WITH CHOCOLATE AGAINST HATE SPEECH – EXPLORING CORPORATE ACTIVISM

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Companies of today have their roles to play in advancing positive change in society. This societal contribution has also slowly become the decisive point of difference for consumers who are expecting companies to speak out on critical socio-political issues and participate in solving those alongside traditional changemakers. (e.g. Bhagwat et al. 2020.) This phenomenon, termed *corporate activism*, confronts companies with fundamental challenges on how to run a business and communicate on its behalf.

This qualitative study aims to gain more insight on this prominent, yet, still scarcely researched phenomenon by focusing on a single case: Fazer, a major Finnish FMCG company, and its activist effort on hate speech from 2018. The study sheds light on how corporate activism is perceived from both the corporate and public perspectives, and on the factors that should be taken into consideration when engaging in corporate activism. The research data consists of a semi-structured interview and publications collected from Fazer's owned media, owned and earned social media, as well as from news media. The data was analysed with an abductive approach, using content analysis.

The findings suggest that Fazer engages in corporate activism primarily due to the company's inherent sense of duty although activism has benefitted the company also financially and reputationally. Fazer's fight against hate speech was received with mixed emotions and met with an active counter-mobilization; the public did not seem to understand Fazer's motivation to address hate speech nor the relevance of the issue. Besides, the public discussion mostly circulated around the phenomenon of corporate activism rather than focusing on the issue at the heart of the campaign. The findings support the notion raised in prior research (e.g. Weinzimmer & Esken 2016) that considering how a stand is taken instead of merely focusing on what the stand is may help companies design ever more purposeful and successful efforts. This study also further underlines the importance of communication, and stresses candid collaboration and co-creation.

Key words

Brand activism, case study, corporate activism, corporate advocacy, CSR, hate speech

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Tiivistelmä

Voitontavoittelun ohella nykyajan yritysten tulee tavoitella toiminnallaan myös laajempia yhteiskunnallisia hyötyjä. Yritysten yhteiskunnallisesta vaikuttavuudesta on tullut myös tärkeä valintatekijä kuluttajille, jotka odottavat yritysten osallistuvan yhteiskunnalliseen keskusteluun ja yhteiskunnallisten ongelmien ratkomiseen perinteisten muutoksentekijöiden rinnalla. (e.g. Bhagwat et al. 2020.) Yritysten näkökulmasta *yritysaktivismi*, kuten ilmiötä kutsutaan, nostaa pintaan perustavanlaatuisia kysymyksiä siitä, miten yritystä tulisi johtaa ja miten yrityksen tulisi viestiä.

Tämä laadullinen tutkimus pyrkii lisäämään tietoutta tästä merkittävästä mutta yhä vähän tutkitusta ilmiöstä paneutumalla yksittäistapaukseen: Fazeriin, suureen suomalaiseen elintarvikealan yritykseen, ja tämän vuonna 2018 julkaisemaan kampanjaan vihapuhetta vastaan. Tutkimus selvittää, miten yritysaktivismi koetaan yhtäältä yrityksen näkökulmasta ja toisaalta laajemman yleisön näkökulmasta ja mitä tekijöitä tulisi ottaa huomioon yritysaktivismiin ryhtyessä. Tutkimusaineisto koostuu puolistrukturoidusta haastattelusta sekä Fazerin oman median julkaisuista, oman ja ansaitun sosiaalisen median julkaisuista ja uutismedian julkaisuista. Aineisto analysoitiin teoriaohjaavan sisällönanalyysin menetelmin.

Tulokset osoittavat, että Fazer ottaa aktivismin tuomista taloudellisista ja mainehyödyistä huolimatta kantaa ensisijaisesti velvollisuudentunteesta. Fazerin vihapuheen vastainen teko herätti yleisössä vaihtelevia reaktioita ja jopa vastamobilisaation; yrityksen motiivi puuttua vihapuheeseen ja aiheen tärkeys yritykselle jäivät epäselviksi laajemmalle yleisölle. Julkinen keskustelu keskittyi niin ikään lähinnä ilmiöön itseensä eli yritysten yhteiskunnallisiin kannanottoihin eikä teon keskiössä olleeseen aiheeseen. Tulokset tukevat aiemmassa tutkimuksessa (e.g. Weinzimmer & Esken 2016) esitettyä käsitystä siitä, että luodakseen merkityksellisiä ja onnistuneita kannanottoja ja tekoja yritysten tulisi kiinnittää huomiota kannan valitsemisen sijaan ennen kaikkea siihen, miten esittävät kantansa. Tämä tutkimus alleviivaa viestinnän tärkeyttä ja puhuu myös ennakkoluulottoman yhteistyön ja yhteiskehittämisen puolesta.

Asiasanat
Brändiaktivismi, tapaustutkimus, vihapuhe, yritysaktivismi, yritysvastuu

Säilytyspaikka
Jyväskylän yliopiston kauppakorkeakoulu

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1 INTRODUCTION

Gone are the days when companies could be neutral bystanders – let alone the days when they could solely concentrate in producing commodities, creating jobs, and maximizing their profits. In today's polarized, globalized and hypermodern world, companies are instead regarded as so-called corporate citizens who have, in addition to the pursuit of profit, their roles to play in advancing positive change in society (e.g. Bhagwat et al. 2020; Verhoeven et al. 2018). Moreover, according to several global surveys, companies are not only expected to consider their impact on society in the form of corporate social responsibility (CSR), but also to speak out, take clear stances, and to actually participate in solving social and political issues from climate change to pay gender inequality (Global Strategy Group 2016; Edelman 2018, 2019; Miltton 2017; Weber Shandwick 2018).

This phenomenon, referred to as *corporate activism* or *corporate advocacy*, can be defined at its simplest as a company's proactive and visible support for certain socio-political issues – individuals, groups, ideals or values (Bhagwat et al. 2020; Wettstein & Baur 2016). Typical for this type of corporate political involvement is that it goes beyond company's immediate economic interests. Instead, it primarily concerns what the company perceives as the public good and the values it wishes to manifest and be associated with. The involvement in advancing issues that the company holds dear, can be shown either through communications or concrete actions. (Bhagwat et al. 2020; Wettstein & Baur 2016.)

Corporate activism has commonly been considered to be fuelled by conscious consumerism (e.g. Bhagwat et al. 2020; Moscato 2016; Sarkar & Kotler 2017). Indeed, a growing constituency of consumers along with shareholders and the general public is expecting companies to be vocal about critical issues and to participate in solving those alongside the traditional changemakers, such as political actors, public institutions, non-governmental organisations, and citizen movements. Consumers of today – especially the generation Z and millennials – are aware of global challenges and increasingly concerned about companies' contributions to society and, consequently, weighing corporate principles and values as much as its products and services. (e.g. Bhagwat et al. 2020; Shetty, Venkataramaiah & Anand 2019; Smith & Korschun 2018; Vredenburg et al. 2020.) Already a few years back, research (Accenture 2018; Edelman 2018) found that nearly two-thirds of consumers around the globe buy on belief. In other words, over half of the consumers chose, switched, avoided, and boycotted a brand or a company based on its position on issues they found important.

As Miltton (2017) found out in their research report on corporate advocacy, a similar trend has been visible in the Nordics as well. According to the report, people do not only buy on belief but also select employers based on belief; millennials in particular yearn for jobs that have a higher meaning than profit-making. What is more, the majority of the Finns surveyed were unanimous that companies should take stance on current issues even if they were heavily polarised. (Miltton 2017.)

Corporate activism is also inherently linked to *corporate purpose* – a company's reason for existence beyond profit-seeking and a concept actively talked about in the recent years (Stanley 2020). As people of today are looking for purpose in their own lives to an unprecedented degree, they require companies to have a larger purpose, too. Accordingly, those companies that do have a larger purpose and are able to convert it into action, are increasingly seen as leaders in their industries (Sarkar & Kotler 2017).

In the light of the foregoing, corporate activism is nothing to disregard for those companies who wish to stay relevant and "future-proof" their business. In fact, corporate activism has been said to essentially change the nature of business with no less than a magnitude comparable to the rise of digital technology at the turn of the 21st century (Bakhtiari 2019). Unsurprisingly, the phenomenon is increasingly on the lips of practitioners; e.g. Forbes Communications Council's expert panel consisting of respected PR and communications executives and leaders, Viesti, a Finnish trade union for communications professionals, and FIBS, the largest corporate responsibility network in the Nordics, among others named activism as one of the biggest communications industry trends of 2020 (FIBS 2020; Forbes 2019; Repo 2020).

It looks like many companies have recognized and are responding to the trend as more and more companies are publicly taking stands on different kind of social and political issues (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020; Wettstein & Baur 2016). Companies are also increasingly encountering ethical challenges that have such pervasive impacts that they cannot but address those (Zerfass et al. 2020); one of the most recent examples include the COVID-19 pandemic. Companies taking stands is not a distant thought in Finland either; According to the *Survey of Large Corporations* conducted by OP Financial Group and NIBS think tank set up by Aalto University professors (2020), 72 per cent of the corporations studied deemed it is their responsibility to try and find solutions to societal problems, showing an increase of 16 per cents from the previous year. Furthermore, over 90 per cent deemed that engaging in acts related to corporate responsibility has a growing impact on competitive advantage (OP Financial Group & NIBS 2020).

Certainly, deeming that taking stances is a company's responsibility does not imply that a company actually takes stances. In fact, research has shown that some companies underreport their activities even if they had good deeds to communicate about and their engagement in activism was authentic as they are afraid of possible detrimental effects (Bhagwat et al. 2020; Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020). Indeed, the demand for voicings and constant reflection on the role companies play for their stakeholders and society at large, confronts companies with great, even rather fundamental challenges on how to run a business and to communicate on its behalf. Suddenly, it is no longer good enough – nor even an option – to be neutral, and businesses must think whether and how to convey their views. Moreover, companies cannot necessarily choose the issues they want to engage in anymore; it is all the more often the stakeholders – such as customers, society and employees – who dictate it. (Sarkar & Kotler 2017.)

The aim of this master's thesis is to gain more insight on this phenomenon that is rapidly gaining ground but still scarcely researched considering the salience of the topic. Slowly but steadily, the phenomenon has become a topic that seems to warrant scholarly scrutiny in its own right and garnered attention from academics trying to make conceptual sense of the phenomenon. The vast majority of corporate activism related research has stemmed and is stemming from North America, meaning that there is very little research on the phenomenon in the Nordics, let alone in Finland. This study contributes to filling that gap for its part. More insight is certainly welcome as corporate activism is being discussed in an ever-increasing number of negotiating tables in the Nordics, too. Besides, it touches people in many different roles; for public relations practitioners, for instance, advocacy and activism are all the more crucial dimensions within their profession.

By focusing on a single case – Fazer, an established Finnish fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) company, and its activist effort on hate speech – this study sheds light on corporate activism and how the phenomenon is perceived both within a company and among the public. Also, the factors that should be taken into consideration when engaging in corporate activism are explored. Instead of statistical representativeness, this study aims at comprehensive understanding of the case and a detailed presentation of a useful benchmark for other businesses. The research questions can be specified as follows:

RQ1. How does the case company reason its engagement in corporate activism?

RQ2. How was the public discussion around the case company's activist effort on hate speech?

RQ3. Based on the case of the study, what factors should be taken into consideration when wanting to engage in corporate activism?

This qualitative study is structured as follows. Firstly, the theoretical framework is presented and discussed, followed by a chapter introducing the case of this study. Secondly, data and methodology are presented and the choice of them justified. Thirdly, results of this study are presented and analysed and finally concluded along with discussion of limitations of the study as well as avenues for future research.

2 CORPORATE ACTIVISM

In this chapter, the theoretical framework is presented. Firstly, corporate activism is defined and conceptually embedded, which is then followed by a discussion on how corporate activism translates into practice. Lastly, criticism that corporate activism has attracted in the recent years is discussed.

2.1 Defining Corporate Activism

Traditionally, companies have avoided picking sides on divisive socio-political issues and stayed outside of contested debates (Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019). Advocacy and activism have, instead, long been forces that affect companies externally; they are core non-profit functions, through which social movements and non-profit organizations contribute to democratic governance, promote change and aim to hold companies, people and governments accountable for the social and environmental consequences of their activities (Guo & Saxton 2014; Moscato 2016).

Due to all the more intensive partnerships with non-profits, advocacy and activism have gradually stepped inside the companies, too – first in the form of different kind of campaigns, fundraisings and workshops, for instance, and later as companies' own advocacy initiatives (Austin & Seitanidi 2012; Guo & Saxton 2014). This change in corporate communication and social responsibility practices that borrows from the non-profits, has been labelled as *corporate political shift* (Manfredi-Sánchez 2018, 344).

Behind this shift is also the fact that, due to globalization, the role of nation states and traditional institutions is diminishing, and companies among other private and civil society actors are reinterpreting their roles and starting to fill this void (Dodd 2018; Scherer 2014; Wettstein & Baur 2016). Many corporate actors have realized that, with their resources, they are able to bring different issues to the mainstream and be part of the positive change in society (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020).

Before deepening into corporate activism and corporate advocacy, brief definitions of activism and advocacy are in place. At simplest, *activism* can be defined as a form of a political activity that aims to influence societal agenda around a controversial issue. It is often motivated by perceived injustices and can actualize as nurturing conflicts, or transgressing prevailing laws or norms in a society. (Atkinson 2017; Isin 2009; Olkkonen & Jääskeläinen 2019.) *Advocacy* is a term very closely related to activism and often used beside it. As such, advocacy can be defined as "the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal" or "the act or process of advocating something" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.).

As it already came out, the contexts within which advocacy and activism typically take place are non-profit organizations, advocacy organizations, and social movements (Atkinson 2017; Taylor & Van Dyke 2004). Advocacy and activism are often affiliated with action directed by non-profit organizations and advocacy organizations toward – both governmental and corporate – institutions (Moscato 2016). *Social movement* could simply be understood as involving collective actions for a social cause. The notion of social movement has been rigorously debated over the years and it has been conceptualized in a variety of ways across different academic disciplines; social movements have been seen as certain groups and organizations, as shifts in meaning and ideologies within a society, and as a set of collective behaviours and actions, for instance (Atkinson 2017). In recent years, social movements have been examined as "networks of organizations through which activists meet, produce media, build meanings together and enact resistance" (Atkinson 2017, 12). What distinguishes social movement from other, more routine political actors, is the element of protest and the strategic use of novel and unconventional, even dramatic, forms of political expression when aiming to shape public opinion and putting pressure on authorities (Taylor & Van Dyke 2004).

When defined on a more general level, both advocacy and activism are forms of a political activity that entail specific means and tactics. Both deal with *conventional strategies*, such as voting, petitioning or raising awareness via campaigning, as well as *confrontational strategies*, such as public protesting or transgression against laws, that is, tactics that entail disruptive and strongly mobilizing action (Atkinson 2017; Taylor & Van Dyke 2004). Consequently, both activism and advocacy can be used to address social and political issues.

Corporate activism and *corporate advocacy* relate to a company's active involvement in public discussion and its contribution to advancing and solving socio-political issues (Bhagwat et al. 2020; Dodd & Supa 2015; Wettstein & Baur 2016). Socio-political issues are typically controversial, existing at the "intersections of time, politics, and culture" and thus yield polarized stakeholder responses (Bhagwat et al. 2020, 2). According to Bhagwat et al. (2020), the controversy surrounding the issues can change – either evolve or resolve – through time.

Through engaging in corporate activism, companies shows explicit and public support for certain individuals, groups or causes with the aim of effecting change and convincing and persuading others to follow (London 2010). Corporate activism can be either intentional, that is, a planned and proactive part of communication, or unintentional as, for example, in the case of a CEO or another company representative making a reactive and impromptu remark to media. Whether intentional or not, the public perception that tends to follow, is that the organization is linked with the issue. (Dodd & Supa 2014; Moscato 2016.)

As corporate activism still is a rather novel phenomenon that have been documented and analysed scarcely in the academic world, there is no long-standing, pronounced theoretical base nor consensus on how to define it. To further complicate matters, various names have been used for the more or less same phenomenon. Some scholars call the phenomenon of companies taking stance simply *corporate activism*, whereas some particularize it further and talk about *corporate socio-political activism*, *CEO activism*, or *brand (political) activism*.

As the names imply, those referring to CEO activism deem activism as an act primarily initiated and done by a chief executive officer (e.g. in Chatterji & Toffel 2019; Hambrick & Wovak 2019) and those referring to brand activism deem it as an act primarily initiated and done by a brand instead of a CEO or a whole company (e.g. Moorman 2020; Vredenburg et al. 2020). The terms are quite intertwined, however, as according to e.g. Dodd & Supa (2015) corporate activism occurs most often in the form of a CEO statements and, according to Moorman (2020, 388), brand activist efforts can be "made by or on behalf of a company using its corporate or individual brand". Moorman's (2020) definition is somewhat problematic as in the case of a company name being the same as the corporate brand, one cannot distinguish whether the activist is the brand or the company. The concept of CEO activism is beyond the scope of this study, but brand activism is kept close throughout the thesis.

Corporate advocacy is another common name for the same phenomenon. It is a hypernym which entails both the political and the social dimension but which can be broken down into hyponyms *corporate political advocacy* (e.g. in Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019; Wettstein & Baur 2016) and *corporate social advocacy* (e.g. in Austin, Gaither & Gaither 2019; Dodd & Supa 2014; Moscato 2016) that further particularize the term by incorporating the type of the addressed issue in it. Although the terms are various and the emphases vary, there are many similarities and touchpoints between all the aforementioned concepts. The different names and close-related terms are compared in TABLE 1.

TABLE 1. Comparison of the definitions of corporate activism.

Term	*Corporate Activism*	*Corporate Advocacy*	*Brand Activism*	*CEO Activism*
Definition	Company's proactive and visible support for or opposition to one side of a partisan socio-political issue to create change by influencing the attitudes and behaviours of institutional actors.	Company's public demonstration of support for certain socio-political issues that goes beyond its immediate economic interests.	Public statement or actions focused on a partisan socio-political issue made by or on behalf of a company using its corporate or individual brand.	Corporate leaders taking public stands on socio-political issues that are not directly related to their company's core business.
Also called as	Corporate Socio-political Activism, Corporate Political Activism	Corporate Political Advocacy, Corporate Social Advocacy	Brand Political Activism	CEO Socio-political Activism
Occurs through	Communication and/or concrete actions	Communication	Communication and/or concrete actions	Communication and/or concrete actions
For the benefit of	Stakeholders / society and/or the company	Stakeholders / society	Stakeholders / society and/or the company	Stakeholders / society and/or the company
Backfire effect / limits	Public criticism (e.g. on credibility and legitimacy), reputation and image, consumer backlash, decreased financial performance, legislative backlash, employee alienation and walk-out	Public criticism and opposition, simplification of a complex issue, trust, reputation, consumer backlash (e.g. boycott), lessened purchase intention	Decrease in brand equity, brand reputation risk (e.g. as a spillover), stakeholder alienation, consumer backlash, accusations of "woke washing" when inauthentic	Unintentional linkages with issues when impromptu, employee alienation and increase in turnover intentions, lessened purchase intention, image
Success evaluated through / measurement	Favourable progression in the issue (e.g. normalization, changes in laws or public policies), stakeholder perceptions, attitudes, engagement and purchase intention, financial performance	Favourable progression in the issue; stakeholder perceptions, attitudes, engagement and purchase intention; reputation and image; profitability and other financial incentives	Increase in brand equity and reputation; stakeholder perceptions, attitudes, engagement and purchase intention	Increased engagement and purchase intention, financial performance, reputation and image
Indicative literature	Aronczyk 2013; Atkinson 2017; Bhagwat et al. 2020; Corvellec & Stål 2019; Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020; Moscato 2016; Olkkonen & Jääskeläinen 2019; Smith & Korschun 2018	Austin, Gaither & Gaither 2019; Dodd 2018; Dodd & Supa 2014, 2015; Hoffmann et al. 2020; Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019; Wettstein & Baur 2016	Manfredi-Sánchez 2019; Moorman 2020; Shetty, Venkataramaiah & Anand 2019; Vredenburg et al. 2020	Brown, Manegold & Marquardt 2020; Chatterji & Toffel 2019

In this study, the term corporate activism is preferred over corporate advocacy as it could be seen as a slightly more encompassing term than the latter one; in corporate activism, the whole act of taking a stance is included – not only the expressive aspects. According to Olkkonen and Jääskeläinen (2019), who have also chosen activism over advocacy in their article, advocacy should actually be understood only as one form of activism. However, as in Olkkonen & Jääskeläinen (2019), also in this study the terms are occasionally used side by side, too, as according to London (2010), advocacy should also be understood comprehensively; it includes the intention to advocate, the actual act of advocating, as well as the impact of advocating. Virtually, corporate advocacy and corporate activism could be said to be the two sides of the same coin.

What is distinct for corporate activism is, firstly, that the matter a company has chosen to support, is supported for its own sake. In other words, corporate activism goes beyond company's self-interest and the engagement to an issue is more or less void of business considerations. (Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019; Wettstein & Baur 2016.) That being said, Wettstein and Baur (2016, 204) remark that, although corporate activism is principally and primarily based on what the company perceives as the public good and the beliefs and values it wishes to manifest and be associated with, some-level reputational – and financial – considerations can never be entirely excluded. In their article, Bhagwat et al. (2020) make an even bigger concession and argue that companies may be motivated to engage in corporate activism *either* by morality *or* economic self-interest, *or* a combination of these two.

Secondly, research (e.g. Dodd & Supa 2015; Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019; Moscato 2016; Wettstein & Baur 2016) has found that the issues companies are addressing when engaging in corporate activism differ from the issues that are of particular relevance to them. Also, those issues are partisan, i.e. very divisive in nature (Bhagwat et al. 2020). In fact, the social or political issues in which companies take stance, may sometimes be so controversial, polarizing or unusual that the engagement isolates their stakeholders and induces punishments from them. Simultaneously, it may attract novel stakeholder groups. (Dodd & Supa 2015; Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019.) Bhagwat et al. (2020) put clearly more emphasis on this second feature than on the first one as, even if a company would take stance to help meet business objectives, the authors would qualify it as corporate activism as long as the issue addressed is partisan and it may risk backlash from the company stakeholders.

The third and last feature constitutive for corporate activism is that it is overt and vocal. When engaging in activist effort, companies express their support and opinions visibly; they might share their perspective in public discussions or take tangible actions through marketing, public affairs, or through making changes to their policies, among others. (Wettstein & Baur 2016, 200.) Accordingly, corporate activism does not take place behind closed doors nor solely in formal political channels. The audience for corporate activism is also other groups – such as consumers, employees, and the public at large – than just regulators and politicians who are typically addressed in nonmarket strategy. In this manner, activism is aimed at communicating corporate values and purpose to important stakeholders, rather than trying to change a policy to directly impact the financials. (Chatterji & Toffel 2019; Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019.) See the three features of corporate activism on FIGURE 1.

Based on the three dimensions depicted in the previous paragraphs, corporate activism can be distinguished from other close-related, perhaps more established and familiar forms of corporate political involvement. The boundaries between the different forms are often ambiguous, however, and the distinction artificial. In practice, corporate activism can perhaps never be found in its purest form, but rather as a hybrid that borrows from different strategies of corporate political activity, corporate social responsibility, and strategic issues management. Defining the ideal type of corporate activism still makes sense because it provides the ground to identify specific conceptual challenges associated with it.

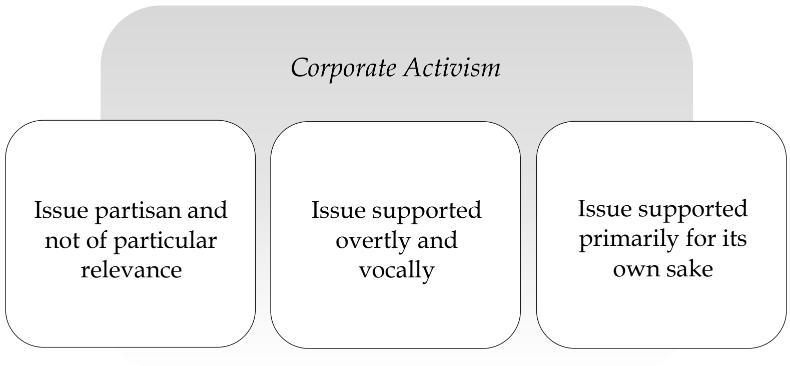

FIGURE 1. The three distinct features of corporate activism.

2.2 Embedding Corporate Activism Conceptually

In the following subchapters, corporate advocacy is reflected to a few closely related fields to make conceptual sense of the phenomenon and to better grasp its origins and trajectory. As stated earlier, corporate activism has so far been documented and analysed rather scarcely in the academic world, and there is no single existing theory or a research field that would be able to embed corporate activism completely. The fields that corporate advocacy could be regarded as the most closely related to and which are viewed in the following paragraphs are corporate political activity (CPA) and corporate social responsibility (CSR).

2.2.1 Situating Corporate Advocacy in CPA

Corporate political activity (CPA) can be broadly defined as corporate efforts to gain access to governmental decision-makers with the aim of shaping policies in ways favourable to the company and attaining business objectives (Hillman, Keim & Schuler 2004). The term of CPA has emerged in management research already in the 1980s (see e.g. Moran 1985; Waltzer 1988; Weidenbaum 1980), and it could be comprehended as the traditional way for companies to operate politically (den Hond et al. 2013). According to Lux, Crook & Woehr (2011), CPA has been steadily increasing e.g. in the United States although its impacts on company performance have been rather mixed, some studies showing positive impacts, some negative and some no impact at all (Hadani, Dahan & Doh 2015).

CPA encompasses several different types of activities that have been commonly employed by companies across countries; e.g. campaign contributions, advocacy advertising, lobbying, and operating a government relations office are all considered types of corporate political activities (Lux, Crook & Woehr 2011). Hillman, Keim & Schuler (2004, 844) have made a distinction between *proactive* and *reactive* type of activities; for example, campaign contributions, lobbying, and active attempts to reduce regulation of the company would fall into the former category, whereas tracking the development of a regulation, for instance, would fall into the latter one. The authors (Hillman, Keim & Schuler 2004) have also further elaborated the proactive type by distinguishing approach, participation, and strategy level considerations; when formulating CPA, one must decide between a relational (that is, long-term, or issue spanning) and transactional (that is, ad hoc, or issue specific) general approach, between individual and collective participation, as well as among three types of strategies: information, financial incentive, and constituency building.

What CPA and corporate activism have in common, is the pressure-based activity. The focus of CPA is, however, on corporate strategies that aim to shape and influence government policy in the hope of advancing companies' private interests – which clearly runs counter to how corporate activism is comprehended both commonly and in this study. Through advocacy advertising and lobbying, for instance, companies aim to shape government policy in ways that would primarily favour them, lead to financial pay-offs and serve their competitiveness (Hillman, Keim & Schuler 2004). Therefore, the ultimate reason for both the advocacy advertising and lobbying are different than that of corporate activism which usually strives to distance itself from the economic self-interest. In both of these aforementioned strategies, however, there are also hues that could be seen nearing corporate activism. Actually, all of these concepts – advocacy advertising, lobbying, and corporate activism – should perhaps be reviewed as parts of the same continuum, rather than reviewing them apart from each other, as separate concepts. (Hillman, Keim & Schuler 2004.)

Advocacy advertising is communication or advertising aiming at shaping public opinion on political, economic, or social issues (Lee, Haley & Yang 2019, 241). Advocacy advertising is more widespread in the non-profit world than in the corporate world and, in fact, most non-profit organizations engage in advocacy advertising to advance their agendas whereas businesses only occasionally employ it to advance or oppose legislation. (Lee, Haley and Yang 2019.) According to Lee, Haley and Yang (2019, 241), along with corporate identity and cause-related advertising, advocacy advertising is "one of several tools an organization may use to enhance various stakeholders' assessments of the organization". The reasons why companies engage in advocacy advertising are varied – companies may try to deflect criticism, promote policies, or build acceptance of a product or service, for instance (Lee, Haley & Yang 2019). If promotion of the greater good was the primary motive driving advocacy advertising – which, however, is rather seldom the case (see e.g. Hillman, Keim, & Schuler 2004; Wettstein & Baur 2016) – it would be well aligned with corporate activism.

Lobbying, then again, is an inherent part of political marketing and could be defined at its simplest as an activity by which a company aims to shape governmental policies and environment to support its economic success (Anderson, Martin & Lee 2018). There is a whole array of techniques through which companies can reach out to and inform policymakers about how they feel about issues and are affected by them from talking to legislators to cultivating public support for issues in grassroots lobbying (Alzola 2013). The subject matter of the *classical lobbying* is closely related to the company's core and usually pursued regardless of the public interest. Surely, the private strategies that companies employ in their endeavour to improve their competitive positions, may at its best coincide with the public interest making it a win-win situation but sometimes, at its worst, be counter to it. (Wettstein & Baur 2016.)

There is a rather widespread suspicion that, in many cases, lobbying represents an abuse of corporate power. However, there are alternative views, too, suggesting that lobbying is a fundamental part of the political process and "an act of counterbalance". (Anderson, Martin & Lee 2018, 511.) According to Alzola (2013), lobbying and other corporate political activities could be justified based on either the argument that corporations have a right to speech or that corporations are citizens and, as such, both permitted and required to be active participants in the political process. These two arguments could well be applied to corporate activism's permissibility, too.

Lobbying is not black and white – in fact, there are many hues in between. The form of lobbying that Wettstein and Baur (2016) deem falls closest to corporate activism is *lobbying for good*. This form of lobbying aims first and foremost at advancing the greater good but, while doing so, it still hopes to benefit from financial side-effects, too. The authors call lobbying for good as "precursor to" or as "weak form of" activism. (Wettstein & Baur 2016, 202.) Lobbying for good, as well as the other corporate political activities discussed in this chapter are juxtaposed with corporate advocacy in FIGURE 2.

Lastly, one feature more in which CPA and corporate activism differ is the publicity. While corporate activism is publicly promoted as making corporate values known, CPA is most often executed quietly, or behind closed doors (Lux, Crook & Woehr 2011). If CPA was made public, it would usually only be by accident or unintentionally (Bhagwat et al., 2020). See FIGURE 3 for comparison of the levels of publicity and partisanship in corporate activism, CPA and CSR.

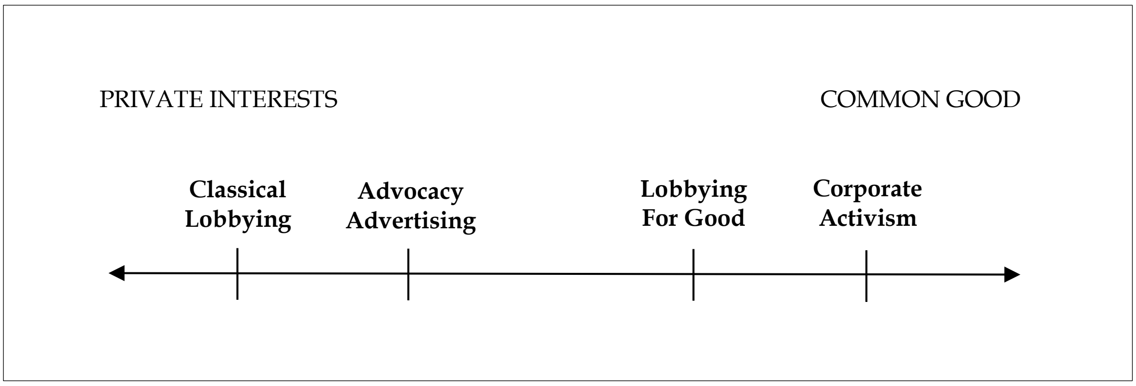

FIGURE 2. Continuum of corporate political activities and corporate activism based on the main motivator.

2.2.2 Situating Corporate Advocacy in CSR

Wherever the corporate world might turn these days, it is likely to face the notion of *corporate social responsibility* (CSR). However, although there is a vast, ever growing amount of research on CSR, and almost every modern organization is in one way or another involved in CSR activities, corporate social responsibility is by no means a univocal concept (Matten & Moon 2008). Firstly, the concept suffers from competing definitions in both professional and academic circles. Secondly, CSR could be seen as an umbrella term that overlaps with some conceptions of the business-society interface and is synonymous with others, and thirdly, there are rather open rules of CSR application. (Matten & Moon 2008.)

At the core of CSR is the idea that it reflects the social imperatives and the social consequences of business success (Matten & Moon 2008). What is often highlighted in CSR definitions, is the *triple-bottom line* which includes the societal, environmental and economic dimensions or, alternatively, the *triple P* for people, planet and profit. The idea behind both the triple-bottom line and triple P is that all three dimensions should be integrated in the business and that corporations should strive to fulfil not only their economic obligations but also obligations to their surroundings, stakeholders, and the society as a whole. (Dahlsrud 2008.) That being said, the precise manifestation of CSR and direction of the responsibility still lie at the discretion of the organization.

Two features that could be regarded as especially distinctive for CSR are, firstly, that CSR activities partly or entirely benefit society and/or general interests and, secondly, that they are not obligated by law (Jong & Meer 2017).

Against this background, CSR is differentiated from business fulfilment of core profit-making responsibility and from the social responsibilities of government – much like corporate activism.

Throughout its decades-long history, the meaning of CSR has been in a state of flux, and the sphere of it constantly expanding. Also, various complementary – and competing – frameworks and terms have emerged along the way, many of them clearly overlapping CSR in terms of their meanings and applications. (Carroll & Shabana 2010.) Some of them, such as corporate citizenship, have eventually become incorporated in CSR. The concept of *corporate citizenship* relates corporations to citizens – just like citizens, corporations have rights and obligations while acting in the society (Matten & Crane 2005).

Many researchers view both brand and corporate activism as something that originates from CSR (see e.g. Dodd & Supa 2015; Moscato 2016; Olkkonen & Jääskeläinen 2019). Olkkonen and Jääskeläinen (2019) refer to corporate activism as an interesting development of CSR and Moscato (2016, 105) describes the relationship between CSR and activism as "increasingly fluid". According to Dodd and Supa (2015), corporate activism is an outgrowth of CSR and *strategic issues management* (SIM). They (Dodd & Supa 2015) define SIM as a mixture of strategic business planning, issue monitoring, best-practice standards of corporate responsibility and dialogic communication ensuring legitimacy and a supportive climate between the company and its stakeholders. Regarding SIM as the springboard for corporate activism is not unproblematic as corporate activism is clearly more about dissensus and agonism than about rational consensus-driven approaches. In contrast to Dodd & Supa's (2015) view, Ciszek & Logan (2018) see corporate activism through a postmodernist lens that allows for polyphony and discord; they argue that conflict inherently belongs to communication and social change, and with that, to corporate activism.

Then again, Dodd and Supa (2015) understand CSR as voluntary actions that a company undertakes when trying to pursue its mission and to fulfil its obligations to its stakeholders and the society as a whole. What is different in activism, is that the issues corporations engage in are outside of the normal sphere of their CSR interests; for a textile company, for instance, CSR activity could be to promote a topic such as fairly grown cotton, whereas the advocacy or activism initiative might be to engage in gender pay gap (Dodd & Supa 2015). Furthermore, in traditional CSR, the issues are often widely favoured (e.g. education) rather than partisan (e.g. transgender rights). In other words, CSR involves high societal consensus and pursuit for legitimacy, whereas corporate activism tends to polarize. (Bhagwat et al. 2020.) See FIGURE 3 for comparison of the levels of publicity and partisanship in corporate activism, CPA and CSR. The model applied from Bhagwat et al. (2020) shows that when it comes to CSR, the partisanship is low and the publicity can be either low or high. Corporate activism and CPA, then again, are highly partisan but the latter is not to be made public, whereas the former is highly disclosed.

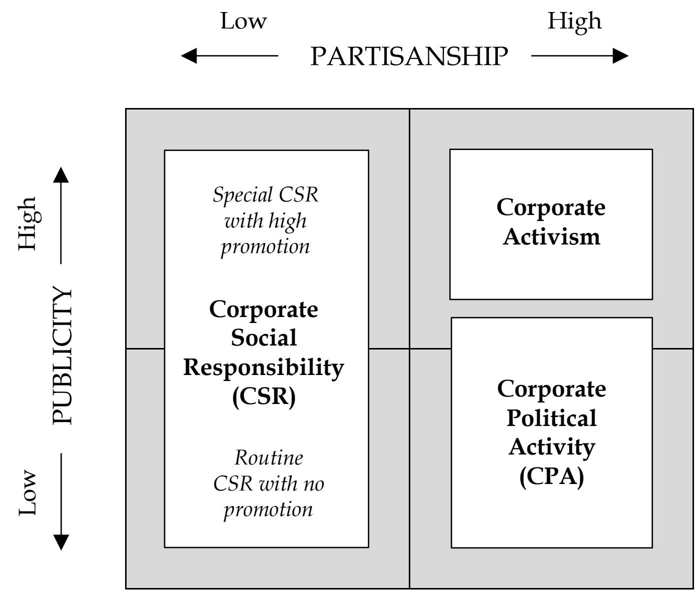

FIGURE 3. Comparison of the levels of partisanship and publicity in corporate activism, CPA and CSR as applied from Bhagwat et al. 2020.

Most recently, new flairs of politics and advocacy have emerged in CSR. A CSR perspective to which Olkkonen and Jääskeläinen (2019, 7) deem corporate activism is situated closest to, is *political CSR* (PCSR) which is a newer stream of research where corporate social responsibility is linked with political theory, and companies are viewed as political actors (Scherer et al. 2016). According to Scherer et al. (2016, 274), it developed as "a critical alternative to the purely instrumental view on CSR and CPA". PCSR focuses on the political role and responsibility of companies within the new and emerging forms of governance (e.g. public-policy networks or multi-stakeholder initiatives) where the notion of nation-state has been abandoned and the tasks between private and public actors are redistributed (Scherer et al. 2016).

Like corporate activism, also PCSR is concerned of other than narrow economic interests and, also, prefers open political engagement to a hidden one. Where PCSR clashes with corporate activism, is the pursuit of legitimacy; while PCSR negotiates and strives to balance stakeholder interests, corporate activism abandons the impartiality and may favour some stakeholders over others, potentially isolating some of the existing stakeholders and attracting new ones (Bhagwat et al. 2020; Dodd & Supa 2015). Olkkonen & Jääskeläinen (2019) further suggest that PCSR could perhaps be expanded to include confrontational political participation and then conceptualized as *activist CSR*.

According to Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020, 463), corporate activism addresses issues that "face barriers in their progress toward a solution". Therefore, this behaviour is more devoted to solving specific socio-political problems or "transforming the social order and status quo" than CSR (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020, 463). In brief, through CSR, companies can support whereas through corporate activism, companies can create change (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020).

Wettstein and Baur (2016) elaborate the link between CSR and corporate activism in their article, too, but unlike e.g. Dodd and Supa (2015) and Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020), they do not exactly view activism as something that would originate from nor be part of CSR. According to the authors (2016), the focus of CSR is heavily on the core business – that is, on minimizing the harm and negative impact that companies' operations have on people and planet – whereas corporate activism is, vice versa, characterised by the disconnection to core business.

Moreover, corporate activism addresses issues in a more proactive manner than CSR and strives to do more than just avoiding harm or sanctions for wrongdoings (Wettstein & Baur 2016). In a way, corporate activism can go further than CSR. For instance, when several Finnish brands decided to withdraw their products from Kärkkäinen department stores in 2015 after it had come out that the company has connections to a neo-Nazi association, based on Wettstein and Baur's view (2016), they did not engage in activism by doing so but merely refrained from contributing to the cause and avoided becoming involved in it. The prior research is not unanimous on this, however. In her article on brand activism, Moorman (2020, 389) sees e.g. business partner selection on the basis of political stance and "making changes to products and services in response to political issues" as occurrences of activism. Also, Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020) include usage and withholding tactics (e.g. providing or withholding resources) in corporate activism. If not understood belonging to CSR, these actions should perhaps be understood as *active* corporate activism rather than *proactive* and thus nearing CSR.

Against this background, corporate activism should not be confused with a merely philanthropic outlook on corporate responsibility either; activism and advocacy are more than volunteering or providing support for a cause through, for instance, voicing agreement or donating money (London 2010). Furthermore, although both activism and *philanthropy* represent the most voluntary dimension of responsibility, neither aims at financial gain, and both can also have political relevance, philanthropy often lacks the vocal and public promotion of values that activism and advocacy largely rest on (Wettstein & Baur 2016). *Sponsorship* – that is, connecting worthy causes explicitly to a name of a brand or organization in exchange for money (Jong & Meer 2017) – is yet another form of CSR to be kept separate from corporate activism and advocacy.

According to Wettstein and Baur (2016), for corporate activism to be regarded as a part of CSR, the dominant activity-based view of CSR should be replaced with a more holistic value-driven one which considers CSR as something that is rooted in the corporate character and culture, instead of something that only appears in the form of activities. Indeed, so far CSR research has mostly been minding different kind of activities along the value chain instead of the bigger picture. The more holistic outlook would perceive responsibility rather as "a governing ethos" of a company than as mere compliance approaches, or as a constraint for its operations (Wettstein & Baur 2016, 206). This view also relates to the notion of *corporate integrity*, the consistency between stated and lived values of a company (Brown 2006). Integrity denotes that the fundamental values of a company should match both with the communication of the values and the value-driven behaviour. Conversely, if those values that a company represent and wishes to protect are violated or threatened, it should not stay silent. (Wettstein & Baur 2016.)

CSR often is beneficial not only to the society or general interests, but also to the organization itself. Research has shown that engaging in CSR activities – including philanthropy and sponsoring – can lead to competitive advantages, such as more positive image or reputation, increased purchase intentions among consumers or consumer loyalty (Austin & Gaither 2016; Bhagwat et al. 2020; Carroll & Shabana 2010; Lux, Crook & Woehr 2011). Additionally, CSR may reduce risks, protect reputation in times of crises and contribute to free publicity and attractiveness as an employer, among others. (Jong & Meer 2017.) Certainly, the benefits for the organization depend on how, or how *well*, CSR is communicated (Arvidsson 2010). Same could be said to apply to corporate activism. See comparison between the main features of CSR and corporate activism in TABLE 2.

TABLE 2. Comparison of CSR and corporate activism.

	Voluntary	**Primarily benefitting the common good**	**May lead to competitive advantages**	**Open, vocal engagement**	**Connection to core business**	**Pursuit of legitimacy**
CSR	×	×	×	(×)	×	×
Corporate Activism	×	×	×	×		

2.3 Corporate Activism in Practice

This subchapter discusses how corporate activism translates into practice. Some definitions and practices are again borrowed – mostly from research on social movements and CSR. The first subchapter discusses companies' propensity to become activists, and the second and third subchapters the execution of corporate activism. The fourth subchapter deepens into communication of corporate activism and also touches on the notion of dialogue in the context of the phenomenon. The fifth and last subchapter discusses public response to corporate activism.

2.3.1 Probability to Engage in Corporate Activism

Many companies are wary of corporate activism, and rightly so. As Weinzimmer and Esken (2016, 331) have put it, taking stance is "risky business"; it jeopardizes the support of those stakeholders who disagree, induces punitive actions, and have an enduring financial and reputational impact, among other things (Bhagwat et al. 2020). Corporate activism makes company's position exceptionally clear, thus, telling a lot about a company, its priorities, and values to its stakeholders; to the investors, for instance, it might tell that the company is "willing to engage in a risky firm activity and divert resources from profit-generating activities" (Bhagwat et al. 2020, 17). Thus, the decision on whether to take stance or not should not be made on flimsy circumstantial grounds.

On the other hand, engaging in corporate activism may be tempting as it is an efficient way to articulate corporate values and demonstrate responsibility, may boost public acceptance, strengthen relationships with those who think alike, and lead to competitive advantages. Corporate activism can also make meaningful progress in socio-political issues (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020), while still involving a lower level of initial monetary investment compared to CSR (Bhagwat et al. 2020). Besides, Stanley (2020, 394) deems that doing *good* does not need to compromise doing *well* and remarks that "alignment of values and business purpose benefits all stakeholders", shareholders included.

To begin with corporate activism, there must be a social need of some kind (London 2010) (see FIGURE 4). Drawing on London's (2010) study on social advocacy – which focuses on individuals as advocates rather than groups or organizations, but which could certainly partly be applied to those, too – this need can be characterised by various factors determining its complexity and specificity. Examples of the factors include the number of people affected and the financial and human costs and gains, for instance (London 2010). In his article, London (2010, 228) refers to Grant (2007) who has identified four dimensions of a social need's potential impact that affect advocacy involvement: magnitude, scope, frequency and focus. *Magnitude* refers to the degree and duration of the potential effects, whereas *scope* refers to number and breadth of people potentially affected, the resources at stake or required, and the effect of inaction. *Frequency* has to do with how often a positive impact can be achieved, and *focus* then again with chances to prevent harm or promote gains to others. (London 2010.)

According to London (2010), becoming a *self-appointed advocate* is more likely if one is personally affected by the need, while *would-be advocates* weigh the features, such as the probability of different outcomes, carefully. Certainly, different causes vary in the input and commitment required, the clarity of the need, and the anticipated immediacy of impact and needed action (London 2010).

Some companies are also more prone to taking stance, or more politically active, than others. This has to do with the value system they are built on and the *corporate identity orientation* they have, i.e. what a company thinks about itself and how it perceives itself in relation to others (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020).

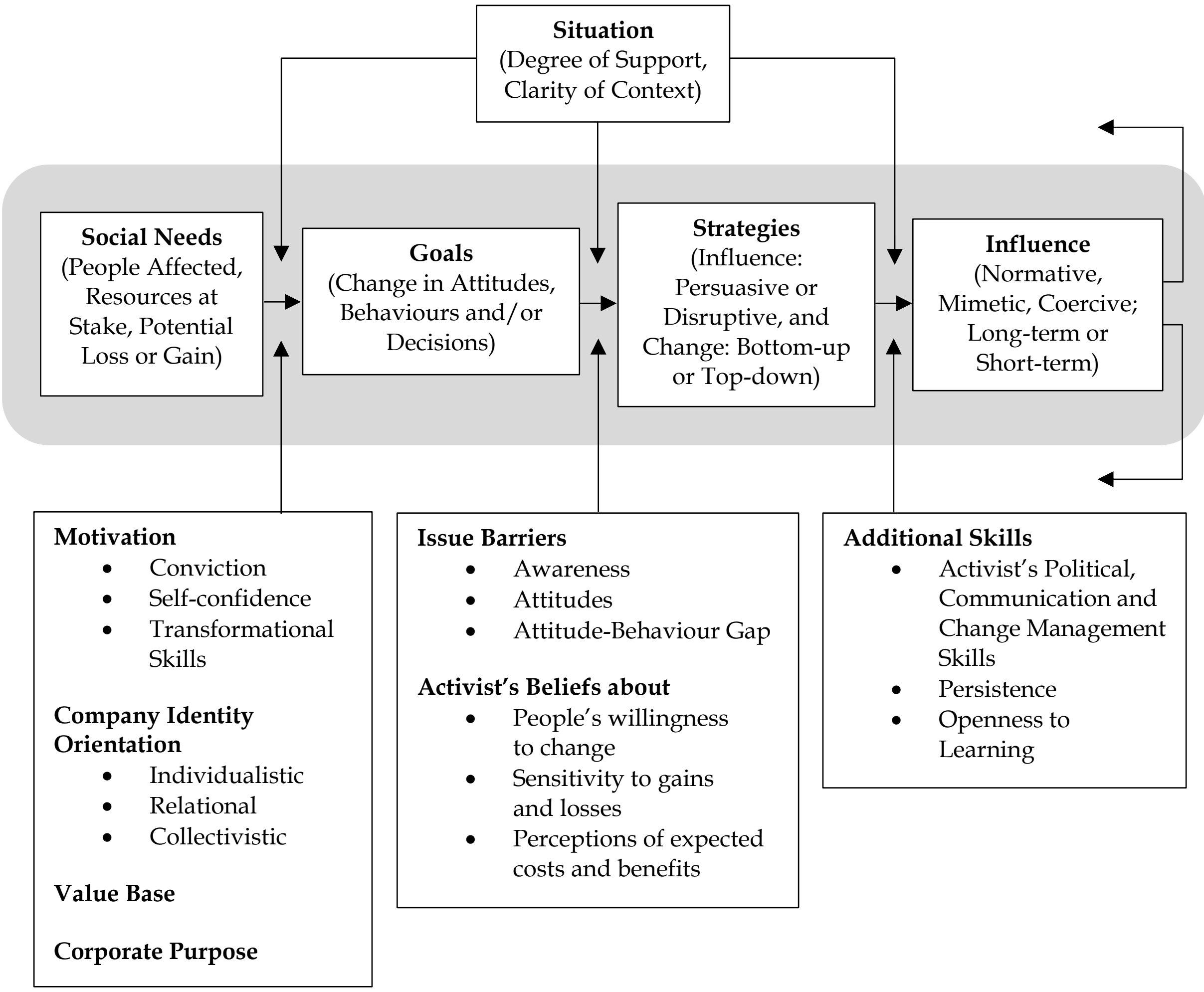

FIGURE 4. Activist characteristics and processes as applied from Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020) and London (2010).

Research has shown that companies with an *individualistic orientation* – or companies seeing themselves as stand-alone units – are not so likely to address social issues unless the benefits clearly outweigh the risks. On the contrary, companies with *relational orientation*, i.e. companies perceiving themselves as relationship partners and hoping to benefit others, or *collectivistic orientation*, i.e. companies perceiving themselves as members of larger groups and hoping for collective welfare, are motivated, able, and more likely to engage in successful corporate activism. (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020.) The last-mentioned identity orientation is also associated with riskier corporate activism practices than the two others (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020).

Eilert and Nappier Cherup's (2020) orientations are congruent with individual characteristics that London (2010) deems are likely to influence an actor's motivation to engage in advocacy behaviour. London (2010, 231) has distinguished three general categories: strength of conviction, self-confidence as well as transformational characteristics and skills. *Conviction* is the motivational spark and sensitivity to the need; characteristics associated with it are e.g. empathy, pro-social behaviour, social exchange, and perceptions of social injustice. *Self-confidence* is about feeling capable of taking action and bringing about change, and *transformational characteristics and skills* include extroversion, the ability to convey a compelling vision, carry out required actions, and inspire others through their values. (London 2010.) In other words, those who are high in conviction, self-confidence and transformation characteristics are likely to show empathy and sensitivity to others' problems, have a concern for fairness and social justice, and want to help others without personal benefit – much like those with relational or collectivistic identity orientation – are likely to engage in activism.

To further elaborate on companies' likelihood to address socio-political issues, the values of the top management may influence the propensity of the company to take risks and, with that, to engage in corporate activism. For instance, if the top management is politically liberal, the company is more likely to engage in activism in spite of possible negative consequences. (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020.) This has been seen e.g. with Apple CEO Tim Cook or Finlayson CEO Jukka Kurttila. What is important to note, however, is that if the activist effort comes across as only orchestrated by the CEO or the top management and forces the engagement of employees, it may yield negative feedback such as accusations of inauthenticity and exploitation (Bhagwat et al. 2020; Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020).

Situational conditions, such as prevalence or scarcity of resources, degree of support or antagonism and opportunities for voice, undoubtedly have an impact on advocacy, too (London 2010). This is something that Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020) take clearly less into consideration when compared to London (2010), yet, situational considerations undoubtedly affect companies' activist efforts, too, and not just individuals' activist efforts.

According to London (2010), when there are sufficient resources available and strong support from others, a climate is created that nurtures the emergence and development of an advocacy effort. This kind of situation could be called as supportive and munificent, in comparison to adversarial and constraining situation that discourages advocacy. Situational conditions, such as social pressure (e.g. getting involved in causes that are popular), knowing others who support the same cause, and potential for extrinsic and intrinsic reinforcements, may encourage to become an advocate. (London 2010.) London (2010) notes that situation also directs the nature of advocacy, providing the need and goals, the choice of strategy and the need for persistence.

In her article on brand activism, Moorman (2020, 389) joins the discussion of propensity to take stances by introducing seven lenses, or perspectives, that guide companies' decisions about "whether and to what extent to engage in activism". Each perspective reflects a set of assumptions and beliefs that company members may have about a brand, its role, risks, and company's culture and responsibilities (Moorman 2020).

The first one of Moorman's (2020) lenses, *brand authenticity* perspective (1) requires companies to act in an authentic, brand-consistent manner and not engage in activism if it cannot be done in a brand-consistent way. This may, in fact, reduce activism due to fear of risks to the brand. The *corporate citizen* perspective (2), then again, motivates a company to engage in activism as it fulfils corporate responsibility, yet, a company may lack operational guidelines to actually drive activism. (Moorman 2020.) According to the *cultural authority* perspective (3), brands are powerful social and cultural actors and, as such, entitled and even expected to engage in activism. Having this perspective may increase activism. (Moorman, 2020.) Quite on the contrary to the previous view, the *calculative* perspective (4) suggests that companies should only engage in activism when it helps a company to "win", or gain at the expense of competitors, which tends to lead to infrequent activism and could, for example, make a company take stance on an issue because other companies are addressing it. As the name implies, *brands as educators* perspective (5) fathoms activism as education of consumers on new ideas and desired behaviours, and places the company in leadership position, quite like in the cultural authority view. (Moorman 2020.) Finally, according to Moorman (2020), when a company perceives itself through the *political mission* lens (6), social change is its reason for being and activism in the core of its business strategies, and when a company perceives itself through the *employee engagement* lens (7), activism is primarily seen as a tool to attract and retain employees as well as to increase their productivity.

2.3.2 Choosing an Issue

According to Wettstein and Baur (2016), for corporate advocacy to not redound upon themselves, companies must carefully deliberate which values, ideals, and causes are appropriate and worthwhile to be promoted. Drawing from Wettstein and Baur (2016), there are three basic conditions that must be met in order for activism to be legitimate. The conditions are consistency, plausibility, and authenticity, in which *consistency* (1) denotes that the activist effort must be aligned with the corporate or brand values. Advocating on causes that are not closely aligned with company's core business, may not be as effective as advocating for causes that stem from company's core. (Wettstein & Baur 2016.)

In their article, Weinzimmer and Esken (2016) have also identified business linkage as one of their three key concepts to contemplate when planning for corporate activism. According to the authors (2016), activist company must balance its fiduciary responsibility with doing the right thing by framing the issue in a business-specific context; in other words, the issue must be purposefully connected to the success of the company (Weinzimmer & Esken 2016). The authors (Weinzimmer & Esken 2016) remark that although consumers are supportive of companies taking stances, there are also consumers who believe it is inappropriate and, quite literally, "none of their business" to take stance. However, as long as a connection to a relevant business corner is made, consumers are more supportive than they would be without one (Weinzimmer & Esken 2016).

Even Chatterji and Toffel (2019) and Bhagwat et al. (2020) have similar thoughts on the consistency and business linkage. According to Chatterji and Toffel (2019), those activist efforts that are not properly aligned may only have a limited social impact and, besides, they may be questioned for their motives. For their part, Bhagwat et al. (2020, 17) state that those companies that are truly dedicated to activism and have it in line with their strategic objectives, the possible benefits "may be worth an intensified negative response". If and when a company decides to take a stance, it should also be confident in its stance and with the decision to make it public. Then again, if the role of activism is uncertain in the strategic priorities of a company, or the company is sensitive to negative responses e.g. from investors, a more moderate approach to engaging in corporate activism should be chosen. (Bhagwat et al. 2020.)

Smith and Korschun (2018, 88) also call for more "nuanced set of alternatives" for taking stance. According to the authors (2018), companies have different motivations for becoming politically active and seldom seek the most extreme options, which is why corporate activism should not be an either-or question. Smith and Korschun (2018) posit that before throwing the full weight of a company behind an issue, its importance to the company's financial performance and relevance to the stated values should be assessed. The authors (2018) have identified four strategies, or degrees of support, between which a company can choose; the strategies are forceful, tempered, pragmatic and neutral. Proactive, *forceful* positions should be taken when an issue speaks directly to the stated values of a company and is material to its success, whereas a *tempered* position with a broader framing should be taken when an issue relates to a core value but its materiality to performance is low. Then again, *pragmatic* stand highlighting practical rather than moral reasons should be taken when an issue does not relate to the company's core values but is of material importance to performance, and *neutral* non-political stand when an issue is important neither for performance nor the corporate values. (Smith & Korschun 2018.) See the framework applied from Smith and Korschun (2018) on FIGURE 5.

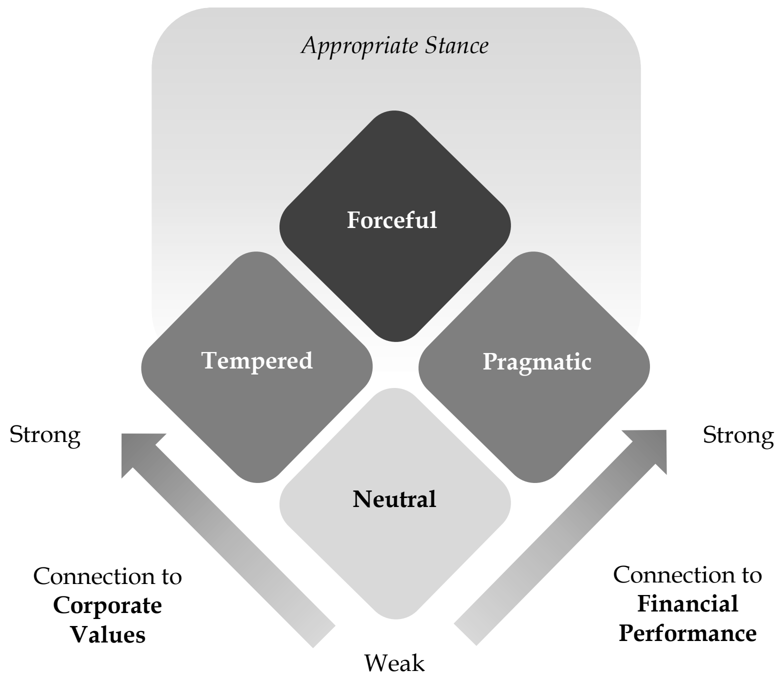

FIGURE 5. Framework of different nuances of corporate activism as applied from Smith and Korschun (2018).

Wettstein and Baur's (2016) second condition (2), that of *plausibility*, necessitates that the activist effort is part of company's long-term strategy, and not an add-on. In a similar manner, Weinzimmer and Esken's (2016) second key concept posits that the activist company should consider taking a stance on a social issue as a strategic issue, meaning that market and firm competencies should be first assessed and understood – just like in any other strategic initiative. The authors (Weinzimmer & Esken 2016) suggest that finding out the consumers' perceptions of and preferences regarding the socio-political issue that the company is planning to advocate for, might prevent from detrimental repercussions. Also, current trends and the demographics of a target market should be taken into consideration to understand how they may influence consumer reactions (Abitbol and Sternadori 2019; Weinzimmer & Esken 2016).

Wettstein and Baur's (2016) third and last condition (3) is *authenticity*, or integrity, which denotes that companies must be genuine in their motives, consistent in their sayings and doings, and engage in the same change internally as they are seeking externally. Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020) discuss the same concept but call it *moral authority* and argue that if the institutional environment is doubtful about a company's motives and skills, they may well react negatively to its activist efforts. Similarly, Stanley (2020) argue that activism that is consistent builds trust and credibility over time, and London (2010) argues that advocacy is likely to be perceived positively when the advocate is trusted, ethical and fair.

Stanley (2020) further discusses *corporate purpose*, i.e. the reason for being, in the context of corporate activism. Before undertaking corporate stances as marketing campaigns or leaping onto joint efforts and mutual pleas, he (2020) suggests that a company should work on its purpose. Taking a stance just for the sake of taking a stance might be effective for a short while but counterproductive in the long run, whereas corporate activism that is "grounded in a company's core purpose can be built on for decades and adapted to the changing moment without loss of meaning" (Stanley 2020, 394).

Weinzimmer and Esken's (2016) third and last key concept relates to compliance. According to the authors (2016), when taking a stance, the activist company must perform due diligence, i.e. make sure the engagement does not contradict the law. If a company takes stance on a socio-political issue that does contradict the law, the position needs to be framed in a business-specific context – in line with the first key concept – rather than merely opposing the law (Weinzimmer & Esken 2016).

A notion that deserves to be discussed in connection with Wettstein and Baur's (2016) conditions and Weinzimmer and Esken's (2016) key concepts – and the business linkage debate in particular – is the *company-cause fit*. Abitbol and Sternadori (2019, 22) base their conceptualization of company-cause fit on the definition made by Varadarajan and Menon (1988) who have defined it as "a link between a company's product line or brand and a cause it supports". Traditionally, the fit of an issue has been discussed in the context of CSR and marketing; prior marketing literature, for instance, suggests that the company-cause fit is of key importance in developing successful socially responsible initiatives (Zasuwa 2017). The basic idea of the company-cause fit is that high-fit efforts can enhance consumers' attitude toward a company for they see its actions as appropriate, eventually, leading to positive perceptions of corporate reputation, while low-fit efforts may contradict with the prior expectations, leading to negative attitudes toward a company (Abitbol & Sternadori 2019).

Discussing the fit of an issue in the context of corporate activism, however, is not unproblematic, as corporate activism is largely about addressing issues outside of the core business – that is, issues that essentially do *not* fit. In fact, from the perspective of company-cause fit, corporate activism is very high-risk; If stakeholders and other institutional actors deem that taking a public stand on a certain issue is out of line for the company, its reputation and bottom line may be at risk (Bhagwat et al. 2020). Furthermore, when the issue itself is very controversial – as it typically is in corporate activism – the risk is enhanced (Zasuwa 2017).

Discussing the fit still makes sense as, after all, it is often in the core of corporate activism related debate. Abitbol and Sternadori (2019, 22) posit that the company-cause fit can take many forms, including congruency between stakeholder beliefs and the advocated issue, regardless of whether a "natural", or obvious, fit between the company and the issue exists. Against this background, and without forsaking the characteristic features of corporate activism, company-cause fit could perhaps be seen as congruency between the issue and the values or goals of the targets. To have a high fit, the engagement in the issue should be meaningful to the targets. If the relevance is low, also the persuasiveness of the activist effort may diminish (Parcha & Kingsley Westerman 2020).

In a similar manner, Stanley (2020) posits that it might be beneficial to stick with issues that the company has – if not expertise on – at least solid experience of. Moreover, research has shown that an established and well-known company often has less leeway when it comes to addressing issues than a less-known company as people evaluate its credibility by contrasting the advocacy efforts to the company's image (Olkkonen 2017). In view of Korschun and Smith's (2018) framework (FIGURE 5), companies could possibly take more moderate stances on issues that are low-fit and the company only has opinions about but not experience of.

That being said, just like having a multitude of brands gives access to a broader range of potential customers, new niches and arenas, it can also widen company's opportunities to take stance. Especially in the case of *endorsed branding* – where the corporate brand is only in the background, authenticating the linked second brand – every linked brand has its own identity which allows for different views, opinions, and statements. (Hsu, Fournier & Srinivasan 2016.)

Having a *house-of-brands*, that is, a portfolio of multiple distinct brands, instead of a *branded house* with a unifying corporate brand extending across all "brand entities", also distributes the risk more evenly, over more brands (Hsu, Fournier & Srinivasan 2016); consistent with this logic, opting for brand activism instead of corporate activism might be wise, as if the brand activism backlashed, the harm would primarily be on the brand and not necessarily directly on the whole company's reputation. Certainly, if the product brand is explicitly connected to the corporate brand with shared attribute or benefit associations or with the use of shared design, for instance, the possible harm may be on both the product and corporate brand. This type of unintended contamination from related brands is called a *spillover risk*. (Hsu, Fournier & Srinivasan 2016.)

Lastly, in opposition to the traditional vie of company-cause fit, Vredenburg et al. (2020) argue that having a moderate mismatch between company and the cause, or *optimal incongruence*, may in fact be beneficial for activist companies and brands. According to Vredenburg et al (2020, 452), slight incongruence is regarded as more interesting, which may encourage consumers to elaborate more and "actively evolve their understanding and expectations for a brand" and, ultimately, lead to more intense, memorable reactions.

2.3.3 Addressing the Issue

As an increasing number of companies have gotten interested in corporate activism, the should-questions have slowly been transforming into how-questions. The question of how is important as, in fact, succeeding in corporate activism has a lot to do with how the stand is taken – even more than with what the stance is (Weinzimmer & Esken 2016) and whether corporate activism is "an appropriate corporate activity in general" (Wettstein & Baur 2016, 211). The following paragraphs discuss the how of corporate activism. See FIGURE 4 that, in addition to activist characteristics, depicts activist processes discussed in this subchapter.

In their research, Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020) conceptualize corporate activism as "a response to barriers that hinder the solution of an issue". Based on this conceptualization, issues can face different kind of barriers stemming from institutional actors' (e.g. employees, suppliers, consumers, competitors, other businesses, and governmental institutions) attitudes and behaviour in consequence of their lack of awareness (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020, 461). If the issue is highly partisan, the presence of competing viewpoints and dissensus may create yet another type of barrier. In their research, the authors (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020) have examined different types of *influence* and *change strategies* that companies can use to address these barriers, contribute to the advancement of an issue and, ultimately, create change.

Before deepening into the strategies, a quick look into the influences, or pressures, that the strategies can result in is in place. The change and influence strategies can have three different types of influences on the targets: normative, mimetic and coercive. The *normative* influences reflect what kind of behaviour is acceptable; to create such a pressure, companies could institutionalize the issue within their own organization (e.g. policies promoting diversity) or try to include the issue in their marketing, for instance. *Mimetic* influences, then again, denote feeling pressured to adopt a certain behaviour to stay competitive (e.g. staying closed on Black Friday to promote anticonsumption). (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020.) Finally, *coercive* influences can be created by facilitating attitudes and behaviour change in the institutional actors. This type of pressure often exists in the form of protests and boycotts. (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020.)

London (2010) discusses *outcomes* rather than influences but the types are, to a large extent, the same. According to the author (2010, 229), reactions to advocacy may be "pressure for change, feelings of sympathy or empathy for others, and/or concern for future consequences". London employs temporal categorization by categorizing the outcomes further into early and later outcomes as well as long-term effects. (London 2010.) *Early outcomes* might be informing, building awareness, or eliciting verbal expressions of support, whereas *later outcomes* may be more concrete changes. *Long-term effects* mean accomplishing the goals set, e.g. learning above and beyond adaptation, or respect and recognition for the advocate, among others. (London 2010.)

According to Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020), who draw from prior research on social activism, there are two different types of influence strategies – persuasive and disruptive – that companies can use on institutional actors. With *persuasive* strategies, companies can try to convince the targets about the merits of their claims. Specific tactics with which the activist can try to change attitudes in favour of the issue consist of rationality, recommendations, and information exchange. (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020.) London (2010) specifies a strategy that focuses on information and rationality as a *cognitive strategy*, and a strategy that draws on emotions – e.g. with such tactics as warnings or playing with guilt or sympathy – as an *emotional strategy*.

Disruptive, or protest, strategies then again aim for material or reputational damage and may include threats. London (2010) calls such strategies *behavioural strategies*. Protests and boycotts – typical tactics of both disruptive and behavioural strategies – easily draw attention to both the company and the advocated issue, yet, they are also high-risk. (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020.) As the driving force of a protest or boycott, the activist company could use either the "logic of material damage" or the "logic of numbers", as Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020, 465) call them. As the names imply, the former aims at harming the target materially, and the latter calls for participation of others in the activist effort. According to Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020), the support of other companies can help demonstrate the salience of the issue and set expectations that can then result in normative and mimetic pressures, possibly making more companies follow with their support. Furthermore, London (2010) deems that advocacy efforts supported by other influential or respected actors, are more likely to lead to the wished outcomes, and Bhagwat et al. (2020) argue that a stance announced in a coalition with other companies rather than alone is less likely to result in negative evaluations.

However, controversy exists regarding the support of other companies. Based on the findings of Parcha and Kingsley Westerman's (2020) study, having too many companies in support of a stance might be detrimental for persuasion. This is because institutional actors may interpret it negatively if a company seems to be merely "on the bandwagon", i.e. engaging in an issue because other corporations have already done so. Besides, if a company can be the first or one of only a few taking a stance on a divisive issue, this could lead to the targets finding the stance more meaningful and the company more sincere in its concern for the issue (also known as *first-mover advantages*). (Parcha and Kingsley Westerman 2020.)

When it comes to the change strategies, Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020) have made a distinction between bottom-up and top-down change. With these strategies, companies can target institutional actors on different levels to create change top-down or bottom-up (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020). When a *top-down* change strategy is employed, the activist company targets institutions that "influence the legitimacy of an issue directly" (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020, 466). Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020) however remark that having an actual effect on social institutions and legal environment may be costly and time-consuming; if quicker changes are desired, companies should settle upon disruptive tactics resulting in coercive influences and earlier outcomes.

When a *bottom-up* change strategy is employed, the activist company strives for change by influencing individual actors, or its primary stakeholders, such as employees and the marketplace (e.g. consumers, suppliers, and other businesses). This strategy works primarily through normalizing an issue; when the company manages to make the grassroots actors adopt the advocated issue, the government may feel pressured to respond to these changes, too. (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020.) In London's (2010) categorization, the grassroots actors adopting an issue would be an early outcome and the government responding to the changes a later outcome.

According to Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020), strategies are chosen on the grounds of the issue barrier. London (2010) then again believes that different strategies are employed depending on advocate's *beliefs* about what motivates people to respond and change and how sensitive they are to gains and losses – e.g. can they be coached and convinced to change and how risk averse they are. Especially stakeholders' motivation to respond and willingness to change are key. For instance, advocates who believe that relevant stakeholders change their attitudes and respond to cognitive cues, provide them with information, appeal to reason, and strive to alter their views. (London 2010.) Then again advocates who believe that relevant stakeholders respond primarily to emotional cues and that behaviours will follow attitudes, focus on packing on emotions and feelings, and advocates who believe that attitudes follow behaviours, try to get relevant stakeholders to act, hoping that attitudes will follow. Furthermore, if stakeholders are thought to act for self-gain, advocates can try to focus on potential gains, if altruistic, advocates can try to focus on ways to help others, and if risk averse, advocates can focus on e.g. warnings on possible losses. (London 2010.)

What can also affect the choice of strategy, according to London (2010), is advocates own beliefs about the costs and benefits of action and outcomes. According to London (2010), advocates tend to be sensitive to gains and losses and thus carefully consider e.g. the probability of success and the immediacy of the outcomes. This would apply especially to those companies with individualistic identity orientation (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020).

The identity orientation of a company (individualistic, relational, and collectivistic) and the individual characteristics influencing motivation (conviction, self-confidence, and transformational abilities) discussed in the beginning of this chapter not only influence the propensity to engage in corporate activism but also the success of the effort. In other words, they influence the extent to which the activist company is able to turn chosen strategies into reality. (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020; London 2010.)

Drawing from London (2010), what may also help reach wished outcomes, is advocates' political and change management skills, persistence characteristics, as well as their own openness to learning. Certainly, communication skills are of great importance, too (London 2010). Firstly, to influence others' attitudes, *political skills* and impression management are required. *Impression management strategies* include e.g. intimidation, exemplification, and self-promotion – advocacy could be amplified e.g. through social pressure, demonstrating personal involvement and commitment or ethics and trust, and engaging in open and honest communication. (London 2010.) When the impression management strategies are used and the advocate is additionally politically skilled – that is, socially perceptive and *resilient*, i.e. able to adjust to changing situational needs –

advocacy is more likely to succeed. On the other hand, if the advocacy efforts do not resonate with the relevant stakeholders and they are ill-timed, advocacy may be perceived self-serving. (London 2010.) According to London (2010), political skills and sources of power such as charisma, expertise, and contacts may also come in handy when building networks, garnering attention, and generating empathy for a cause.

Secondly, when applying *change management skills*, the activist company might emphasize interdependencies between all parties involved in the effort by e.g. demonstrating mutual gain and shared goals, or offer opportunities for stakeholders to get involved in the process, giving them voice and control, thus, generating a sense of belonging and enhancing their commitment. Another way to increase commitment of the stakeholders would be to monitor and report the levels of support and compliance with commitments so that the achievements are more observable. (London 2010.) Also, perhaps slightly controversially, advocates could create negative impressions of those not supporting them or provoke losses for noncompliance. If advocates believe that attitudes are to follow behaviours, they should stimulate action; they could, for instance, engage stakeholders in a demonstration or invite them to make a small contribution of some sort. (London 2010)

Yet another change management method would be to personalize the beneficiaries of the advocacy; in other words, putting a human face on the cause by presenting those who have suffered from a certain injustice or could benefit from the initiative might increase stakeholders' commitment and make them realize what kind of an impact they could have, unfreeze previously fixed ideas and stimulate their learning. (London 2010.) Likewise, Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020) posit that a spokesperson or other figure (e.g. a well-known CEO, influencer, or celebrity) might lend legitimacy, especially if the person has a personal connection to the issue.

Thirdly, according to London (2010) and backed by Stanley (2020), in order to make the strategies yield fruitful outcomes, advocates need to be *persistent*. Resilience and self-confidence are called for to endure and overcome hardships, and maintain the enthusiasm and energy. Certainly, also creativity, originality, and professionalism are useful in creating compelling, relatable and emotional connections. (London 2010.)

Fourthly and lastly, advocates' own *learning* is a key to sustainable advocacy. Advocacy is about committing to a point of view, however, too much of defensiveness is detrimental, too. (London 2010.) In fact, according to London (2010), advocacy should be viewed as an ever-evolving negotiation process where one promotes a viewpoint, yet, is simultaneously willing to listen and engage in real dialogues, actively question, and integrate new ideas in line with changing conditions and accumulated knowledge. The notion of dialogue in the context of corporate activism is elaborated in the following subchapter (2.3.4) as the connections between dialogue and activism are somewhat ambiguous. Also, communication skills and strategies are discussed more in detail in the same subchapter.

2.3.4 Communicating Corporate Activism

Many of the virtues of corporate activism presented in the foregoing subchapters e.g. persistency, authenticity, and consistency, also extend to communication of corporate activism. The danger in advocacy and activist communication is that, instead of being able to convey these virtues, communication dwarfs into mere sound-bites. When trying to have an impact, messages tend to be simplified, exaggerated, and continuously repeated, which might make stakeholders waver – they might think that support must be all-or-nothing and one belongs to either "us" or "them". Then again, if messages do not stand out, advocacy messages may be easy to ignore and forget, especially if there is no personal stake in the issue. (London 2010.)

Drawing from CSR research, organizations can choose different strategies to communicate their responsibility and advocacy efforts. Morsing and Schultz (2006, 325) have built on Grunig and Hunt's (1984) public relations theory and recognized three CSR communication strategies: informing, responding and involving. In the *information strategy*, communication is one-way from the organization to its stakeholders; in other words, companies are mainly disseminating the information they choose to disclose. They are not engaging with their stakeholders, as in the *respond strategy* that relies on two-way asymmetric communication, nor seeking dialogue with their stakeholders as in the *involvement strategy* that relies on two-way symmetric communication. (Morsing & Schultz 2006, 326.) Keeping the asymmetrical attributes of corporate activism in mind, corporate activism would mainly employ the two first strategies. However, the learning dimension that successful advocacy necessitates – and that was discussed earlier in this chapter (subchapter 2.3.1) – would only take place in the last mentioned, most participatory strategy.

After Gómez (2018), informativity refers to transparent communication that encloses honesty, open reporting and providing timely and useful information that helps stakeholders in decision-making and problem-solving. Informativity and *transparency* also relate to the concept of authenticity, which was noted as one condition for corporate activism earlier in this chapter. Drawing from that condition, communication should match the actions of a company as, if a company decouples its actions from its statements or public commitments, symbolic rather than substantive action tends to occur (Eilert and Nappier Cherup 2020). According to Gómez (2018), in social media, authenticity could simply equate to sincere voice in contrast to a remote, institutional voice. Informative messages also often contain signs of *third-party verification*, that is, external assurance aiming at increased credibility. On one hand, e.g. hyperlinks to more information may be useful for the stakeholders but on the other hand – and on a more negative note – they can also act as a tool for woke washing (Gómez 2018.)

Like London (2010), Gómez (2018) has also elaborated mobilization, but in the context of CSR communication. According to her (2018), by encouraging users to do something, companies can *mobilize* stakeholders, which increases participation and invites to act in favor of something or someone. Companies aiming to mobilize can create messages that either include information of a certain issue or a cause, or are encouraging in nature. Encouraging can be realized e.g. through calls-to-action – asking people to "share", "like", "attend", "buy" or "donate", among others. (Olkkonen & Jääskeläinen 2019, 14.)

After Gómez (2018), what can – and should – be applied to online CSR messages to make them more effective and promote engagement and message resonance with audiences, is *informative influence methods*; liking, sharing, re-tweeting, using hashtags, replying to messages and mentioning other users are all indicators of effectiveness. The author (2018) also remarks that influencers that share the content should not be overlooked as they can help spread the CSR messages and mobilize stakeholders both in good and bad. Another element to be applied to both CSR and advocacy messages to ensure the effectiveness, is *supportive features*. With e.g. photos, videos and hyperlinks advocates can promote visibility of their messages. (Gómez 2018.)

Tone of the messages can be differentiated as well. Positive content has an optimistic or hopeful tone and the used words exude positivism, often telling about achievements and acknowledgements or relevant projects and initiatives. (Gómez 2018.) Negative content then again includes messages that have a pessimistic tone and the words exude negativism. Neutral content includes messages that are somewhere halfway between positive and negative, presenting information regarding news, announcements or other neutral information. (Gómez 2018.) While CSR communication might benefit from a low-key tone that focuses on facts (Coombs & Holladay 2012), corporate activism could use stronger emotions.

In fact, according to Gómez (2018), participation, mobilisation and action can be taken to next level by capitalising on *emotions* and *storytelling*. Addressing issues that are important to people and they feel emotional about and, thus, making them feel something – whether it was positive such as awe, excitement, or amusement, or negative such as anger, frustration, or anxiety – can increase engagement and promote dialogue. (Gómez 2018.) Besides, effective and emotional rhetoric can have persuasive power, too (Aronczyk et al. 2017). Similarly, by telling stories, improvising, embellishing or using an actual plot, information can be delivered in a more effective way. (Gómez 2018.)

Another key question for communication is which media and channels to choose. Naturally, activist companies should choose media that they deem are most suitable for delivering their messages, rallying support, and influencing institutional actors – the forms are various from print to social media and events (London 2010).

Elving at al. (2015) have elaborated the use of owned, paid and earned media in CSR communication and state that most self-presentations in e.g. annual reports or on the corporate websites aim at strengthening the company identity and reputation. As a result, they tend to be unilaterally positive and one-way. In owned and paid media, companies are "motivated by the logic of one-sided strategic action – to persuade the others of what can be made true, not *per se* in what is true" (Elving et al. 2015, 121). Also, in earned media, journalists and media only have limited access to information on all aspects of a company and they, too, are driven by their own business interests, meaning that one cannot trust media to represent the whole truth. Elving et al. (2015) note that self-presentations on corporate responsibility are not reliable and sufficient as such.

In his article, Stanley (2020, 394) elaborates marketing communication in the context of corporate activism and posits that companies should not rely exclusively on advertising to make their points as it is "not the most trusted form of human communication" and may yield suspicion and punishments among the institutional actors. In the light of this reckoning, the challenge with corporate activism is to find other, more favourable ways of communication for reinforcement (Stanley 2020).

Framing – the way messages are formulated – is central in defining social problems and building an agenda. Frames do not change the factual information about an issue but they do emphasize a certain perspective to the issue while, simultaneously, ignoring others. Hallahan (1999, 218) discusses three different framings that social movement research has identified in message framing by advocates and activists: the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framings. The *diagnostic* framing is used for identifying problems that need change, whereas the *prognostic* framing suggests solutions to the identified problems. The *motivational* framing then again calls people to take action and participate in the initiative. (Hallahan 1999.)

To borrow again from CSR, Elving et al. (2015) have identified two key framings of CSR communication: the strategic action frame and the communicative action frame, or "the bad" and "the good" as the authors have nicknamed them. These framings lean on Habermas' (1984) concepts of strategic and communicative action. The *strategic action frame* seeks instrumental benefits and success for the company itself, thus, painting a rather pessimistic picture of CSR communication and proving ground for skepticism towards responsibility efforts (Elving at al. 2015, 122). The frame entails *informative* and *persuasive* CSR communication strategies aiming at representing the company in as good of a light as possible and influencing others rather than understanding them.

On the bright side, the *communicative action frame* stresses cooperation and interaction, creating dialogue, balancing interests and seeking a common understanding. The frame consists of *aspirational* and *participatory* CSR communication strategies. (Elving at al. 2015.) According to Christensen et al. (2013, 373), aspirational communication refers to the performative role of language – through it, companies can articulate their ideas, visions and future plans as well as address contested societal issues. Aspirational CSR communication is very much future-oriented, meaning that it announces ideals rather than reflects actual behavior of a company. Although integrity is in a key role in CSR and the lack of it one of the main points of CSR communication – and corporate activism – related criticism, aspirational communication should not be doomed as sole manipulation or identity washing; after all, intentions and plans are actions as well and may be of great importance to companies' self-reflection (Christensen et al. 2013).

Some scholars see participation and relationship-building really as the core of CSR communication (Pedersen 2006). By actively engaging in interaction and dialogue with both the internal and external constituents, companies can better stay on top of the changing values and attitudes of their stakeholders and respond accordingly (Pedersen 2006). Still, although communicative action frame is better-intentioned and perhaps more up-to-date, it is important to acknowledge that the strategic and communicative action frame co-exist and they are interdependent in CSR (Elving et al. 2015). Thus, CSR communication should not exclusively be questioned and criticized as a business tool nor idealized through the rose-coloured, dialogic lenses. Same could well be said about corporate activism.

Traditionally, consensus, symmetry, and dialogue have been regarded really as the cornerstones of successful public relations, stakeholder management, and CSR communication both in research and practice (Ciszek & Logan 2018). With its partisan character and asymmetrical attributes, corporate activism is challenging the ideal of digital dialogic communication and engagement.

Dialogue values interpersonal, empathetic interaction, mitigates power relationships, and emphasizes meaning making, understanding, and cocreation of reality. Also, the concept of *engagement* has been central to the discussion of dialogue in public relations. (Taylor & Kent 2014.) In 2002, Kent and Taylor presented a dialogic theory of PR that e.g. Ciszek and Logan (2018) have named as "the gold standard for ethical [digital] communication". Kent and Taylor's theory (2002) identifies five principles of a dialogic orientation: mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk, and commitment. Here, the concept of engagement is one of the features of *propinquity* which means that the public is heard and they are both willing and able to voice their concerns. Against this background, engagement necessitates accessibility, being present, and interaction. (Taylor & Kent 2014.)

Moving away from CSR research, in their article on corporate (political) advocacy and dialogue, Ciszek and Logan (2018) examine strategies and tactics that companies employ to engage in advocacy in the light of agonistic theories of communication. Refreshingly, they bring in Mouffe's (1998) conceptualization of *agonism*, which Ganesh and Zoller (2012, 77) define as the "pluralist views of democratic processes that treat social conflict as central". In other words, agonism acknowledges that conflict belongs to communication and social change, and it is nothing to avoid or be afraid of. (Ciszek & Logan 2018.) With a focus on agonism, their (2018) standpoint is rooted in postmodernism that values multivocality, difference, and dissensus rather than consensus as an outcome of PR. *Dissensus* the authors (2018) define not only as a conversation between parties with different values or interests but as a conflict about who has the right to speak, who is the voice of agony, and how justice is argued.

In their study, Ciszek and Logan (2018) analyzed ice cream company Ben & Jerry's advocacy effort in support of Black Lives Matter. When the effort was out, the company received a significant backlash; antagonists were calling for boycott of both Ben & Jerry's and its parent company Unilever. Simultaneously, "brand evangelists" were showing their support for the company and their advocacy effort. (Ciszek & Logan 2018, 122.) As the amount of responses to the company's initial post grew, the thread served as a platform for major disagreement about racism and justice in the United States. Nonetheless, Ben & Jerry's continued to support the movement. (Ciszek & Logan 2018.)

Ciszek and Logan's (2018) analysis showed that although the case company aimed to spur conversation, it was not necessarily a dialogic move, but rather pointed to antagonist interaction. The comment thread that the authors (2018, 123) examined, was a hostile environment with no trust, reciprocity or deep engagement with the original message. People talked past one another, "did not appear to listen, learn, or adjust their knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs". Still, the authors (2018, 125) posit that the asymmetrical attributes of corporate activism do not mean that dialogue cannot come about, yet, organizational PR "has value beyond its potential to generate dialogue". According to the authors (2018), along with dialogue, taking a public stand on socio-political issues and advocating for fundamental values are also important pursuits of PR. In brief, not everything has to be involving and participatory.

As a conclusion, Ciszek and Logan (2018, 124) state that public relations needs "an alternative way of thinking about dialogue that embraces non-consensus and accounts for power and conflict". The authors (2018) deem that dialogic theories – as we know them – are insufficient in explaining the multitude of responses and reactions that corporate advocacy may result in. As the case of Ben & Jerry's proved in their study (2018, 124), agonism can be good for public relations because it "shines a light on ideologies of oppression and positions organizations to publicly fight them". Issues of morality, equality, and democracy all then become a central concern and responsibility of public relations (Ciszek & Logan 2018).

Like Ciszek and Logan (2018), Hoffmann et al. (2020) have examined corporate political advocacy in the light of agonistic pluralism, but are more reserved on the connections between advocacy and agonism. They (2020) criticize Ciszek and Logan (2018) for concentrating too much on the public responses and not questioning the self-positioning of the company. Hoffmann et al. (2020) admit that agonistic pluralism is a promising theoretical framework for corporate advocacy but are skeptical about companies' ability to discard the unifying epideictic rhetoric. They (Hoffman et al. 2020, 156) define *epideictic rhetoric* as "ceremonial communication that affirms the respectability or shamefulness of current behaviour", so instead of confronting, epideictic rhetoric "harmonizes social and political contradictions within the ideology of a dominant hegemony".

In their study, Hoffman et al. (2020) analyzed sportswear company Nike's *Dream Crazy* campaign featuring Colin Kaepernick, the controversial US football player. Unlike Ciszek and Logan (2018) with Ben & Jerry's, however, the authors (2020) did not find the campaign of Nike contribute to agonistic debate. The authors (2020, 167) humorously write that: "What at first glance looks like a clear, consistent CPA [corporate political advocacy] statement that pleases some while alienating others is transformed into an epideictic bear hug from which nobody can escape." In other words, Nike did not take an explicit position on a partisan topic but only lifted hyper-individualism and competition on the podium, thus, embracing – rather than abandoning – the totality of the culture industry. In line with this, the authors (2020) found out that only a handful of Twitter comments analysed actually discussed racial justice – the cause at the heart of the campaign.

In this subchapter, communication of corporate activism was discussed through advocacy communication, CSR communication, and agonistic theories of communication. One may contest the appropriateness of CSR communication principles for corporate activism, yet, the two fields are so closely-related that there is a sufficient ground for it to be discoursed here. Additionally, agonistic dualism was introduced to expand the notion of CSR communication that is not necessarily fully capable of explaining the ways corporate activism can be communicated in itself.

2.3.5 Stakeholder Response

> "But I suspect that for every customer we lose, we gain several more who are drawn to our values. Others may not agree with our positions but respect that we do act on the values we espouse. Not a few forgive us because they love the clothes."
>
> – Vincent Stanley, Director of Philosophy, Patagonia (2020, 394)

The choices that companies make on the issues they think should be addressed, generates opinions both for and against depending on the stakeholders' socio-political values. If a company decides to devote to an issue important to one stakeholder group, another group may feel neglected, as not all customers, employees and shareholders think alike. (Bhagwat et al. 2020; Dodd & Supa 2015; Wettstein & Baur 2016.) As Wettstein and Baur (2016) aptly state, this kind of value pluralism is natural and inevitable, and since companies are value-driven institutions, they cannot – and often do not even strive – to please everyone.

From the stakeholders' perspective, knowing what companies value, provides them with the opportunity to consciously gravitate towards those companies whose ideology aligns best with their own – whether it was by buying from, working for, or investing in them. (Wettsein & Baur 2016.) Similarly, by embracing certain values and engaging in certain issues, companies can differentiate and manage what kind of groups they attract, and effectively appeal to their target markets. When the values are congruent, companies might be able to build more meaningful and emotional relationships with their stakeholders and, consequently, create deeper, positive stakeholder engagement, which is beneficial for companies in many ways.

According to the *stakeholder alignment theory*, corporate activism can either strengthen or jeopardize relationships with stakeholders, depending of the alignment of values (Hambrick & Wowak 2019). When the values of a company and its stakeholders are aligned, stakeholders' identification with the company is the highest (Bhagwat et al. 2020). Additionally, those who identify with a company and are positively engaged, might engage in positive word-of-mouth and, furthermore, support the reputation of a company through times of crises. (Chatterji & Toffel 2019; Lievonen & Luoma-aho 2015.) Research (Dodd & Supa 2015; Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019) has also found that when consumers and companies share the same values and beliefs, the purchase intentions are the greatest. Purchasing from a company with certain, distinct values, can in fact serve as a way for consumers to enact their social, political, and other identities (Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019). Even a *buycott* might occur, although this collective action to intentionally purchase products of a company is clearly less frequent than its negative counterpart *boycott*. The rarity of buycott is often attributed to *negativity bias* – the fact that consumers often find negative information more prominent than positive information, which makes the former more impactful. The reason might also be a pragmatic one, i.e. choosing to buy a product is costlier than choosing not to buy a product, or a political one, e.g. conservatism often leads to stronger responses than liberalism (Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019.)

When the corporate values do not resonate with stakeholders' personal values, disidentification with the company may occur (Bhagwat et al. 2020). When a company's socio-political orientation differs from that of stakeholders, its statements can also lessen purchase intention and induce boycotts and other punishments among stakeholders (Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019), as it happened with Nike, for instance, when the sports brand sided with embattled NFL player Colin Kaepernick in their *Dream Crazy* campaign, and pairs of Nikes were burned as a sign of a boycott. In the long-run, voluntary engagement in a partisan issue may lead to hate (Hegner et al. 2017) or even create "a legitimacy gap among stakeholders, impacting the resources and power available to the organization" (Dodd & Supa 2015, 288).

London (2010) adds that those who might be negatively affected by the effort, are likely to perceive the activist company as distrustful and suspicious, and take counteractions when they see the effort gaining momentum. Then again, those who might benefit positively from the efforts, are likely to respond to advocacy when they see goals being achieved. In other words, by reaching – and being able to show – favourable and visible results, and bringing about the change that the company was advocating for can bring positive credit to the advocate. (London 2010.)

Bhagwat et al. (2020) have made a distinction between investors' and other stakeholders' alignment with a company. According to the authors (2020), investors evaluate activist efforts through other stakeholders', especially customers', response; consequently, companies should be more mindful of customers' alignment than that of investors'. On average, investors react negatively to corporate activism (as it is so risky and may e.g. jeopardize cash flows), but especially so when it deviates from the values of key stakeholders. On the other hand, they may also reward activism if it is well aligned with the key stakeholders. (Bhagwat et al. 2020.)

Those stakeholders who disagree with the choices of a company, can either voice their disagreement – in the form of negative word-of-mouth and warning others, for instance – or choose to "exit" their relationship to the company and find alternatives whose ideology they identify better with, or to do both (Hill & Jones 1992). Stakeholders turning their backs to a company and harming it via their behaviour, could well be regarded as hateholders, that is, negatively engaged stakeholders. In the long run, having more hateholders in relation to positively engaged faith-holders, may erode a company's legitimacy – and, also, lessen the chances for a company to become an activist. (Lievonen & Luoma-aho 2015.) Additionally, if companies ignore those stakeholders who disagree and are negatively engaged, trust and loyalty may decrease ever more (Rissanen & Luoma-aho 2016; Kent & Taylor 2002).

In general, managing consumer's expectations when it comes to social issues is increasingly challenging as the public opinion has become all the more polarized. (Gaither et al. 2018). In corporate activism this means that activist companies must try to identify and take into account several stakeholders with differing views and interests. Recognizing those stakeholders that may be negatively affected is particularly important, as otherwise companies could overestimate their success, face unexpected counteractions, or lose supporters and resources. (London 2010.)

Some scholars (e.g. Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019; Wettstein & Baur 2016) have found out that fear of unintended consequences, such as criticism, reputational damage and alienation of stakeholders, may sometimes even keep companies from taking public stances. In fact, if there was no risks and damage at all, perhaps more companies would have already engaged or would be actively engaging in corporate activism. That being said, stakeholder responses are seldom black-and-white, and taking stance may also be worth the risk, as the opening quote of this subchapter by Vincent Stanley (2020) demonstrates.

2.4 Criticism Towards Corporate Activism

Where the lines between private and public, and economic and political are blurred, there tends to be friction. Just like other society-oriented firm practices, corporate activism is a topic that evokes controversy among both the public, practitioners, and scholars (Manfredi-Sánchez 2019).

What is often questioned in corporate activism, is companies' right to take stance on societal issues, ideologies and values – after all, business is business, and it has traditionally been seen somewhat free from ideologies (Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019; Wettstein & Baur 2016). Wettstein and Baur (2016) call it an *intrusion of ideology* when one cannot purchase a product or a service without also buying into an ideology. However, as it has already become apparent in this study, total value-neutrality and freedom of ideology hardly represents today's corporate reality – and perhaps never has represented (Wettstein & Baur 2016).

What is possibly new today is that businesses are embracing other types of ideologies and values than before, and they are doing that through novel channels and overtly, instead of behind closed doors (Wettstein & Baur 2016). Besides, as Wettstein and Baur (2016, 209) point out, companies' pursuit of profits and continuous growth is also just a set ideal that we have come to accept; the corporate mindset – as we understand it – might as well be about pursuing something more significant than profits.

Just like individuals, companies are entitled to freedom of opinion and expression. However, the right is not absolute; it entails special responsibilities and may also be restricted on several grounds. That is, if corporate advocacy is to be considered acceptable – and worthwhile for companies – it should not aim at values clashing with liberal democracy, common beliefs and dominant value systems of our time. In order for advocacy to be legitimate, to not backfire and the company to simply succeed, it cannot adhere to discrimination or exclusion, bigotry or inequality. (Macnamara & Zerfass 2012; Wettstein & Baur 2016.) All of these aforementioned principals leave room for interpretation, yet, there is a reason why companies are against genital mutilation or co2 emissions, and not *for* them, and why many a company in the western countries is loud and proud of supporting gay rights, for instance, whereas many a company against them, stay silent about their stance.

Still, Hoffmann et al. (2020) criticize Wettstein and Baur (2016) for dictating which positions are appropriate for corporate activist engagement. The authors (Hoffman et al. 2020) believe that qualifying only those statements that are aligned with the liberal democratic order as corporate activism, is a broader bias in research on the phenomenon, preventing scholars from fully exploring it. According to Hoffman et al. (2020, 158), it seems that in all cases of corporate activism there always is "a liberal, progressive and 'caring' political camp on the one hand being confronted with a conservative or even populist and reactionary camp on the other". Hoffman et al. (2020) further extend their critique on the divisiveness of corporate activism; according to the authors, companies are too quickly granted the activist status as, in all their political correctness, their engagement still seems to aim at pleasing the majority instead of pleasing some and alienating others.

Yet another point of controversy is corporate activism becoming part of companies' marketing efforts or brand management. According to Aronczyk (2013), the role of the advocacy, activism, and protest can potentially deteriorate when commercial factors act like social movements or non-profit organizations, and try to bring about social change. Similarly, in his article Manfredi-Sánchez (2019, 346) discusses brand activism as depoliticization of social demands and as exploitation of injustice; by engaging in activism, companies risk turning social demands into mere commodities with which to increase sales and attract consumers who, for their part, not only support a cause by purchasing a product but always also benefit the company selling it.

Furthermore, when companies with high visibility take strong stances on issues – perhaps even with insufficient knowledge and weak facts – they may risk oversimplifying and dwarfing complex issues (Juholin & Rydenfelt 2017). According to the Finnish Council of Ethics for Communication (Juholin & Rydenfelt 2017), corporate advocacy does not always help furthering causes; instead, unnecessary interferences, sensations, and disputes might actually slow down the handling of important societal issues.

Obviously, the authenticity of and motives behind corporate advocacy have generated objection, too. The privatization of participation has raised doubts whether there can even be such a thing as corporate activism as defined in this study: focused on greater good and mainly void of financial interests. As many scholars have argued (e.g. Wettstein & Baur 2016) and as discussed earlier in this chapter, there often are mixed financial and ethical motives behind companies' engagement to social and political issues. Engaging in advocacy may be tempting for self-interest and economic reasons, too – especially, for achieving longer-term financial benefits. That being said, when a company takes stance on a partisan issue, initial reputational damage may well occur. (Bhagwat et al. 2020; Wettstein & Baur 2016.) Against this background, all corporate activist efforts ought to be evaluated case-by-case to see whether the greater good overshadows the business interests, or the other way around.

Lastly, what have perhaps slowed down the development – and acceptance – of corporate activism as a phenomenon are the difficulties in defining it. Just like CSR and many other corporate social and political initiatives, corporate activism is not a univocal concept nor a set of clear-cut practices, which makes it somewhat vague and, with that, questionable.

2.5 Summary

Firstly, in the chapter two, corporate activism was defined as a company's proactive involvement in public discussion and its contribution to advancing and solving socio-political issues. In corporate activism, issues and causes are supported primarily for their own sake, the issues tend to be outside of core business and highly divisive, and the support is typically overt and vocal. In this study, the term corporate activism was preferred over corporate advocacy as the former could be seen as a slightly more encompassing term.

Secondly, corporate activism was disentangled from other close-related corporate social and political activities, namely (political) corporate social responsibility and corporate political activity. It was stated that existing approaches for understanding activism in the realm of either (P)CSR or CPA cannot adequately address the unique features of the phenomenon and, thus, it indeed represents a novel phenomenon worthy of unique investigation.

Thirdly, putting corporate activism into practice was discussed. Research on corporate activism, CSR, and social movements were synthesised to explain the propensity of a company to become an activist and to shed light on the motivations, goals, and strategies behind an activist effort. When choosing an issue to advocate on, companies should evaluate their consistency, plausibility and authenticity. Companies that are high in conviction and self-confidence and have solid transformational skills are more likely to engage in corporate activism. Also, favourable identity orientation and value base increase the propensity to become an activist. A social need is what usually sparks an activist effort. The goals, issue barriers, and beliefs about people's willingness to change, sensitivity to gains and losses, as well as company's perceptions of expected costs and benefits are what direct the activist effort and determine whether the strategy should be an influence or a change strategy and whether the desired change should be sought bottom-up or top-down. Finally, the influences can be normative, mimetic, or coercive and either longer or shorter-term. Authenticity, consistency, and plausibility of the activist effort, as well as situational conditions and additional skills in e.g. communication or politics may contribute to the success of corporate activism.

The success of corporate activism largely depends on how it is communicated. Drawing from research on CSR communication, informing, responding, and involving were introduced as main strategies with which companies can communicate their responsibility and advocacy efforts. Also framing has a central role in defining social problems and building an agenda; strategic action frame aims at influencing rather than understanding, while communicative action frame aims at collaboration and dialogue. In order for corporate activism to be regarded as truly dialogic, the notion of dialogue should be revised and extended to include dissensus and conflict. Controversy exists whether corporate activism can contribute to agonistic debate.

The stakeholder responses to corporate activism tend to be highly variable and mostly depend on the stakeholders' socio-political values. In brief, the more strongly corporate activism deviates from stakeholders' values, the more likely it will be perceived as risky and, by that, penalized.

Fourthly and lastly, criticism towards corporate activism was presented. Especially companies' right to take stance on societal issues, ideologies and values, and the appropriate issues to take stance on have evoked contrasting opinions. Some other points of controversy are corporate activism becoming part of companies' marketing efforts and slowing down, instead of advancing, the handling of issues.

3 FAZER COMBATING HATE SPEECH

In this chapter, the case of the study and its context are presented.

3.1 Fazer and Fazer's Blue

Fazer Group (hereinafter Fazer) is one of the largest corporations in the FMCG sector in Finland. In 2019, Fazer had nearly 9,000 employees and net sales of 1.1 billion euros, which showed a slight increase from the previous year. As of 2019, the company operates in eight countries and exports to around forty. (Fazer Group 2019.)

Fazer's business is divided into four areas, which are: Fazer Bakery, Fazer Confectionery, Fazer Lifestyle Foods and Fazer Retail. In the recent years, Fazer has been building on consumer-first approach, which has allowed the company to focus on its fast-moving consumer goods and direct-to-consumer businesses. Furthermore, the company has been heavily investing in oats and plant-based solutions, food tech and innovations to create sustainable food solutions. (Fazer Group 2019.)

According to Fazer Group's Annual Review 2019, sustainability is a part of Fazer's daily operations across all the businesses and on a group level, as well as an important element of its strategy, mission and vision. In fact, Fazer renewed its sustainability approach in 2018 and started the operational execution in 2019. The new approach consists of four core goals with which the company is continuing its work towards 2030, in line with the Paris Agreement's time frame. The new sustainability approach has also meant active dialogue and collaboration with various organisations from Baltic Sea Action Group, WWF Finland and SOS Children's Villages, to universities and research networks both in Finland and Sweden. (Fazer Group 2019.)

Fazer's brand architecture is a hybrid mix of the Fazer brand, endorsed brands (e.g. *Fazer Geisha*, *Fazer Xylimax*, *Fazer Liqueur Fills*), and independent brands (e.g. *Oululainen*, *Froosh*, *Gateau*). According to Fazer (2019), the many different brands have enabled Fazer to fulfil consumer needs in different categories and markets. However, the company has recently revamped its brand positioning to strengthen and extend the role of the main Fazer brand; the implementation of the renewed brand positioning "Northern Magic. Made Real." took place in all businesses during 2019. The positioning entails three brand themes which are *Northern Liberty*, *True Relationships* and *Fearless Creativity* and which have given direction to both product and service development, communications and marketing. (Fazer Group 2019.) According to the Fazer Group's Annual Review (2019, 12), the brand positioning supports decision-making and allows the company to communicate what they stand for and "to grow into being a purposeful brand" that appeals to consumer values and needs.

Fazer has received a great deal of recognition the past few years. Fazer has been chosen as the most advocated brand as chosen by customers in 2018 (Keldsen 2018) and the best in social media in Finland in 2019 (Aarrekangas 2018). Furthermore, Fazer has been ranked among the most sustainable brands in Finland (Fazer Group 2018), and the most appreciated brands in Finland for several years (Niipola 2019). In their Luottamus&Maine (eng. *Trust&Reputation*) survey, T-Media ranked Fazer the third most prestigious in 2020 thanks to the company's sustainability efforts and innovations. (t-media.fi 2020.)

Out of Fazer's many well-known brands, perhaps the best known is *Fazer's Blue*, an iconic chocolate brand. It was first introduced in 1922 and is still recognized for its distinct, trademarked blue colour and the golden signature of the founder of Fazer. (Fazer.fi n.d.a.) According to a survey commissioned by Fazer and conducted by Sales Questor in 2016, many Finns associate the brand with high quality and Finnishness (Fazer.fi n.d.b). Fazer's Blue held the first place in the Brand Appreciation survey for nine years in a row until 2017, after which it was ranked fourth in 2018 (taloustutkimus.fi 2018) and 2019 (taloustutkimus.fi, 2019), and left outside of the top ten in 2020 (taloustutkimus.fi 2020).

3.2 Lovebot Blue and #alittlepieceoflove

In October 2018, Fazer's Blue launched a campaign *Pieni pala rakkautta* (eng. *a Little Piece of Love*) which addressed hate speech and harassment taking place online. Part of the campaign was *Lovebot Blue*, an artificial intelligence powered bot with a self-teaching algorithm, which operated on four different online platforms – Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and a Finnish chat platform Suomi24 – recognizing and intervening in discussions that qualified as hate speech. (Fazer.fi n.d.c.)

In the definition of the term hate speech, Fazer collaborated with experts of Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. Additionally, Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), an independent organisation preventing and resolving violent conflicts through informal dialogue and mediation, a legal tech start-up fighting online harassment and cyberbullying Someturva, advertising agency SEK, media agency Dagmar, and two machine learning consultancies were supporting the execution of the campaign. (Eerola & Romantschuk, personal communication, 2020.)

The actual fight against hate speech took place online, yet, a chocolate promotion visible in selected, physical stores was part of the campaign, too. For the duration of the three-month long campaign, Fazer's Blue chocolate got a new wrapping which stated the campaign slogan "a Little Piece of Love". (Eerola & Romantschuk, personal communication, 2020.)

Fazer and its sub-brands have been active in advocating for the causes they believe in whether it was gay rights, face masks, breast cancer, or refugees. In 2016, preceding the hate speech campaign, Fazer launched a two-year long initiative together with *Deaconess Foundation* called *125 työmahdollisuutta* (eng. *125 Job Opportunities*) which aimed at employing those who typically struggle with becoming employed: young and unemployed people, incapacitated or long-term unemployed people, and immigrants. (Eerola & Romantschuk, personal communication, 2020.)

Fazer's act against hate speech was received with mixed emotions and provoked a lot of discussion both for and against. In the Results and Analysis chapter, Fazer's intentions behind the activist effort and public reaction to it will be examined in closer detail.

3.3 Hate Speech

There is no legal, internationally accepted definition of hate speech, and characterizations of 'hateful' tend to vary (UN 2019). In this study, the term is understood as "any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are -- This is often rooted in, and generates intolerance and hatred and, in certain contexts, can be demeaning and divisive", as United Nations have defined it in their *Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech* (2019, 2).

According to the United Nations (UNRIC 2017), hate speech is a problem of human rights in Finland. Also, the Council of Europe Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI 2019) have called on Finland to tackle growing racist and intolerant hate speech. What fortifies the契 severeness of the problem in Finland is that in 2019, Finnish Ministry of the Interior published a report on hate speech and suggested that policies for its eradication should be included in the Finnish Government Programme. According to the report (Ministry of the Interior 2019), the amount of hate speech has not decreased although measures have been introduced to discourage it; instead, hate speech has gotten new forms, such as online shaming. Besides, generalization and normalization of hate speech are alarming trends in Finland, and they may have connections to other hate crimes, too. Similarly, according to the Police University College's hate crime report (Rauta 2019), verbal insults, threats and harassment are increasing, and e.g. ethnic agitation has tripled in crime statistics. In the report of the Ministry of the Interior (2019), a specific action plan against hate speech is called for and a total of thirteen recommendations are presented for developing more efficient measures to tackle hate speech and cyberbullying.

Needless to say, hate speech has been a major discussion point in Finland and elsewhere the past few years. Also, Fazer is not the only organization to address the problem; Technology company Elisa campaigned on hate speech and harassment together with Children of the Station at the same time with Fazer in late 2018 (elisa.fi/sananvastuu n.d.). In 2017 and again in early 2019, Helsinki Regional Transport Authority and Helsinki City Transport campaigned on hate speech together with the Finnish League for Human Rights (Alkula 2019). Most recently, in August 2020, a Nordic digital services and software company TietoEVRY launched an initiative against hate speech and cyberbullying in partnership with Children & Youth Foundation, (TietoEVRY 2020) and on the International Girl's Day in October 2020, Plan Finland focused on cyber bullying (plan.fi/tyttojen-paiva n.d.). Furthermore, in the summer of 2020, several Finnish companies joined a worldwide boycott called #*StopHateForProfit* where companies reduced spending or completely stopped paying for ads on Facebook for a short period of time to protest the platform's handling of hate speech and misinformation (Kukkonen 2020).

4 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, research paradigms and approach, as well as data and methods of this thesis are described and the choice of them justified.

4.1 Research Philosophy

Based on the research questions (see chapter 1), a qualitative research was regarded as the most appropriate choice as it has the ability to elicit the human dimensions and communicative interactions concerning strategic, professional, and managed communication (Daymon & Holloway 2011). Philosophically, this qualitative research lies on the interpretive paradigm.

The purpose of *interpretivist* research is to strive to deeply understand and create new interpretations of social worlds and contexts (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2012). In this study, this means looking at an activist effort and organization from the perspectives of different groups of people. Interpretivism fits well a complex and unique context where individuals encounter and interact at a specific time (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2012).

Drawing from *ontology*, interpretivism sees the nature of being as rich and complex; it is socially constructed, consists of multiple meanings and realities, and could well be regarded as a flux of processes and experiences. Drawing from *epistemology*, interpretivism focuses on narratives, stories, and perceptions for theories and concepts are seen as too narrow and restrictive. As a contribution, human knowledge is expanded with new understandings and worldviews. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2012.)

To dive deeper, the methodological foundations of this study are laid on *hermeneutics* and *phenomenology* both of which stem from the descriptive–interpretive branch. The former focuses on individuals' lived experiences and the latter on the study of cultural artefacts, yet, both of them are explicitly *subjectivist*. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2012.) With its focus on multiple interpretations, and meaning-making, interpretivism does not strive for law-like generalisations. The main challenge of interpretivists is to fathom the social world from the research participants' point of view. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2012.) In view of this, it should be emphasized that the aim of this qualitative study is not statistical representativeness.

In the following subchapters, the methodologies are discussed starting with the specific research approach, or strategy, which stems from the interpretive and descriptive paradigms.

4.2 Case Study as a Methodological Approach

Case study research involves intensive examination of a single phenomenon within its social context. The aim is at reaching a deep and holistic understanding of a particular phenomenon in its setting and noting the many different layers of influences and experiences that occur within the case. (e.g. Daymon & Holloway 2011; Puusa, Juuti & Aaltio 2020.) Case studies tend to be detailed and descriptive, and concentrate either on a single or multiple cases that are studied as a snapshot or longitudinally over months or years (Daymon & Holloway 2011). This thesis was a single case design and studied as a brief snapshot.

Case study was chosen as this thesis' research approach as it suits well a situation where there is a particular phenomenon – e.g. an event or a campaign – that is wished to be investigated in depth and that can clearly be identified as a bounded system by time and place. Case study outweighed other approaches also due to its ability to capture the complexity of a phenomenon, context included. (Daymon & Holloway 2011.) Furthermore, what is typical for case study is that it captures features of contemporary events and situations; corporate activism is a highly actual phenomenon, which supported the choice of case study as the methodological approach in this thesis. (Daymon & Holloway 2011.)

Fazer's campaign addressing hate speech was chosen as the case of this study for both intrinsic and instrumental reasons. On one hand, the case has *intrinsic value* and is interesting in itself; Fazer's act was brave and pioneering and, after its execution, the campaign has been presented as an empowering example of a company taking stance in many marketing and communication events (e.g. Alma Talk 2018, Finnish Comms Awards 2019). On the other hand, the case is *instrumentally useful* by providing site for theory testing, refinement and building, and facilitating our understanding of corporate activism; the campaign in question is a great example of a company and brand taking stance in an issue which they find important but which is not their core business. (Daymon & Holloway 2011; Puusa, Juuti & Aaltio 2020.) Generalizing case study research is problematic and contested, however, even if knowledge cannot be formally generalized, new knowledge can arise, as Daymon and Holloway (2011, 124) aptly state.

The strength of case study lies particularly in the ability to incorporate different types of data gathered using multiple data collection methods, such as interviews, observations or questionnaires, for instance. (Daymon & Holloway 2011.) In this study – as so often in case studies – strategy of triangulation was employed.

Triangulation refers to the strategy of examining a particular phenomenon in a variety of different ways, or from different perspectives; triangulation adds rigor and richness to a research and, also, although not a tool of validation, it supports validity and trustworthiness (Denzin 2012). Triangulation can be used at different levels in a methodology; the four common forms of the strategy are data, investigator, methodological and theoretical triangulation (Denzin 2012). In this thesis, both data and methodological triangulation were employed, that is to say, multiple data sources (data collected from different groups at different times) and multiple methods were used. Examining different sides of a phenomenon – in this case, the company who initiated the campaign and the public reacting to the campaign – allows for discovering alternative explanations and different nuances within a case.

In the following subchapters, the two different data collection methods employed in this study are discussed in detail. The first one, a semi-structured interview with the case company representatives, was conducted in order to answer the first research question that aimed at scoping corporate activism from a corporate perspective and the third research question concerning the success factors of corporate activism. The second one, content analysis, was performed in order to answer the second research question from the public perspective, but also partly the first and third research questions. This analysis was spread on owned media, earned and owned social media, as well as on news media.

4.3 Interview as a Method

Interview is one of the most exploited data collection methods because it is a very flexible one and fits a variety of research purposes (Puusa, Juuti & Aaltio 2020). In an interview, researcher and the interviewee(s) are in direct linguistic and social interaction, which allows for redirection and adjustments during the data collection (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018).

In this thesis, expert interview, which is a widely-used qualitative interview method aiming to understand a specific field of action, was preferred. What supported the choice of expert interview is that there is only a little previous research on the research problem in question. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008). Also, the insights gained through the interview could have not be obtained as efficiently in any other way; companies seldom state the reasons for their decisions publicly, which makes it difficult to pinpoint the origin and motivations of an activist effort by just looking at the final product, so to speak, or discussion around it in the media.

In this thesis, two people were interviewed at the same time. Group interviews tend to be more time-consuming and harder to organize but, then again, opting for group interview often contributes to multifaceted data that does not only answer what has happened or what an interviewee thinks about a certain topic but also the how and why, and what kind of views, experiences and expectations are attached to the research problem. People often feel safe and secure as part of a group, and it is easy for them to concur with each other but also to expand, argue, or criticize views. (Puusa, Juuti & Aaltio 2020.)

A common denominator between the interviewees is usually wished for in group interviews, which actualized in this thesis, too, as the two participants were colleagues and shared many of the experiences discussed. Since the two participants shared the same occupation and type of experience, the sampling could be called homogenous. (Puusa, Juuti & Aaltio 2020.)

Data and Conduction of the Interview. The interview took place face-to-face with the participants in a cafeteria in the company premises in the winter of 2020 and took approximately an hour and a half. Prior to the interview, a concise, initial email explaining the thesis project was sent to the participants, explaining the purpose and value of the project and the reason for making contact.

The principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) effective in the European Union were strictly followed in the conduction of the interview. Both the researcher and the participants signed a document addressing the data protection principles applied to this study prior to the interview.

Interviewees were Fazer's Executive Vice President Communications and Branding of that time Ulrika Romantschuk and Fazer Finland's Vice President Communications Liisa Eerola, who were chosen to be interviewed based on the extent of their experience of the phenomenon under study; they have been closely involved in the corporate activist efforts of their company and have special knowledge on the campaign that is of interest to this thesis. The interviewees gave their consent to have their full names and roles on show in the study, which is not unprecedented for an expert interview.

The interview conducted was semi-structured, meaning that an interview guide containing the topic areas and questions was drafted prior to interviewing (see the guide as APPENDIX 1). The topic areas were conducted from the research questions, and each interview question was organized under a certain topic area. Yet, the questions did not form a rigid list that had to strictly be followed, thus, leaving some room for spontaneity and participants' reflection, for instance. Also, more information could be prompted whenever something interesting or novel emerged. The need for flexibility and spontaneity was recognized in the pilot interview that was, as suggested in methodology literature (e.g. Daymon & Holloway 2011; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008), conducted with acquaintances before the actual interview. After the pilot interview, or practice run, some questions were also eliminated and reorganized, which resulted in a more refined interview guide.

As usual in interviews, participants own experiences and definitions were prioritized (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008) – therefore, questions that would induce as much conversation as possible were preferred to straight questions. Questions could be posed to a single interviewee or to the both of them simultaneously, however, what had to be ensured – as typical for group interviews – is that the discussion sticks to the chosen topic areas and both interviewees have the chance to talk. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008; Puusa, Juuti & Aaltio 2020.)

The interview was audio-recorded with both a recorder and a mobile phone in agreement with the interviewees, and both audio-files stored password protected on the researcher's personal computer. As the interview took place in a cafeteria, some background noise was audible on the recordings, yet, the noise was not on a distracting level. The recording was listened to a few times and transcribed by the researcher. The transcription style used was standard verbatim, meaning that every word said was captured, yet, parts such as false starts, repetitions, and non-verbal communication were left out (Daymon & Holloway 2011). As a result, the transcript was clean and easy to read, while still being highly accurate and including all relevant parts. Like the audio-files, the sixteen-page transcript was stored password protected on the researcher's personal computer.

The interview data (dataset 1) was analyzed using generic content analytical procedures. The transcription was thoroughly gone through several times and coded in a data-driven manner, yet, as this research is theory-bounded, also theoretical assumptions were guiding the analysis process. Typically, in data-driven coding, the data is preliminary examined before deciding on the categories whereas in theory-driven coding, the categories are established within a chosen theory framework before starting the analysis (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018).

When coding, commonalities and differences, as well as key words and phrases that were repeatedly seen throughout the transcription were pinpointed. These units were labeled with descriptive codes and then refined down further to overarching categories encompassing the coded extracts and, finally, clustered to unifying, higher-level themes (see an example in the FIGURE 6). Simultaneously, as relationships within the data were being discovered, relationships between the data and literature were explored. Finally, a so-called member check, or respondent validation, involving the interview participants was conducted to help improve the accuracy and, ultimately, the validity of the study.

Quotation	Code	Category	Theme
Consumers are expecting it [activism] in a way. We know that consumers actively choose companies that dare to take stance and that truly act responsibly. Generation Z is especially critical, and they have high expectations for brands, yet, they don't trust brands. Having this in mind, you must make visible acts, and it can't be greenwashing but authentic, concrete acts.	Consumer expectations	Pressure to take stances	Motivation to take stances
It [activism] is first and foremost a responsibility, but also an opportunity. We as companies have to take responsibility of what's going on in this world.	Responsibility	Companies' role in society	

FIGURE 6. An example illustrating the shift from the initial codes applied to the quotations to broader categories and themes.

4.4 Content Analysis as a Method

Research employing documents as a data source – whether written, visual, multimedia or digital – is called *content analysis* (Daymon & Holloway 2011). It is a very common research method in qualitative research with which one can make replicable and valid inferences from documents to the context of their use (Krippendorff 2013).

In content analysis, documents can either be archived – i.e. already in existence prior to the research commencing – or they can be initiated at researcher's request (Daymon & Holloway 2011). In this study, content analysis was used to analyse data from owned media, earned and owned social media, as well as from news media. All of the documents were autonomously produced, thus, the collected data was not originally meant for answering research questions, as opposing to the interview. What is important to bear in mind is that documents are always produced and intended to consumed within a particular social context, and they should not be isolated from it (Daymon & Holloway 2011).

Content analysis was chosen as the second method in this study because, firstly, it does not require active engagement with the individuals involved in the study, which makes the access easy and low-cost, secondly, it suits well the inspection of existing owned, social and news media content and, thirdly, it provides insights into the processes of how individuals, groups of stakeholders and organizations project themselves to those whose reactions and evaluations they care about (Daymon & Holloway 2011). Also, content analysis complements well the other data collection method, i.e. interview, employed in this thesis (see subchapter 4.3).

Analyzing documents in addition to conducting an interview allows for a fuller and perhaps even more accurate picture of the phenomenon in question, as opposing to only having data that emerged from either one. Besides, when there are multiple data sources, they can be interpreted and triangulated against each other, which may enable for counteracting some of the possible biases. (Daymon & Holloway 2011.)

Qualitative content analysis, which offers a means of revealing hidden or latent features and nuances in a content, differs from quantitative content analysis concerned with identifying and counting patterns of frequency and regularity in a content (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018). This study relied on the former, yet, to support the qualitative content analysis, also quantitative content differentiation was employed. Quantifying qualitatively collected data brings a new kind of perspective to the analysis and may in some cases also clarify the results (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 100). In this study, numerical content of data is used to find out what tones and themes are possibly dominant in different phases of the campaign in social and news media, and what kind of documents are the most influential based on the reactions, i.e. likes, comments and shares.

Data and Conduction of the Content Analysis. In this study, the content analysis spread on three different datasets. First part of the data of the content analysis (dataset 2) consisted of the initial campaign bulletin and the textual elements of the home page of the campaign website, i.e. the page where visitors first land (fazer.fi/pienipalarakkautta). These documents were chosen using purposive sampling; in other words, these samples were chosen as they were considered the most useful to the purposes of the study (Krippendorff 2013).

To begin with, the documents were copied to separate Word documents for the analysis. As in the interview, the data was coded in a data-driven manner, yet, guided by the theory, and when coding, commonalities and differences, as well as key words and phrases that were repeatedly seen throughout the texts were pinpointed. The units were first labeled with codes and then organized into to overarching categories and finally, clustered to higher-level themes. As relationships within the data were abductively being discovered, also relationships between the data and theoretical framework were explored.

Second part of the data of the content analysis in this study (dataset 3) was collected from Fazer's owned and earned social media. The social media platform chosen was Twitter where the activist effort of interest primarily took place.

The documents were chosen using relevance sampling, meaning that all units that answered the research questions were chosen (Krippendorff 2013). On Twitter, the documents were searched using the platform's own built-in search function. The search was defined so that each document had to:

1) include the word *Fazer* in one of its declensions (declensions entered were Fazer, Fazerin, Fazeria, Fazerilla, Fazerille and Fazerilta) or the word *Lovebot*,
2) be an original tweet (not an answer to someone else's tweet) or a retweet,
3) be written in Finnish, and
4) be produced between October 23, 2018, which was the start day of the hate speech campaign, and December 31, 2018, which was the last day of the month in which the campaign ended.

The official campaign hashtag #alittlepieceoflove was not required as, in the campaign, it was only encouraged to be used when an individual wanted to show his or her support for the fight against hate speech. By defining the search to only include documents that contained the hashtag would have excluded all the documents that did not show support but were still addressing the campaign. However, if a document included the hashtag, it was automatically regarded campaign-related.

All the documents collected were documented on a spreadsheet that can be found in the appendices (APPENDIX 2). After the completion of data collection, all texts originally published in Finnish were translated into English by the researcher.

When it comes to the dataset 3, the coding was again data-driven, yet theory and researcher's accumulated knowledge guiding the analysis. The earlier described Twitter search yielded 1163 hits in total, out of which 395 were identified either as related to the campaign, Fazer's fight against hate speech or Lovebot, the AI-driven bot created for the campaign. Documents that were clearly talking about some other Fazer than the company in question (e.g. Fazer Music) were discarded. The focus of the analysis was then decided to be on what kind of tone each document has, what the discussion theme is and how much engagement each document has yielded. Supportive features (e.g. hyperlinks, pictures, videos) and call-to-actions were registered, too, but not analysed separately.

When coding the tone of each document, those identified *positive* included positive or encouraging words and/or emojis, those identified *neutral* were platonic and/or highly rational, or plainly shared a link or reshared a tweet without an accompanying note, and those identified *negative* included negative words and/or emojis.

When coding the themes of discussion, one document could be coded several times if the document was identified as discussing many different themes (see an example on FIGURE 7). The maximum amount of codings a single document got was three (3), and the total amount of codings was 394. There were in total of fourteen (14) different discussion themes recognized of which descriptions can be seen in the appendices (APPENDIX 3).

#Fazer started a campaign **against freedom of speech** *(restricting free speech)* and in support of an Orwellian society. So, from now on, **Fazer's products can stay on the shelves** *(boycott)*. #hatespeechbot

Yeah, right……. **so ended the purchasing of fazer's products** *(boycott)* for many, including me! [sic]

FIGURE 7. An example illustrating the coding of the discussion themes of the social media posts.

Third and last part of the data (dataset 4) was collected using relevance sampling from online news media. The news pieces were collected using Google search news tab with the combination of the company and campaign names. The same time span that was applied in the social media content analysis, was applied to the news media content analysis. If the news piece was a collection of news, only the parts relating to the hate speech campaign were analysed. Furthermore, news pieces and other articles that were published in fake news platforms and blogs were excluded.

Just like the social media data, the news pieces were documented on a spread sheet (see APPENDIX 4) and coded in a data-driven matter, yet guided by theory and researcher's knowledge of the topic. The focus of the analysis was decided to be on what the news story type is, what kind of tone it has, what the prevailing discussion theme is, and whether the activist company has a voice in the text or not. Also, the possibility to comment and possible social media icons were registered but not analysed separately. The news pieces can be seen in TABLE 4.

5 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the results are presented and examined in the light of earlier research starting from the motivations, goals, and strategies influencing the activist effort, followed by the public response, and concluded with the impact and outcomes of the effort. In the preface, the different datasets and their connections to the research questions and results are presented.

5.1 Preface

As discussed in the previous chapter, data of this study was collected from different sources using different methods. The data collected through the interview with company representatives is from now on called *dataset 1*, the campaign material data (i.e. campaign bulletin and textual elements of the campaign website) *dataset 2*, the data collected from the earned and owned social media *dataset 3*, and the data collected from the news media *dataset 4*.

As can be seen on TABLE 3, the results in the subchapter 5.2 are drawn solely from the datasets 1 and 2, thus, only depicting the corporate perspective. Then again, the results in the subchapters 5.3 and 5.4 are drawn from all four datasets, thus, depicting both corporate and public perspectives.

TABLE 3. Summary of datasets and their handling in the Results and Analysis chapter.

Dataset	Data collected in	Method	Discussed in	Answers
1	Spring 2020	Semi-structured interview with two communication experts of the case company	Subchapters 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3

2	Autumn 2020	Content analysis on the campaign website and initial bulletin published on 24/10/2018	Subchapters 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4	RQ1, RQ2, RQ3
3	Autumn 2020	Content analysis on tweets addressing the campaign between 23/10/2018 and 31/12/2018	Subchapters 5.3 and 5.4	RQ2, RQ3
4	Autumn 2020	Content analysis on news pieces addressing the campaign between 23/10/2018 and 31/12/2018	Subchapters 5.3 and 5.4	RQ2, RQ3

To support the study's resonation with the readers and, ultimately, to strengthen the validity of this study, the results are grounded in various illustrative examples throughout the chapter. All extracts used have been translated from Finnish to English.

5.2 Fazer and Corporate Activism

5.2.1 "That's in our DNA"

This subchapter discusses the case company's individual characteristics and capabilities, as well as situational conditions directing the company's activism. The results are drawn solely from the datasets 1 and 2.

Based on the interview, and concerning the capabilities of Fazer, it seems that the company is high in conviction and self-confidence – both of which positively influence the motivation to engage in activism (London 2010); Fazer is aware that it is respected and liked, and is so established in Finnish society that other actors listen to it. Also, the value base of the company is favourable for activism. Drawing from the datasets 1 and 2, Fazer's values rest on such themes as equality, diversity, and Nordic liberty. Additionally, Fazer is a family company which, according to the interviewees (dataset 1), brings great stability and provides a strong foundation for all actions. It seems that having a close connection to the owners and thinking alike – if not across the company – at least across the leadership, makes a company truly live and protect its values. Furthermore, the case company seems to have a highly integrative approach to sustainability and an experimental and forward-looking corporate culture that allows for trial and error. Arguably, the positioning of Fazer's corporate brand also directs its' activism – theme of "fearless creativity" in particular could be seen to incite for brave acts. All of these aforementioned features nurture corporate activism, as the following extracts from the dataset 1 also show:

> It [what makes corporate activism possible for us] is our values. And it is our ownership. We are a family company which provides us with a lot of stability when it comes to our values and everything we do. And the support from leadership, too; we agree that we do these things [take stance] and it is our duty to do them.
>
> We do want to take stance on issues relevant to us. - - That's in our DNA, our values and our business model. It's in how we operate internally but also in the societal role that we've taken.
>
> As sustainability is in the core of our strategy, it's only natural that we take stances and engage in meaningful activities. For us that's executing our mission, strategy and culture.

Drawing from the dataset 1, taking stances feels natural to the company, and it is something their company has done throughout its history. In fact, the interviewees deemed corporate activism is not a novel phenomenon in general, but rather an activity that many companies were engaged in already decades ago and are now returning to. Indeed, it seems that Fazer has assumed its socio-political role early on by supporting Finnish society through different historical phases and changes. Besides, having a whole tradition of corporate activism is likely to make it easy to engage in corporate activism over and over as the capabilities and knowledge are already in place. Drawing from the dataset 1 and, in the light of Moorman's (2020) seven lenses, Fazer could be seen to view its operational environment and surrounding world from the perspectives of cultural authority, political mission, and brands as educators. This being the case, the degree to which the company and its brands are politically active is high. See extracts from the dataset 1:

> Fazer has always taken on a greater role in the society but, today, we're taking on it perhaps more actively than before.
>
> Now that we have major global problems, it's clear that companies cannot dissociate themselves from the societal responsibility. In a way it seems that we are going back to that time when companies were closer-knit with their surrounding communities and they had to take stance and act.
>
> If we think of e.g. climate change that we're currently in, we see how difficult it is for the UN or the EU, for instance, to make concrete decisions. Companies can act brave and much faster than countries or coalitions.

It seems that Fazer has – if not quite a collectivist identity orientation where a company would be motivated to promote greater good despite potential negative consequences – at least a relational identity orientation (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020). In the light of the dataset 1, Fazer demonstrates genuine concern for their stakeholders and are motivated by the benefits that the activism may have for their relationships with primary stakeholders, such as consumers, employees, or the community. This identity orientation is also often associated with bottom-up change strategies that Fazer employed in their activist effort (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020). The strategies are discussed more in detail in the next subchapter.

The individual characteristics of Fazer described above seem to have led to the company taking stances primarily due to its sense of duty. The interviewees deemed companies have a major responsibility to change things for the better, proactively push for good initiatives, and help people do right choices. Besides, today's global problems are such big challenges and talking points that companies simply cannot ignore and go without addressing them. Interviewees deemed taking stance is also an opportunity, instead of a mere obligation or duty. Still, and as typical for corporate activism, interviewees told that some of their activist efforts are tied to financial or commercial objectives, too, but not all:

> It is first and foremost a responsibility, but also an opportunity. We as companies have to take responsibility of what's going on in this world.
>
> It [corporate activism] is possible, there's need for it and it's expected.
>
> We do these things for economic reasons but there are also things we do only because we believe that it's important that we participate and take stance on societal issues. These issues cannot be economically measured as such and, when taking stance on them, we are not aiming for visibility nor financial gain. However, they do also matter for the company itself, one way or another.

Sometimes there may even be reputational considerations behind corporate activist efforts (Wettstein & Baur 2016). However, according to the interviewees, for Fazer the possible positive impact on reputation or competitive advantage are strictly consequences, not reasons to take stance. The interviewees nearly shunned the terms "activism" and "taking a stance" – for them, the goal of corporate activism is about being *pro* something and supporting a good cause, not just taking a stance. In other words, corporate activism is not an end in itself. As the ideal, interviewees mentioned activist efforts which benefit both the cause and the company. See extracts from the dataset 1:

> We take stance on issues that affect us one way or another – they touch our values, our sustainability, for instance. It has to be relevant in our eyes. It cannot be just about taking stance. That's not it. It is about advancing something good… something important.
>
> Taking stance is a consequence of what we believe in.
>
> It is a win-win situation when we work for those issues [that are important to us as a company and affect our operations], and it benefits not only our business but also society, and it has real impact.

Along the individual characteristics – right values, favourable corporate culture, and tradition, among others – what seems to enable corporate activism for Fazer, is having the support of external stakeholders who are truly fond of the company and its brands. According to the interviewees, in many people's eyes, Fazer symbolizes quality, trust and fairness – all of which are qualities that contribute to people perceiving an activist effort positively (London 2010). Knowing that there are also other than internal stakeholder groups that support the company, whether it was customers or retailers, nurtures the emergence and development of an activist effort.

> As a partner, we are valued. We are valued and trusted. -- And consumers, you know they love this brand.

Another such situational condition influencing activism along strong support is social pressure. In the recent years, pressure for companies to speak out, take clear stances, and to participate in solving social and political issues has seemingly grown (e.g. Edelman 2018; Global Strategy Group 2016; Miltton 2017; Weber Shandwick 2018) and interviewees told their company is feeling this pressure. The pressure is coming from many different stakeholders from upstream activities to third sector. The new kind of awareness and demands of the generation Z and millennials have also been recognized at Fazer:

> Consumer are expecting it. And we know that consumers are actively choosing companies who dare to take stance and act sustainably.

> And then we have the generation Z coming who are very demanding and expect a lot from brands but, at the same time, they don't trust brands. You [as a brand or a company] need to visibly act and it cannot be green washing but real and concrete acts.

Especially big and well-known companies – like Fazer – are vigorously expected to address socio-political problems. At the same time, as big actors, they need to consider every statement and act more carefully; There may be little leeway for choosing the issues that a company wishes to address as people tend to have certain, often rather confined images of companies in which they had better to stay in order to avoid conflicts (Olkkonen 2016). Drawing from the dataset 1, whatever a well-known company decides to do, is often hitting the headlines. On the other hand, according to the interviewees, being a big, well-known actor both mandates and obliges a company to act. One could say that whatever a company decides *not* to do, often hits the headlines, too.

> We are sometimes viewed as quite a traditional company. Many who have taken the effort to get to know us, are like "wow, I would've never thought that of you".

> Whenever you think of these kinds of acts, you can't do them like this [snaps fingers]. As a big actor, we must always consider the downside, too: what it means for the breeders [when thinking of giving up eggs from battery cages] and what is our role there.

> Anything we do, is commented extremely fast and often very strong, too.

Knowing others who advocate for a certain issue and identifying a cause that seems popular are also typical extrinsic enforcements for corporate activism (London 2010). Drawing from the dataset 1, Fazer follows closely what others do in the field, yet, other companies and their activist efforts do not create specific pressure to take stance. Based on the results of the dataset 1, this is primarily because corporate activism is something that so strongly stems from the corporate values, culture, and strategy of a company. According to the interviewees, they still rejoice, get inspired by, and strive to learn from the great examples of corporate activism around them. Nonetheless, initiatives that either invite companies to join in on a mutual plea or statement, or are related to a highly actual issue (e.g. an accident or natural hazard) seem to make an exception. In the light of prior research (Bhagwat et al. 2020), having the support of other companies may mitigate the possible backlash, yet, controversy exists whether the engagement will be seen unique and sincere. See extracts from the dataset 1:

> Of course, we keep track of what everyone else is doing. However, it does not steer our behaviour. We admire great examples, and are happy and proud when someone advances a good cause. Everyone should be happy when someone else succeeds. And you can certainly learn from them, no question.

> Bigger, mutual pleas make an exception. I mean, if there's a big campaign that the majority of Finnish companies are supporting, we may get on the bandwagon, too.

5.2.2 From Spark to Execution

This subchapter discusses the reasoning, goals, and the strategies with which Fazer addressed the issue of hate speech. As in the previous subchapter, the results presented in this subchapter are drawn solely from the datasets 1 and 2.

Fazer decided to take stance on hate speech because, although not its area of business, it had a clear connection to the company. Interviewees told they had recognized an unwanted and unfavourable change in their social media channels in the recent years; some of their own channels seemed to have become platforms for hate speech. Again drawing from the dataset 1, what essentially motivated Fazer to take stance on hate speech, is a strong social need. Additionally, the company was personally affected by the need which, according to earlier research (London 2010), increases the propensity to become a self-appointed advocate. The scope of the social need was wide since the hate speech was not only aimed at the company but also at other people and groups of people, which was, additionally, clearly incongruent with Fazer's values. By addressing the issue, Fazer had also great chances to prevent harm that the hate speech caused and promote gains to others, which tells of the focus of the social need.

Also, in the initial campaign bulletin (dataset 2), Fazer extensively reason their decision to engage in corporate activism to tackle the problem of hate speech. The company tries to make the linkage to the issue clear by making their corporate and brand values known and emphasizing that turning their values into real acts is an inherent part of their strategy and ways of working. Contradictory to the dataset 1, however, Fazer's experience with hate speech –

i.e. their channels giving rise to hate speech – does not come forth in the bulletin nor on the campaign website (dataset 2).

The interviewees deemed that when choosing a topic to address and wanting to ensure its resonance with the targets, a connection of some kind to the company is indeed of great importance. The connection might be with the business or with the values of a company – what matters is that the company is able to stand upright behind its statements. In order for corporate activism to come across authentic and sincere – and ultimately to succeed – the issue or the cause supported must be relevant both for the company and for its target audiences, as the following extracts from the dataset 1 show:

> It has to have this certain authenticity in order for it [corporate activism] to resonate with your stakeholders and really etch. When your actions are real and authentic, they can turn into brand building material in the long run. When your actions are not real – something that our head of communications could not be able to tell if she was woken up in the middle of the night – it won't resonate with your company or with no one else for that matter.

> We have to be able to build a bridge between our business and our activist efforts because it wouldn't be credible otherwise. We cannot just put marketing glasses on, choose some hot topic that the public is currently talking about and start advocating for it.

Drawing from the datasets 1 and 2, Fazer's goal in the hate speech campaign was to educate people by increasing public awareness of the reality of hate speech and influence their attitudes on the issue, which would then result in a positive change in their behaviour – that is, less hate and more empathy for others, and no tolerance for hate speech. Fazer's corporate discourse seems to predicate that if more people realized that hate speech is a problem, then more people would also understand why such activist efforts are important and could be inspired to support it. When the campaign was launched, hate speech was still quite a novel discussion point in Finland. One could think that the phenomenon itself was so new in Finland that people were lacking awareness of it. It might also be that to a large part of the Finnish population the issue was irrelevant and, therefore, not so actively discoursed. Against this background, Fazer might have had some-level first mover advantages when taking stance on hate speech (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020). This could not be proven with the data of this study, however.

In order to reach their goal and overcome the issue barriers of lack of awareness and attitude-behaviour gap, Fazer employed persuasive influence strategies. Both cognitive and emotional tactics were used. In their initial bulletin and on the campaign website (dataset 2), Fazer provided their target audience with information and rational arguments on why hate speech is so harmful and how it can be prevented, calling on everyone to join the fight against hate speech and striving to increase the targets' awareness and alter their views. Also, in the bulletin and on the campaign website, the use of artificial intelligence in the campaign was reasoned and the mechanics of it explained in order to dispel people's doubts on it. A separate Twitter profile was created for the Lovebot Blue

– the AI powered bot – through which to intervene and take part in Twitter discussions, further mobilize and encourage people to join the fight against hate speech, and keep them on track of the advancement of the effort.

The cognitive messages were enforced by packing on emotions. Drawing from the datasets 1 and 2, the hate speech campaign spoke for the counterforces of hate, such as empathy, mutual understanding, and love – all of which are very positively charged themes. When it comes to the emotions, or sentiment, in general, the interviewees deemed that building the actions and messages positive make the activist efforts more sustainable and memorable when compared to examples that concentrate on the negative or speak ill of other companies:

> I believe that those activist efforts that challenge or malign other companies quickly backfire, whereas positive openers where you encourage others to maybe join you in the good cause tend to work. For example, Lidl's Christmas ad campaign, where they included their competitors in a heartfelt way, was a positive example. I think that kind of openers are the most sustainable ones and might even benefit brand value.

In the initial bulletin (dataset 2), and in addition to demonstrating the connection between the issue and the corporate values, Fazer talks about the company's commitment to UN Global Compact and joining #*ykkösketjuun* – a joint campaign by Finnish citizens, civil society organisations, companies and trade unions, calling for a Finnish law on mandatory human rights due diligence – to prove that helping forward human rights is nothing new to the company and advocating for the issue is plausible (Wettstein & Baur 2016). In the bulletin, it is also mentioned that many people may regard hate speech as a difficult topic to address as those who address it, easily become targets of hate speech themselves. While showing empathy like this, the case company simultaneously underlines their own courage to engage in the complex and emotive issue. Earlier research on CSR communication (Elving et al. 2015) has shown that most self-presentations of companies tend to be unilaterally positive and one-way, which also shows on the bulletin belonging to owned media.

The communicative and strategic action frames seemed to co-exist in the campaign material (dataset 2). As depicted above, the corporate discourse relied on informative and persuasive strategies on one hand and, on the other hand, motivational, or participatory, strategies were evident, too.

When it comes to the direction of change in the campaign, Fazer opted for a bottom-up change strategy, meaning that they strived to influence individual actors and the primary stakeholders of the company (the marketplace, especially consumers, and employees) instead of social institutions. Based on the choice of change strategy, the company was arguably aiming for normative and coercive influences. (Eilert & Nappier Cherup, 2020.) Firstly, the case company created normative pressure by institutionalizing the issue within their organization by declaring that they do not accept hate speech internally (dataset 2) and, secondly, they created coercive pressure by facilitating attitudes and behaviour change in the institutional actors (dataset 1).

Previous research has shown that topics close to company's expertise areas tend to work better than topics that are far off (Olkkonen 2016; Stanley 2020). In accordance with this, fighting for sustainable cocoa, for instance, would be more favourable for Fazer than fighting against hate speech. In the initial bulletin (dataset 2), Fazer tried to link hate speech with another topic that is in fact closer to their expertise, namely the importance of eating together for interaction and building trust. However, when taking stance on issues which are aligned with a company's values but which are not exactly core business or company's expertise, the results drawn from the dataset 1 suggest that companies could seek for external support. In the hate speech campaign, Fazer collaborated e.g. with Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare and CMI, both of which lent their expertise and legitimacy to the company. By collaborating with actors who have expertise in the issue, it seems that companies can extend their own expertise, so to speak.

According to the interviewees, their company indeed prefers to partner with someone when taking stance as especially a partner who has specialized in the advocated issue (e.g. a non-profit organization) brings security and credibility. Similarly, when special knowledge or expertise on advocacy, communication, marketing, or anything else related to the activist effort is needed, seeking extra support is often beneficial.

> We do have opinions on this kind of [socio-political] issues, but we seldom address them alone, by ourselves. We are usually in collaboration with someone.

Drawing from the datasets 1 and 2, Fazer tried to be very transparent on the partnerships in the hate speech campaign and also heavily capitalized on third-party verification to gain increased credibility (Gómez 2018). In the initial bulletin, for instance, CMI has been given a big and visible role in discussing the importance of conflict resolution and how hate speech has become all the more commonplace and accepted. Also, UN is quoted in the text to underline the importance and urgency of the issue. On the campaign website, Fazer trusts the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare with the definition for hate speech. In the interview, the company representatives also confirmed that they wanted to make sure the targets of the campaign understand Fazer did not address hate speech on a whim but really prepared for the effort and have the right partners to help them:

> We had CMI and Someturva as our specialists. Additionally, we used experts from Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare to define hate speech. So, it was not just our definition on what is hate speech and what not.

While aiming to inform people about the detrimental effects of hate speech and influencing their attitudes on the issue, Fazer's campaign against hate speech also had economic interests. This came forth in both the dataset 1 and 2. Indeed, engaging in corporate activism does not need to mean giving up on the company's fiduciary responsibility or the pursuit of profit, and having mixed motives behind the efforts is nothing unusual for the phenomenon (Bhagwat et al. 2020; Wettstein & Baur 2016).

Companies contemplating activism tend to be sensitive to gains and losses (London 2010) and hence carefully consider whether the effort will succeed or not. Also, as company must try to identify possible scenarios, take into account several stakeholders with divergent views and interests, and engage in dialogues to earn the right to advocate, corporate activism takes time and resources. According to the interviewees, the preparatory work and studying should not be underestimated. In fact, a lot of the work put into an activist effort is planning which starts long before the act being visible, as the following extracts drawn from dataset 1 show:

> There is always a lot of thought and dialogue with stakeholders behind there: what is the real impact and the consequences? We always try to look very carefully from the risk perspective, too, and think how we can mitigate the possible risks: how to avoid unnecessary crises?
>
> All these [activist efforts] require a lot of work, truly butt-on-bench-kind-of preparatory work. We must prepare for anything and everything, because we are aware that whatever we do, people are quick to form their opinions.

According to the interviewees, it is essential to be aware of and prepared for the negative. When preparing for the hate speech campaign, Fazer knew that they have a history of being bullied and trolled by certain groups, especially critics of immigration. Before the launch of the campaign, Fazer's three-year-long initiative employing those who typically struggle with becoming employed, e.g. immigrants, had just finished. According to the interviewees, the initiative had garnered – alongside the positive – a lot of negative attention. If a company did not take the time and effort to recognize those stakeholders that may be negatively affected, it could overestimate its success, face unexpected actions, or lose support and other resources (London 2010).

Based on the results drawn from the dataset 1, Fazer has realized that when engaging in dialogue with the hateholders, company can try to understand their anger and learn from the differently thinking people, possibly even finding solutions, new insights, and mutual ground. Building trust like this before any trouble has struck is also in a key role in taking the edge off of negative responses. Then again, when a group is really positively engaged, involved, and well taken care of, they may turn into faith-holders who become a unique asset for a company:

> There are people who think different from our values, which makes them turn against us. We accept that, too, but we still want to have a dialogue with them because for us, that's the only way to solve things.
>
> We do have critical stakeholders and with them, it's all the more important to have an open dialogue. It's our principle that if someone wants to discuss with us or has appropriate criticism for us, we gladly invite them over, discuss openly on social media

> or whatever the platform is. If we have something unpleasant to share, we gladly share it, too, rather than try to hide it.
>
> It is a wonderful thing when consumers, people who love our brand defend us. We don't expect it at all but of course we are endlessly grateful and happy that it's not just "us against the world" but there's this certain third-party endorsement going on. It tells something about your brand and the love people feel for it.

Fear of unintended consequences may sometimes keep companies from taking public stances (Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019; Wettstein & Baur 2016). However, it seems that when corporate activism truly stems from the strategy and values of a company, that fear does not necessarily – and luckily – always discourage. At least it has not kept Fazer from living its values, as the dataset 1 proves:

> When we take stance, we want change. We want to create better operational environment, better opportunities for employment, cleaner environment, better livelihood for farmers and so on. We are always supporting something important. At the same time, when we are visible and transparent, we are aware of the reverse side, too; some people may think different. We are aware of it and then we just need to think how to handle it the best way possible. However, it doesn't keep us from supporting nor advocating for a cause which we believe in and is in our values.

The interviewees further elaborated on fears by stating that little bravery and conscious risk-taking are needed when engaging in corporate activism. Then again, when the intentions are right, the size of the activism does not matter. Smaller and milder actions count, too, and are as worthy as big and controversial ones. In line with previous research, the interviewees deemed that what matters is that a company is consistent with its responsibility and advocacy work.

> We've gotten a lot of feedback saying that was so brave. And I guess we think so too – it was brave indeed. And we learned a lot.
>
> Activism does not have to be extremely radical and out there – it's about meaningful actions that are honest and real. And every company has their own way of doing it. What matters, is that the actions are sustainable. Sustainable and meaningful.

5.3 Public Discussion on Fazer's Activist Effort

This subchapter discusses the public response to and discussion on Fazer's activist effort on hate speech. The results in the subchapter are primarily drawn from the datasets 3 and 4 but backed up by the results drawn from the datasets 1 and 2. Thus, the subchapter depicts both corporate and public perspectives.

5.3.1 Roaring Public Response

Drawing from the dataset 3, although Fazer's activist effort received a great deal of positive support, it received even greater opposition. Out of the 395 tweets that were identified as related to the activist effort, 354 belonged to earned social media and 41 to owned social media. Out of all these 354 earned social media posts addressing Fazer's activist effort from October 23rd until the end of the year 2018, positive reactions accounted for 26 per cent (85 tweets or retweets), neutral reactions 34 per cent (129 tweets or retweets), and negative reactions 40 per cent (140 tweets or retweets). See FIGURE 8 for the distribution of the tones. The tones of the tweets belonging to owned social media are discussed in subchapter 5.3.2.

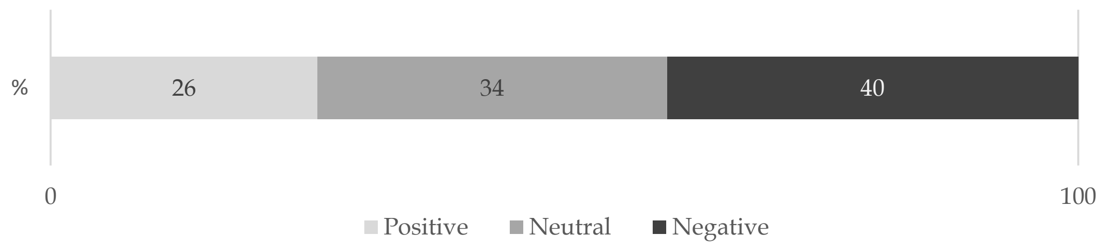

FIGURE 8. Tones of the earned social media posts addressing Fazer's activist effort on Twitter in 2018 (N = 354).

The hate speech campaign was launched in late October 2018. The first tweets regarding the activist effort were produced mainly by Fazer's partners in the campaign or news media, therefore, the tone of the public response was primarily positive or neutral (see FIGURE 9). Not long into the campaign, however, the discussion around it started going off on a tangent and negative reactions started increasing. As illustrated in FIGURE 9 drawing from the dataset 3, the first peak of negative reactions occurred already two days after the launch.

What seemed to be the biggest discussion theme (see FIGURE 10) and truly divided opinions on Twitter, was company's role in society, or *company taking a stance*. Some of the tweeters seemed to rejoice of Fazer's example, calling for other companies to engage in such efforts, too. Fazer was also congratulated for the well-chosen, important topic:

> In my opinion, this is exemplary corporate social responsibility and promotion of sustainable development from Fazer. What is particularly nice, is that the Blue happens to be my one and only favourite chocolate.

> A fantastic campaign from #Fazer against hate speech. I'm speechless. This kind of responsibility and real advocacy would be great to see more of. #littlepieceoflove

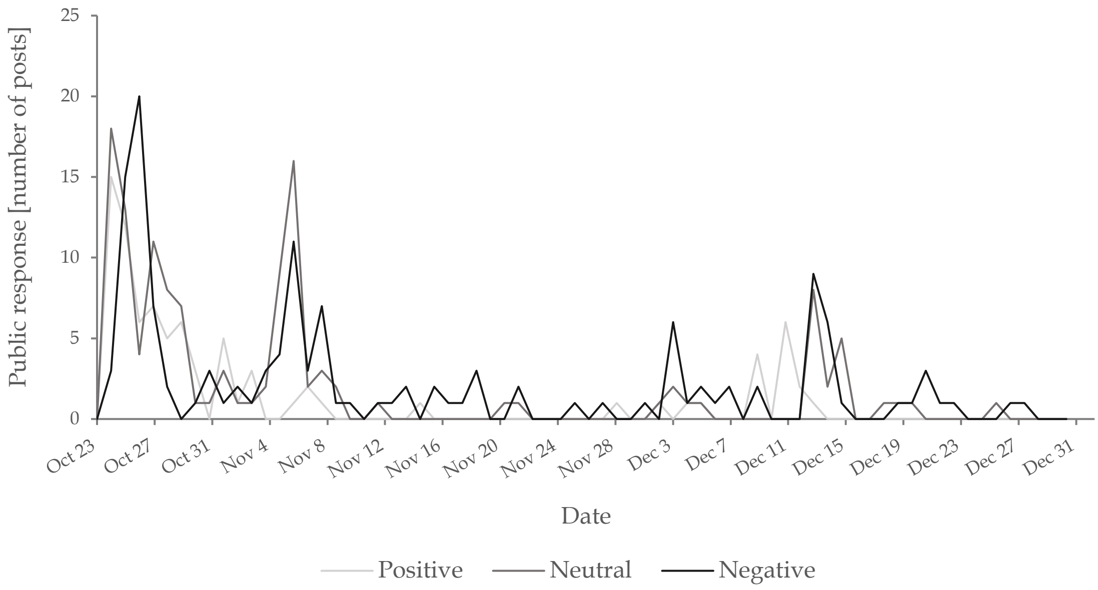

FIGURE 9. Timeline and tones of public response (earned social media only) to Fazer's activist effort on Twitter in 2018 (N = 354).

As it has already come forth in this thesis, consumer are increasingly demanding companies to take stance, yet, based on the evidence of the dataset 3, it seems that there still is a big group of people who think the opposite. Also, many of those who are expecting and demanding companies to take stance, seem to be highly critical of the ways how and the reasons why companies engage in corporate advocacy. Drawing from the dataset 3, there were many critical voices stressing that Fazer should stick to its own business. Furthermore, some were saying they would appreciate not having to choose sides and be engaged in politics when buying chocolate, whereas, some people used Fazer's decision to show colours even as a reason to boycott the company:

> Fazer is tackling "hate speech", Coca-Cola telling you who to vote. Rag and scissor companies are not selling their products to retailers. World has gone crazy. Soon we have separate right-wing and left-wing stores. Not long till that.
>
> Fazer could show sustainability by using e.g. Fair-Trade cocoa beans in all of their chocolates. #FairTrade #UTZ #propaganda
>
> Teaching religion, ethics and moral, and selling chocolate and buns are two different things. Mixing those things is inappropriate and, on top of that, embarrassing. I guess it's going bad for Fazer.
>
> Not a single piece of Fazer anymore! Sweet talk from every direction, and different coloured, sexually "emancipated" people assumed to be humans based on appearance. I don't consider myself as a racist or someone who would engage in hate speech but this continuous foisting of values is coming out of my ears.

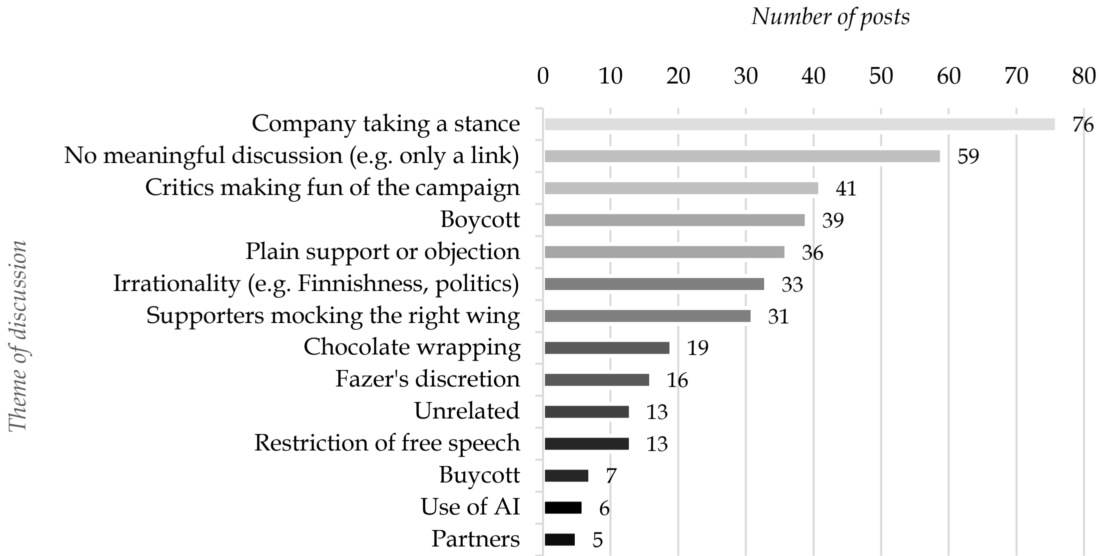

FIGURE 10. The most popular discussion themes on earned social media posts addressing Fazer's activist effort on Twitter (N = 394).

Fazer's activist effort met active countermobilization from Fazer's "arch enemies", that is, right-wing leaders and other critics of immigration, their followers and internet trolls who interpreted Fazer's act as an attempt to restrict freedom of speech. Many were making fun of the campaign (see *Critics making fun of the campaign* on FIGURE 10) and e.g. playing with the famous slogan of Fazer "Say Fazer when you want something good", as the following two citations drawn from the dataset 3 show:

> Say Fazer when you want something good or, actually, your MOUTH TO BE SHUT! With regards, @FazerSuomi
>
> Say Fazer… and that's all you'll say.
>
> #Lovebotblue project is not only Fazer's political stand, but also their stand on freedom of speech. Worth remembering e.g. on your next grocery run. #fazerboycott

The countermobilization entailed counter advertisements and a fake Twitter profile (see FIGURE 11) that impersonated the original Lovebot Blue account but played with the name and colouring by changing the colour blue to "Soviet Union red" and deploying a hashtag #alittlepieceofpropaganda and a slogan "a little piece of communism", among others. Some of the people who felt attacked wrote they had been supporting Fazer for years, but would now switch to competitors. The countermobilization finally escalated into declarations of boycott, and people demonstratively flushing Fazer's Blue chocolate bars down the toilet:

Mmmmmarabou… Fazer is making it easy for us. #littlepieceoflove #gowokegobroke #soitgoes

CHRISTMAS RESOLUTION <3: I'll buy all my gifts from Kärkkäinen and I WON'T buy anything from Fazer and Finlayson. I'll only donate to white Finnish people. Have a nice Christmas time

The bot worked just like it should. I'm now boycotting Fazer's products. Panda rules.

FIGURE 11. A fake Twitter account (right) impersonating the original Lovebot Blue Twitter account (left).

Many of the oppositional decodings were irrational, juxtaposing the campaign to Islam, totalitarism, the social credit system of China, Vladimir Putin, the US elections, or certain Finnish politicians belonging to the national coalition party and the Centre party who, as a matter of fact, had nothing do with the effort (see *Irrationality* in FIGURE 10). Some people used the opportunity to blame Fazer for other issues, too, such as for the use of palm oil or the origins of their chocolate (also classified as *Irrationality* in FIGURE 10). A group of stakeholders was seemingly alienated, which is not unusual for corporate activism (Wettstein & Baur, 2016). See extracts from the dataset 3:

The Chinese cousin of Fazer's sweet talk bot guides travellers in a bullet train in Beijing: if you e.g. smoke, the offence is filed on your personal credit account, which in China, matters to everything in life. #littlepieceoftotalitarism

Do these look like children from refugee camps? USE YOUR BRAINS, GROWN-UPS. Orpo thrusts our tax money to his business colleagues, and crapulous people of EKK [sic; Confederation of Finnish Industries] are supporting it, just like Fazer's candy man. For those who – thanks to Niinistö – became poor already in '95, they can't even give a hundred euros. Pile of shit.

One of the most prominent topics within the *Irrationality* category was Finnishness. It looks like Fazer's effort was, although highly actual, perhaps slightly ill-timed as the dust of their previous activist effort, the earlier mentioned employment initiative, had not quite settled yet. People seemed to have difficulties in wrapping their heads around the fact that Fazer's Blue – which oozes Finnishness – is focusing on hate speech and, simultaneously, seems to be yet again defending immigrants. Essentially, the problem was that their idea of Finnishness did not match with that of Fazer's Blue's – in other words, there was incongruity between the symbolic meanings of the brand and people's idea of themselves, which may indeed lead to negative engagement, or even to hate when longer-term (Hegner et al. 2017). As the campaign was gaining momentum, they felt threatened and negatively affected by the campaign, which tends to lead to counteractions (London 2010):

> The one who purchases Fazer's chocolate today, is a disgrace to Finnishness.
>
> Those crackpots are whining about "hate speech" when all we – who have worked decades for the benefit of this country – want to do, is keep our country safe and liveable for our children. No to slovens who are just more and more! From now on, Fazer's candy man can eat his own products.

Drawing from the dataset 3, Fazer's activist effort also had other, more rational critics than the nationalists. Some seemed to be against the campaign not because they were right-wing or against the values that Fazer represent but because, in their opinion, the execution of the activist effort was weak; the Lovebot intervened in discussions with automated messages, and with no sense of context nor irony. The use of artificial intelligence provoked discussion, too. Some seemed to think it was a great experimentation and just the "perfect use for AI", while some seemed to find it out of line. The *Use of AI* was also among the discussion themes that stood out, primarily due to the novelty and unexpectedness of it (see FIGURE 10). See extracts from the dataset 3:

> Now #AI has been harnessed where it's really needed. --
>
> With machine learning against hate speech? MACHINE LEARNING
>
> Should #Fazer focus on producing chocolate or developing algorithms in the future? #askingforafriend #corebusiness #digitalisation #digitalchocolate #virtualchocolate

The interviewees (dataset 1) mentioned that some people seemed to be intimated by the AI used in the campaign, which could be discerned in the dataset 3 as concerns for *restriction of free speech* (see FIGURE 10). Many decoders seemed to think that the bot – and with that also Fazer as a company – wants to abridge their freedom of speech or censor them.

In line with the findings of Hoffman et al. (2020), who examined Nike's Dream Crazy campaign in the light of agonistic pluralism, there was little discussion on the social cause at the heart of the activist effort, that is, hate speech in Fazer's case and racial discrimination in Nike's case. Hoffman et al. (2020) reasoned this with the fact that Nike did not take an explicit stance on a partisan issue but rather stayed in the traditional American Dream narrative, emphasizing the values of hyper-individualism and competition. As a result, many were discussing the meaning of sacrifice and never giving up, rather than racial matters.

Instead of the actual cause, the majority of the tweets addressing Fazer's hate speech campaign were discussing the phenomenon of companies taking stances – or nothing at all; the categories of *No meaningful discussion* and *Plain support or objection* were among the most prominent (see FIGURE 10). Drawing from the dataset 3, some of those tweets coded to the categories of *Company taking stance* and *Restriction of free speech* were also in a way touching on hate speech as a topic, but very superficially either by stating that it is an important topic the company is addressing or that the effort is only restricting the freedom of speech. It might be that people had difficulties comprehending the issue of hate speech or were afraid of its complexity and thus refrained from addressing it more profoundly.

In a few publications in the dataset 3, Fazer was contrasted to Finnish textile company *Finlayson,* oil refining and marketing company *Neste* and fast-food chain *Hesburger* – all of which have been rather actively engaged in corporate activism. Some people seemed surprised by the activist effort as they saw Fazer as something traditional and old-fashioned. Thus, to these decoders, the hate speech campaign seemed to come across self-serving – that Fazer is only wanting to "belong" and ride on the crest of a wave:

> Previously, consumers could choose the products and the producers that appealed to them. Today, producer chooses the customers that it finds appealing. @fazer @OrklaSuomi @finlayson @HesburgerFIN #othergrinches

> Fazer is fighting hate speech online. Somehow leaves me with a bitter taste in mouth – yelling in chorus because it's so damn trendy. Luckily, consumers vote with their feet, and there is no lack of options.

> Fazer campaigns against hate speech, and now Neste against eating meat. This is a trend in marketing communications but should the cobbler stick to his last. [sic] What to do, when companies are mystifying the fact that they want to sell as much as they can through allegedly ethical communication. [sic] #marketing #communication #ad

Drawing again from the dataset 1, the interviewees thought the mission of the campaign was indeed misunderstood in spite of the efforts to make the company's connection to the issue visible to people; people did not seem to understand the linkage between Fazer and hate speech. What might have helped in clarifying the mission of the campaign, is a tighter, even more visible collaboration with the campaign partners, as interviewees themselves also pondered. Fazer was perhaps lacking on political skills and sources of power, and accentuating the skilled partners would have brought in the needed expertise and charisma. After all, it has been proven that collaborating with someone who has influence or is respected, is indeed likely to make people perceive an activist effort more positively (London 2010). Certainly, Fazer could have simply put more effort into being clear about their connection to hate speech and try to storify their experience of hate speech, for instance. As stated earlier, their own experience of hate speech did not come forth in any of the campaign materials (dataset 2), but only in the research interview (dataset 1). See an extract from the dataset 1:

> Lesson learned was, however, that we should've had some non-profit association or organization more visibly involved to better convey our mission. Our audiences were not completely aware of why we wanted to address hate speech which is why the discussion went off on a tangent and we got a lot of negative feedback.

As illustrated in FIGURE 9, the public response was very erratic, the peaks forming around different controversies. A second peak of negative reactions on Twitter occurred (see FIGURE 9) early November – this time, however, the neutral slightly outweighing the negative. The discussion circulated around Fazer's poor discretion – or blindness, as many decided to call it. Fazer's poor discretion also came through as a prominent discussion theme (see FIGURE 10) in the dataset 3. People deemed that the backlash was Fazer's own fault and that Fazer was ill-prepared going into the campaign, as the extracts from dataset 3 indicate:

> This proves how isolated these people of economic elite are from the normal life of our nation. They create a bot that censors and then get SURPRISED of the reaction.
>
> Taste of your own medicine doesn't seem to be too good? So, turned out Fazer really is behind this! Lol
>
> How saddening… Are people capable of doing anything else than taking offense these days? But at least the campaign has been a great success in the sense that there's been so much discussion! #hatespeech #lovebotblue #alittlepieceoflove @FazerSuomi

The third and fourth peaks of negative reaction (see FIGURE 9) could respectively be explained by a misunderstanding concerning UN's Global Conduct, and by another counteraction orchestrated by the right wing. The former peak occurred in early December when a rightist politician Sebastian Tynkkynen mistook Global Conduct (GC), to which Fazer is committed, for Global Conduct for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), to which Fazer is not committed. Tynkkynen announced on Facebook that he would be boycotting Fazer as it seems that the company is supporting GCM and fighting against hate speech, and by doing this, they favour the Left and the Green and insult the rightists. Fazer addressed the issue on its corporate social media channels, trying to set the fact straight that Tynkkynen had in fact confused the two compacts. Shortly after, the politician corrected his writings. Yet, the harm was already done as people were quick to adhere to the statement on Twitter, as the extract below shows. Also, Tynkkynen still decided to stick with the boycott as, in his opinion, companies should stay away from politics and Fazer was clearly politicizing with the hate speech campaign. The tweets discussing the topic were coded to the category of *Irrationality* (see FIGURE 10). See an extract from the dataset 3:

> If #GCM is as harmless as they say, why are so many EU countries also refusing it? And the list of nay-sayers is only getting longer. Fazer already started the politicizing with its ”hate speech” bots, so this stupidity does not surprise me anymore. I'll buy my chocolates from Panda and Marabou in the future.

The latter peak of negative reactions occurred in mid-December. Right before, there was a smaller peak of positive reactions due to the campaign being presented in a marketing event Alma Talk. The surge of negative, then again, gained its strength from a service where people could order Fazer's Blue chocolate with a customized text on the wrapping, which Fazer introduced a few weeks after the launch of the campaign. Those negatively affected by the campaign stroke back by designing their own wrappings with derisive names and slogans. People shared pictures of the designs on Twitter and, again, mocked Fazer for being so "blind" (see *Chocolate wrapping* in FIGURE 10). See FIGURE 12 for screenshots, and see extracts from the dataset 3 below:

> Awesome that our counter campaign to @FazerSuomi's censor bot is bearing fruit!
>
> You'd think that quite many a brand would've already learned this fundamental fact of life: the trolls troll if they are given the opportunity to. The personification machine of Fazer's chocolate bars' is the latest victim #marketing

Every cloud has a silver lining, and so does Fazer's hate speech campaign. Fazer could experience the power of its' faith-holders in a very concrete way in the hate speech campaign. Drawing from the dataset 3, as a response to the boycott, some people seemed to suggest the exact opposite: a buycott. Many stated on Twitter that, owing to the great campaign, they now had another reason to purchase their favourite chocolate. Still, the mobilization for buycott was clearly not as great as that for boycott (see FIGURE 10), which may be due to a negativity bias. Besides, conservatives – that is, the antagonists in Fazer's campaign – have been found to exhibit stronger negativity bias than liberals, which may also lead to a more amplified response (Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019). See extracts from the dataset 3:

> Reading these tweets is making me crave for chocolate.
>
> Not that I had needed more reasons to eat Fazer's Blue, but this @LovebotBlue campaign is surely not making the thought of it feel more objectionable.

FIGURE 12. Chocolate wrappings designed by the campaign antagonists.

There were also many people who did not seem to give their direct support to Fazer nor the activist effort, but who clearly settled on Fazer's side and supported the liberal camp on Twitter (see *Mocking the right wing* on FIGURE 10), thus, mitigating the backlash:

> Funny how those who larp "winter war", are always taking someone behind the sauna, and waiting for marshalling of troops like a kid for Christmas, hysterically fear for plant-based food and hybrid cars, and feel threatened by Fazer's campaign against hate speech.
>
> Such a cute group they are. Fazer creates a Twitter bot that notifies for coarse language and, for some, that's a reason enough to boycott a company. Well, what could be more dreadful than a request to behave.

Although the dataset 3 proved that the campaign did have many fans and supporters, too, they were not quite as loud as their negative counterparts – which would also partly explain the negative overweighing the positive (see FIGURE 8). Also, backlash often tends to be faster than the praise; negative reaction occurs when people realize that an effort threatens them, whereas positive reaction occurs when people see there are concrete, favourable results (London 2010).

Regrettably, Fazer announced only once through the Lovebot Twitter account the amount of hate speech identified and addressed. According to the interviewees (dataset 1), there was also a counter on the campaign website showing the number of discussions addressed which, however, was not visible anymore at the time of the conduction of this study. Investing more on the ability to show visible results – ultimately, to prove the campaign is actually working, bringing about the change that was wished for, and letting people "join the journey" – might have brought more positive credit to Fazer. Now, the recognition might have come only weeks and months after the campaign ended, which is outside of the scope of the analysis conducted in this study. The impacts and outcomes of the activist effort are discussed in closer detail in the subchapter 5.4.

Drawing from the dataset 1, what Fazer found particularly valuable in the campaign, was the paid collaboration with social media influencers. Fazer had chosen to collaborate with a few bloggers, vloggers and influencers, both less and well-known, who all have had their own experiences with hate speech and who then shared their personal stories on social media in connection to the campaign. Through the collaboration, Fazer was seemingly able to reach out to different kind of audiences, with a different kind of tone. This comes, yet again, back to the fact that having someone with influence is likely to contribute to a positive perception of activism (London 2010). Moreover, the influencers might have succeeded in what Fazer failed at: articulating their connection to and personal experience with hate speech, in other words, putting a human face on the cause.

Again drawing from the dataset 1, the chosen influencers were also a great fit with the issue and thus, some level image transfer through the collaboration might have taken place. In other words, some of the associations linked to the influencers might have become connected to Fazer's brand in the followers' minds as, after the interviewees, the public respond was much softer than what Fazer had experienced in the corporate channels. Sadly, the collaboration with influencers did not take place on Twitter, meaning that this result could not be triangulated. See an extract from the dataset 1:

> What delighted us, was that we could involve social media influencers with very different audiences and target groups. For us, it was the most popular influencer marketing campaign and, for many of the influencers, the most popular post of the year. This part of the campaign we could've invested in even more as the influencers could reach out to their audiences in a very positive way. Certainly, if the discussion is going off on a tangent, it is a big responsibility to have the influencers and their followers at stake, too. In our case, the followers were very loyal to the influencers.

According to the interviewees, Fazer had recognised the risk that lies in collaborations; if the activist effort was to backfire, the impact could extend to the influencers, too. However, after the interviewees, this effect did not take place. Still, on Twitter, some critics tried to initiate a smear campaign on Fazer's partners (dataset 3) (see *Partners* in FIGURE 10). These critics were seemingly upset of CMI's connection to the campaign, whereas some blamed Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare for being Fazer's ally, and some were asking for the marketing agency behind the campaign as the campaign was "the worst ever".

5.3.2 Employees Speaking Up

Out of all the campaign related tweets, 10 per cent (41 publications) accounted for owned social media; in other words, they were either Fazer's, Lovebot's, or Fazer's employees' publications. Out of the tweets belonging to owned social media, every third (32%) tweet was published by the account assigned to Lovebot Blue. Only two tweets (5%) were published by Fazer's main Twitter account while the majority (63%) were published by Fazer's employees.

In quite a contrast to the tweets belonging to earned social media, all of the publications belonging to the owned social media in the dataset 3 were either positive (10 publications) or neutral (31 publications) – the neutral ones often plainly sharing a link to Fazer's initial campaign bulletin or news articles regarding the campaign, and the positive ones stating e.g. that it has been an honour to be involved in the execution of the activist effort or sharing news links together with positive emojis. See the distribution of the tones in FIGURE 13.

For an activist effort to succeed, open and transparent communication is a key (London 2010). However, based on the low number of publications that would have addressed the hate speech campaign and been published by Fazer, the company comes across slightly withdrawn. It might be that the volume of the negative feedback was so overwhelming that the resources allocated for the campaign were simply not enough to tackle it all and therefore Fazer took a step back from involving and responding to only informing. After all, the interviewees also stated (dataset 1) that the backlash was greater than expected.

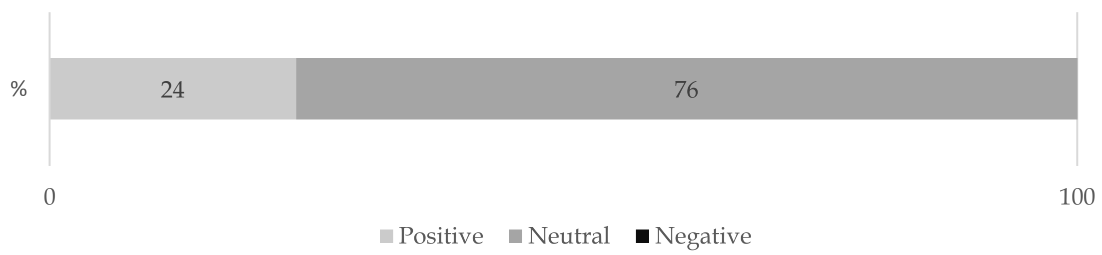

FIGURE 13. Tones of the owned social media posts addressing Fazer's activist effort on Twitter in 2018 (N = 41).

Certainly, in the activist effort, it was the duty of the Lovebot Blue's to address the wrongdoings online and intervene in discussions where hate speech emerged, and not Fazer's nor Fazer's Blue's. Still, as the activists behind the effort from whom one might expect authority, both Fazer and Fazer's Blue came across surprisingly withdrawn. Fazer tried to put out some of the fires that emerged – as the GCM example introduced in previous subchapter proved – but otherwise the company stayed largely away from the public discussion.

Based on the campaign material (dataset 2), Fazer wanted to include people and give them the chance to participate in the campaign by letting them report hate speech, encouraging them to use the campaign hashtag, and showcasing those publications that employed the hashtag on the campaign website – in other words, there were some attempts for engagement. However, other defining characteristics of dialogue were not evident in Fazer's digital discourse on hate speech. Also, many of Lovebot's tweets (dataset 3) were mobilizing but not inviting for interaction nor engaging for dialogue:

> Hi, I'm Lovebot Blue, an AI developed by Fazer's Blue against hate speech. Help me fight hate speech. Get to know my ways of working here: [link to campaign website] #alittlepieceoflove
>
> Yesterday I found over 1400 possible incidents of hate speech and addressed over 70 of those. Today, the work continues. Remember that hate speech is never accepted! By using the hashtag #alittlepieceoflove also you can show you are against hate speech and don't accept it in any form.

Much like in Ben & Jerry's activist effort for Black Lives Matter that Ciszek and Logan (2018) examined, there was also little evidence of Kent and Taylor's (2002) dialogic principles of mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk, and commitment in the public discussion – to be frank, the supporters and antagonists were rather spitting on each other. That being said, the analyzed tweets were distinct publications (excluding a handful of retweets seemingly answering to other publications) which makes it impossible to confirm that two-way communication would *not* have occurred as, after all, it might have occurred in single Twitter threads discussing the effort. Still, to support the evidence against dialogue, the vast majority of the publications had very low number of reactions; every third tweet (32%) belonging to earned social media had no reactions at all, i.e. neither comments, likes or shares, and nearly three quarters (68%) of the tweets had five or less reactions. Less than 10% had more than thirty reactions (both comments, likes and shares included).

In any case, based on the distinct tweets analyzed, the findings of dataset 3 point rather to agonistic pluralism than to shared meaning or issue resolution. Some scholars (Hoffman et al. 2020) deem that taking a stance while trying to be politically correct and on the liberal side of an issue, only results in harmony but, on the other hand, as the analysis on the most prominent discussion themes showed, especially arguments on who has the right to define, speak about, and educate on hate speech all collided on Twitter. Some antagonists (dataset 3) even blamed Fazer for trying to be so progressive and politically correct as, by doing so, they divide people into camps:

> This thing of Fazer is such a massive mistake that it's even hard to comprehend. They are stupid, hypocrite and politically correct "better people" who tell us "stupid people" how to behave. We won't buy Fazer's products anymore. Period.

Although Fazer's discourse on hate speech was not too dialogic, dialogue still is a major part of Fazer's public relations management and part of the process of legitimation, as it came forth in the subchapter 5.2.2. Based on the results drawn from the dataset 1, Fazer had also made sure that the support and mandate from the ownership and leadership had been earned before launching the hate speech campaign. Yet, it seems like they had slightly neglected the employees; the employees were not proactively kept up to date of what is going on and aware of the reasoning and intentions behind the activism, which led to confusion. In Fazer's favour, however, their initial respond later transformed into pride, as the interviewees also told:

> This was something new to our whole staff. Some were surprised in the beginning, which then later turned into pride of their company doing something like this. -- A major learning was that you need to make sure that your own people get the right facts, understand why we are doing this and know how to deal with the feedback and distinguish what is positive and negative. Our people have such a strong feeling for our company and brand, which makes that we tend to take things very personally.

As the employee example indicates, it seems that reaction to corporate activism is not always exclusively negative or positive but rather ever-evolving – especially when the effort is a campaign instead of a single occasion which also constantly evolves. Thus, one could think that for activism to sustain, engaging in dialogue prior to, while, and after the activist effort would be important both internally and externally. Dialogue allows continuous feedback, change of thoughts, and integration of new ideas, and enhances the learning experience, too (London 2010). If a company is not willing to involve its stakeholders, and co-create and collaborate with them, it may risk coming across uncooperative and uninterested.

Fazer's proud employees also stood up when the company seemed withdrawn into its own shelf during the campaign. Drawing from the dataset 3, Fazer did not address e.g. the case of personalized wrappings with derisive texts on its corporate channels, yet, one of Fazer's employees did with somewhat sharp-tempered tweets on his personal account. In the light of the dataset 1, employees speaking for and defending Fazer is nothing new as Fazer's employees are known for their commitment to and enthusiasm for their work. Based on the evidence of the datasets 1 and 4, Fazer has been able to empower its employees to become brand ambassadors, or evangelists, of the company who are, as a rule, talking about their daily work on social media. Letting employees defend and speak for a company on social media shows great trust, yet, it can also have a detrimental effect if, for instance, their defence was too poignant (Moorman 2020). See an extract from the dataset 1:

> People are extremely proud to be working for Fazer, and they also want others to know that. When they are sharing their experiences on social media, for instance, we greatly value it as a company and as an employer.

5.3.3 Echoing News Media

To make sense of the news media's depiction of the campaign, a look into the dataset 4 must be taken. There were in total of nine (9) news media items produced between 23rd of October and 31st of December that were identified as addressing Fazer's hate speech campaign (see TABLE 4). Three items were reused in different outlets within the same media house but these were counted only as three (3) distinct publications instead of twelve (12).

Based on the results drawn from the dataset 3 and 4, Fazer's activist effort was much more popular topic on social than in the news media. When comparing the volume of the tweets (394) to that of the news pieces (9) produced in the same time frame, the volume of the tweets was more than fortyfold. Then again, single news pieces arguably reached a wider audience and were more prominent than single tweets as many of the tweeters only had a handful of followers and, as pointed out in the previous subchapter, the tweets yielded little reactions.

As so common in today's media landscape, it seems that the social and news media were reflecting each other during Fazer's campaign. Whenever an article was published in the news media, it was quickly filtered to fit ones' own viewpoint, and shared on Twitter. Then again, whenever something major took place on social media, it was reported on news media. The reciprocity of the social and news media can be seen on FIGURE 14.

TABLE 4. News media items addressing Fazer's activist effort and their tones, types and discussion themes.

Nr	Date	Outlet	Author	Tone and Type	Discussion Theme
1	**24/10/2018**	*Markkinointi & Mainonta* (*MarMai*) (+ *Kauppalehti on 28/10*)	Kukkonen, L.	Neutral news article and an interview	Campaign introduction, Fazer's motivation
2	**29/10/2018**	*Aamulehti* (+ other *Lännen Media* outlets on 29/10)	Pajunen, E.	Neutral sidebar for an article on volunteering and CSR	Campaign introduction
3	**5/11/2018**	*MarMai* (+ other *Alma Media* outlets on 6/11)	Alkula, M.	Neutral news article and an interview	Backlash
4	**8/11/2018**	*Suomen Uutiset*	Turkkila, M.	Negative news article and a comment	Censorship, company taking a stance
5	**22/11/2018**	*Maaseudun Tulevaisuus*	Kuivalahti, L.	Neutral human-interest feature	Profile of Fazer's sustainability director, company taking a stance
6	**3/12/2018**	*Iltalehti*	Julku, M.	Neutral news article	Boycott of the right-wing, Tynkkynen
7	**13/12/2018**	*Iltalehti*	Egutkina, A.	Neutral news article	Chocolate wrapping, trolls
8	**14/12/2018**	*MarMai*	Perttula, V.	Negative comment	Trolls, chocolate wrapping, failure

9	**20/12/2018**	*Talouselämä*	Jauhiainen, J.	Positive comment	Benefits of the boycott, financial gain, company taking a stance

Drawing from the dataset 4, what was especially widely reported on the news media was a follow-up of people's reactions to the campaign. It seems that in the beginning of the campaign it was mainly newspapers targeted at media and business professionals (e.g. *Markkinointi & Mainonta*, *Kauppalehti*) that reported about the activist effort but as the debate on social media got all the more heated – or unusually heated for Fazer's media landscape – also news media outlets targeted at wider audience (e.g. *Uusi Suomi*, *Iltalehti*) regarded the case as newsworthy (see FIGURE 14).

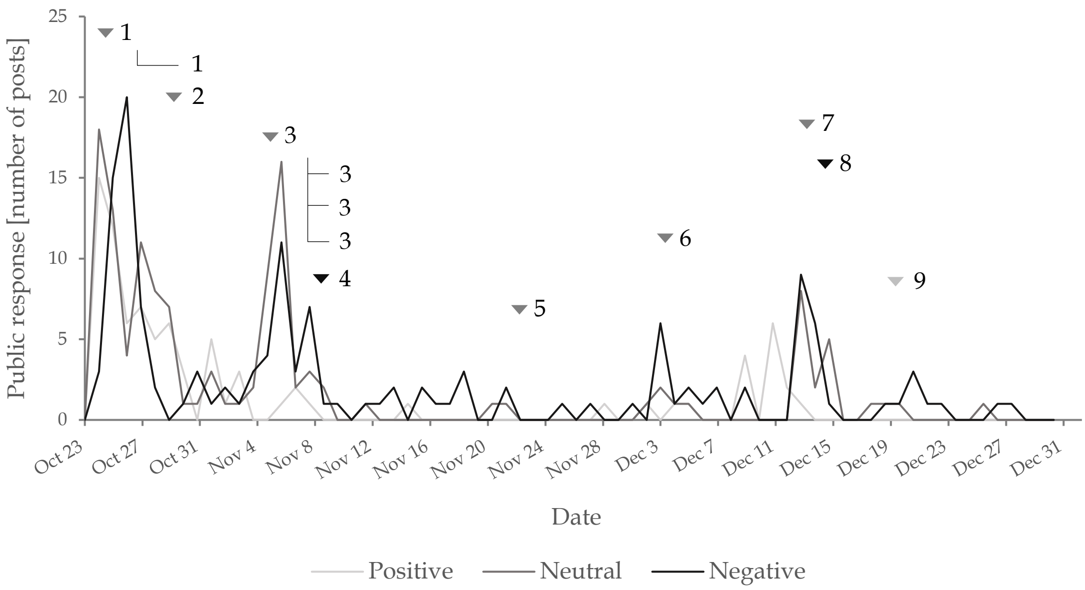

FIGURE 14. The reciprocity of the public response on social and news media in 2018. See the legends of the numbers in FIGURE 13.

Drawing from the dataset 4, almost all of the texts analysed were focusing on Fazer alone, usually with the company also present in the headline and possible picture. Moreover, two thirds (6 out of 9) of the publications included quotes from a Fazer representative, thus, clearly giving voice to the advocate.

The tone was mostly neutral, with a reporting type of standpoint for the issue; only two of the texts, a comment published on a Finnish magazine targeted at media and marketing communications professionals *Markkinointi & Mainonta* (Perttula 2018) and an article published on a right-wing political media *Suomen*

Uutiset (Turkkila 2018), were negative. The former news item was critical of Fazer letting people design their own chocolate bar wrappings especially so soon after the backlash that the hate speech campaign had provoked, whereas the latter was critical of how Fazer is doing something that is not any of its business and discusses whether the activist effort was an attempt to censor public discussion. The campaign was negatively portrayed on many fake news platforms and right-wing blogs, too, but these were not included in the content analysis of this study.

What is noteworthy, is that none of the articles truly discussed the issue at the heart of the campaign, that is, hate speech. What often seemed to be in the centre, was the phenomenon itself, that is, company taking a stance – just like in the social media discussion (dataset 3). The focus of the articles was chiefly on the execution of the effort and the reactions it yielded.

5.4 Impacts and Outcomes of Fazer's Activism

In this fourth and last subchapter, the aftermath – that is to say, the impacts and outcomes of the activist effort – is discussed. The results in the subchapter are drawn from all four datasets.

Fazer's hate speech campaign ended in mid-December 2018. However, based on the results drawn from the dataset 3, the public discussion continued a while longer – the supporters praising the brave act and the antagonists spitefully asking why Fazer had now "given up":

> Where did #Fazer #alittlepieceoflove go… is it starting to affect the Christmas sales… [sic]

> Fazer's Lovebot ran out of steam – left for Christmas break

In hindsight, it seems like many things did not go as Fazer had planned in their activist effort (dataset 1); the employees took it with confusion, the mission was misunderstood, resources were not enough, and both stakeholder alienation and a boycott took place. Still, when asked to evaluate whether the campaign was successful, the interviewees were unanimous in their opinion that it indeed was successful and worth it.

Firstly, drawing from the dataset 1, the campaign had exceeded the commercial goals set for it; according to the interviewees, both market share and sales margin of Fazer's Blue grew, and ad awareness clearly increased. As so often with corporate activism, despite of possible initial reputational damage, long-term financial benefits may still generate (Dodd & Supa 2015; Wettstein & Baur 2016).

Secondly, again drawing from the dataset 1, the campaign had evoked discussion and garnered attention to an important and actual issue. The dataset

3 indicated that true dialogue on the issue did not emerge, but the effort and with that the issue indeed garnered attention. According to the interviewees, hate speech became a big discussion point in the media after the year turn when the campaign had just ended – not necessarily nor at least merely on account of the campaign, but at least proving the actuality of the topic. This would suggest that some-level coercive pressure was created and Fazer could indeed increase the importance of the issue in the eyes and minds of institutional actors. However, whether the effort resulted in a change in the actors' attitudes or behaviour cannot be evaluated with the data of this study. See an extract from the dataset 1:

> It [hate speech] was a topical theme and the reason why we chose to address it. And I'm not saying it was just us, but hate speech did rise to public discussion soon after our campaign. The discussion continued, which felt good – it proved we had addressed something relevant.

Thirdly – and what seemed like the interviewees valued the most – the learning experience was significant. In the light of the dataset 1, whenever Fazer has taken stance, they have learned both about the topic and execution. In the hate speech campaign, a major learning that came forth in the dataset 1 was that there is no such thing as being too generous on resources. Even if the preparatory work had been extensive and all scenarios and possible risks covered, room for surprises and changing conditions must be left. When an activist effort is out there at the mercy of the public, resilience, persistence, and continuous adjusting are called for not only to endure hardships – in Fazer's case, the counteracts and the surges of criticism – but also to maintain the spirit (London 2010). Evoking discussion could be counted as an early outcome, and the learning then again as a long-term effect. See again an extract from the dataset 1:

> It [Fazer's LoveBot Blue] was our most commented social media campaign, and a big part of the comments were negative or criticizing. This meant that it necessitated a lot of our resources. Although we had prepared well, the volume of the negativity was more laborious than we had expected.

Fazer was not the only one to declare the effort successful. A few days after the campaign ended, Talouselämä (eng. Economic Life), a weekly financial and business magazine, published a retrospective comment (Jauhiainen 2018) on the activist effort. In the text (Jauhiainen 2018), the author relates Fazer to Nike's Dream Crazy campaign, and states that both examples prove that a company can, in fact, benefit from a boycott. Jauhiainen (2018) concludes that companies' good deeds are emphasized when there are people against it who represent injustices in the eyes of others. One could say that Fazer, in a way, benefitted from its haters as those who were not necessarily supporters of Fazer, were supporters of liberal values and now may link Fazer with those values that they hold dear.

Drawing from the dataset 1, it seems that Fazer sees corporate activism as just one way among others to put corporate sustainability into practice and communicate about sustainability. Also, the interviewees told they are striving for sustained efforts when it comes to their sustainability work:

> It [corporate activism] is a lot about building. When you think of stakeholders – consumers or media, for instance – we want to be systematic and persistent in our sustainability work and with them, too. We communicate also about things that are not so hip, instead of only picking the cherries. This way we can build trust.
>
> Of course, certain openers and themes have worked better than others. We're aware of that; some things are harder to grasp than others and may not feel relevant to everyone at that point of time. But we want to be systematic and not only tell about the things that we know are going to be smash hits, so to speak.

Yet, one can argue whether the systematism has fully reached Fazer's activist efforts. Systematism would be important as also earlier research has shown that in order to earn the right to advocate, plausible and credible advocacy efforts are needed (Chatterji & Toffel 2019; Dodd & Supa 2015; Wettstein & Baur 2016). Drawing from the datasets 1 and 2, the campaign was preceded with events and other acts on different human rights related themes. These were mostly internal and not specifically on hate speech, and therefore for many, the effort might have come as a surprise. Also, based on the interviewees' assessments, the advocation of hate speech largely ended when the campaign came to its end. The interviewees told Fazer continued with the issue again internally but, from the outside, the effort could have looked more systematic had the momentum been kept longer or even continued in another form at a later point of time. If company is not persistent with an issue, it may risk the engagement with the issue coming across inauthentic, or even as woke washing (Vredenburg et al. 2020):

> As a campaign [Fazer's LoveBot Blue campaign that fought hate speech], that was it. But the elements carried on. As I said, the bot was taught to recognize fifty most typical hate speech words and we still have those as filters on our social media channels. - - We've also lowered our level to intervene in discussions that have features of cyber bullying. And internally, diversity has been a big theme for us ever since.

When it comes to the activist itself – that is, Fazer – it seems that one other favourable long-term effect along the learning took place. Drawing from the datasets 1 and 3, Fazer got a fair amount of recognition from both consumers, and communication and marketing practitioners. Of course, on the other side of the coin is one negative long-term effect; the interviewees told that still, two years after, the campaign occasionally negatively echoes on Fazer's corporate channels in the form of single comments calling Fazer names. Drawing from the dataset 1, some of those mental images of Fazer restricting freedom of speech and promoting "wrong kind of Finnishness" seem to be alive and well.

Also, what came forth in the dataset 3, the negative impact was not only limited to the Lovebot Blue that was personally involved in the discussions nor Fazer's Blue, but came up to the corporate brand, too. This does not come as a surprise, however, as Fazer's corporate brand and Fazer's Blue product brand are so intertwined; Fazer's Blue is Fazer's most iconic product and best-known brand extension, and their brand awareness, associations, and loyalty seem to have largely gone hand in hand. Also, in the initial bulletin of the campaign (dataset 2), Fazer's Blue is only called the "herald" while Fazer appears as the actor behind the effort.

However, based on the results drawn from the dataset 1, the positive has seemed to outweigh the negative. After the interviewees, the case did not induce too much of negative engagement or disengagement, nor create a long-term legitimacy gap among Fazer's stakeholders, which could also well be the case when voluntarily engaging in controversial issues (Dodd & Supa 2015; Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019).

According to the interviewees (dataset 1), in the big picture, corporate activism has had a positive impact on their company. Internally, it has positively affected their company's culture through learning and new insights gained. Externally, corporate activism has positively affected their company's reputation and employer brand, as well as consumers' purchase intentions. See extracts from the dataset 1:

> It [taking stance] affects corporate culture through learning and pride. It affects company's reputation. I say it also affects who apply for jobs in a company and who buy your products. Consumers, our stakeholders… As Liisa said, we get loads of requests for collaboration. It does have business relevance.

> Certainly, it [corporate activism] does affect our brand. And our brand ranks well on brand surveys.

6 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In this final chapter, the results will be concluded and research questions answered. How the findings of this study fit within the previous understanding and framework of corporate activism will be analysed. The chapter also discusses the managerial contributions. Lastly, the study will be critically evaluated and some suggestions for future research will be proposed.

6.1 Conclusions and Theoretical Implications

The aim of this master's thesis was to gain more insight on corporate activism by deepening into a single case and probe experiences of this rapidly ground-gaining phenomenon from both corporate and public perspectives. Research on corporate activism still is rather scarce – and research that would have been conducted within some other context than that of North America especially so. This study discussed corporate activism in the Finnish context, further facilitating our understanding of the phenomenon and striving to make it more tangible to businesses operating in the Nordics. Although the case under study was a rather clear-cut example of corporate activism, it also brought something new to the already existing definitions and classifications discussed in the theory chapter.

The first research question of the study concerned the reasoning behind the case company's activism, that is, on one hand the factors enabling corporate activism for Fazer and on the other the factors driving their engagement in it. The answer was obtained through the analysis of the interview and campaign materials. The research question goes as follows:

RQ1. How does the case company reason its engagement in corporate activism?

The interviewees, or company representatives, assessed that Fazer primarily takes stance in consequence of the company's sense of duty. In other words, they perceive corporate activism as something that is not only expected but also needed. The representatives seemed to think the demands coming from consumers, in particular, are very much justifiable as with the fast reactivity, resources, and connections that companies have, they should undoubtedly be engaging in societal debate and finding solutions to mutual problems. After all, business is a part of society and companies, too, have a responsibility to make a positive contribution to society, proactively push for good initiatives, and encourage people to do right choices. Accordingly, what ultimately sparked Fazer's hate speech campaign, was a strong social need affecting both themselves and their primary stakeholders, and a will to educate people on the detrimental impacts of hate speech.

It seems that Fazer has acknowledged and assumed its societal role and relational identity orientation making it concerned for its customers and other primary stakeholders early on. The case company representatives stated that taking stances is nothing new to them; the phenomenon has perhaps been labelled again and increasingly talked about in the recent years – and their company might have become all the more active in it – but it is by no means a novel activity for them nor wider in society. Besides, the representatives deemed taking a stance is also an opportunity for a company, instead of a mere obligation or duty. In fact, being part of the positive change in society could well be said to be part of Fazer's corporate purpose; the company is deeply committed to advancing socio-political issues, and its role in their strategic priorities is clear.

Along the inherent sense of duty, relational identity orientation, and purpose, other internal factors nurturing the emergence and development of corporate activism at Fazer are the company's favourable value base emphasizing such themes as equality, diversity and Nordic liberty that Fazer wishes to foster and protect both within and outside of the company, an experimental and forward-looking corporate culture that allows for trial and error, and the positioning of the corporate brand that incites for activism. Certainly, as Fazer has a tradition of taking stance and the capabilities and knowledge are already in place, it seems to be quite easy for the company to engage in corporate activism over and over. Additionally, integrated approach to sustainability came forth in the findings as supportive of corporate activism; for Fazer, corporate responsibility is something very omnipresent and corporate activism plainly one tool among others with which to put it into practice. This also suggests that regardless of where corporate activism as a phenomenon originates from, within a company it might be seen as an intrinsic part of CSR.

When it comes to external factors, or situational conditions, it seems that having a strong internal and external stakeholder support allows Fazer to take stances in divisive socio-political issues. According to the representatives, being a family-owned company – and sharing the same values across leadership – makes it easier to capitalize on different kind of aspirations. Knowing that there are also external stakeholder groups that support and respect the company, makes Fazer truly live its values, push boundaries, and stand behind its statements without needing to waver.

Another situational condition often discoursed in corporate activism related research is pressure to take stance. This pressure – despite from whom or where it is coming from – might make companies take stances just for the sake of taking stances, which after Stanley (2020) seldom lead to long-lasting activism. The case company representatives told their company has indeed recognized an increased pressure to participate in solving socio-political issues. The new kind of awareness and demands of the newer generations – which has widely been recognized in previous research, too (e.g. Shetty, Venkataramaiah & Anand 2019) – was emphasized in the findings. Then again, the pressure does not seem to notably steer Fazer's activism, but rather the sense of duty and societal role that the company has assumed well before the pressure has emerged. Pressure that would arise from other companies taking stances did not come forth as supportive of emergence and development of corporate activism for it seems that corporate activism is something so strongly rooted in company's own corporate purpose and values. Yet, the representatives told they do sometimes join in on mutual pleas, which indicates that social pressure occasionally does encourage Fazer to engage in corporate activism.

Still, based on the findings of the interview, it is not only the common good that drives Fazer's engagement in activist efforts – which is nothing unprecedented for corporate activism. Prior research (Bhagwat et al. 2020; Wettstein & Baur 2016) has found that there often are mixed motives behind companies' activist efforts and, in addition to financial considerations, there may sometimes be reputational considerations behind corporate activist efforts, too. According to the representatives interviewed, the company does support some causes just for themselves without any financial or commercial objectives, whereas some causes are clearly tied to financial or commercial objectives, too. The possible positive impact on reputation or competitive advantage then again are strictly consequences for Fazer, not reasons to take stance. The case in the heart of this study, i.e. Fazer's campaign against hate speech, arose from mixed motives. The effort came into being due to the strong social need that concerned both Fazer and its primary stakeholders, but was not fully altruistic, or void of economic interests either. In fact, according to the representatives, an ideal activist effort would be one that benefits both the cause and the company.

Next, the second research question concerning the reception of and discourse on Fazer's corporate activist effort on hate speech is answered. The question goes as follows:

RQ2. How was the public discussion around the case company's activist effort on hate speech?

In corporate activism, companies take stance in highly divisive issues. This, combined with an increasingly politically polarized population, means that emotions and opinions both for and against are typically evoked. (Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019.) Congruently, although Fazer's activist effort on hate speech received a great deal of positive support on social media, it received even stronger opposition, which was also rather widely reported in the news media. The answer to the second research question was principally reached through examining the tones and themes of owned and earned social media as well as those of news media.

Out of the analyzed tweets that were identified as related to the activist effort, the vast majority – i.e. 90 per cent – belonged to earned social media and the rest 10 per cent to owned social media. Among the earned social media posts addressing Fazer's activist effort, the negative reactions overweighed both the positive and the neutral. During the campaign, the discussion was not steady but rather fluctuating both tone and volume wise. For the most part, however, the amount of negative on earned social media is explained by the active countermobilization that the activist effort met from the case company's rightist bullies. As the campaign was gaining momentum, this group felt threatened by the campaign, which according to prior research (e.g. London 2010), tends to lead to counteractions.

When it comes to the owned social media, neutrality dominated while around a quarter of the publications were positive. The results of both the interview and the social media content analysis proved that Fazer has been able to empower its employees to become real brand ambassadors of the company. Having such a buffer of positively engaged employees who take pride in their work and spread organizational messages on their private social media accounts certainly helps in turbulent times that corporate activism may cause. On the other hand, it looked like Fazer and Fazer's Blue as a company and a brand stayed very much in the background of the campaign-related discussion, instead trusting their employees with speaking for the company. This made the activists themselves look rather remote and furthermore, might make a company vulnerable to erratic employee actions (Moorman 2020).

Based on the findings, the activist effort was much more popular topic on social than in the news media. There were in total of nine (9) news pieces produced during the campaign that were identified as addressing the activist effort, meaning that the volume of the tweets compared to that of the news pieces was more than fortyfold. That being said, single news pieces arguably reached a wider audience and were more prominent than the single tweets. The tones of the news pieces were mostly neutral, with a reporting type of standpoint for the issue. Only two of the texts, a comment published on a Finnish magazine targeted at media and marketing communications professionals and an article published on a right-wing political media were negative. Certainly, judged by the news type and the outlet, neither of these publications strived for neutrality and impartiality in the first place. The campaign was also negatively portrayed on many fake news platforms and right-wing blogs, but these were omitted from the content analysis.

Among the earned social media posts, in total of fourteen (14) themes of discussions were identified. Out of these, *company taking a stance* was clearly the most prominent, including statements both for and against. The findings point in the same direction as prior research (Weinzimmer & Esken 2016; Wettstein & Baur 2016): although many are already expecting companies to take stances, some people are still utterly bothered by the intrusion of ideology. Many of those who are demanding companies to take stance, seem to also be highly critical of the implementation of corporate activism. The same theme of companies taking stances dominated in the news media, too. This theme being so prominent both in the social and news media could also be seen to indicate that companies taking strong stances on socio-political issues was not a usual sight in Finland in 2018 – or then corporate activism just happens to be such an emotive topic in itself.

In the campaign, many of the negative arguments were highly irrational, accusing the advocate of restriction of free speech or juxtaposing the campaign to e.g. radical political ideologies. Among the negatively engaged, there were also other groups – some even Fazer's customers – who were not necessarily as radical as the rightists but whose values were simply not congruent with the activist company. They seemed surprised of Fazer so strongly taking stance – which implies some-level reputation-reality gap – and particularly irritated by the fact that Fazer's Blue – an ultimately Finnish brand – addresses hate speech and, simultaneously, seems to side with immigrants. Essentially, the antagonists' idea of Finnishness did not match with that of Fazer's Blue's. Traditionally, the more strongly the advocated values deviate from the values of the targets, the more punishments are induced (Bhagwat et al. 2020). This kind of value incongruity may also lead to negative engagement, alienation, or even to hate when longer-term (Hegner et al. 2017; Wettstein & Baur 2016).

The irrationalities also contained smaller discussion themes, such as sustainable sourcing, which were not directly connected to the activist effort. It looks like corporate activism can incite people to try and find just any dirt about the activist company and use the opportunity to blame it for that, too. Against this background, companies should carefully consider what issues are worth advocating for and what not – or alternatively, be prepared to distinguish other fires, too, than that possibly caused by the advocated issue.

Finally, the negative response escalated into boycott declarations. Boycott is quite an extreme reaction especially in Fazer's media landscape and naturally induced much discussion. As a response to the boycott that the negatively engaged declared, some people seemed to suggest a buycott which is also nothing new as a response to corporate activism (Hydock, Paharia & Weber 2019). However, the negatively engaged took up clearly more space than the positively engaged; boycott as a discussion theme was over fivefold compared to buycott, for instance. Then again, negativity bias might have occurred. Moreover, research (London 2010) has shown that the backlash often tends to be faster than the praise; negative reaction occurs when people realize that an effort threatens them, whereas positive reaction occurs when people see there are concrete, favourable results. Against this background, the positive reaction might have come weeks or even months after the campaign ended, thus, simply not coming forth in the content analysis data. Based on the interviewees' assessments, Fazer got a great deal of recognition after the campaign had ended, proving that despite of initial backlash, corporate activism can indeed later lead to favourable results.

Critics making fun of the campaign and *supporters mocking the right wing* also stood out as distinct discussion themes. Many of the publications in the former category were flouting the AI-driven bot, the execution of the campaign, or Fazer as a company. The latter, then again, consisted of a set of playful publications that seemed like a counterattack towards the rightists' abrupt reaction to the campaign; these people did not give their direct support to Fazer nor the activist effort, but clearly settled on Fazer's progressive side on the debate, thus, mitigating the backlash. This implies that those who respond positively to an activist effort, do not necessarily have to like the activist or find it especially skilled – agreeing on the stance is enough. What also stood out as its own discussion theme, was Fazer's *discretion* where both the supporters and antagonists seemed to come together; the dominant opinion was that Fazer was ill-prepared for the campaign and wrongfully surprised by the reaction it caused.

The news media was largely echoing whatever took place on the social media, and then again, when something was published in the news media, it was quickly filtered to shore up own viewpoint, and shared on Twitter. In the beginning of the campaign, it was mainly newspapers targeted at media and business professionals that reported about the activist effort. Later, as the debate on social media got all the more heated – or unusually heated for Fazer's media landscape – also other news media outlets seemed to consider the case newsworthy. What is an interesting question though is that if the backlash would not have taken place, would the effort have become as big of a topic in news media and the advocated issue, i.e. hate speech, gotten as much exposure? Presumably not.

Finally, in congruence with the findings of Hoffman et al. (2020), there was minimal discussion on the social cause at the heart of the campaign. Some of the opposing decodings were discussing the restriction of free speech which can be seen nearing the issue of hate speech, but which only represents one perspective. Similarly, none of the news pieces conversed on hate speech; much like in the social media, the phenomenon itself, i.e. corporate activism, stole the spotlight instead. Furthermore, based on the findings and in congruence with the findings of Ciszek and Logan (2018), the public discussion did not contribute to constructive dialogue on hate speech nor issue resolution.

Lastly, the third research question concerning the success factors of corporate activism is discussed. The question goes as follows:

RQ3. Based on the case of the study, what factors should be taken into consideration when wanting to engage in corporate activism?

For corporate activism to succeed, the right to advocate should, first of all, be earned. This process of legitimation entails dialogue, alignment, and co-creation with the closest stakeholders prior to the effort being launched. In addition to earning the support of and mandate from the leadership, also employees of the company should be proactively kept up to date and aware of the motives behind the activism to prevent them from turning against the effort.

Second of all, the issue or a cause supported should be carefully chosen. The interviewees placed a great emphasis on the connection between the issue and the activist company; they believe that, to ensure credibility and consistency, the issue or a cause supported should have a connection to the company. This is very much in line with previous research that has conversed on e.g. integrity and moral authority (e.g. Weinzimmer & Esken 2016; Wettstein & Baur 2016). Furthermore, and indispensably, company should be able to make the connection visible to the target audiences through communication. If the connection to the issue and the motives driving the activism are not clear, people may find the engagement in the issue inauthentic – as the case of this study proved. Despite Fazer reasoning their decision to address the issue of hate speech in their own media and the motives being discoursed on news media, too, people seemed to be sceptical about the company's intentions and question its authority. Also, the company's own experience of hate speech that came forth in the research interview did not come forth in any of the campaign materials. Had the company capitalized on that experience and truly manifested the connection, there might have been more positive judgments coming Fazer's way.

The fit of an issue, or company-cause fit, has been a major point of discussion and debate in prior research on socially responsible initiatives (Abitbol & Sternadori 2019), yet, its applicability to corporate activism is dubious as corporate activism often is about divisive issues that are not exactly core business and that essentially do not fit. As an in-betweener, Vredenburg et al. (2020) have spoken for a moderate mismatch between company and the cause, or optimal incongruence, which may encourage consumers to engage in greater elaboration and, ultimately, lead to more intense reactions and longer lasting memories. Although Fazer tried to draw the issue of hate speech closer to the company by connecting it to other themes that are naturally closer to the company (e.g. love, eating together) and extensively reason their decision to address the issue, the incongruence was considerable – at least by judging from the public response. Besides, it looks like people did not find the issue relevant for themselves either. On the other hand, the reaction to Fazer's campaign was indeed intense and the campaign had remained both positively and negatively imprinted on peoples' minds still at least for a year after the campaign had ended.

In this study, company representatives confirmed what earlier research (Olkkonen 2017) has found: big and well-known companies are especially avidly expected to take clear stances, yet, they may have little leeway when it comes to addressing issues as people evaluate their credibility by contrasting the activism to the company's image. Having a hybrid architecture of multiple different brands, however, could be said to widen company's opportunities to take stance as each brand has its own image allowing for different views, opinions, and statements. Still, the findings suggest that an activist effort done through a product brand does not necessarily shield the corporate brand from the possible backlash due to spillover effect.

When choosing the issue, also its divisiveness could be assessed. According to the case company representatives, not all activism has to address extremely divisive issues. They believe smaller and milder actions are as worthy as big and controversial ones. On another note, some scholars (Hoffman et al. 2020) have questioned whether companies that only promote liberal values about which the majority think alike should be granted the activist status at all. Then again, there are pronounced differences between the Nordic and North American contexts; in Finland, for instance, there has not been a similar need for radical activism and there still is no similar culture of debate as in the United States, which could be seen to impact corporate activism, too. One could think that, in Finland, the topics for corporate activism do not necessarily have to be extremely partisan to qualify as corporate activism. In view of the foregoing, if Finnish companies wished to engage in corporate activism, they would not have to aim for the issues rooted in the most partisan extremity but rather for those that are meaningful and plausible for them and they believe they can truly have an impact on.

One more aspect to consider in connection to the advocated issue is its complexity. Hate speech, for instance, is a rather controversial and manifold issue and, traditionally, many people have related efforts fighting hate speech to efforts restricting free speech, or even confused them for those, which also showed in the findings of the content analysis. Against this background, companies that decide to address hate speech or any other complex issue as part of their advocacy agenda should be particularly well prepared and aware of all the dimensions that the discourses of those entail. Besides, they should show sensitivity to their targets' orientation and level of knowledge, and make the issue as understandable and digestible for the targets as possible.

Complex socio-political problems are often too great to be tackled alone. Instead, they require new ways of thinking, innovative approaches, and candid collaboration with different actors from individuals to start-ups, civil society and other businesses. In the hate speech campaign, collaboration with social media influencers proved to make the issue more understandable and tangible for the targets. Additionally, after the interviewees, the campaign got a much softer response when "filtered" through the influencers than in the corporate channels. Earlier research (Eilert & Nappier Cherup 2020; London 2010) has found that including a spokesperson or other figure who has been personally affected by the issue in the activist effort, may indeed lend legitimacy and increase the targets' commitment. Findings of this study also suggest that a partner who has specialized in the advocated issue brings credibility and might even make it possible for a company to address issues that are lower-fit – e.g. issues that are close to a company's values but which are not exactly core business or a company's expertise. By embracing collaboration and co-creation, the advocate company can, in a way, extend its expertise and reassert its right to advocate. With the support of non-profit organizations or other changemakers, companies might also be able to design better, more effective activist efforts that support the advancement of an issue and complement the non-profits' actions in a meaningful way.

Yet another point that the interviewees lifted up in connection to the factors to consider, was approaching the advocated issue from a constructive and amicable perspective. Based on the results of the interview, companies had better not disrespect and insult other companies to make themselves look better but rather be their own competition, set positive examples, and aim for collective, collaborative action with others. Also, timing is an important point to consider when planning to take stance. Fazer might have had some first-mover advantages as they took stance in the issue when it was not as widely discussed as it is today, or as it was soon after their activist effort. However, it seems that the burden of their previous activist effort slightly reflected on their effort against hate speech; a group of stakeholders seemed to think Fazer has, once and for all, abandoned them as Fazer again sided with the liberal camp, instead of advocating for more conservative values. Similarly, prior research (London 2010) has found that activist efforts may be perceived self-serving when ill-timed.

Based on the evidence of this study, the planning – i.e. the preparatory work and studying and building different scenarios – should not be underestimated. It is particularly important to be aware of the critical stakeholder groups, and the potential risks that lie in those. Also, sufficient resources should be allocated for the effort. Although Fazer was aware of their critical stakeholders prior to addressing hate speech, it seems that the company was surprised of the volume of the backlash, and also slightly discouraged by it. The effort might have worked out better, had the company had the resources to more actively engage in interaction and direct the discussion around the effort. Persistency, resilience, and self-confidence would have also been called for to support the company to overcome the backlash and maintain the enthusiasm, and ultimately make their strategies yield fruitful outcomes. Persistency has also been widely discussed and underlined in prior advocacy literature (e.g. London 2010; Stanley 2020).

Although the notion of dialogue in the context of corporate activism is quite contested – some scholars deeming that true dialogue that counts on mutuality and consensus can hardly exist within corporate activism (Ciszek & Logan 2018) and some that advocacy should be viewed as an ever-evolving negotiation process (London 2010) – based on the evidence of this study, it looks like there is need and space for dialogue within corporate activism, too, and especially if and when an activist effort is a campaign which spans and evolves over a longer period of time. However, as Ciszek and Logan (2018) have suggested, within the landscape of corporate activism, dialogue should indeed be understood as not only idealizing consensus-driven communication, but also leaving room for dissensus and conflict. By engaging in dialogues, companies can actively question, change thoughts, and integrate new ideas in line with changing conditions and accumulated knowledge and hence also amplify their own learning experience. After all, also the interviewees of this study named learning as one of the most advantageous outcomes of corporate activism.

TABLE 5. Factors to consider when wanting to engage in corporate activism.

Legitimation	Authority and the right to advocate must be earned prior to engaging in corporate activism.
Relevant, carefully chosen issue	The issue should be relevant for both the activist company and the targets so that the activist is committed to it and the targets care for it.
Communication	Open and honest communication on the connection and motives driving the effort.
Co-creation	Embracing co-creation may support in legitimation, conveying messages, and designing more effective activist efforts.
Constructiveness	Amicable and solution-focused approach to advocated issue should be preferred over attacking or needling other institutional actors.
Sensitivity to the targets' orientation	Designing the activist effort so that the targets can comprehend and process it.
Timing	Issues should be addressed at the right time.
Planning	The importance of planning should be realized and enough resources allocated for the activist effort.
Resilience	Activism requires persistency and resilience to maintain the enthusiastic spirit through possible backlashes.
Dialogue	Dialogue allows integration of new ideas to the effort and amplifies the activist company's own learning.

6.2 Managerial Contributions

From a practical point of view, this study has discussed an organizational reality that more and more communications professionals and PR practitioners may have to cater to as their companies get involved in corporate activism. The phenomenon presents companies with new kind of conceptual, normative, and practical challenges that necessitate them to rethink how to communicate their stands on intricate and delicate issues and engage publics on them. The rise of corporate activism also further reasserts communications professionals' role in corporate strategy creation and development; communications professionals can give pivotal inputs on the purpose and societal position of their companies, as well as on the actions with which to make the purpose and position visible to others.

As it has come forth, corporate activism may be a risky undertaking and it therefore deserves a proper assessment of potential risks and benefits (Weinzimmer & Esken 2016). Then again, taking a stance also calls for courage and risk-taking, and corporate activism is not about pleasing everyone but being true to the corporate values. Insights from this study could be used to assist practitioners and leaders of companies when pondering whether and how to get involved in a socio-political issue. Although the findings of this study cannot be generalized, it provides leaders and practitioners with a useful benchmark of why one company has chosen to become politically active and what it has brought and meant for the company.

This study has explored the possibilities and pitfalls of taking an explicit stand on an emotive socio-political issue and suggested factors that those building corporate activist efforts could consider to increase the probability of success. Shifting attention from the *what* of corporate activism to the *how* of it – and not compromising on the *why* – may help practitioners create strategic, influential, and purposeful efforts that address societal problems while still supporting fiduciary responsibility. It is hoped that more Finnish companies would be aware of their capabilities and possibilities for voicings and better prepared for public responses and, ultimately, encouraged to proactively contribute to positive change in society. Before engaging in corporate activism, companies should engage in self-examination and ask themselves:

- What are the issues we care about and are relevant to us?
- How do our stakeholders find those issues?
- Do our leadership and employees understand how and why activism could make a difference?
- What do we have to give for and say about the issue we wish to address?
- Are we willing to work longer-term on the issue?
- Are there others advocating for the same issue?
- What do we want to reach by addressing the issue?
- To whom could we reach out for support and co-creation?
- Are we able and willing to invest enough time and resources in the effort?
- Are we open to debate and learning?

6.3 Evaluation of the Study and Directions for Future Research

There are no single truths nor established criteria for evaluating the credibility of a qualitative research. (Puusa, Juuti & Aaltio 2020.) However, there still are certain aspects that can be assessed in order to maximize the quality and trustworthiness, and reliability and validity of a qualitative research.

The terms of *reliability* and *validity* originate from quantitative research and, as such, refer to operationalization of the phenomenon under study and making it empirically researchable. In order to evaluate reliability and validity in the context of qualitative research, the holistic nature of qualitative research must be understood and the definition of the terms adjusted accordingly. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018.)

In qualitative research, validity could be regarded as the *soundness* of the phenomenon under study. It includes continuous evaluation of what all constitutes the phenomenon and what not. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018.) Also, the methods used and results achieved must then fit the particular phenomenon. Especially phenomenology in qualitative research is very much phenomenon-centred, striving for increased knowledge about a certain phenomenon and results that ultimately speak to both academics and practitioners. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018.) *Triangulation* is often regarded as a tool to support the validity of a study (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018). The strategy was utilized in this study, too, and discussed more in detail in the subchapter 4.2.

In qualitative research, one can hardly ever reach utter and complete objectivity. As discussed in the subchapter 4.1 about the set of assumptions underpinning this study and its methodological choices, interpretivism does not even strive for objectivity but rather for rich understanding of a phenomenon. Then again, as the role of a researcher tends to be so instrumental in qualitative research – and especially in interpretivist research where the researcher typically strives to include not only the participants' interpretations into the research but also her own (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2012) – objectivity could well be understood as recognition of the researcher's own subjectivity. (Puusa, Juuti & Aaltio 2020.) In this study, the researcher has actively strived for identification of her own thoughts, attitudes and preconceptions that might have the potential to influence the research. Yet, according to the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning this study, space for own interpretation have been left, too.

Taking researcher's own position into account is also central for credibility. In this study, the researcher adhered to good scientific practice throughout the conduction of the study. There were no personal nor professional relations to the case organization that would have led to e.g. premature conclusions. In addition to a constructively sceptical process of independent auditing, external evaluation may contribute to the quality of a research. (Puusa, Juuti & Aaltio 2020.) Therefore, to increase the degree of others' acceptance and certitude about the study and its results, this study has been opposed and critically evaluated by fellow researchers and the supervisor of the thesis.

For the interview, the researcher plainly chose participants who were deemed best-fitting for the case and topic. The interviewees were close colleagues, which meant that their perspectives on the phenomenon under study were rather similar and little dissensus emerged. Having similar experiences is of course wished for in group interviews, but including someone from outside of the communications department (e.g. from marketing or corporate responsibility) might have brought more diversity. The researcher strived to make the interview as pleasant and permissive as possible, giving space for the interviewees to reflect on the topic and refraining from steering their answers. When analysing and presenting the data, single answers were not detached from their contexts. Finally, a member check was conducted to rule out possible distortions and misunderstandings.

What is also noteworthy in connection to the content analysis, the nature of (marketing) communications often tends to be political and subjective. Having it as data once again requires sensitivity to the context. (Daymon & Holloway 2011.) Also, data gathered online – let alone, online publications gathered months or years after their publication – has its downsides; some publications might have changed or been deleted that could have well been part of the data, thus, possibly affecting the big picture. As no pre-collected data was used, however, the researcher had full control over the data and preconceptions of another researcher were not a concern in this study. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018.)

Traditionally, reliability has meant achieving noncoincidental results or, in other words, same results when researched again, or in spite of a researcher or a method. When evaluating the reliability of a qualitative research, however, it is more important to be aware of the context of the study and make it visible to others, too, than to be able to achieve the exact same results again. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018.) This is because in qualitative research the comprehension of a phenomenon typically outweighs the repeatability of the study. Against this background it is important to note that, was the research to be done again, another researcher might have settled upon different research philosophy, methodology, or theoretical framework, or done different choices when coding the data, thus, getting into somewhat different results. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018.)

To expand on the notions of reliability and validity, also *transferability* is often discussed in qualitative research. The term refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized, or transferred to other contexts or settings. Transferability can be increased by being transparent on the chains of reasoning – that is, by describing how the research was conducted and the results achieved. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018.) For transferability reasons, the data collection process and methodology, for example, have carefully been described and evaluated in the Data and Methodology chapter (chapter 4), allowing the reader to evaluate the collection and processing of the data. Also, the linkage to previous research was broad and thoroughly discussed. The previous research utilized in this study consisted mostly of peer reviewed scientific articles. A few book references were also included, yet, they did not have a salient role in the theoretical framework.

This master's thesis was a singular case study of which aim was not a statistical representativeness. The researcher was aware of the smallness of the sample and the narrowness of the context and, thus, also refrained from generalizing the findings. What must also be considered is the fit between the data gathered in Finland and the literature used in this study that is principally from outside of the Nordic countries. Certainly, it would have been ideal to capitalize heavier on research conducted in a context that is culturally closer to Finland than the North American context; In Finland, ethical decision making, social responsibility, and green agenda might be integrated in quite a different way from everyday life to business models than in the United States, for instance, and the tradition of activism is less established and the public conversation still less polarized than in the US, where the phenomenon of companies taking stances has begun and is more prevalent. Also, trust in public institutions may be different, as may be the issues that are deemed divisive among the two nations. However, as research on corporate activism and advocacy still is very scarce outside of North America, omitting the North American research was not an option. The cultural differences have been borne in mind throughout the study and also remarked where necessary.

In spite of the limitations presented above, this study reached its aim of gaining more understanding of corporate activism. Surely, a lot remains to be examined in and around the phenomenon. To conclude this final chapter, possible directions for future research are suggested.

There are many avenues for further research from the corporate perspective. Research could investigate who are ultimately the ones making the decisions on what issues to address and executing corporate activism in companies. Certainly, research could also look into the issues Finnish companies deem the best to advocate for and compare the issues that companies in different countries decide to advocate for – is there actually a lower threshold for being called an activist company in societies where public conversation is less polarized? Yet another topic would be the measurement of the corporate activist efforts; the phenomenon entails so many layers that a framework for measurement would unquestionably have to be something rather multidimensional.

There is more to discover in stakeholder responses, too. Now that there is starting to be a sound conceptualisation of the phenomenon, quantitative research on the topic could reveal possible causal connections between the stakeholder responses and their attitudes towards the activist companies, for instance. Future research might also dive deeper into how institutional actors engage in co-creation – and possible co-destruction – of corporate activism. In what ways can companies and institutional actors collaborate on activist efforts? What about the punishments; do they discourage companies to take stances again, or result in efforts that are not as forceful or visible? Or are some companies so high in self-conviction that it does not affect them at all? One other interesting research avenue would be to examine the consequences of when companies and brands choose not to take stances, too; what kind of responses does such inaction generate? Can it in some occasions be beneficial to refrain from taking a stance?

Last but certainly not least, the impacts of coronavirus on corporate activism would be an intriguing area to explore. It looks like many companies have been inspired to join the fight against the virus and promote mask-wearing, for instance, but what exactly is the role of the pandemic in fuelling corporate activism? How does such a crisis change the way companies deal with their wider societal role? Sometimes after catastrophic events, it seems that everything that a company or a brand says and does is perceived as taking a stance. In view of this, it would be interesting to find out whether this applies to a global pandemic, too, and what all said and done in the name of coronavirus would actually fall into the category of activism.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. The interview guide.

A. Background of the Interviewees and Fazer

Roles and main duties at Fazer
Fazer's brand identity and image
The most important stakeholders
The operational field
The brand of Fazer's Blue

B. Situational Conditions

How is corporate activism perceived at Fazer?
Have you experienced pressure to take stances?
  If yes, where has the pressure come from?
  Has the pressure changed over time?
How has corporate activism appeared within your operational field?

C. Advocated Issues

Little Piece of Love -campaign and Lovebot Blue

Please tell about the Little Piece of Love -campaign that addressed hate speech
  Targets
  Motivations
  Duration
  Execution (planning process, partners etc.)
  The relation between Fazer's Blue's brand and the effort
  Would you identify the campaign as corporate activism?
  Follow-up / monitoring
  The success of the effort
  Impacts: both positive and negative
  Lesson's learned

More generally

What other issues, causes or groups Fazer (or Fazer's Blue) has advocated for?
What topics have possibly worked the best?
How would you evaluate your success in corporate activism?
What kind of impacts has your activism had?
How have the responses to your activist efforts been?
  Has corporate activism impacted your stakeholder relations?
Have you ever experienced fear of taking stances?

D. Capabilities and Motivations of Fazer

Why does Fazer take stances?
    Typical goals
    Typical motivations
How are the advocated issues chosen?
    Balancing between private and common interests
    Approach: campaign or long-term work
    How is the meaningfulness ensured?
What enables corporate activism for Fazer?
    Factors supporting or hindering activism
How is the work behind the activist efforts?
    Who are in charge of the execution, who decide?
    Part of CSR or its own function

E. Lastly

How does Fazer's future look like when it comes to addressing socio-political topics?
Would you like to add anything?

APPENDIX 2. The coding sheet of the documents belonging to earned social media.

CONTENT ANALYSIS: ***Earned Social Media***												
Post	**Type** (tweet, retweet)	**Channel**	**Date**	**Author**	**Sentiment / Tone**	**Engagement** (comments)	**Engagement** (likes)	**Engagement** (shares)	**Supportive features** (picture, video, emojis, hyperlink)	**Activation** (CTA, question or request)	**Campaign hashtag**	**Discussion Theme**

APPENDIX 3. Discussion themes and their descriptions.

Theme of Discussion	**Description**
Boycott	Documents suggesting a boycott
Buycott	Documents suggesting a buycott
Chocolate wrapping	Documents addressing the possibility to design a personalized chocolate wrapping
Company taking stance	Documents discussing corporate activism as a phenomenon or e.g. companies' role in society
Critics making fun of the campaign	Negative documents flouting the campaign
Fazer's discretion	Documents suggesting Fazer showed poor discretion in the campaign
Irrationality	Documents discussing something absurd but related to the campaign (e.g. Finnishness, politics, ideologies, sustainable cocoa, palm oil, GCM)
No meaningful discussion	Documents plainly sharing a link or retweets without any accompanying note (i.e. documents not discussing anything)
Partners	Documents discussing Fazer's partners in the campaign
Plain support or objection	Pro and con statements not backed up with any arguments (e.g. a link or a single word with an emoji)
Restriction of free speech	Documents discussing restriction of free speech
Supporters mocking the right wing	Documents flouting the right wing and/or their response to the campaign
Unrelated	Documents employing the campaign hashtag but seemingly discussing something unrelated to the campaign
Use of AI	Documents discussing the use of artificial intelligence in the campaign

APPENDIX 4. The coding sheet of the news media items.

CONTENT ANALYSIS: ***News Media***								
Outlet	**Title**	**Text type** (news article, opinion, blog post)	**Date**	**Author**	**Voice to Fazer?**	**Possibility to comment**	**Social media icon**	**Discussion Theme**