situations of control over a company's actions?

The experts agreed that norms in the communication of CSR in social media have been established and that the socially defined right to control communication related to CSR is no longer held by the organizations but is instead held by the stakeholders participating in social media dialogue. The respondents considered entering a dialogue in social media is not simply a possibility but an increasingly unavoidable requirement: "Companies no longer can decide whether they want to interact in social media; they are forced to do so by external pressure. Nevertheless the direct dialogue with groups opens possibilities." Furthermore, stakeholders are considered to be a "supervisory body, the competences of which competences should not be underestimated," as an NGO representative explained. According to the experts, well-informed users monitor companies and their comments carefully, particularly those that are related to CSR topics. The possible danger of drawing attention to sensitive CSR-related content is viewed by all of the experts as a particularity of CSR communication. One expert stated that "CSR always is somewhat connoted with public relations and hidden self-interests" that must be taken into account when communicating CSR. Another expert emphasized the risk of "greenwashing" and the lack of credibility "if companies actively advertise their products or services with CSR efforts." However, social media is not perceived as a typical channel for advertising; therefore, the consensus was that CSR can be communicated in social media more actively.

A subject many experts referred to is the tone of communication in social media. The experts argued that to be credible and trustworthy, organizations must meet stakeholders as equals "on the same eye level and with the same language." Nevertheless, there are also critical voices who considered that a "rather informal tone, as prevailing in social media, is inadequate to communicate trustworthy. CSR efforts have to be communicated in a more formal, serious tone." Similarly, another expert raised the concern that it is a challenge to close the gap between professional and personal communication.

Q3: Does communication of CSR in media raise any obligations and expectations between organizations and their stakeholders and, if yes, which ones?

The experts agreed on the proposition that if an organization communicates CSR in social media, certain obligations and expectations evolve. One expert discussed the expectations of stakeholders regarding the simple aspect of accessibility. Once a company has started to communicate CSR in social media, stakeholders expect the company to continue its communication efforts and to be reachable: "Social media have no opening hours." In contrast, other experts took a more pragmatic approach because a company cannot "be present 24 hours a day." However, they agreed that endurance in dialogue enhances stakeholder relationships. Furthermore, one expert felt that stakeholders expect organizations to communicate actively in social media:" Reactive communication is considered by stakeholders as greenwashing." It is perceived that companies that are well positioned "do not react, but are proactive, also in communication." On the other hand, some experts recommended a rather cautious communication in terms of CSR-related topics because "information about CSR efforts don't have to be communicated to actively. People who are interested will look and ask for information." Finally, one expert stated that it is nearly impossible to take on a leading role in communication in social media: "The difficulties with social networks are that you are essentially reactive."

Entering a dialogue enables organizations to receive valuable feedback related to their CSR efforts because stakeholders can feel obliged to engage in the dialogue. However, they also expect organizations to pay attention and react: "It is important to listen; groups in a dialogue in social media expect companies to listen to them." The attentiveness of companies will be rewarded: "In an ongoing dialogue companies can perceive honest opinions." Therefore, the practitioners acknowledged social media as a valuable tool to determine the public opinion of their companies, products and brands: "The interesting thing with Facebook is that we can test the temperature of our reputation at any time. This of course goes with CSR too."

The expectations on the company side toward dialogue partners are "to discuss in a fair way and not to spread false information." Once a relationship has been established over dialogical CSR communication in social media, stakeholders, even very critical ones, will "feel obliged to discuss the CSR efforts of companies properly in public."

Q4: Does the communication of CSR over social media result in the identification of stakeholders with organizations and, if yes, in what way does it achieve this?

The experts agreed with the proposition that communication of CSR over social media can advance the identification of stakeholders with an organization. As a particularity of social media, the possibility of the individualization of CSR communication is emphasized: "Social media has the big advantage to individualize the communication." Interestingly, in the experts' opinions, the individuality in stakeholder engagement does not only apply for developed relationships over longer periods of time but also for short-term communication due to low technical barriers. "Because it is also visual – you have for example a picture there – communication becomes quite personal and individual just from the beginning. It is quite easy to be approached, as you are not an anonymous grey spokesperson."

It was argued that the identification with a representative will evolve more easily than with an anonymous, abstract company.

Furthermore, some experts stressed that new stakeholder groups can be reached by social media and can be motivated to identify with a company: "One year ago the social media or Web 2.0 aspect was not really significant for CSR in general. This has changed now. Web 2.0 enables CSR to become more mainstream and to reach people that did not really know that there is something like CSR." In addition, some experts considered Web 2.0 to be a democratic medium in which "everybody has access, and therefore a huge audience can be reached." Yet this is met with the criticism of experts who did not feel social media reaches a broad audience: "There is no broadness – I am quite skeptical." Furthermore, the experts felt that not every consumer segment can be reached by social media. However, this was not an issue for some experts who considered the fragmentation as an advantage: "We are using the Internet in a much more matrix way, where we can get specialist people talking about specialist issues. It allows so much more diverse and targeted specialization." Here, the fragmented and individualized approach toward stakeholder groups is seen to enhance the identification of stakeholders with the company because they feel like "a member of a rather small group, discussing a company's CSR."

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The underlying aim of this article was to determine how the communication of CSR in social media can enhance stakeholder relationships and lead to gains in relational social capital. After drawing four propositions based on relational social capital literature, practitioners and experts in the field were asked how CSR communication in social media can build trust, establish norms, raise obligations and expectations, and enhance the identification of stakeholders with organizations. In summary, the experts agreed that the communication of CSR in social media is capable of fulfilling all of these goals as long as organizations follow certain rules.

To establish a more trustful relationship over CSR communication in social media, organizations must be willing to be vulnerable, which means they must be transparent. Only then will participating actors agree to engage in social exchange and cooperative interaction. Furthermore, stakeholders will only believe in the good intent and concern of exchange, the competence and capability, reliability, and openness of organizations if the organizations engage in real dialogue rather than one-way communication. Authenticity is another key factor that must be considered if organizations wish to gain trust with stakeholders; communication should be based on real engagement.

Regarding norms, the experts dwelled on the increasing power of stakeholders that evolves in social media. The socially defined right to control the communication of CSR efforts has shifted partly to the broad audience in Web 2.0. According to the experts, well-informed users monitor organizations and their comments very carefully, particularly those related to CSR topics. If organizations communicate their CSR efforts in a way that seems too much like advertising, the communication may be perceived as greenwashing. However, social media has the advantage of not being perceived as a classical channel to distribute advertising. Moreover, organizations must follow the norms relating to the tone of communication. This means that to appear credible and trustworthy, stakeholders must be approached as equals; therefore, organizations must adapt to the tone of social media. However, this poses some challenges to organizations because they must close the gap between professional and personal communication.

The obligations and expectations raised through CSR communications in social media were viewed by the experts predominantly from the stakeholder's side. Due to the strongly dialogical functions in social media, stakeholders expect an organizational commitment to communication once a dialogue has been established. Furthermore, stakeholders expect organizations to listen and react to their dialogical contributions. On the other hand, stakeholders can feel obliged to give organizations honest feedback on their communication and CSR efforts and to not discuss them in an improper way. Fair discussions regarding CSR efforts are what companies expect from dialogue partners. Other expectations of stakeholders concern accessibility and the active communication of CSR efforts. Not only do stakeholders wish to have access to organizations, but they also expect them to communicate actively (delivering both good and bad news) concerning their CSR activities. However, the experts did not agree on this final expectation unanimously; a small group of experts argued that CSR should not be communicated too aggressively.

Identification of stakeholders with a company through communicating CSR in social media is primarily enhanced by the possibility of individualizing the communication. Due to its dialogical functions, low technical barriers, and additional communication features, such as pictures or videos, stakeholders are given the feeling that they are members of a (discussion) group with established ties in which the individual (at least partly) adopts the values or standards of the group as a comparative frame of reference. The fragmentation of target groups among stakeholders can support this effect. Furthermore, the accessibility of new stakeholder groups enhances the identification of people with the company, which would not have been achieved before.

In summary, these results provide evidence that the communication of CSR in social media can enhance stakeholder relationships and, thus, lead to gains in relational social capital. From an instrumental point of view, benefits for organizations arise through the improvements of relationships with external stakeholders based on the idea that the interaction among networked actors creates and maintains social, intangible assets. Within this context, CSR takes the role of an investment in which socially responsible business practices may achieve a long-term payback through enhancing a firm's reputation, creating a favorable climate of opinion and possibly attracting reciprocal favors. Kurucz et al. (2008: 85.) explicitly outlined the financial advantages of CSR efforts by arguing that "companies can do well by doing good." The positive effect of CSR programs on a company's bottom line could be less distinct than its effect on intangibles.

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