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INTERNATIONAL MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT

MASTER'S THESIS

CSR COMMUNICATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Overcoming stakeholders' mistrust and scepticism

towards sustainable-related disclosures.



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Abstract

The international business scenario is heading towards exploring new sustainable approaches to implement and include when operating to generate revenues. An always greater and urgent demand from critic and pretentious external stakeholders is making companies realise that a sustainable development is of vital importance to continue to perform in every market worldwide. As a result, Corporate Social Responsibility is becoming one of the pivotal and central themes addressed within every core strategy, and firms are progressively reconciling a social mission with the standard economic purpose.

However, it is acknowledged that traditional firms face a considerable challenge as to being believed to act sustainably, mainly due to phenomena like greenwashing which often threaten also reliable companies' reputation. Therefore, the research explores what are the elements and features necessary to attain credibility by making a CSR communication trustworthy. Further, the study focuses on the disclosures that occur on social media, as the stakeholders' most reliable source of information.

In order to explore and understand the concept of CSR communication on social media, the research employed multiple qualitative methods aimed at discovering the thoughts, beliefs and attitudes towards CSR promotions. Initially, the study utilised in-depth interviews with experts in order to gather generic insights in the field of CSR, CSR communication, social media and social enterprises. The empirical data were supported by secondary data which assisted in the interpretation and categorisation of results. Afterwards, the research focuses on the instances of three SEs and a traditional company within the personal care industry, to concretely observe how different types of firms disclose their sustainable actions and what is the users' reaction.

Findings revealed that for-profit firms have to confront a higher level of mistrust and scepticism than SEs, but by focusing the CSR disclosures on the concrete impact achieved and the fit with the business strategy, while leveraging personal relevance and transparency when establishing a meaningful dialogue with users, organizations can enhance trust and reliability.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Research Field

Sustainability has become a central topic in the modern twenty-first century society, since the world population continues to rise and technologies evolve, while several other crucial matters, such as poverty, health, water resources, climate change and preservation of ecosystems are influencing more and more the business environment (Martin & Schouten, 2011).

People and communities are starting to play an active role to contribute to a sustainable development; over the past few decades, indeed, there has been a growing recognition for collective responsibility to reduce harmful environmental and social problems (Porter & Kramer, 2019).

This rising attention on sustainable matters has changed the expectations stakeholders have towards companies, making firms rethinking the way they are supposed to operate. Therefore, consumers now pay a remarkable attention whether enterprises have fulfilled their social responsibility and have incorporated sustainability actions within their production and commercial activities (Kotler, 2011). Actually, 62% of customers would like their preferred firms to play a major role in solving social problems (Bernyte, 2018). As a consequence, enterprises became aware that their response to sustainability may greatly influence their competitiveness, financial performances and even survival (Lubin & Esty, 2010).

The increasing importance that sustainability is playing among customers is significantly shaping the business environment and has led to some crucial changes and consequences at a global level. There are two leading implications particularly interesting to highlight due to their international relevance. Firstly, one of the major effects of consumers demanding for sustainable actions is the escalating role which Corporate Social Responsibility (henceforth CSR) is portraying in every business. The concept of CSR is increasingly becoming both a corporate value and an integrative part of the business strategy for the majority of companies. Corporate sustainability is defined as a relative concept that describes the planned and strategic management processes of operating towards a balance of economic, social, and environmental goals and values (Signitzer & Prexl,

2007). To achieve these combined goals, several tools have been deployed to make business processes more sustainable and, consequently, to enhance long-term profit maximization.

Some authors (e.g. Visser, 2011) have detailed the transition of the role of CSR initiatives, demonstrating how the role of the modern empowered consumers and information technology have heavily affected this concept. Studies suggest that the importance of CSR activities is increasing sharply, shifting from a marginal strategic tool to a more integrated part of corporate identity. As a demonstration of this, scholars indicate that firms are more active than ever in pursuing sustainability and engaging customers (Signitzer & Prexl, 2007).

A second trend is the ever-greater number of companies that are combining financial return purposes with a primary pursuit of a social mission, and which are successfully competing across multiple markets globally. Due to the intensifying demand for organizations to have a proactive and innovative role in tackling social problems, a growing body of entrepreneurs has indeed started to adopt innovative business solutions to address them (Scherer, Palazzo, & Matten, 2009) and to combine social impact with profit generation, constituting the so-called Social Enterprises (henceforth SEs) (Smith, Gonin, & Besharov, 2013).

SEs have both social and commercial performance objectives, aiming at generating value and positive outcomes for society while being able to capture enough funds to profit and build revenues (Santos, Pache, & Birkholz, 2015). Due to the combination of elements of for-profit and non-profit firms in one single business model, SEs are often seen and defined as “*hybrid*” organizations (Battilana & Lee, 2014).

Building on these circumstances, it is believed of remarkable interest to analyse how organizations, looking at both traditional firms and social enterprises, are acting in terms of marketing communications to promote their sustainable commitment.

Considering that consumers are willing to purchase from companies that share their values and principles, and that consumer values are shifting towards sustainable development, a need for marketing communications to become anchored to appropriate sustainable principles is evident (Bernyte, 2018).

Few research studies in the field of marketing strategies have explored how enterprises communicate sustainability to the public (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014). Nonetheless, the topic of Sustainability Marketing Communications (SMCs) is gaining relevance among academics,

who define it as the marketing communication efforts that enterprises input to promote sustainability, while pursuing economic growth for the personal, economic and environmental well-being of the consumers in a marketing campaign (Lee, 2017). Companies that attempt to promote their CSR operations have to deal with convincing stakeholders that their commitment to sustainability is honest, and they are not just trying to greenwash themselves (Lee, 2017). It has been shown, indeed, that most enterprises promote sustainability primarily because they wish to build a favourable image to positively affect product evaluation (Dahlsrud, 2008), accepting the risk of losing credibility. With respect to Social Enterprises, there are relatively few studies that have analysed the contribution that marketing communications could make to them (Powell & Osborne, 2015).

1.1.1. Limitations

Organizations usually use three different channels to connect with their stakeholders: company intranet, company website and social media. The current study focuses solely on social media communication, for several reasons. Firstly, social media are undoubtedly the most popular channel, considering that more than 15 million organizations have a public Facebook page (Wang & Huang, 2018). Moreover, social media is increasingly perceived by consumers as being the most trustworthy source of information and knowledge (Foux, 2006). Additionally, over the last years, firms have chosen online media to disclose their CSR efforts (Moreno & Capriotti, 2009). Social media could thus represent an optimal channel for addressing issues, beliefs and actions in the field of sustainability and for building trust between enterprises and stakeholders (Schweidel & Moe, 2014).

Afterwards, the study will be conducted by observing differences in terms of CSR communications between traditional for-profit companies and SEs. The choice of selecting SEs and excluding non-profits relies on the fact that SEs still present multiple features similar to conventional companies, since sustainability is at the core of the business model, but they also operate in order to generate revenues (Battilana & Lee, 2014), and therefore the comparison is made more reliable.

Furthermore, in order to make the reasoning more narrowed and effective, the generic findings gathered from an initial analysis will be then addressed to a specific industry: the personal care business. As a matter of fact, the market for sustainable personal care products offers enormous

potential for both retailers and manufacturers. Moreover, sustainable consumption of cosmetics is a significant concern (Eberhart & Naderer, 2017) since the production of personal care products could have negative effects regarding water resources, climate change and land use. A specific case study will then compare the CSR communications of a traditional multinational, The Estée Lauder Companies, with the ones of some SEs operating in the same market: Lush, LMXI and The 7 Virtues.

1.2. Project Motivation and Purpose

The fundamental purpose of the project is to investigate and link two of the major subjects with which every company needs to confront to successfully operate and perform in nowadays business: sustainable development and social media.

The reason for choosing and consider these matters is their pivotal importance in each market internationally. On the one hand, sustainability currently represents a core aspect of each company, implying that enterprises have responsibility to not only acquire financial profits and maintain economic growth, but also consider external stakeholders' interests (Dahlsrud, 2008). On the other hand, social media are becoming the most popular channel which allows organizations to directly connect with their stakeholders (Wang & Huang, 2018).

Both themes found room as core topics in a large amount of studies and analyses. However, few research studies have explored their connection, namely how enterprises communicate their sustainability commitment to the public on social media (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014). It would therefore be dramatically relevant to analyse what are the requested elements needed when disclosing sustainable actions on social media, since stakeholders have increasingly expected and pretended from companies to develop, implement and communicate sustainable activities as part of their core strategies and daily operations (Etter, 2014).

In this regard, the topic of CSR communications, applied to social networks, requires to be located as central to the discussion.

Building on previous studies, which have demonstrated that most enterprises promote their sustainable responsibility primarily because they wish to build a favourable image and greenwash to achieve a positive reputation (Dahlsrud, 2008), it would then be effective to analyse the logic according to which traditional companies face more obstacles than social enterprises in terms of acquiring social media users' trust. On this point, this thesis will finally provide strategic

managerial implications and suggestions to traditional organizations, with respect to how honestly and transparently promote their sustainable responsibility.

1.3. Research Question

On the basis of the conjunction of decisive concepts such as CSR communication and social media, the project will explore how different types of organizations implement strategies to deal with them. Even if companies are struggling discovering the best approach to properly handle them, these subjects arguably hold the potential for creating notable value.

In particular, it will be investigated the different response and perception that external stakeholders have towards CSR disclosures deriving from traditional firms and social enterprises within the beauty industry.

Based on the discussion above, the thesis aims to explore the following question:

How can traditional for-profit companies effectively disclose their transparent and honest sustainable commitment on social media, overcoming the stakeholders' mistrust and scepticism deriving from the phenomenon of greenwashing?

In which way can traditional companies learn from Social Enterprises to attain credibility?

1.4. Thesis Structure

The current project is divided in seven parts which provide an exhaustive understanding of the subjects under debate.

I. Introduction

In order to give the reader an initial broad understanding of the subjects under research, the project started by giving a brief introduction of the research field. This chapter clarified topics like CSR, SEs and social media. Moreover, the introduction has provided the purpose of the thesis as well

as the research question which will be investigated and which will shape the framework of the entire project.

II. Literature Review

Following, the existing debates in the literature will be reviewed to grasp the current conceptualisation of the occurrences investigated in the research question. The main and most relevant theories regarding the project's subjects will be analysed.

Firstly, the concept of CSR is described, followed by the main features of CSR promotion and communication. Secondly, the social media trend and its powerful importance will be examined. The last part of the section will then describe the characteristics and functioning of social enterprises.

III. Methodology

In order to understand the research approach chosen to answer the research question, the methodological considerations will be explained to clarify the choice of research design, philosophical view and techniques used to analyse the empirical data. The methodology part will also justify the theory used for the analysis and the analysis approach.

IV. Case Presentation

This chapter will introduce a brief presentation of the personal care industry, portraying its main trends, features and connections with CSR issues. Furthermore, the four companies that will be subject of study will be presented.

V. Analysis

The analysis will be divided in two subsequent parts. Initially, the analysis will investigate the empirical data gathered from expert interviews on the basis of interpretation and existing theories. Secondly, the main findings obtained will be observed and commented with regard to social media CSR disclosures of the companies chosen from the case study.

VI. Discussion and Perspectives

To answer the research question, this chapter will present a discussion based on key findings and applicability of the results, as well as a reflection on the methodological approach chosen and limitations of the paper, in order to provide recommendations for further research.

VII. Conclusion

Finally, a conclusion will sum-up the research before opening up a debate around managerial implications and future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Corporate Social Responsibility

This chapter introduces and describes the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility. An overview concerning the evolution of this topic is presented, from its emergence until modern days, in order to comprehend and demonstrate how CSR developed through time, increasing as far as becoming of essential importance in nowadays business environment. Thereafter, it will be investigated how organizations are yet approaching to CSR practices, while confronting a major challenge: greenwashing.

2.1.1. The Evolution of CSR

This section will analyse the major contributions in the literature to the concept of CSR, aiming at revealing how the notion rose in terms of relevance over time, thereby demonstrating why it is paramount to investigate it.

The thought of CSR has a long and mixed history (Carroll, 1999). Since formal writing regarding this matter is largely a product of the second half of the 20th century, Carroll (1999) traced the evolution of the CSR construct from its beginning in the 1950s.

In the early writings on CSR, the notion was usually referred to as social responsibility (SR) rather than CSR. Bowen (1953) started from the belief that the largest companies were vital centres of power and decision making and their operations highly influenced the lives of citizens. SR was perceived as *“the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society”* (Bowen, 1953, p.6). CSR was therefore intended as a *social consciousness* of managers, that is their responsibility regarding the consequences of their company’s activities (Carroll, 1999).

The decade of the 1960s marked a significant rise in formalising what CSR means. CSR was seen as those decisions and actions taken for reasons partially beyond the firms’ economic or technical interest (Davis, 1960), made in order to gain long-run economic profits. Walton (1967) then recognized CSR as the intimacy of the relationships between the corporation and the society, elaborating that its essential element was voluntarism.

In the 1970s a notable contribution to the concept of CSR came from the Committee for Economic Development (CED), which noted how the relation between businesses and society was changing, being companies asked to assume more responsibilities to society and to address a wider range of human values (CED, 1971). Firms began to be expected to contribute more to the quality of life, rather than just supply goods and services. At the time, socially responsible activities were well-intentioned and even beneficent, but they still lacked any coherent relation to the business' internal activities and its host environment (Preston & Post, 1975).

In the 1980s, socially responsible actions were perceived as the ones voluntarily adopted, involving an always broader group of people, including employees, suppliers and neighbouring communities (Jones, 1980).

In the 1990s, the CSR concept served as a point of departure for other related and compatible notions like stakeholder theory and corporate citizenship (Carroll, 1999). The major contribution in this decade came from Wood (1991) who identified three CSR principles as being social legitimacy, public responsibility and managerial discretion, respectively referring to the institutional, organisational and individual level.

More recently, the increasing role of CSR has been analysed by Visser (2011) who demonstrated that the evolution of business responsibility could be best understood in terms of five overlapping ages, each of which manifests a different stage of CSR (Figure 1).

Economic Age	Stage of CSR	Modus Operandi	Key Enabler	Stakeholder Target
Greed	Defensive	Ad hoc interventions	Investments	Shareholders, government & employees
Philanthropy	Charitable	Charitable programmes	Projects	Communities
Marketing	Promotional	Public relations	Media	General public
Management	Strategic	Management systems	Codes	Shareholders & NGOs/CSOs
Responsibility	Systemic	Business models	Products	Regulators & customers

FIGURE 1: THE AGES AND STAGES OF CSR (VISSER, 2011)

Initially, the *Age of Greed* was characterised by *Defensive CSR*, where the few sustainable operations and practices were undertaken only in case shareholders' value benefits from them. The *Age of Philanthropy* was marked by *Charitable CSR*, which saw companies supporting social and environmental causes through donations and sponsorships. *Promotional CSR* in the *Age of*

Marketing regarded the strategy of reinforcing the brand, image and reputation of a company by implementing sustainable actions. The *Age of Management* was represented by *Strategic CSR*, in which CSR actions started to be connected to the company's core business, usually through the implementation of social and environmental management systems. Finally, the *Age of Responsibility* generates *Systemic CSR*, in which companies develop innovative business models, revolutionary processes, products and services in order to combat existent unsustainable and irresponsible practices (Visser, 2011).

With this last age, the role of CSR shifted from a micro level to a macro level, encompassing communities, ecosystems and economies and changing firms' strategies to have a concrete impact on a broader scale (Visser, 2011).

2.1.1.1. CSR 2.0

In his framework, Visser (2011) described the ultimate stage of CSR, namely *Systematic*, as CSR 2.0. According to the author, the shift from CSR 1.0 to CSR 2.0. occurred at two levels.

At a meta-level (Figure 2), there is a decisive mutation in CSR's ontological assumptions, where companies' defensive and moderate responses to social and environmental issues are replaced by proactive strategies and investments (Visser, 2011).

CSR 1.0	CSR 2.0
Philanthropic	Collaborative
Risk-based	Reward-based
Image-driven	Performance-driven
Specialised	Integrated
Standardised	Diversified
Marginal	Scalable
Western	Global

FIGURE 2: CSR 1.0 TO CSR 2.0 - META-LEVEL ONTOLOGICAL SHIFT. (VISSER, 2011)

At a micro-level (Figure 3), it can be noticed a shift in CSR's methodological practices: CSR does not manifest as premium products and services, but rather as affordable solutions directed to the ones who mostly demonstrate the need for life improvements.

CSR 1.0	CSR 2.0
CSR premium	Base of the pyramid
Charity projects	Social enterprise
CSR indexes	CSR ratings
CSR departments	CSR incentives
Product liability	Choice editing
Ethical consumerism	Service agreements
CSR reporting cycles	CSR data streams
Stakeholder groups	Social networks
Process standards	Performance standards

FIGURE 3: CSR 1.0 TO CSR 2.0 - MICRO-LEVEL METHODOLOGICAL SHIFT. (VISSER, 2011)

The author stated that due to the strict connection between businesses and global challenges, firms that still relate to CSR 1.0. will be left behind. Therefore, companies have to adapt to this transition by embracing CSR 2.0 features in nowadays business environment (Visser, 2011).

2.1.2. The Modern Role of CSR and Organizations' Approach

After reviewing how the importance of CSR evolved and developed during time, this section will look at the role that CSR is playing in nowadays business scenario worldwide. This analysis will be conducted by investigating how CSR is affecting the ordinary operations of companies and how enterprises are approaching to it, emphasizing the preeminent trends which are impacting organizations' sustainable development.

For the purpose of the study, it will be taken into account the generic understanding of CSR as it is perceived by the European Commission, according to which CSR constitutes the responsibility of companies for their impacts on society, whereby enterprises have to integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer issues into business activities and core strategies in close cooperation with stakeholders (European Union, 2019).

As a matter of fact, corporate sustainability is increasingly becoming both a corporate value and an integrative part of the business strategy in many companies, challenging many of the principles underpinning the role, structure, and functioning of corporate governance (Signitzer & Prexl, 2007). Hence, CSR represents yet one of the leading priorities for every firm, since both media and society are demanding and expecting companies to address to a greater extent environmental and social concerns, while being transparent and open when disclosing their actions (Bernyte, 2018).

Being CSR a core aspect of every organization, companies are developing structured resolutions to include it as part of the core identity and activity of the business. Many researchers have identified *instrumental* approaches and *political-normative* approaches as the two prevailing frameworks of handling CSR (Schultz, Castellò, & Morsing, 2013). The former approach views CSR as an instrumental and strategic tool for achieving greater financial performances through competitive advantages (Porter & Kramer, 2006) or reputation improvement (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). The latter approaches intend the political role that companies play in creating a society's norms and values (Schultz et al. 2013).

Aside from the specific approach selected, fulfilling stakeholder expectations and gaining legitimacy, while actively implementing CSR strategies to address societal problems such as inequality and environmental damage, is an increasingly complex process for every firm (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011), since it requires a sophisticated understanding of many concerns, voices, and conceptions of truth, and the ability to engage across independent and conflicting interpretations (Schultz et al., 2013).

One effective way for companies to fulfil stakeholders' expectations while gaining legitimacy consists in either include CSR-related operations within the annual financial report, or even formulate and develop a report totally concerning the sustainable development of the company. In fact, CSR reporting has been emerging over the past years (Tschopp & Huefner, 2015). Even though it is still in its infancy, it seems destined to become a key part of the overall accounting reporting framework, being included into the external financial reporting, income tax reporting, regulatory reporting, and internal reporting (Tschopp & Huefner, 2015).

Three main factors have driven the growth of CSR reporting and its inclusion within annual reports (KPMG, 2017). The first one is the escalating interest of shareholders and investors in sustainability matters, which is forcing more and more companies to publicly uncover their sustainability related information. Secondly, the more intense request from stakeholders for businesses to undertake climate change-related disclosure. Lastly, the publication from the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) of industry-specific Sustainability Accounting Standards that advise what CR disclosures organizations should include in their mandatory financial reports (KPMG, 2017).

KPMG's Survey of Corporate Sustainability Reporting (2017) demonstrates that an always greater number of organizations disclose their sustainable actions, highlighting that this trend is exceptionally growing in the latest years (Figure 4).

In particular, 93% of the 250 biggest companies worldwide (G250¹) provide and publicly share an annual report regarding their Corporate Sustainability (KPMG, 2017). In addition, more than two thirds of the companies in every sector, except for Retail, now report on their CR performance (KPMG, 2017).

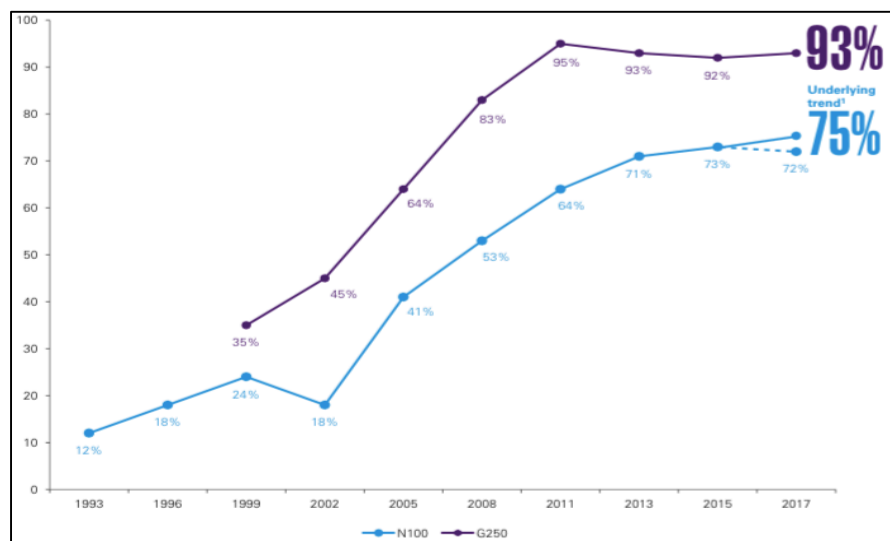


FIGURE 4: GROWTH IN GLOBAL CR REPORTING RATES SINCE 1993. (KPMG, 2017)

The vast majority (78%) of the G250 organizations now include CR information in their financial report, indicating that they believe that data regarding their sustainable commitment and development are relevant not only for the external stakeholders, such as customers, but most importantly for investors (KPMG, 2017). This trend runs parallel with the increasing role that CSR played in its evolution history, since KPMG's survey disclosed that in 2011 only 44% of the companies considered included CR data in their annual reports (KPMG, 2017) (Appendix 1). Human rights are among the top matters of every company's agenda. Statistics show that 90% of the G250 companies acknowledge human rights as an issue for their business; however, most of the firms have yet to disclose policies regarding this concern (KPMG, 2017).

¹ The G250 refers to the world's 250 largest companies by revenue based on the Fortune 500 ranking of 2016. Large global companies are typically leaders in CR reporting and their behavior often predicts trends that are subsequently adopted more widely (KPMG, 2017).

The preeminent CSR practices are, instead, linked to the environment, specifically addressing climate change issues. 67% of the world's largest companies are reported to disclose targets to cut their carbon emissions, while 48% of G250 firms acknowledge that climate change has a financial risk. Nevertheless, among those firms, very few are currently quantifying the potential impact of those risks in financial terms (KPMG, 2017).

Ultimately, the function of CSR has tremendously transformed in 2015. In that year, the United Nations (UN), as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Appendix 2), a series of 17 goals which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - and that aim at ending poverty, improving health and education, reduce inequality, boosting economic growth, all while tackling climate change and working on preserving the environment (Sustainable Development, 2019). Each goal has a specific target to be achieved over the next 15 years. KPMG's survey has shown that the SDGs have resonated steadily with businesses internationally. Around 43% of G250 firms, indeed, have clearly connected their CSR activities to SDGs, meaning that SDGs are expecting to cover a pivotal role in every CR report in the following years. The reason for companies to associate their CSR initiatives to SDGs, is that they provide a means for demonstrating the impact a firm is creating in the society. The next challenge for businesses will then be to quantify, verify and effectively communicate the concrete impact they are having referring to the several goals (KPMG, 2017).

2.1.3. Trust in CSR Commitment and the Concept of Greenwashing

This paragraph will analyse the main challenge businesses face when it comes to implement strategies finalised at developing a sustainable path through CSR practices, that is overcoming customers' mistrust towards such actions and the related notion of *greenwashing*.

Trust in CSR commitment is defined as an individual's belief in the reliability of firms' promises concerning CSR activities (Kim, 2019). Stakeholders' trust in an organization is usually established and enhanced through communication, and it is thus affected by the company's communication process (Bentele & Nothaft, 2011). The stakeholders' lack of confidence in a firm is primarily due to discrepancies detected between organizational actions and

communication, meaning that often companies generate a CSR communication that does not perfectly reflect and represent their actual activities and commitment (Kim, 2019).

Generally, individuals' attribution of a company's CSR motives could be of two types: *extrinsic*, in which the firm is solely seen as attempting to rise profits; or *intrinsic*, in which it is viewed as acting out of a transparent and honest concern for the focal issue (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010). This latter type leads to react positively towards the company, whereas the former generates mistrust (Yoon, Gürhan-Canli, & Schwarz, 2006).

CSR has been widely recognised as a tool to enhance and manage corporate legitimacy (Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010), as well as a compelling mean to achieve public support and thus improve an enterprise's image and reputation (Barone, Miyazaki, & Taylor, 2000).

However, the above-mentioned mistrust in CSR commitment makes linking sustainability issues to companies a hazardous action due to public scrutiny and criticism (Fieseler, Fleck, & Meckel, 2010). As a matter of fact, when a company has to deal with external criticism or negative notoriety, it tends to promote a greater CSR commitment which remarkably deviate from the reality. This kind of public campaign is referred to as *greenwashing*.

Greenwash is defined as the “*selective disclosure of positive information about a company's environmental or social performance, while withholding negative information on these dimensions*” (Lyon & Maxwell, 2011, p. 5).

Greenwash has become a competitive advantage exploited to overcome competitors (Parguel, Benoît-Moreau, & Larceneux, 2011); due to the growth in demand of green products and services in numerous markets, greenwash continues to rise becoming a strategic asset (Horiuchi, Schuchard, Shea, & Townsend, 2009).

Even if green claims should be clear, true and accurate, many sustainable declarations are ambiguous and deceptive (Chen & Chang, 2013). It has to be clarified that most green claims are not completely false, but merely partial truths (Lyon & Maxwell, 2011).

The phenomenon of greenwashing is facilitated by the fact that consumers are at a remarkable informational disadvantage when a firm makes claims about its sustainable commitment (Lyon & Montgomery, 2013). Companies exploit this information asymmetry knowing that customers often rely on corporate advertising and promotion to make decisions. However, it has been proved that greenwashing disclosures are reducing people's trust (Hamann & Kapelus, 2004). The

resultant lack of confidence makes consumers unable to decide their purchasing and therefore it endangers the whole market, being also green marketing of virtuous companies affected and damaged (Chen & Chang, 2013).

In order to reduce consumer confusion and perceived risk, companies must weaken their greenwash behaviours and allow consumers to obtain information with transparency and honesty, to be enabled to compare with other companies' brands or products purely on the basis of environmental considerations (Hoedeman, 2002). Hence, to win consumers' trust, companies are required to disclose greater information in more detail rather than just claim CSR commitments and unspecific actions (Chen & Chang, 2013). Without providing trustworthy information to customers, it would be challenging even for truthful firms to convince their customers of the excellence of their products and of their clear sustainable development (Chen & Chang, 2013). Perceptions of greenwash, indeed, can damage consumers' attitude toward a company to such an extent that they can decide to desist purchasing.

2.2. CSR Communication

Building from the main arguments outlined in the previous paragraphs, this section will focus on the marketing aspects of CSR. In particular, it is determined how CSR practices are communicated to the public, and what are the elements which have to be taken into consideration to make CSR communications as effective as possible.

Former research regarding CSR has been limited in terms of providing empirical evidence of CSR communication role or its process in relation to public expectations (Kim, 2019). Major attention has been paid to the potential relationships between CSR itself and corporate reputation, neglecting the missing link of CSR communication aspects (Brammer & Pavelin, 2006). However, this issue is believed of essential importance since there is an increasing public demand for data concerning corporate responsibility actions (Lehtimäki, Kujala, & Heikkinen, 2011).

2.2.1. The Foundations for CSR Communication

Customers have been demonstrated to purchase more from organizations which share their same values and principles. Moreover, as observed previously, consumers' values are progressively shifting towards sustainable development, creating the necessity for marketing communications

to properly run parallel to sustainable marketing principles (Bernyte, 2018). It follows that appropriate sustainability marketing, meant as CSR communication, generates solid and durable relationships with customers (Bernyte, 2018).

CSR communication is occasionally referred to as *Sustainability Marketing Communication* (SMC), intended as the marketing communication efforts that enterprises employ to disclose sustainability and commit to related value activities, while pursuing economic growth for the personal, economic and environmental well-being of the consumers in a marketing campaign (Lee, 2017).

While conventional marketing is oriented towards doing something to customers, CSR-related marketing perceives customers as people with whom engage and cooperate (Grönroos, 2007). Thus, the increasing importance of sustainability grows the need for marketing communications to focus more on relationships and connectivity (Kotler, 2011). CSR communication hence merges the conventional marketing principles, including commercial transactions, with the concepts of relational marketing and sustainable development (Belz, 2006). As a result, sustainable marketing become the process of creating, communicating and delivering value to customers in a manner which enhance both natural and human capital (Martin & Schouten, 2011). A company's CSR information reveals aspects of its corporate identity which are fundamental, enduring and distinctive by virtue (Du et al., 2010).

Du et al. (2010) developed a framework which encompasses all the most significant elements that are included within CSR communication (Appendix 3). According to this framework, all the sustainability communication factors are related to two major elements: message content and message channel.

Message Content

A company's CSR message can cover a social cause itself or the organization's specific involvement in a social cause (Du et al., 2010). The first case is rare and is more likely to lead to consumers' scepticism and critics. To avoid this suspect and enhance credibility, companies are recommended to select a social issue which is directly linked to the core business of the firm (Menon & Kahn, 2003).

Du et al. (2010) underlined several factors on which the message content can focus: commitment, impact, motives and fit.

CSR commitment could be placed as the central subject of a disclosure, by highlighting the amount of input that the organization is putting on CSR practices, the durability of the association or the consistency of the input; firms who base their communication on *CSR impact*, on the contrary, focuses on the outputs and overstate the benefits contributed to the target audience, improving the message credibility with concrete facts; *CSR motives*, as stated in an earlier chapter, define the justification why a company is engaged in a sustainable development and they can be either intrinsic or extrinsic; finally, firms can decide to focus their message on *CSR fit*, or the perceived congruence between the social matter and the organization's business (Du et al., 2010), which is of critical importance since it directly affects stakeholders' CSR attributions (Simmons & Becker-Olsen, 2006).

Message Channel

In agreement with the framework, the second element to be considered concerning CSR communication is the channel through which information about a company's CSR activities are disclosed.

The importance of official documents like annual corporate responsibility reports has already been outlined, along with their ascending deployment. Further communication tools that could be used encompass TV commercial, dedicated section on an organization's website, magazines, billboards or even product packaging (Du et al., 2010).

A major concern that is undermining such company-controlled CSR information channels is the ever-greater number of external promoters of sustainable related issues, including media and consumer forums, which cannot be entirely controlled by the firm (Du et al., 2010). Actually, a lower degree of controllability should not be detected as completely disadvantageous: the less controllable the CSR disclosure is, the more credible it will be perceived from stakeholders (Du et al., 2010). Studies demonstrate, indeed, that consumers react more positively to a company's CSR operations whenever they acquire such information from a neutral source (Yoon et al., 2006). That is the reason why organizations should attempt to obtain media coverage from unbiased sources as well as boost word-of-mouth mechanisms (Du et al., 2010). Afterwards, it will be evidenced how social media represents the most effective channel to share CSR messages.

2.2.2. Evidences of CSR Communication Effectiveness

As mentioned formerly, the main challenge of CSR communication consists in minimising public's scepticism (Du et al., 2010). Due to increased stakeholder distrust and criticism, companies are generally convinced that explicit CSR communication is ineffective (Morsing et al., 2008). Due to the uppermost position of external stakeholders, alongside differences in terms of culture, nations and industries (Golob & Barlett, 2007), tools like reports are not perceived as the most effective to disclose CSR commitment.

Effective CSR communication is the one that can improve consumers' awareness, trust, engagement and their perception of corporate communication (Kim & Ferguson, 2018).

Additionally, different studies provide evidences that effectiveness of CSR promotion happens when the expectation-confirmation theory is met (Kim, 2019). In this regard, companies today face high expectations and demands from stakeholders to be socially responsible and to practice better communication (Pomeroy & Dolnicar, 2009). To meet these increased expectations, CSR communication should be constantly evaluated in terms of whether stakeholders' views are being met (Kim, 2019).

To demonstrate the real effectiveness of CSR communication, Kim and Ferguson (2018) established six factors, extracted from previous studies as part of consumers' expectations, which are required for properly promote CSR commitment:

- *CSR informativeness*, defined as the information that should be disclosed in CSR communication concerning CSR efforts of an enterprise. These information regards, for instance, CSR commitment and impact.
- *personal relevance* is perceived as those messages which are linked to people's personal life experiences and interests.
- *consistency* is conceptualized as how constant the communication of the company's CSR goals to stakeholders is.
- *transparency* is defined as the extent to which a company is open to disclose both good and bad information. This factor is able to builds trust and credibility towards the firm.
- *factual message tone* consists in factual quality and feeling expressed in CSR communication by organizations. It indicates whether a message is self-promotional or factual in tone.

- *third party endorsement* determines those solicited or unsolicited recommendations that come from customers (Kim & Ferguson, 2018).

The authors states that when it is perceived the presence of the CSR communication factors, there will be a positive correlation with consumers' responses such as trust, reputation and engagement (Kim, 2019).

2.2.3. Stakeholder Engagement

This paragraph will explore a fundamental element which has to be considered as a core element by firms when they promote CSR activities, that is the engagement of stakeholders.

Stakeholder engagement consists in the individual's interactions and connections with the CSR operations of a company (McMillan & Hwang, 2002). This concept is seen as a pivotal element for a correct approach to CSR; companies need to actively engage people by establishing frequent yet stable connections founded on co-construction of sustainable initiatives (Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

Businesses have therefore realized that a sustainable development through CSR programs cannot be successful without securing active stakeholder engagement. The attention of critical stakeholders is not limited to the direct decisions and activities of a company, but it also focuses on the decisions and actions of suppliers, consumers and other stakeholders, which could encourage criticism towards the firm. As a consequence, CSR engagement now requires more sophisticated and ongoing awareness and necessitate improved CSR communication strategies (Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

Building on a previous framework of Grunig and Hunt (1984), Morsing and Schultz (2006) defined three CSR communication strategies in relation to stakeholders' engagement (Appendix 4):

- *Stakeholder information strategy*: according to this method, communication flows always one-way, from the organization to its stakeholders. Communication is perceived as telling, not listening (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). The purpose of this strategy is to spread objective information, without a clear intention of persuading the receivers. This strategy assumes that customers are influential to the extent that they can either show support by purchasing or show opposition by demonstrating and boycotting the company (Smith, 2003).

- Stakeholder response strategy: this approach is based on a ‘two-way asymmetric’ communication model, where information flow from and to the public but with an imbalance in favour of the company, since the firm does not change depending on public relations. Instead, the organization tries to adjust public attitudes and behaviours. In order to achieve this change, the company needs to implement actions which are relevant for its stakeholders (Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

This strategy is still a one-sided method, as the firm has the unique aim to promote its attractiveness to stakeholders, who are expected to passively react to corporate initiatives.

- Stakeholder involvement strategy: according to this strategy, the company establishes a dialogue with its stakeholders. Both parties influence and persuade each other, forming a symmetric communication model where both the parties are willing to change. This approach encompasses also a negotiation to discuss major concerns, as well as frequent dialogues to engage customers and make them develop and promote positive support (Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

According to the authors, in order to succeed, companies should employ all the three strategies simultaneously, due to their interdependency. In this way, organizations can inform, encourage feedback and involve their stakeholders in the communication of CSR initiatives and commitment.

2.3. Social Media

This chapter emphasizes the evolution and importance of the internet and social media, drawing attention on their influence on the marketplace and on every business’ operations. Furthermore, it is demonstrated their effectiveness and relevance when deployed as communication tools, with a specific regard to CSR promotion.

2.3.1. The Rise of Web 2.0. and Social Media

The dramatic and fast path that technologies and internet have been undertaking during the last decades is considerably shaping the daily life of every people; subsequently all companies must adapt and embrace it, in the interest of competitively operate in their business. This path has

transformed the original World Wide Web (WWW) to a new series of digital and technological devices which are grouped together under a unified concept: Web 2.0.

Web 2.0. is a term which was coined in 2004 and describes a new way in which online users started to utilise the WWW; that is, a platform made up of contents continuously generated and modified by all users in a participatory and collaborative manner, in contrast to previous applications created and published by individuals (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The transition to Web 2.0. has been driven by a combination of *technological* drivers, such as increased broadband availability and hardware capacity, *economic* drivers, like the increased availability of tools for the creation of contents, and *social* drivers, as for instance the rise of a generation of ‘digital natives’ (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The Web 2.0. has not only transformed individuals’ behaviour, but it has also affected some of the classic power structures in the marketplace, since it generated a substantial migration of market power from producers and vendors towards customers (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). This rapid change has significantly impacted daily habits of both users and organizations, some of which understood with difficulties the phenomenon, whereas others cleverly exploit them to build a substantial competitive advantage (Schultz & Peltier, 2013).

As a matter of fact, the advent of Web 2.0. technologies took unawares the majority of organizations because a general advancement was not sufficient, but a substantial shift was instead required, encompassing also behavioural aspects (Kane, Alavi, Labianca, & Borgatti, 2012). This transformation induced, indeed, a transition from a static, one-way information-based paradigm, to a dynamic dialogue-based one (Rayna & Striukova, 2010).

Therefore, one of the main results of this shift comprises the fact that customers, or more specifically networked visual users, do not trust and rely firm-supplied information as much as peer conversations which naturally form on social media (Shah & Jha, 2018).

Whilst this rapid and continuous change has been presenting businesses with new challenges, it has also offered them numerous new opportunities, including getting closely and easily in touch with their markets and learning about the needs and opinions of their customers as well as interacting with them in a direct and personalised way.

The most impactful and relevant advancements within Web 2.0. breakthroughs, especially with regards to business environment, are certainly social media. Even if the terms Web 2.0. and social media are occasionally used interchangeably, commonly social media comprises the social aspects of Web 2.0. (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008).

Social media, indeed, can be defined as those mobile and web-based technologies that serve to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated contents (Kietzmann, Hermkness, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011).

From their emergence, social media have been rising at an exponential rate. As of March 2019, statistics show that there are 3,397 billion active social media users around the world (Smith, 2019). Moreover, 91% of retail brands are reported to use two or more social media channels, while 38% of organizations plan to spend over 20% of their advertising budget on social media (Smith, 2019). Due to their impressive expansion, they should hereby be of interest to every companies operating in nowadays business environment (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

According to Shah and Jha (2018), social media are characterised by three main pillars: *user categories, user-generated contents, applications and platforms*.

- The first pillar concerns the different types of social media users, including ‘clever customers’, ‘crowd’, ‘digital natives’ and ‘generation C’. Additionally, users can also be categorised by demographics or frequency of social media use (Tuten, 2012). Unlike traditional consumers, social users co-create with companies rather than simply satisfy their needs in open markets, leading to meaningful interaction (Sashi, 2012).
- The second pillar, namely User Generated Content (UGC), represents the core of social media. UGC can be seen as the sum of all the ways in which people make use of social media, that is the various forms of media content publicly available and created by end-users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Users perceive it as part of their lifestyle besides a trustworthy decision-making source (Hardey, 2011).
- Finally, the third pillar regards the social applications and platforms which leverage the relationship and connection between the firm and its customers, and thus represent part of integrated marketing communication (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). While people use them for personal networking, companies employ them for marketing and engagement purposes; in

order to maximize customer reach, it is hence recommended that organizations are present to an extensive number of platforms (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

2.3.2. Social Media as a Communication Tool

The rise of Web 2.0-based social media has dramatically changed the way marketers communicate with consumers. Social media involve mass communication and crowd-sourcing, and they are part of the everyday communication mix of each company (Kesavan, Bernacchi, & Mascarenhas, 2013).

Historically, organizations were completely able to monitor the information available about them through press announcements and public relations managers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Nowadays, however, the advent of social networks confines firms as mere observers, since they do not have neither the knowledge nor the possibility to affect publicly posted comments from customers. Nonetheless, such an evolution should not be surprising since the WWW, from its very beginning, was created as a platform to facilitate information exchange among its users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

This increased access of customers to information through social media platforms represents thereby one of the major challenges that organizations have to face nowadays (Kesavan et al., 2013). As a matter of fact, companies are required to introduce and develop new learnings in order to connect with customers on digital platforms. An accurate approach to social media still have a relevant potential as a persuasive and relational communication tool (Taylor & Kent, 2014).

Furthermore, the interactive and immediate nature of social media allows enterprises to build close and mutual relationships with consumers internationally. The successful peculiarity of social media as a communication device consists in bringing together two crucial, even though opposite traits: global reach and personalisation (Okazaki & Taylor, 2013).

In addition to considerable benefits for organizations, the instant-interactive nature of social media is likewise advantageous for customers since they are provided with greater opportunities to process communication messages stimuli if compared with traditional media (Ko, Cho, & Roberts, 2005). Social media websites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter provide unlimited means for online users to interact, express, share and create content about anything, including brands. The common online consumer is therefore aware that Web 2.0. applications offer new

opportunities in terms of information sourcing and direct connections and dialogues with producers and vendors (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008).

If on the one hand, social media, along with applications based on UGCs, are object of scepticism, since things that are shared can be examples of abuse of intellectual rights, on the other hand they allow new sources of consumer creativity, influence and empowerment (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008).

To sum up, social media platforms appear to have engendered a more interactive communicative environment (Fieseler & Fleck, 2013) where information asymmetries are reduced for both companies and users. In addition, this decentralized two-way communication allows users to detect misleading communication practices, such as greenwashing (Lyon & Montgomery, 2013).

2.3.3. CSR Communication on Social Media

Social media may be one of the optimal channels for several matters, beliefs and activities related to sustainability (Schweidel & Moe, 2014). Using social media to build social capital benefits companies and stakeholders, and contributes to increase economic capital (Taylor, 2013).

Previous research has shown that frequent interactions between stakeholders and organizations on social networks usually strengthen users' perception of CSR and purchase intention (Haigh et al., 2013). Specifically for NGOs, it has been demonstrated that their social media page enhances donors engagement and perceived control (Sisson, 2017).

Saxton et al. (2017) argue that organizations which implement interactive CSR communication disclosures on social media are more likely to reduce information asymmetries, and thus increase credibility and trust towards messages promoted. The authors state that the public, transparent and social networked features of social media provide contexts in which the breadth, quality, clarity and strength of messages are more observable allowing a higher level of transparency (Saxton et al., 2017).

Furthermore, Kent and Taylor (2016) established three more aspects which make social media use for CSR promotion effective. The first point consists in *stakeholders engagement*, which has been analysed previously and recognised as a pivotal element for CSR communication.

The second feature is the *recognition of the value of others*, meant as having an unconditional positive regard for the other, and which reflects the firm's commitment to develop a transparent and honest dialogue with all of its stakeholders. The third point concerns organization's *empathy with users*, implemented by being open to their ideas and opinions and valuing what they say (Kent & Taylor, 2016).

In addition, the effectiveness of CSR communication on social media is also influenced by the source where the disclosure comes from (Wang & Huang, 2018). Two different social media sources could be involved when a firm conveys with its stakeholders: on one hand, messages can be disclosed via the organization's official media accounts, such as the Facebook page, and they usually deal with official and formal information; on the other hand, more personable and humanised CSR messages may be promoted through the CEO's personal accounts, being CEOs perceived as the public face of the company (Wang & Huang, 2018). Both these sources represent the voice of the organization and they could engage with the same users' target. Nonetheless, users may decide to connect with them for differing reasons and expectations: people follow CEOs on social media because they want to comprehend their values, expecting more personal contents, whereas users who follow organizations' official pages may expect certain forms of mobilisation messages (Saxton & Waters, 2014).

2.4. Social Enterprises

This chapter will explore the definition and the main features of social enterprises, by underlying their hybrid nature and functionalities, as well as the different challenges they have to face due to their twofold mission. Thereafter, in order to make the further comparison analysis more effective, the major characteristics of SEs' marketing communication strategies will be investigated.

2.4.1. The Function of Social Enterprises

Over the last decades, social enterprises have increasingly grown their importance, arousing interest of many scholars due to their innovative way of addressing complex social issues, such as poverty and environmental damage, meanwhile being financially sustainable by competing in

the market (Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, & Shulman, 2009). This interest in SEs is consistent with the previously outlined demand imposed on companies to trigger positive social change by engaging in CSR practices.

Researches acknowledge SEs as mission-oriented companies that compete in the market to address complex social matters (Dacin, Dacin, & Tracey, 2011). The social value sought could concern, for example, job creation through social innovation, provision of social services or contribution to local communities (Kang & Kim, 2017). A *social entrepreneur*, moreover, is defined as an individual who seeks to find innovative solutions and creative uses of resources to satisfy social and environmental needs (Thompson, Alvy, & Lees, 2000).

Social enterprises are usually designed as *hybrid* organizations which combines elements and structures of traditional commercial firms, with features of non-profit organizations. Indeed, they primarily pursue a social mission, while relying consistently on economic returns to sustain their business (Battilana, Lee, Walker, & Dorsey, 2012). These types of companies have been present for a long time in certain industries, such as job training and healthcare, but they are taking hold in many more new sectors recently, including consumer products and information technology (Battilana et al., 2012). This recent growth in the number of SEs is mainly due to social entrepreneurs' willingness to be less dependent from donations, but rather outlasting thanks to independent financial profits (Battilana et al., 2012).

Additionally, SEs are positively perceived by customers, who tend to better trust their sustainable activities compared to those of traditional organizations. Choi and Kim (2013), indeed, asserted that consumers of SEs pay considerable attention to the social value contributed by those companies. SEs' external stakeholders are reported to seek public interest and they aim to support vulnerable groups of people by conscious purchasing actions (Kang, 2017).

Furthermore, in terms of impact, hybrid organizations have proven effective in addressing long-term societal matters (Santos et al., 2015). Fair trade enterprises which benefit small producers in developing countries, for instance, gave rise to 4.8 billion USD in sales worldwide in 2011, reinforcing the economic conditions of more than 1.4 billion manufacturers (Santos et al., 2015).

The business model of SEs consists in using product or service sales to fund the social mission, with the purpose of reducing dependence on donations and grants, and to enhance and strengthen the organization (Battilana et al., 2012). The integrated hybrid model of SEs generates both social

value and commercial revenue through a single, unified strategy. Even if it is hardly attainable, the ideal hybrid model allows managers to avoid the choice between mission and profit, because these goals are integrated in a unique approach. Actually, this integration enables cycles of profits and reinvestments which result in a concrete impact towards social problems. (Battilana et al., 2012).

The business model upon which SEs are based, is strictly related to the concept of *creating shared value*, which indicates the creation of social value by enterprises' actions while seeking for economic profit (Porter & Kramer, 2019). Differently from traditional companies that implement CSR activities, however, social value creation is central to SEs' functioning (Battilana & Lee, 2014).

Moreover, SEs can effectively implement a differentiation strategy, and consequently sustain a competitive advantage, by developing inimitable resources and capabilities, such as reputation and culture (Kang & Kim, 2017). Therefore, intangible assets, like ethical activities, become particularly relevant within this context.

The successful recombination of social and commercial performance is significantly complex since it requires the management of several divergent organizational structures, values and stakeholders (Smith et al., 2013). Even if many governments tend to promote SEs, these organizations still need to have deep knowledge in the field of management to compete with traditional companies (Kang & Kim, 2017).

A first challenge which undermines SEs regards their legal structure. While for-profit organizations focus on shareholder value maximization to distribute returns, non-profits pursue a charitable goal, and thus obtain tax benefits from governments. Given that it is often difficult to obtain legal recognition for a hybrid company, SEs are forced to be legally recognized either as for-profits or non-profits. The most common solution to this dilemma is to create two separate legal entities, to exploit the benefits of both legal structures (Battilana et al., 2012). Another challenge consists in finding investors; while classic companies aim at giving some profits to their shareholders, SEs do not have this mission, thus they appear less attractive to potential investors.

Nevertheless, the main problem for a social enterprise is avoiding the occurrence of mission drift. *Mission drift* consists in abandoning social concerns in favour of profit-generating activities

(Battilana et al., 2012). This drift can provoke internal tensions and loss of support from relevant stakeholders (Battilana & Lee, 2014).

Despite the evidence of societal and environmental impact, studies have demonstrated that SEs are fragile organizations, due to internal tension and mission drift caused by incompatible and diverging goals (Santos et al., 2015). A SE is continuously exposed to the risk of implementing practices and innovations that might cause the unbalance towards the prioritisation of either social or economic performance (Ramus, Vaccaro, & Brusoni, 2017). SEs which prioritise the social performance, could dissatisfy those commercial partners and investors who support the firm to be profitable (Pache & Santos, 2013). In contrast, giving priority to commercial acts goes at the expense of those donors, employees and customers who support the company for the positive impact that it has on the society and environment (Zahra et al., 2009). The central challenge of SEs is then to align the activities that generate profit with the practices aimed at rising a social impact. Studies have shown, indeed, that mission drift risk is reduced when the SE is capable of controlling both internal and external pressure regarding commercial achievements through a proper organizational structure (Binder, 2007).

2.4.2. Social Enterprises' Marketing Communications

This section explores the role that marketing communication plays in the context of social entrepreneurship, in order to define to what extent is comparable to traditional firms' one and to determine its main distinctive features.

There are relatively few studies which investigate the contribution marketing communication could make to SEs (Choi & Kim, 2013). Nevertheless, with the rise of SEs, entrepreneurial marketing has emerged as a remarkable term in both marketing theory and practice (Shaw, 2004). Shaw (2004) demonstrated that communication activities of SEs are rarely planned and usually conducted unconsciously. Another research (Bull & Crompton, 2006) stated that marketing activities within a SE had a little impact due to the limited amount of resources devoted to them. It is evidenced from several studies that SEs need to demonstrate a great competency in terms of networking and building relationships when dealing with marketing communications (Shaw, 2004), meaning that the degree of interaction and engagement with the public is essential. Marketing communication, indeed, is better executed in SEs when it is referred to relationship building rather than to achieving competitive advantage (Powell & Osborne, 2015). Further,

Bjerke and Hultman (2002) argues that entrepreneurial marketing is about identifying market opportunities and transforming resources such as knowledge and technology, to co-create with consumers products or services which they perceive to be of value.

Marketing objectives of a SE are encompassed within the organization's general objectives. Since a SE operates with several objectives, related to numerous different stakeholders, such as customers, managers and governments, communication planning in a SE should develop well-defined set of promotion messages in relation to the different addressees (Dholakia & Dholakia, 1975).

3. Methodology

In the previous chapters, it has been analysed the literature on specific topics - CSR, CSR communications, social media and social enterprises. In this section regarding the methodology, the various methods and approaches selected to design the analysis are presented and discussed.

3.1. Research Philosophy

The selection of the research philosophy has a remarkable impact on the validity of the project. All the research is underpinned by a set of implicit and explicit philosophical assumptions, which shape the practice of the study and the theoretical conclusions drawn on the basis of the data collected (Bell, Bryman, & Harley, 2018). The philosophy of social science seeks to explain and understand assumptions in different spheres, which are hereinafter investigated.

3.1.1. Ontology: Objectivism versus Constructionism

In business research, *ontology* refers to theories about the nature of reality (Bell et al., 2018). Conducting a research implies trying to understand reality, thus it is relevant to consider what reality is. Moreover, different ontological positions will provide different answers to questions of what reality represents. Ontology hence represents the assumptions made about what it means for something to exist (Bell et al., 2018).

The main distinction is between those who perceive the social world as something external to social actors, constituting *objectivism*, and those who see reality as something that can be influenced and constructed by people, representing *constructionism* (Bell et al., 2018).

Objectivism is an ontological position according to which social phenomena and their meanings exist irrespective of social actors (Bell et al., 2018). According to this thought, organizations are conceived as observable objects, with specific rules and regulations which generate standardized procedures (Bell et al., 2018).

The opposite ontological position, *constructionism*, views social objects and categories as socially constructed. Social phenomena are continuously revised and produced through social interactions (Bell et al., 2018).

Culture is not an external reality that exists and constrains individuals, but is rather an emerging reality in constant state of construction and reconstruction. Culture has a reality that influences and shapes people's perspectives: it acts as a reference point, but it is in an ongoing process of being formed (Bell et al., 2018).

In accordance with the paper's purposes, constructionism is found to be the right ontological position to take, since the study will be conducted by assigning meanings to the phenomena observed, and it is this assignment of significance which constitutes the reality of the objects of the research.

3.1.2. Epistemology: Positivism versus Interpretivism Paradigms

In addition to ontology, another element of philosophy of social science must be considered to fully understand how the study is conducted: *epistemology*.

Epistemology refers to theories about what is known, or what can be known. It follows logically from ontology, meaning that a specific ontological position determines a particular epistemological position. Furthermore, epistemology allows to answer the research question and define how to conduct the study (Bell et al., 2018).

Aiming at developing the research design, a comprehensive analysis of existing research paradigms is needed, to select the most valid concepts that fit with the research objective.

The majority of researchers distinguish between two main philosophies: *positivism* and *interpretivism*.

Positivism is an epistemological position which supports the use of natural sciences' methods to the study of social reality. Based on the ontological assumption that reality exists objectively and externally, the correct way to gather data is to directly observe phenomena and measure them (Bell et al., 2018).

In contrast, *interpretivism* is an epistemological position which does not seek for general rules of reality, but rather it looks for understanding the motives and purposes of human behaviour. Individuals do not simply accept and react to outer effects, but they interpret and give meanings to different situations (Blumberg et al., 2011).

The three fundamental principles of interpretivism are:

- the social world is constructed and people give subjective meanings to it
- research is driven by interests
- the researcher becomes part of what is observed (Blumberg et al., 2011).

A study conducted through interpretivism delivers broad explanations of the facts and an interpretation of the findings (Blumberg et al., 2011).

Given that the ontological constructivism will be adopted, knowledge needs to be gained in different ways, such as observing and interviewing social actors in an attempt to understand the reality. For this reason, and in accordance to the research objective and question, an interpretivism paradigm is considered as the most suitable. This thesis, indeed, aims to investigate the stakeholders' perception, feelings and thoughts towards CSR disclosure on social media. The researcher will then have to immerse into the circumstances as part of the phenomenon studied, and subsequently understand and interpret the findings.

3.2. Research Approach: Deductive versus Inductive

The majority of researchers recognise two opposite approaches to reasoning, namely *deductive* and *inductive*, distinguished by the different roles that theory and data cover.

The *deductive* approach consists in a process which starts from the literature and its theories, further developing logical conclusions linked to concrete cases (Bell et al., 2018). Since the deductive approach is advanced for testing existing theories, it will not be selected for the current study. The aim of this research, indeed, is to critically reflect on the perceptions towards CSR-related disclosure.

With the *inductive* approach, on the contrary, theory becomes the outcome of the study, where generalizable findings and conclusions emerge from observation (Bell et al., 2018).

In accordance with the philosophy of science, an inductive approach will be selected. In fact, data are firstly gathered and afterwards analysed and reflected upon in relation to existing literature (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Moreover, an inductive approach is considered appropriate for contextualising a restricted number of cases (Saunders et al., 2009). At first, the author will observe and collect data to catch the most relevant outcomes, which will subsequently be analysed and connected to the principal literature regarding CSR communications on social media of both social enterprises and traditional organizations.

3.3. Research Design: Exploratory versus Conclusive

Research design details the procedures necessary in order to gather the information and data needed to structure and solve the research. It specifies the details and the practical aspects of implementing the study, and therefore a proper research design will ensure that the thesis is conducted effectively and efficiently (Malhotra, Nunan, & Birks, 2017).

Research designs are classified as *exploratory* and *conclusive*. This study will preclude a conclusive design, since this kind of research is typically formal and structured, hence requiring clearly specified information in order to describe specific phenomena, to test specific hypotheses and to examine detailed relationships (Malhotra et al., 2017).

The thesis will then be conducted as an *exploratory* research. The primary objective of this type of research is to provide insights into and an understanding of phenomena (Malhotra et al., 2017). The information needed to answer the research question, indeed, are loosely defined, and the research process is flexible and unstructured. The process will be driven by the insights gathered from qualitative interviews and observations of social media platforms, on the basis of several topics such as CSR, sustainability and consumer engagement.

3.3.1. Research Method: Qualitative versus Quantitative

The research method represents the techniques and procedures selected to answer the scientific questions (Blumberg et al., 2011). There are two types of research methods: *quantitative* and *qualitative*.

Quantitative methods are research techniques that are aimed to quantify data and numbers by applying some form of measurement and statistical analysis (Malhotra et al., 2017). *Qualitative* researches, on the other hand, seek to achieve a deep understanding of a social phenomenon and uncover the reasons which rely behind it (Blumberg et al., 2011).

There is a close parallel in the differentiation between ‘exploratory and conclusive research’ and ‘qualitative and quantitative research’ (Malhotra et al., 2017). In accordance with the research philosophy, the inductive approach and the exploratory design, the topic under investigation requires the use of qualitative methods over quantitative.

Even if some researchers state that only quantitative studies provide valid findings, qualitative techniques are believed to be the only methods capable of capturing attitudes, motives and behaviours (Malhotra et al., 2017), which are considered pivotal elements for the investigation of a sensitive topic such as the one under research.

Indeed, in order to draw meanings and insights to answer the research question, the study necessitates methods which are based on the observations and interpretations of the data, rather than focusing on numbers and distributions. A qualitative research hence enables the researcher to explore interpretations, values and attitudes towards sustainability, social and environmental awareness and companies’ reputation, so as to achieve the purpose of the study.

In order to figure out how conventional companies can successfully promote their sustainable development and responsible practices, the study will require interviewing and intensive observation. In addition, the core themes of the study, due to their subjectivity and extensiveness, are better understood through participants experiences, beliefs and thoughts rather than just quantitative results gathered, for instance, by surveys. As a result, the researcher necessitates rich and detailed answers which cannot be simply processed with quantitative methods.

In addition and support to the qualitative analysis, the study will be addressed to analyse specific case studies. The findings and outcomes gathered from an initial and general primary data

collection, will be further applied to the circumstances of specific firms and following observed and interpreted to monitor their practical transposition. The motives behind the selection of the industry and the specific firms within it, will be outlined in the next chapter, before the current analysis.

3.3.2. Data Collection

Qualitative research comprises numerous methods that can be flexibly combined, to allow participants to reflect upon and express their views as well as to observe their behaviour (Malhotra et al., 2017). Actually, qualitative data can be obtained from several sources.

Whilst conducting the thesis, different qualitative methods are applied to collect both primary and secondary data, originating a so-called a *multi-method qualitative study method* (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.3.2.1. Primary Data

“Primary data are data originated by a researcher for the specific purpose of addressing the problem at hand” (Malhotra et al., 2017, p.92). Their main feature is the exclusivity which results from the fact that they are tailored to the specific research.

In the current study, primary data are made of semi-structured in-depth interviews and observations of social media platforms of the companies included in the case study.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews

An in-depth interview is a direct, personal interview where a single interviewee is asked to uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, feelings and attitudes regarding a specific theme. This kind of interview is a qualitative method based upon conversation, whose primary purpose is not to detect facts, but rather to derive meanings through interpretations (Malhotra et al., 2017).

In-depth interviews can be categorised in semi-structured or unstructured interviews. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher has a list of questions and topics that he wants to be covered and which might vary from interview to interview (Saunders et al., 2009). The semi-structure enables to neglect or supplement some questions in certain interviews depending on the specific context, or to modify the order of questions according to the flow of the conversation (Saunders et al., 2009). An unstructured interview, in contrast, is not build from a predetermined list of

questions, and the interviewee has the possibility to talk freely without any guidance, and in fact is the respondent the one who direct the interview (Saunders et al., 2009).

For the current study, the semi-structured way is preferred for several reasons. Firstly, because preparing a list of questions in advance enables to ensure to cover the core topics of the research, such as the role of CSR or the phenomenon of greenwashing, while providing a great extent of flexibility at the same time. In this way, the researcher is able to obtain extensive insights and thoughts on the main themes that need to be addressed, guaranteeing linkage to the study's objectives as well as remaining professional and consistent to the approach. Furthermore, the semi-structured aspect facilitates the comparison of the interviews, in order to render the analysis more valid and effective.

Nonetheless, the lack of a fixed structure could make the outcomes biased and the respondent could be vulnerable of the influence of the interviewer and vice versa (Malhotra et al., 2017). Being conscious of this disadvantage, the researcher is aware of the factors which can arise prejudices.

All the interviews took from 30 minutes to an hour, and they started with a brief explanation of the study and its purposes. According with the semi-structure nature, the researcher developed a framework composed of 18 questions (Appendix 5), which served as a guidance for all the interview. The list was adapted and changed for every interview made, in compliance with the status of the interviewee and the flow of the conversation. The interviewer always checked the list to ensure that all the important issues were tackled, but the number and the order of the questions was widely altered.

Moreover, the questions were raised as *open questions*, in order to enhance flexibility, and to encourage the interviewee to reply with freedom and to provide extensive and developmental answers (Saunders et al., 2009).

A total of 5 interviews have been conducted (Appendix 6). Since the main purpose of the study is to provide traditional companies with concrete managerial implications in terms of how to effectively disclose their honest commitment regarding sustainable practices by analysing how social enterprises are acting, it has been considered relevant to select as interviewees social entrepreneurs and professional people working in the context of SEs. Taking into consideration people who based their business on various social missions, has exposed the beliefs, thoughts and

values which serve as recommendations to conventional firms to properly communicate their CSR, and hence to better answer the research question.

Social Media Platforms

In the current research, a second source of primary data is represented by passive social media research, that is “*analysing what is already being discussed in social media channels*” (Malhotra et al., 2017, p.495). The websites, social networks profiles and postings of the companies encompassed in the case study, along with postings and comments of users, are taken into consideration.

These assets are comprised within primary data, since only those elements and contents which are related to CSR and sustainability matters have been considered, in compliance to the purposes and objective of the study, and further interpreted and designed on the basis of the findings and beliefs emerged from the interviews, as well as associated to the pertinent literature.

Relevant data were also obtained from the companies’ web pages, in order to gather background information regarding core values and social missions.

The focus on social media is justified by the fact that data provided can give the researcher a view of what people truly feel due to their spontaneity and honesty (Malhotra et al., 2017).

3.3.2.2. Secondary Data

“*Secondary data are data that have already been collected for purposes other than the problem at hand*” (Malhotra et al., 2017, p.92).

In this paper, secondary sources consist of data collected from academic books, research and scholarly articles and journals related to the field of study.

Secondary data are encompassed in the study because, besides the advantage of their straightforward accessibility, they enable to interpret primary data with more insights and to validate the qualitative research findings. According to the inductive approach selected, secondary data will enable to analyse significant insights and findings from primary data methods - both in-depth interviews and the case studies on social media - by connecting with relevant literature. It will be taken into consideration that secondary data have been collected for purposes which differ from the specific research question and objectives of this study (Saunders et al., 2009), consequently they will be employed to partially address the intended aims.

3.3.3. Data Analysis

In order to better structure and organise the qualitative data gathered, all the interviews have been audio-recorded and successively transcribed, just omitting those parts which were out of the scope of the interview, thus emphasising the most remarkable outcomes in compliance with the study's objectives.

The application of qualitative techniques is not necessarily a fixed and structured procedure (Malhotra et al., 2017). According to the inductive approach selected, data are firstly collected, and then explored to detect the topics and matters to follow up and concentrate on (Saunders et al., 2009).

In the process of reducing data, it is necessary to organise, manage and retrieve the most significant insights of qualitative data collected. To do so, for certain parts of the analysis, data were labelled and categorised according to specific groups taken from existing frameworks to better compare and interpret data. By categorising, interviewees' responses and other data sources are brought together into classes that form similar ideas, concepts or themes (Malhotra et al., 2017). This method has been used because it is a subjective and discretionary process that enables the researcher to identify what it is believed particularly meaningful in order to draw conclusions and interpret meanings (Malhotra et al., 2017).

Once data from interviews are reduced organising the core beliefs, thoughts and values, as a subsequent step, the main findings were taken as guidance for observing and interpret the specific communication channels and texts on social media platforms within the context of the case studies. The aim of this analysis is to explore the communication and discussion between companies and its stakeholders on the social media platforms. Therefore, a *discourse analysis* is employed to investigate the main themes of matters detected from the interviews regarding CSR communication and how it is discussed in the different channels of the companies considered.

3.3.4. Reliability and Validity

Reliability is defined as “*the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings*” (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008, p.109 in Saunders et al., 2009).

In order to ensure reliability, the researcher attempted to present the study with its key features and objectives in the same manner to every respondent.

Bearing in mind some potential threats to reliability, the matter of *participant bias* has been reduced by interviewing respondents which were completely free to express their views without any pressure of trying to avoid certain probing questions. The issue of potential *bias of interviewees*, which in the current study can be for instance encountered when discussing about the reasons for conventional firms to communicate CSR practices, was already deemed when designing the questions, and was mostly under consideration when interpreting and analysing the data.

In addition, another threat is represented by observer error, which is particularly difficult to address because the flexible structure of the open questions might let some interviews to take a direction that could be distant from the core objective of the study. To avoid this issue, the researcher ensured that the semi-structure nature of the interviews still allowed to touch all the points considered key for the subsequent analysis. Finally, the *observation bias*, which involves different ways of interpreting data, has been addressed by discussing findings and interpretations after each interview as well as connecting the debate of case studies on the basis of the insights uncovered from the interviews.

Validity relates to “*whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about*” (Saunders et al., 2009, p.157), that is ensuring that the methods employed actually examine what it is supposed to be examined. In the case of this study, the validity of in-depth interviews is guaranteed by inspecting the answers and relating them to the research question in order to monitor if they contributed to the answering of this. In this respect, minor adjustments in the questions have been implemented in order to maintain the results comparable but accurate and pertinent at the same time.

Generalisability, often referred to as *external validity*, concerns the extent to which the research is generalizable, which means that findings could be likewise applicable to other study settings

(Saunders et al., 2009). It has to be clarified that the findings resulted from non-standardised qualitative methods are not necessarily meant to be repeatable, since they design a reality which may be subject to transform (Saunders et al., 2009). The results and conclusions of the current study are not claimed to be successfully applied to every case; firstly, because personal care industry features detailed CSR issues, such as animal testing or harmful product ingredients, which might not appear in many other markets, therefore making the industry more subject to stakeholders' mistrust towards greenwashing claims. Secondly, because the circumstances posed at the centre of the research are complex and significantly dynamic.

4. Case Presentation

4.1. The Cosmetic and Personal Care Industry

The cosmetics and personal care market is defined as consumer goods for beauty and body care (Statista, 2019a). This industry is characterised by few major global players which own internationally recognised brands of which the most important are L'Oréal, Unilever, Procter & Gamble, Estée Lauder, Shiseido and Beiersdorf (Statista, 2019a).

The global beauty market is usually divided into five segments: skincare, haircare, colour (make-up), fragrances and toiletries. These segments are defined by complementary goods that through their diversity succeed in satisfying all consumers' needs and expectations with regard to cosmetics (Statista, 2019b).

The most important trends in the industry are the growing importance of emerging markets, which represent huge potential for international companies, as well as a noticeable upturn in the usage of colour cosmetics, mainly driven by social media (Statista, 2019b).

Revenues in the personal care market amounts at USD 110,045 million in 2019. The industry, in addition, is expected to grow annually by 1.1% (Figure 5) (Statista, 2019a). Furthermore, per capita spending on personal care goods is ranked among the top six categories of private household consumption (Eberhart & Naderer, 2017).

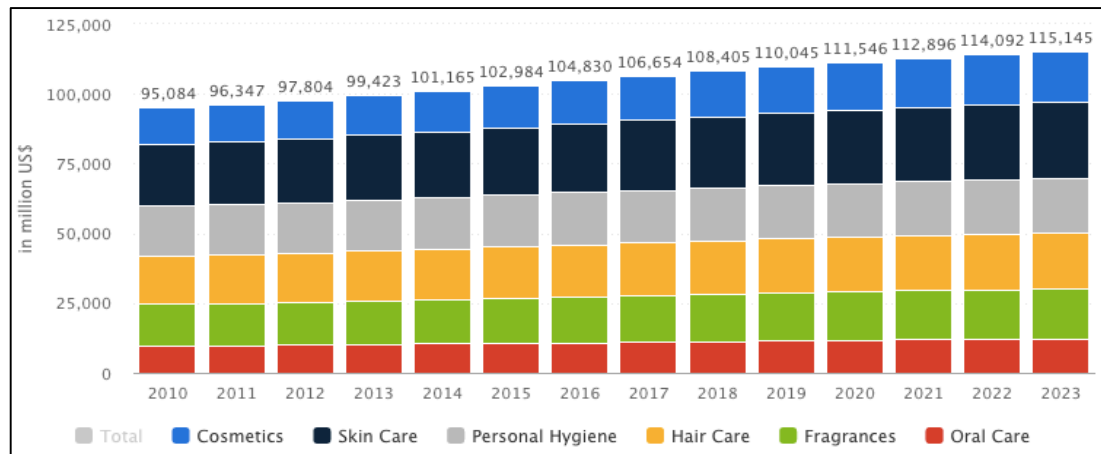


FIGURE 5: REVENUES IN THE COSMETICS & PERSONAL CARE MARKET (STATISTA, 2019A)

Globally, the United States is the country which engenders more revenues, with a market volume of USD 79,814 million. Among the top 5 countries worldwide, there can be found China, Japan, Brazil and Germany (Figure 6) (Statista, 2019a).

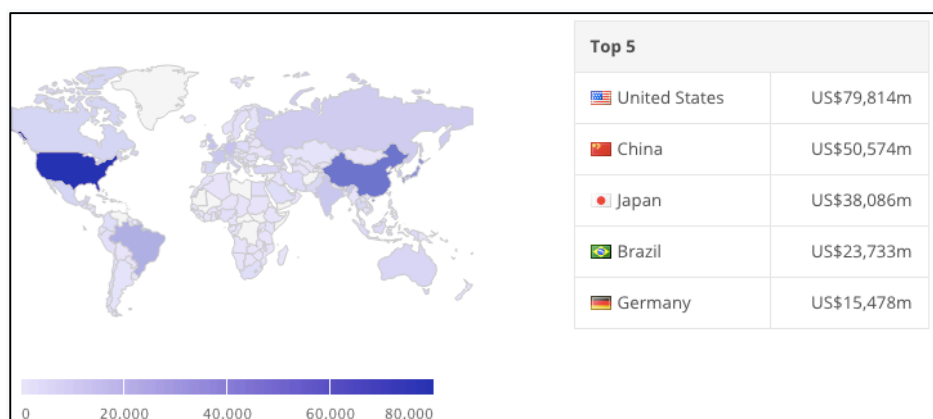


FIGURE 6: GLOBAL COMPARISON REVENUE - IN MILLION USD (STATISTA, 2019A)

4.2. Sustainability and CSR Issues in the Personal Care Industry

Even if this industry is featured by a dramatic price competition and a low growth rate, the market for sustainable personal care products offers remarkable potential for both retailers and manufacturers (Eberhart & Naderer, 2017). Forecasts show that sustainability issues will be a major driving force for the sector's market growth in the years to come, leading annual growth rates up to 10% (KPMG, 2016). As a matter of fact, consumers place great emphasis on buying cosmetics with a conscience (Sahota, 2014). A study conducted by an American online retailer

demonstrated that 75% of women prefers to purchase cosmetics goods presenting a cruelty-free logo over items without (Sahota, 2014).

It is a fact that the main reason why personal care consumers purchase from companies which are highly committed to CSR practices are health and taste of sustainable products themselves. However, studies regarding sustainability within the personal care sector are scarce, and the comprehensive motives by which consumers are moved to purchase from trusted environmental and social friendly firms are still under-investigated (Eberhart & Naderer, 2017).

Media is playing a pivotal role in raising social and environmental issues within this industry (Sahota, 2014). Being consumers more aware of sustainability concerns, they are increasingly demanding for goods to meet ethical and ecological standards (Sahota, 2014). Additionally, public awareness is also raised by NGOs and associations such as Greenpeace, that in 2005, for instance, released the Cosmetox Guide, a report that exposes details of harmful ingredients within beauty goods, and it rates companies on the basis of the chemical composition of their products (Sahota, 2014).

Even though public awareness is raising unfavourable aspects of cosmetic products, a study conducted by Eberhart and Naderer (2017) demonstrated that personal care goods consumers have generally a positive attitude towards sustainability, but they still rarely transfer this position to sustainable purchasing. According to the study, only a small percentage of customers, namely responsible consumers, manage to combine personal interests and sustainability motives. The reason for this is that stakeholders establish their purchasing decisions on the basis of companies which sell goods that concretely prove direct personal benefits. An additional reason relies on the fact that most of customers suffer from insufficient knowledge in respect of which are the companies more committed to sustainable operations (Eberhart & Naderer, 2017).

In the context of personal care, sustainable products are commonly the ones provided by organizations which reflect moral and ethical principles such as eliminating toxic ingredients causing negative environmental and physical effects or demonstrating commitment to animal welfare (Environmental Working Group, 2019). These types of products are certified by labels to contain only raw materials, and both their ingredients and production processes reflect considerations for sustainable development along all the production chain (Eberhart & Naderer, 2017).

However, production of personal care goods may negatively affect the environment by impacting water resources, climate change and land use. It is thus a primary and pivotal aim for sustainable companies within the personal care to address these concerns and try to minimize risks for both individuals and the environment (Eberhart & Naderer, 2017).

To conclude, the choice of selecting the personal care industry for this study, relies on the fact that nowadays consumers stay better informed about ingredients that may potentially harm either their body or the environment. Since they know more, they are often more sceptical regarding claims made by product manufacturers, whether in advertising, packaging, websites or point-of-sale materials. Hence, consumers have started demanding full transparency from businesses about their sourcing methods, product, ingredients and sustainability practices (KPMG, 2016). Moreover, critics claim that a consistent number of environmental practices advertised by cosmetic and fragrance producers are exaggerated, false or meaningless (Kumar, 2005). For instance, many of the ‘biodegradable’ packages have been shown to be incapable of degrading under conditions present in the majority of landfills (Kumar, 2005).

These occurrences perfectly fit within the thesis’ research problem, which is aiming at investigating how personal care companies can prove their honest and transparent commitment towards a sustainable development to their stakeholders.

4.3. The Companies

The following paragraphs will introduce the companies within the personal care industry selected for the study. This chapter will present the main information of the businesses, specifically focusing on their social mission and CSR-related practices.

4.3.1. Lush - *Fresh Handmade Cosmetics*

Founded in 1994, Lush is a multinational personal care retailer with headquarters in the UK and over 700 retail outlets in more than 40 countries (Aronczyk, 2016).

The cosmetics firm perceives charitable giving and activist orientation as the central and pivotal elements for its business (Aronczyk, 2016). As a result, all the company’s activities and practices are driven by six values: freshest cosmetics, 100% vegetarian, ethical buying, handmade,

packaging free and fighting animal testing (Lush, 2019a). Moreover, Lush regularly partners with charity groups, non-profit organizations and NGOs to support a range of social and environmental causes (Aronczyk, 2016).

The great social impact that the firm is achieving, is obtained by a combination of several campaigns and strategies. Among all, the launch, in 2007, of a body lotion called Charity Pot, for which the 100% of the purchase price goes towards supporting humanitarian, environmental and animal rights causes locally and globally (Lush, 2019b). Since its launch, Charity Pot has donated more than USD 33 million to 2450+ grassroots charities in 42 countries (Lush, 2019b).

Moreover, in addition to its fair trade and organic commitment, in 2010 the enterprise created the Sustainable Lush Fund: an initiative that allows to invest 2% of the expenses on raw materials and packaging, and to put that towards supporting communities to become more resilient (Lush, 2019b).

Lush employs a marketing communication strategy greatly integrated around transparency, fair trade, human rights, and justice (Aronczyk, 2016). Especially the protest campaigns, supported by employees themselves on behalf of the company, are crucial to Lush's extensive branding and reputation strategies, complementing and vastly extending the practices of corporate 'self-mediation' via websites and social media platforms (Aronczyk, 2016). Lush internal stakeholders and members of its partner organizations extensively document the campaign protests and circulate them broadly via their online networks. The company also generates online content like spoof ads and videos on YouTube against target industries or governments (Aronczyk, 2016).

The firm hence attempts to engage all of the possible stakeholders, including employees, charities, NGOs, volunteers and consumers, in unconventional advertising, by encouraging to disseminate Lush's values along with their own (Aronczyk, 2016).

4.3.2. LXMI - *Beauty for Humanity*

Described as the "*Chanel of Social Impact*", LXMI is a social enterprise founded in 2015 by the well-known social entrepreneur Leila Janah after a casual discovery of Nilotica, LXMI's signature ingredient, at a market in Uganda. The enterprise emerged from the acknowledgement that marginalized East African women could be helped by finding dignified work through the wild harvesting, production and exportation of Nilotica (LXMI, 2019a). The harvest of primary

ingredients, indeed, enable producers to earn more than three times the local wages (LXMI, 2019b). As a result, these improved living wages allow to eliminate some of the world's most serious problems, from childhood malnutrition to human trafficking (LXMI, 2019b). With the creation of LXMI, the founder, moved by the idea of “*transform our skin, our planet and people for the better*” (LXMI, 2019b), became a pioneer of the #GiveWork concept, perceiving work as the most powerful mean to fight poverty.

LXMI is committed to three different brand principles:

- Pure, rare ingredients from unique terroir
- Going beyond charity to provide work for women, and
- Natural and organic botanicals, often safe-enough-to-eat (LXMI, 2019a).

After years of success, LXMI nowadays represents a luxury brand which combines undiscovered, effective natural ingredients with transparent, responsible production and sourcing practices (LXMI, 2019c).

The core mission is to engage women to take an active part in the world in a way that creates lasting beauty. This is driven by three key beliefs:

- The way we treat our skin – and people – matters.
- Work is at the core of human dignity.
- Giving work is the ultimate solution to global poverty (LXMI, 2019c).

4.3.3. The 7 Virtues - *Make Perfume Not War*

Launched on the International Women's Day in 2010, The 7 Virtues is a fast-growing Canadian social enterprise which manufactures and sells 'peace' perfumes. Already successfully established in hundreds of Sephora stores across the USA and Canada, the organization will expand to Europe in 2019.

The mission of the company, and founder's Barb Stegemann herself, is to “*Make Perfume Not War. To make rebuilding more exciting than destruction.*” (The7Virtues, 2019a). This social mission comprises harnessing women's buying power and voting power to end corruption, poverty and war (The7Virtues, 2019b).

The empowerment and peace path that the enterprise is pursuing, is executed through the purchase of materials solely from fair trade legal businesses in countries that are rebuilding after war or strife, and characterised by an elevated level of illegality (The7Virtues, 2019b). Additionally, this

social enterprise is committed to encourage other businesses to trade and purchase from suppliers which are actively supporting associations that are helping groups of individuals in need such as orphans and widows (The7Virtues, 2019b).

Likewise many SEs, The 7 Virtues can boast of offering its employees extremely high wages if compared to the general ones of those poor nations. Furthermore, the fragrances are never tested on animals and do not contain any harmful ingredients (The7Virtues, 2019a).

4.3.4. The Estée Lauder Companies

The Estée Lauder Companies Inc. (ELC) is one of the world's leading manufacturers and marketers within the personal care industry, operating since 1946 (ELC, 2019a). The firm's creative and innovative products are sold in over 150 countries worldwide under numerous brand names, generating, in 2018, USD 13.68 billion net sales (ELC, 2019a).

The for-profit firm claims to be dedicated to understanding and managing economic, environmental and social impacts throughout the value chain (ELC, 2019b).

According to the influential Reputation Institute's UK CSR RepTrak 2016 study, The Estée Lauder companies has been recognized as one of the most sustainable companies in the UK (ELC Report, 2017).

The company's environmental efforts are concentrated on climate change, waste and recycling, and water. On the other hand, the social impact is pursued focusing on health and education (ELC, 2019c).

Among its main accomplishments, the multinational firm is considerably reducing the carbon footprint of its packaging, as well as putting inclusion and diversity of employees as one of the central driver (ELC Report, 2017).

The holding company owns 29 brands, each of which differs in terms of core values and customer target, being some sub-firms categorised as luxury brands while other address their products to the mass market. For this reason, it is judged relevant to select a couple of these specific brands to analyse, rather than investigating the mother company as a whole. The two firms chosen are: MAC Cosmetics, the biggest and most profitable brand belonging to ELC, which therefore has the potential to generate the greatest impact; and Origins, a successful business acknowledged for its core environmental values.

MAC Cosmetics

MAC is the world's leading professional makeup firm. Part of ELC since 1994, MAC items are sold in over 120 countries worldwide (MAC, 2019).

In 1994, the brand MAC established the MAC AIDS Fund, a charitable foundation which operates in order to provide support and assistance to men and women of all ages, all races and all genders affected by HIV/AIDS. The firm raises awareness with the Viva Glam Campaign which sells a special line of lipsticks. Moreover, MAC employs the famous ambassadors for this campaign to raise awareness. As reported in the MAC Cosmetics webpage, the Viva Glam campaign, since its beginning, has raised 500 million USD (MAC 2019). According to the website, every cent of the VIVA GLAM Lipstick is donated to the MAC Viva Glam Fund.

Origins

The ELC's brand claims to be committed to the well-being of both the people and the planet. The firm attempts to be environmentally friendly in every aspect of its business, from the formulas of the ingredients, avoiding harmful elements, to the packaging, kept at minimum and composed of recycled materials. Furthermore, all the items are manufactured by using renewable energies. (Origins, 2019)

The most important and significant sustainable activity implemented by Origins is represented by the plant-a-tree initiative, a program which aids reforestation projects in several parts of the world. To date, the plant-a-tree initiative has helped planting more than 800,000 trees worldwide.

5. Analysis

This chapter constitutes the analysis of the current thesis, which aims at enabling the researcher to answer the research question of how traditional for-profit companies can effectively disclose their transparent and honest sustainable commitment, overcoming the stakeholders' mistrust and scepticism deriving from the phenomenon of greenwashing. To answer this question, it is investigating in which ways conventional organizations can learn from SEs to attain credibility. For this purpose, the analysis will be following two steps. An initial analysis draws upon findings derived from the collected primary data resulting from the in-depth interviews, connected with

the secondary data gathered from the existing literature in the field of the core topics object of the study. The aim of this primary phase is to gain insights and meanings further interpreted and categorised to establish generic understandings of the themes under assessment.

A further phase of the analysis focuses on the companies selected for the case study. This analysis draws upon the connection of the outcomes and results obtained from the first step and the primary data gathered from the observations of the enterprises' social media platforms. The goal of this analysis is to validate and verify the empirical findings produced from the previous phase by addressing them to concrete and specific company cases within the personal care industry.

5.1. Interviews Analysis

As stated above, this initial analysis is founded on the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews conducted. The 5 interviewees approached (Appendix 6) are either social entrepreneurs or professionals working in the context of social enterprises. This choice reflects the fact that sustainability and CSR represents pivotal and core elements for SEs' businesses, and their employees can therefore provide valuable and reliable beliefs and thoughts regarding these themes.

The combination of the answers of the participants to the 18 questions (Appendix 5) are categorised, labelled and interpreted according to different frameworks retrieved from the existing literature.

5.1.1. Companies Approach to CSR and Sustainability

The first three questions were asked in order to interpret participants' generic beliefs and thoughts towards companies' sustainable development with the purpose of understanding which role CSR is covering in nowadays business environment and how firms are approaching to it.

As outlined in the literature review, the approach to CSR could be either *instrumental*, by employing it as a strategic tool to achieve greater financial performances, or *political-normative*, more focused on firms' willingness to contribute to the society's norms and values (Schultz et al., 2013).

The answers provided justify defining the approach of conventional companies as *instrumental*. It is a common belief of all the interviewees that the role of CSR has changed over time for every business. CSR is not perceived as a side project to have within the company, but rather it is becoming the one of the core aspects (Interviewee 4, d.1), being incorporated in the DNA of the corporation (Interviewee 3, c.1). Every company has started to include sustainability within the bottom lines, but the reason why traditional firms are approaching CSR is because it is an intangible device thanks to which it is possible to make money. Moreover, CSR is perceived as something necessarily needed; according to the Interviewee 1 (a.1) around 86% of consumers will not purchase anymore from organizations which are not bringing a sustainable development. As a matter of facts, even if CSR importance is increasing shifting from marginal to central role, being ahead of competition and making money still remain the primary purposes (Interviewee 5, e1). Company are thus employing CSR as a mean to accomplish foremost goals.

On the contrary, the approach of SEs can be termed *political-normative*. Within the SEs context, indeed, the whole business is founded and based on doing something good for the society and the environment, since this is what represents the core reason why these companies exist (Interviewee 4, d.2). These types of enterprises do not detect sustainability as a mean to achieve higher profits, but rather as a tool which allows to improve the conditions to the whole business environment first, and further to the whole society (Interviewee 2, b.2). Obtaining growing revenues is an objective which allows SEs to fulfil the social mission and generate major impact.

Nonetheless, it is clear that the situation for conventional firms is changing. According to Interviewee 4 (d.2), CSR is a concept that has evolved so much that it is a part of the core value of a company, which then has to do good in society. To explain this, some participants compared *sustainability* with *innovation*. In the way innovation has already been understood as the main element to embed in every strategy of each market, the same destiny is expected to happen to sustainability, which will become central to every core business strategy.

<u>Traditional Companies</u>	<u>Social Enterprises</u>
<u>Instrumental Approach:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate profits • Mandatory to include in some strategies • Marginal aspect of the core strategies 	<u>Political-Normative:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do something good for the society and the environment • Improve the condition of the entire business environment • Fulfil the social mission • Generate a remarkable impact

FIGURE 7: APPROACHES TO CSR. (OWN SOURCE)

5.1.2. Motives Behind the Implementation of CSR

Questions 4 and 5 were asked in order to understand which are, in participants' thoughts, the true reasons why traditional companies and SEs disclose and promote their social-environmental commitment. The aim was to identify potential differences between the two types of organizations and categorise the different motives. As formerly explained, indeed, the motives behind the choice of communicating CSR practices could be either *intrinsic*, moved by transparent and honest concerns, or *extrinsic*, moved by the rise of profits (Du et al., 2010).

It has to be taken into account, as stated in the methodology chapter, that participants could have expressed biased answers within this context. Working with social businesses might distort the perception of enterprises operating within conventional industries, raising mistrust and scepticism towards firms acting with the sole purpose of generating money. Nevertheless, since the thesis aims at analysing how to overcome the abovementioned mistrust, interviewees' feedback are believed to be solid and consistent, thus deserving to be examined and investigated as they are.

With regards of traditional firms, nobody among the interview participants believed firms to execute sustainability practices following an honest willingness to change the world by improving environmental and societal conditions.

It is a common belief that the motives according to which conventional for-profit companies implement and communicate sustainable actions derive from two main reasons. The leading justification relies on the growth of profits. It is a fact that companies implementing CSR policies can benefit from an increment of revenues up to 20%, demonstrating that sustainability itself is a profitable business (Interviewee 1, a.2). Furthermore "*companies are using sustainability to be*

better in contact with customers, and because it is necessary, and because they were starting to lose market” (Interviewee 2, b.3).

The second motive consists in answering to a clear and straightforward request from consumers. Organizations are beginning to realise that stakeholders are increasingly demanding visibility, transparency (Interviewee 3, c.2), as well as explicitly requesting for companies to be more sustainable. Customers are starting to pay a considerable attention whether the products they purchase come from organizations committed to sustainability. Furthermore, the demand comes also from inside, from the employees, which are increasingly in need of a purpose, they need to know that their work is relevant for the society and has a meaning (Interviewee 4, d.3).

It is acknowledged that the role of the company in the society is changing, but as Interviewee 3 (c.3) stated *“I don’t think we will see CSR making traditional companies becoming social enterprises. But there is a big potential in making CSR part of the core business”*, meaning that conventional companies are not ready yet to operate according to a major social mission.

Therefore, it is obvious that the decision of businesses to undertake a sustainable development path is not fully voluntary and intentional, but is rather a necessity, driven by the society itself, that must be enhanced in order to gain competitive advantage and hence continue to successfully survive in the modern business environment. As a result, the overall reasons for traditional firms to implement and communicate their CSR-related practices can be identified as *extrinsic* motives.

On the other hand, SEs are believed to be moved by *intrinsic* motives. The main difference with conventional companies is that SEs are acting in order to accomplish and achieve a social mission, even though they have to rely on financial returns. For this purpose, they still have to generate profits, but with the aim of being enabled to maximise the social impact. *“The more the economic growth, the more the social impact. The more the social impact, the more the economic growth”* (Interviewee 3, c.4) explains this strict correlation between the economic and social aspects of SEs, which are hence operating in compliance with a honest and transparent concern towards the environmental or social issues they attempt to address. Further reasons for SEs to disclose the social mission is to attract donors, investors and supporters, always with a view to accomplish the social mission.

Traditional Companies	Social Enterprises
<u>Extrinsic:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ raise profits ▪ expand market share ▪ accomplish customers' demand ▪ respond to employees' request ▪ imperative to be in line with a trend set by the modern society 	<u>Intrinsic:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ share the core social mission ▪ maximize the impact ▪ acquire donors, investors and supporters of the cause

FIGURE 8: MOTIVES TO PROMOTE CSR PRACTICES. (OWN SOURCE)

5.1.2.1. Motives to Greenwash

Once determined the motives behind the decision of implementing and disclosing CSR actions, question number 6 investigates the potential reasons according to which a company could undertake the hazardous decision of *greenwashing*.

As a result of the data gathered, the enforcement of a greenwashing claim is deemed as an extremely dangerous strategy. According with Interviewee 1 (a.3), “*many companies believe that greenwashing is a very good financial strategy: you can cheat people by claiming fake facts for instance for decreasing prices. The fact is that you cannot cheat all of the people all of the time. Eventually, reality will catch up with you*”. The aforementioned demand from stakeholder for more sustainability does not permit anymore to act unethically.

Among the reasons to do greenwashing claims harvested from participants, the most significant ones are the attempt to overcome regulations, to be more competitive, especially in terms of price, and to be somehow associated with a growing and remarkable topic as sustainability in order to increase market share (Interviewee 3, c.5). Moreover, conventional for-profit firms are believed to lie about their CSR operations because they do not fully embrace the philosophy of acting for a social mission (Interviewee 2, b.4), which involves enforcing CSR to make a concrete impact and not to boost revenues.

Participants report that companies are aware of the dangerousness and risk that is implied when communicating a fake claim, but they still employ it due to financial matters. As stated by several interviewees, executing CSR practices is costly because it concerns the entire value and production chain. Managers and shareholders need to prioritise other expensive investments like production equipment. Directors of corporations still want to take actions to be more sustainable,

but without investing a consistent amount of resources on it (Interviewee 4, d.4). As a consequence, companies try to “*cut corners*” (Interviewee 5, e.8), so that they still prove to be committed to CSR, but their claims actually exaggerate the real engagement.

To sum up, it is understood that companies take the risk of disclosing greenwashing claims due to different financial priorities, and not because they aim to cheat stakeholders, because “*if there were not a financial aspect, (...) a lot of companies would implement CSR more*” (Interviewee 4, d.5).

5.1.3. Elements of CSR Communication: Message Content

As described in the Literature Review chapter, there are two main elements of communication considered when disclosing CSR practices: *message content* and *message channel* (Du et al., 2010).

With regards to the message content, it can focus on several aspects, namely *commitment*, *impact*, *motives*, and *fit*. Questions number 8 and 9, in association with other answers provided to related questions, offered responses which can be interpreted to comprehend and determine which of these elements are considered the ones that better promote credibility.

Commitment

Focusing on the amount of input reserved to CSR practices is not deemed as a positive way to promote the company’s sustainable development, since nobody among the interviewees mentioned it.

Interviewee 2 declared that when the situation of the company was not profitable, the co-founders commenced to invest their own money and decrease their own salaries, to ensure and guarantee to stakeholders that the firm would have continued its mission to improve the environmental and societal conditions of the directly helped communities. This honest and transparent commitment would undoubtedly be appreciated by external stakeholders. However, highlighting the dedication in terms of resources towards CSR, especially if coming from a conventional for-profit, is seen as a way to ameliorate the reputation of the firm, therefore being encompassed among extrinsic motives which not reflect a righteous concern towards the specific matter.

Impact

It has to be remarked that even if the researcher never mentioned the word ‘*impact*’, this has been expressed in every interview, demonstration of the fact that it is thought as an important element that should be encompassed in a CSR-related communication.

An interesting statement which is worthy of being observed is the fact that all the interviewees also mentioned the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a tool to be used as the core element of a CSR message content. SDGs, indeed, represents a framework of sustainable actions, which facilitates organizations to demonstrate their CSR involvement with precise and homogeneous dimensions (Interviewee 1, a.4). According with Interviewee 4 (d.7) the audience tend to be more excited when hearing ‘*impact*’ and ‘*Sustainable Development Goals*’ in the same sentence.

In line with what Interviewee 3 (c.7) stated, a firm should initially relate its CSR message to specific SDGs, which refers to the long term (year 2030), and further select sub-categories and metrics in order to concretely prove the ongoing impact that the organization is achieving. Referring to SDGs is the good strategy since they represent a clear global framework in the field of sustainability, even if they are not concrete enough for consumers who want effects and an impact “*here and now*” (Interviewee 4, d.6).

Motives

Only one of the respondents mentioned that a company may focus on the purpose and proposal of the business (Interviewee 2, b.5), but this has still to be linked to every aspect of the organization. The reason why interviewees did not mention *motives* as the element that could be placed at the core of the message content, might be attributable to the fact that the common belief, as mentioned in the previous section, is that companies are believed to implement CSR practices due to extrinsic reasons. Hence, a message focused on the motives may not be detected as convincing.

Fit

According with Interviewee 1 (a.5), it is meaningless to pursue a social mission which is not connected with the core business of the firm, and it is becoming always more obvious to organizations. Moreover, the audience is assumed to favour those companies which cope with

unrelated matters only once they have started to address and solve their own straightforward CSR issues.

It is believed of critical importance to demonstrate, in the content of the message, that the CSR strategy promoted is part of a greater overall business strategy (Interviewee 3, c.6). Therefore, the message advertised should manifest that the CSR operation is not only impacting the outer environment, but it is strictly and directly integrated within multiple aspects of the company.

By way of conclusion, in order to better promote a CSR communication, its content message should either focus on the *impact*, by demonstrating the concrete short-term achievements related to the sub-categories SDGs, or on the *fit*, by evincing a congruence between the social matter and the organization's business.

5.1.3.1. Factors of CSR Communication Effectiveness

Closely linked to the content of a CSR message, Kim and Ferguson (2018), as detailed previously, established six factors which, if occur, are able to render a CSR communication effective: *CSR informativeness*, *personal relevance*, *consistency*, *transparency*, *factual message tone* and *third-party endorsement*. The answers provided to question 7, along with statements provided in several parts of the interviews, allowed the researcher to identify which, among the 6 factors, are the ones believed to be more vital. Indeed, even if the interviewees were not specifically asked to give an opinion regarding these factors, the answers given clearly detected the most relevant ones.

As mentioned in the preceding section, focusing the communication on the commitment, comparable to *CSR informativeness*, can be perceived as an indication of extrinsic motives, because emphasising the efforts made for CSR practices might be an attempt to increase the reputation of the company. As a result, customers may be sceptical towards a disclose focused on CSR informativeness.

Another factor, *consistency*, was not mentioned in any interviews, signifying that, according to the interviewees, promoting CSR activities continuously and steadily does not make the communication more reliable.

With respect to *personal relevance*, it is Interviewee 4's belief that disclosures which feature people's personal stories are more effective, since they are capable of engaging customers and touching feelings and emotions which enhance the chance to truly rely on the firm's sustainable values (Interviewee 4, d.9).

Videos presenting how the life of people and communities have benefitted from a firm's sustainable strategies are indicated as one of the best way to make CSR communication effective (Interviewee 1, a.7).

Following, Interviewee 1 (a.10) listed *transparency*, along with honesty, as the core aspect that must be present when communicating CSR. Companies need to demonstrate that they disclose their sustainable development because they seriously want to make a difference. Transparency becomes a critical element for succeeding since, as formerly outlined, external stakeholders are increasingly demanding for more visibility and openness (Interviewee 3, c.2). Moreover, businesses need to demonstrate that they do not have a hidden agenda, by openly disclosing every practice (Interviewee 5, e.6).

Concerning the *factual message tone* factor, organizations, traditional companies in particular, when disclosing CSR actions have to present the results with concrete facts. Companies cannot limit to tell a story, but they have to objectively present the impact achieved. (Interviewee 1, a.9) For this reason, SDGs are again considered effective because they are an objective guideline that could be used internationally as a framework to demonstrate impact. A communication will be perceived effective if linked to SDGs' sub-categories, which set detailed and concrete metrics that enable the public to monitor the achievements (Interviewee 3, c.7).

Finally, with regard to *third party endorsement*, letting the public to interact and narrate their own stories, in response to companies' communications, is believed to strengthen customer's loyalty and experience (Interviewee 3, c.9). Additionally, CSR communication, in accordance with Interviewee 4 (d.9), needs to be encompassed within influencer marketing practices, meaning that firms should let the public tell stories by themselves. Interviewee 5 (e.7) stated that in order to successfully disclose information, a company "*have to say to customers: this is what we are doing. How can we get better? You have to ask for inputs*".

This can also be seen as a challenge, because a company must meet the need of its customer portfolio as a whole, but the instability and differences of the stakeholders makes it difficult to listen to everyone's recommendations (Interviewee 2, b.13).

5.1.4. Elements of CSR Communication: Message Channel

As presented in the abovementioned framework of Du et al. (2010), the second fundamental element of CSR communication is the *channel* chosen to disclose the information. Questions number 10 and 11 aimed at extracting the principal reasoning in terms of detecting which is perceived as the most appropriate channel for companies to effectively promote their sustainable development.

The existing literature, as indicated in the previous chapters, has already demonstrated how both official documents, like annual corporate responsibility reports, and unprompted sources, such as social media, if implemented correctly, can favourably express a firm's sustainable commitment. As a matter of fact, they are consistently and increasingly deployed throughout every business and markets.

With this regard, interviewees' responses showed a moderate discrepancy. All the professionals interviewed listed reports and social media as the only channels that could be employed. However, not all the interviewees saw these two channels in the same way. While everyone recognised the potency of social media, only a couple acknowledged the relevance of responsibility reports.

According with Interviewee 1 (a.6), sustainability reports are the best way to disclose company's CSR actions to external stakeholders. More specifically, and in accordance with what have emerged from the analysis of the message *content*, these reports should be constituted by visual infographics showcasing the concrete impact achieved and the range of people who have benefit from CSR activities (Interviewee 1, a.6). In line with this thought, Interviewee 5 (e.2) declared that reports should be simple and to the point, comprised of specific, key and uniform indicators which enable the report to be easily readable and, most importantly, comparable with the ones of other companies. In this respect, SDGs are believed to be a potential measure which could be employed as the core indicators throughout the report (Interviewee 5, e.2).

In contradiction with this statement, Interviewee 3 (c.8) believed that common stakeholders do not read sustainability reports. According with his thought, *“if you want to communicate CSR, you have to do it in the same way as you communicate in general. You have to communicate it in the 21st century: videos, images, personal narratives, stories that relate to people in everyday life”*.

As reported by Interviewee 4 (d.8) *“using reports is always good but not for your customers. For certain types of stakeholders is fine, but using social media, in terms of engagement, is definitely the best option”*. As stated by Interviewee 2 (b.7), online channels represent the only way to promote the business. Social media are featured by the fact that they allow a greater degree of interaction. This feature enhances communication’s transparency, so that users accordingly reduce the perception that companies have hidden agendas. Furthermore, through live sessions and blogs, stakeholders are provided with the opportunity to discuss and directly engage with firms (Interviewee 5, e.3).

Interviewee 1 (a.7) underlined the importance of videos representing personal stories of people and communities whose life has changed and ameliorated thanks to the firm’s actions. In compliance with this, Interviewee 4 argued that social media should be employed as ‘influencer marketing’, that is not only sharing personal stories about stakeholders, but also get other people to tell stories in the guise of the company. A simple anonymous post does not enhance trust because users requires contents that they can relate to, stories that are able to move feelings and emotions (Interviewee 4, d.9).

The relevance of personal commitment is perceived as so significant that Interviewee 4 claimed as a supplementary channel the creation and participation at events in the area of sustainability. Indeed, getting people together and creating a sense of connectedness and community is considered an effective way to demonstrate the extent to which the company is involved in sustainability.

Nevertheless, the instability that characterised social media render these tools difficult to properly understand and manage (Interviewee 2, b.7).

To sum up, companies can decide to elaborate a corporate sustainability report, in order to be in line with global trends as well as graphically and easily present the impacts achieved according

to CSR practices implemented. Reports should refer to worldwide indicators, to facilitate readers to concretely understand the achievements obtained by the firm. SDGs are believed to be the best measures to use as an international framework. Nonetheless, organizations should be aware that only a moderate part of their whole external stakeholders will get in contact with these reports. Common consumers, indeed, are reported to be better engaged by personal and subjective contents spread through social media platforms. In this way, the company can not only disclose its sustainable development, but it can also enhance trust and credibility through personalised contents and interaction with users.

5.1.4.1. Social Media Challenges

After having analysed and understood the successful role that social media could play when disclosing CSR-related information, questions number 11 and 12 further investigated the downsides that these types of unsteady networks present, since it has been demonstrated that consumers are notably empowered online and thus they might also represent a threat for companies. In particular, it was believed of remarkable importance to gather beliefs and thoughts in terms of disadvantages and challenges that firms still face when attempting to deal with them.

According to Interviewee 2 (b.11), social media, even if essential, represent a real challenge. In her opinion, this is due to the fact that public's opinion is changing very fast, and it is therefore extremely fluctuating. For this reason, reaching the right users is an arduous issue which renders companies still not completely aware of how behave online (Interviewee 2, b.11). This instability, indeed, does not allow to fully understand these tools because all their features are in a continuous transition.

Moreover, in Interviewee 2's view (b.12), there is a direct and narrow correlation between the WWW and psychology. The way people react differs from what happens in reality: all the effects are maximised, mainly thanks to the simplicity and easy accessibility of these tools, which have therefore to be deemed carefully (Interviewee 2, b.12).

Utilising social media thus make companies more vulnerable (Interviewee 3, c.11), but even with their difficulties, they are of essential importance to successfully compete in nowadays business environment. In Interviewee 4's words, indeed, the risk that social media cause is currently just "*part of the game*" (Interviewee 4, d.10), so firms should not be dampened by them.

To conclude, the openness enabled by social media constitutes both an advantage and a disadvantage for companies. From the one hand, these channels allow to build a dialogue with the public and consequently reinforce reputation, credibility and trust. From the other hand, their instability and inconstancy render firms vulnerable. Anyway, it is generally believed that social media are a vital tool which has to be managed as effectively as possible.

5.1.5 Stakeholders Engagement

Since social media platforms have been identified as an effective channel for organizations to promote their sustainable commitment by both the existing literature and the primary data gathered from the interviews conducted, and considering that the current thesis is focused on analysing CSR communication through these platforms, questions number 13 and 14 were asked in order to firstly comprehend if the topic of sustainability is believed to require a high level of dialogue with stakeholders, and then to determine the finest way to engage with users.

As detailed previously, there are three different strategies which can be employed to disclose CSR actions to the public on social media, that differ whether the information flow one-way, two-way asymmetrically or two-way symmetrically (Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

It is a shared belief that topics related to CSR cannot simply be communicated without establishing a dialogue with addressees. Interviewee 5 (e.4) assumed that the traditional method, namely one-way (or *information strategy* as described in Morsing and Schultz's framework), does not work. With this strategy, users lose confidence towards the company and the risk is that they engage with each other at the expense of the company. As stated in the previous section, simply making a post about the activities deployed is not effective. In order to move emotions and feelings of users, businesses have to enable people to narrate personal stories, to give the public something to relate to. (Interviewee 4, d.9)

According with Interviewee 3 (c.9) engaging and creating a dialogue with stakeholders is extremely critical for companies, especially in the field of sustainability.

In support of this *stakeholder involvement strategy* (two-way symmetric), to enhance trust companies should find and select partners, suppliers and other types of external stakeholders

which share the same idea and purpose of the business with the intention of creating an impact together and supporting each other (Interviewee 2, b.9).

Interviewee 3 (c.9) believed that the relationship between companies and stakeholders have changed drastically, and it is expected to transform even more in the close future. According to what has been stated, loyal customers are always more related to the firm's strategies and being markets disruptive and fast-changing, keeping direct contacts with these loyal consumers is necessary. To do so, organizations should enable them to tell their own stories and provide suggestions and opinions (Interviewee 3, c.9).

Furthermore, Interviewee 2 (b.8) mentioned that there is a 10% of clients who are particularly demanding and picky when it comes to sustainability matters. These judgemental stakeholders pay substantive attention to every specific aspect of products and procedures, therefore requiring a greater level of dialogue with the company.

On the other hand, however, Interviewee 3 (c.10) declared that companies are highly hesitant to this openness. On social media, in particular, they might fear to be accused of greenwashing even if they are not, or that some communications might backlash.

Moreover, in Interviewee 2's opinion, on social media the issue of how to engage with the public is particularly complicated due to the way users might react. Engaging in the proper mode becomes of utmost relevance, since a single user who react negatively may generate an oversized group reaction. In addition, it is widely difficult to detect if the responses will be positive or negative, due to the instability of social media (Interviewee 2, b.10).

Nevertheless, in order to compete nowadays, companies must let themselves more vulnerable and allow the public to be involved (Interviewee 3, c.10).

To sum up, all the interviewees agreed that in order to effectively engage with stakeholders to promote sustainable practices, a company should develop a dialogue with them, where communication flows in both directions, and stakeholders' part is equally valuable and essential to make information trustworthy and reliable. This is in compliance with previous findings which exposed that social media are the most suitable channels in the field of sustainability, because they enable the public to feel engaged and free to share personal stories and contents.

5.1.6. Social Enterprises

The following section aims at investigating more thoroughly whether SEs also need to overcome stakeholders' criticism and scepticism, or if it is just a concern which regards conventional for-profit companies. Questions 15, 16 and 17 were hence asked to verify whether the fact of operating to satisfy a social mission, rather than an economic scope, automatically implies that SEs are believed to act transparently and honestly. Furthermore, it is investigated the opinion of interviewees in terms of the proportion of SEs' customers who plainly purchase because they want to contribute to the achievement of the social goal.

Interviewee 5 (e.5) claimed that for SEs, the bar of mistrust is set lower. As the company grows, however, the bar also rises and so stakeholders' expectations. The reason, according to the interviewee, is that consumers are aware of their honest commitment and accept that initially they need to make occasional unsustainable decisions in order to grow and thus contribute with a greater impact in the future (Interviewee 5, e.5).

Moreover, according with Interviewee 1 (a.8), the financial business model upon which SEs rely is enough to justify their honest commitment. In his opinion, also, it is meaningless to greenwash if your primary purpose is achieving a social mission. Social enterprises, indeed, do not necessitate to overstate their practices, because the returns produced will directly contribute to generate a social or environmental impact, and it is all evidenced in the main corporate documents.

Additionally, what enhances SEs' trust and credibility is that this kind of organizations arises from a sustainable mission of an entrepreneur, around which is accordingly built a business model that generates profits. Traditional firms, on the contrary, are born with the intention of producing revenues, and are nowadays required to turn part of those revenues in something sustainable (Interviewee 3, c.12).

However, an issue for SEs is to demonstrate that their whole financial business model is also sustainable (Interviewee 3, c.12). Clients of these type of organizations, indeed, expect firms to be sustainable in every aspect of the business and become particularly strict and inflexible towards inappropriate practices. In compliance with this, Interviewee 4 (d. 11) stated that, as a SE, there is the *“need to be aware of these high expectations all the time in every action we do,*

and every step we take, and every partnership we make; we need to ask ourselves if we are sustainable in every aspect, because people are going to ask us many questions”.

Furthermore, in Interviewee 2’s opinion, there is just a small proportion of stakeholders, approximately 10%, who comprehend the efforts and struggles that SEs face with respect to operating in conformity with sustainability (Interviewee 2, b.13).

It results clear that SEs cover a favoured position with regards to mistrust and scepticism, mostly due to customers’ awareness of the sustainable purpose which rely at the base of the entire organization. Nevertheless, it has to be noticed that SEs are expected to be completely sustainable in every aspect, making them susceptible to accusations.

5.1.7. Conclusion

This section provides a brief summary of the major findings emerged and investigated in the first part of the analysis, in order to combine the most important results which will be further analysed and applied on practical cases.

In terms of approach to CSR and the motives behind the decision to implement CSR strategies, it has been shown that traditional companies are believed to establish an *instrumental* approach, led by *extrinsic* motives. Conventional firms are indeed thought to be driven by purposes and goals which contribute to increase profits, rather than an honest commitment to accomplish an environmental and social impact.

In terms of message content, to enhance trust and credibility, companies should focus on the *impact* achieved, providing precise metrics both in the short and long term, and the *fit* between sustainability and the business strategy. Furthermore, the main factors that are believed necessary to underline in a CSR disclosure are personal relevance, transparency, factual message tone (comparable to the impact) and third party endorsement.

In addition, being the *involvement strategy* perceived as the best setting to engage with stakeholders, social media constitute the optimal channel to promote the sustainable development, since they allow to establish a dialogue with external stakeholders on the basis of a two-way symmetrical communication.

5.2. Case Analysis

In order to conduct this second part of the analysis, the principal social media platforms of the companies encompassed in the case study are examined. The focus is set on those posts where the firms under investigation communicate their CSR activities and efforts. The posts are observed and interpreted in conformity with the main findings resulted from the former part of the analysis. It is verified whether there are differences between traditional companies and SEs in the way they disclose their sustainability practices, as evidenced in the interviews. The purpose is to discuss upon these various modes of promoting CSR in order to provide recommendations to conventional companies to properly share their honest sustainable commitment, and hence answering the thesis' research question.

At first, the social enterprises are observed, exploring the main features and strategies employed when communicating their social mission to detect prospective analogies. On the basis of these observations, the traditional brands are then examined to spot similarities and differences with the previous cases.

5.2.1. Lush

When looking at Lush's social media pages, most of the outcomes resulting from the initial analysis are validated.

To begin, the public can readily see that Lush's business is moved by honest and transparent motives. In a variety of posts, the company states the difficulty to operate ensuring sustainability in every aspect of the business model. Moreover, the firm admits that some of its core environmental missions, such as the regeneration of lands devastated by deforestations, are not easily achievable (Appendix 7). Nevertheless, Lush acknowledges and tries to face these challenges because they represent the reasons upon which the company relies, and the justification why the firm was established.

With respect to the message content, in several posts the company provides numbers and metrics by which users are able to apprehend the concrete *impact* that the firm is achieving in terms of benefits for the environment and the communities. In some of the posts founded on Lush's official Instagram page (Appendix 8) the company not only discloses its achievements in Uganda and

Guatemala, but it also sets precise and definite future goals, so that stakeholders can continue to monitor the impact that will be attained.

In addition to concretely showing how the company is positively affecting the environment and the society, Lush manages to enhance credibility by demonstrating the *fit* that its sustainable practices have with the business strategy. Looking at certain posts (Appendix 9), investing in areas such as Uganda and Guatemala, enables the company to grow the major ingredients needed for manufacturing its saleable products. In this way, the organization contributes to an environmental and societal improvement, and stakeholders' scepticism is constrained because it can be clearly seen that these CSR initiatives are an inherent and essential element of the overall business strategy, being part of the production processes. Moreover, this is also considered to support *transparency*, because the public becomes aware of the fact that the firm is committed to operate according to sustainability along all the supply and production chains.

Furthermore, one of the major insights gathered from the interviews was that, in order to better engage with customers, the firm has to move feelings and emotions by narrating stories of people to which users can relate to. By producing ingredients in needy countries affected by civil and environmental issues, the firm employs locals and thus ameliorates the conditions of various communities. Observing Lush's social network pages, it is often noted that the firm communicates stories about its farmers, therefore highlighting *personal relevance* in its disclosures (Appendices 8 and 10). It is then seen that Lush's CSR communication strategy does not limit to expose what the company has implemented, but it goes beyond by providing evidences through personal stories of how many people have upgraded their lives as a result of the firm's sustainable practices.

As indicated in the company description, Lush strongly encourages and promotes activism. Inviting external stakeholders to join the company to battle specific sustainability matters, is a remarkable example of how a company can exploit *third party endorsement*. Among the main company's missions, there is the fight against animal testing, a major concern within the personal care industry. Observing the online profiles, several claims regarding this can be found (Appendix 11). With this regard, Lush actively engages people to be part, alongside the company, of fighting these unethical actions. On Lush North America Twitter page, for instance, it can be found a post in which users are actively encouraged to support the new Cruelty-Free Cosmetics Act in Canada (Appendix 12). People engaged, often document the campaigns and share them on social media,

so that the company's message reach is maximised and made more trustworthy, since it has been determined that information coming from uncontrollable sources are better detected (Du et al., 2010). Moreover, the use of hashtags, *#becrueltyfree* in this case, allows users to mostly handle the concern, knowing and hence trusting that the company has an active role in it. For this same reason, Lush often employs the use of hashtags such as *#ethicalbuying*, so that users are eased to interact and share contents related to the firm's posts, resulting in generating more awareness across the WWW and thus raising the impact.

These aforementioned tools reveal that the organization employs a *stakeholder involvement strategy*, meaning that the information flow in both direction, from the firm to users and vice versa, and that the two parties are set on the same level. In compliance with this, it can be observed that even being Lush a multinational firm, with 4.4 million followers on Instagram, it ensures that its team is always open and disposed to answer users' comments with respect to CSR topics (Appendix 13). Also, it can be seen that the company shows openness to recommendations coming from users, making the information flowing perfectly symmetric.

To conclude, it should be noticed that in Lush's CSR-related messages, the products are never shown, but if anything, just mentioned in the text. This is an additional indication for users that the firm is not trying to generate revenues, but it is rather proving to create an impact.

5.2.2. LXMI

Observing LXMI's social media pages, it can be suddenly perceived how pivotal the figure of the founder and CEO of the enterprise is. Multiple posts, indeed, represent Leila Janah, often quoting her own words. The decision to communicate the social mission through the figure of the CEO, considerably enhances the reputation of the company for several reasons. Among them, it lets the public know the motives behind the establishment of the firm (Appendix 14). As already evinced, in this way stakeholders realise the core mission of the enterprise, which drives all the business model around it. Accordingly, trust towards the firm is guaranteed since it results obvious that LXMI's approach to sustainability is *political-normative*, meaning that the organization's primary purpose is to ameliorate the society with its business by ensuring proper working conditions and opportunities to women in needy communities.

In terms of message content, LXMI rarely provides concrete results showing the impact achieved. The company's CSR messages rather deal with the *fit* and the *motives* of such sustainable

practices. As it applied for Lush case, the sustainable development of the company is directly and strictly connected with its business. As it can be seen in several posts (Appendix 15), LXMI pursues its mission of giving work on the principle of fair trades with women in Africa, by purchasing the ingredients such as Nilotica from them and offering prices that represent unique opportunities to upgrade their living habits. These women become the principal suppliers of LXMI's supply chain and external stakeholders are made aware of the central relevance they cover within LXMI's business.

The main factor that is detectable on LXMI's social media profiles, is the *personal relevance*. As mentioned above, the personal commitment of the founder, accompanied with her strict engagement with the African women supported, enables the public to comprehend the extent to which the company closely operates to achieve a positive societal impact. Furthermore, the posts which regard sustainability practices spur *transparency* because the company openly discloses where it supplies the ingredients included in its items, declaring the serious commitment to operate in compliance with fair trade. Transparency and honesty, two pivotal elements that have been demonstrated to assure credibility and trust, are also communicated in certain posts (Appendix 16) where the firm admits that supplying from tiny local producers is far more complicated if compared with mass-produced ingredients, but it is worth according with the company's mission to provide *#beautyforhumanity*. In addition, this makes it clear that the enterprise's primary purpose is not to generate revenues, but achieving its social mission instead. With regards to stakeholder engagement, it can be noted that LXMI attempts to use social media as a source of interaction rather than as tools to promote its actions. Supported by the limited size of the firm, users often receive answers from the company's page or even by the CEO herself (Appendix 17). Looking at the comments under various posts, it is noticed that every time a user makes a request, the firm makes sure to answer and be open to provide further information. In addition to this, people are actively engaged and encouraged to join the company, not simply becoming employees, but activists (Appendix 14). This is a signal that the firm does not want to limit itself to sell products, but it wants its internal and external stakeholders to fully embrace the social mission and contribute to maximize the impact.

5.2.3. The 7 Virtues

On The 7 Virtues social media profiles, many analogies can be found with LXMI. Likewise, the figure of the founder, Barbara Stegemann, is included in many posts both to expose which is the social mission that gave origin to the company and to express the extent to which the social enterprise is operating in order to accomplish it.

It is evidenced that the motives which guide the business are truthfully and transparently oriented to create an impact for the society. In one of the posts (Appendix 18), as an example, a customer admits that she purchases mainly because of the cause pursued by the company and not for the products themselves, and the company answered stating that this is the what really matters for the enterprise.

As already observed in the previous SEs cases, *personal relevance* is utilized as the main topic in the CSR message's content. The social media profiles provide stories about local farmers in Rwanda where the firm has established to select its suppliers (Appendix 19), in compliance with the mission of rebuilding the countries affected by numerous civil wars and therefore improving the conditions of local communities. It can also be noticed that the founder promotes her personal commitment by commenting posts, so that the public can gather further information about the relations between the company and the beneficiaries of its actions.

Moreover, even when promoting the launch of new products, the firm ensures that the sustainability aspects are always included in the promotion (Appendix 20). In this way, the organization specifies how CSR practices are encompassed in every item sold and every process managed, by underlying from which suppliers the ingredients come from and how fair trade is ensured.

5.2.4. The Estée Lauder Companies

MAC Cosmetics

As previously described in the company presentation, MAC represents the largest and most profitable brand belonging to The Estée Lauder Companies. The brand's sustainable commitment can be clearly detected due to the creation of the Viva Glam AIDS Fund, which operates in order to assist young people affected by HIV and AIDS diseases.

Due to the greatness of the campaign, Viva Glam is promoted very often on Mac's social media platforms, and a specific section regarding it, is reserved in the foreground on the website main

page. More specifically, in terms of message content, the firm predominantly discloses the *impact* achieved to date, focused on the *factual message tone* factor: in Viva Glam related posts (Appendix 21) it is claimed what is the concrete effect when purchasing a Viva Glam Lipstick. It should be observed, however, that in those types of posts, the firm employs the use of Instagram Shopping (Appendix 22), meaning that by clicking on the image, users can be suddenly directed to the e-commerce website of Mac Cosmetics, where they can purchase the Viva Glam items. From the users' perspective, this could be interpreted as a firm's attempt to apply its sustainable practices solely as an instrument to continue to retain customers and raise revenues. As a matter of fact, it has been observed that in the CSR messages promoted by the SEs analysed, the companies promoted their sustainable commitment without any direct link to e-commerce.

Furthermore, the firm does not exploit the *personal relevance* which could be able to enhance credibility and trust towards its promotions. In contrast to what has been remarked in the SEs cases, MAC does not communicate personal stories about those people who benefit from its sustainable operations. As an example, the firm communicates how many homeless LGBT youth are supported on a daily basis (Appendix 21), but it does not tell a subjective narrative which concretely demonstrates how the life of a specific LGBT homeless, or community, has changed as a result of the Viva Glam Fund.

Besides, for the purpose of the analysis, it is considered of remarkable importance to notice the differences in terms of users' comments below the companies' posts on their social media profiles. In the previous sections, it has been observed how the public almost always showed its positive response towards the companies' sustainability practices, explicitly expressing their appreciation in respect of those actions. Just in a few cases, users requested for more information, and the firms promptly provided the sources where customers are able to further investigate what the firms are implementing.

Looking at the comments below the Viva Glam posts on Mac's social networks, instead, it can be observed how users often manifest their scepticism and criticism towards Mac's sustainable claims (Appendix 23). Critic users do not perceive MAC's CSR disclosure as fake news. Nonetheless, their mistrust is shown evident since they always attempt to accuse the firm of not being responsible of addressing other concerns such as animal testing, or of assisting just a specific group of people disregarding others. Concerning this, even if the company promote on social media such as Instagram and Twitter, perfectly suitable for a two-way communication,

there is no interaction between the company and the public. The stakeholder engagement strategy which is reflected is solely based on the information disclosed from the company to the public. MAC, indeed, is not perceived as using its social networks for interactive purposes since it does not respond to negative comments coming from users. In this way, the firm does not offer the possibility to establish a dialogue.

Origins

As defined in the company presentation, Origins is a for-profit brand highly committed to environmental issues.

In compliance with the other firms analysed, Origins usually includes the *impact* that its CSR activities are achieving. Being the Plant-A-Tree program a core aspect of the company, which aims at aiding reforestation projects around the world, it is common to notice in Origins' online profiles objective data regarding the number of trees it contributed to plant to date (Appendix 24). In addition to this, the company also provides evidences of the *fit* between its sustainable practices and its strategies. As it can be read in the official website (Appendix 25), and in several social media posts, one of the core values of the company regards the packaging choices. It is mentioned online that Origins' packaging reflects the values of the firm, by being simple and environmentally friendly, as well as the intention of keeping in at minimum in order to reduce the impact it has on the planet.

Like MAC, Origins' social media pages lack in terms of narrating personal stories. However, in this case, the company's sustainable commitment is primarily linked to the environment and not to the society, thus the company prioritises posts concerning its environmental impact.

Even if Origins can benefit from a good reputation, if compared with many other for-profit brands, and many users explicitly state their appreciation towards the organization's sustainable efforts, it can be clearly seen that it still receives many more accusations than a social enterprise. More specifically, users seem to not appreciate the fact that the firm is not officially 100% cruelty free. The firm declares that it does not directly test its items on animals, but in some of the countries where it operates, former laws requires it on imported cosmetics. The claimed attempt of fighting these practices is not enough for the public, which expect such an environmentally friendly company to be sustainable altogether (Appendix 26). Similar to MAC's case, Origins does not demonstrate the willingness to establish an involvement strategy by conversing with its

online stakeholders, since it cannot be observed any response to users' comments. Without a proper dialogue with the public, the company is not able to exploit the *third party endorsement*. Among the comments, indeed, it can be found that some customers are proposing some sustainable recommendations to the company (Appendix ad), that would highly decrease mistrust and scepticism if takes as a starting point for a constructive dialogue.

5.2.5. Conclusion

The results of this second pragmatic analysis provided worthwhile insights and findings in terms of how social enterprises and traditional companies disclose their sustainable practices on social media.

It has been evidenced that multiple similarities can be found among the modes in which SEs promote their social mission and commitment. Foremost, these types of organizations put a remarkable emphasis on how they are operating in order to accomplish the mission according to which the firm was established. To do so, they frequently demonstrate through personal narratives how underprivileged people and communities have been positively supported by the firms' operations. Furthermore, the SEs under investigation clearly substantiate how the sustainable practices adopted are an integrative element of the core strategies. Finally, it has been observed how SEs exploit social media as a tool by which it is possible to directly engage with stakeholders, establishing dialogues. All these elements contribute to render these firms trustworthy and well considered.

On the other hand, conventional for-profit brands likewise disclose the impact that their CSR-related activities are achieving. However, the response of the public is not as positive as for SEs. Many reasons could be at the root of the accusations. The principal differences with SEs are found in the fact that the companies analysed lack in terms of interacting with users. The firms, indeed, are not reported to answer to users' claims. Moreover, they just communicate their achievements, without exploiting the discussion generated from them as a source of further improvement and as a chance to strengthen trust and credibility.

6. DISCUSSION

This chapter aims at debating over the major findings gathered from the analyses in order to provide generic managerial implications for traditional companies to successfully communicate their sustainable development.

The main purpose of the thesis was to investigate how conventional for-profit companies can promote their CSR activities on social media, in such a manner that they can overcome the mistrusts and criticism deriving from thoughts and beliefs that what it is claimed is not implemented in a honest and transparent way. To provide empirical managerial implications, it was studied what it can be learned from SEs' communications. The answer to the research question will be derived from the sum of a series of generic recommendations regarding several aspects of CSR communications, from the message content to the way in which firms should engage with the public.

Despite the fact that sustainability has been shown to be a remarkable topic in nowadays business environment, and accordingly companies are increasingly developing and implementing CSR practices, it results difficult for firms to properly communicate their sustainable development. The main reason relies of the ascending interest of the majority of stakeholders towards sustainability actions, which renders public scrutiny and criticism pivotal concerns to tackle.

This research did not rely on the assumption that for-profit businesses' CSR activities are necessarily unreliable and somehow untrue. Instead, it is perceived that the disclosures analysed are honest and trustworthy, but the challenge is that external stakeholders need to be convinced of this commitment too. As evidenced in the analysis, social media users frequently react negatively to CSR-related posts. Even where the companies exhibit the impact and the objective achievements obtained with their sustainable operations, users still commented adversely, mainly by accusing the company of being negligent towards other critical sustainability issues, meaning that they expect firms to be entirely sustainable. This hostility is not detectable under SEs' similar posts. It is argued that this disparity in terms of trust could be resulting from the differing approaches to sustainability and the different motives that these two types of organizations have to confront CSR. As highlighted by several interviewees, the SEs are established in order to address and solve a social/environmental concern, therefore developing a business model which

supports this mission by generating profits. Consequently, there is no need, from a customer perspective, to believe SEs to implement greenwashing communications. Traditional firms, instead, are born with the purpose of raising revenues, employing CSR as a supplementary tool to include in some strategies with the aim of further gaining money and satisfying customers' demands. In this respect, it is discussed that in order for conventional firms to enhance credibility and overcome mistrust, they need to underline the extent to which CSR practices represent a remarkable and central element of the overall business strategy. External stakeholders need to perceive that companies are not executing sustainable actions as minor and marginal strategies (instrumental approach), but rather they require firms to be moved by righteous motives and encompass CSR in every aspect of the organization.

In compliance with this, it has been proved that firms, when promoting their sustainability operations, are likely to strengthen their credibility and trustworthiness if they focus the message content on the *fit*, meaning demonstrating the congruence between the social matter and the business strategy. In fact, even if it is appreciable that firms are committed to solve certain unrelated activities which benefit the environment and needful communities, customers still prefer companies to address sustainability concerns which are directly addressable to firm's specific business surroundings. To give an example, users are not reported to criticise the operations of LXMI and The 7 Virtues, because it appears evident that the social mission, namely supporting needy communities in harmful countries, is fully integrated into the overall business model. Whereas in the case of MAC Cosmetics, the congruence between social matters and the business can be solely observed in the choice of assisting people who are included in the customers target, that is young generations. However, online users are accusing the company of neglecting other more connected issues, such as the practice of animal testing applied to inspect products.

Furthermore, to gain customers' trust, companies should also focus their CSR message contents on providing concrete results in terms of the *impact* achieved. An option that firms have to make their sustainable messages objectively concrete, is to make straightforward references to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and more specifically to their well-defined sub-categories. In this way, traditional organizations can deliver metrics and measures that are effective and legitimate at an international level. Moreover, this would enable users, from the one hand, to

compare the impact achieved by a specific enterprise with the ones of other businesses, including SEs and NGOs, and from the other hand, to perceive companies' commitment in the long-term, since the goals are set to be achieved by 2030.

Another effective way to concretely demonstrate how the company's CSR operations are bringing benefits to the society or the environment is to communicate it through personal narratives. External stakeholders are reported to manifest positive attitudes towards CSR communications that involve personal stories of people whose life has changed thanks to a firm's action. In this respect, for-profit companies should apply some communication strategies employed by the SEs, which clearly put the *personal relevance* at the heart of their CSR disclosures. In combination with exhibiting objective metrics which demonstrate the effects achieved, firms should post pics and quotes of the people in the communities directly supported. In this way, along with tangible facts, the public is presented with narratives that move feeling and emotions, thus allowing a closer relation and reliance.

Another element that must be comprises when communicating sustainable practices is *transparency*. Since it has been outlined that customers are increasingly demanding for more information, and their criticism renders them requesting for more knowledge, companies need to be greatly open when it comes to CRS. This means that firms have to be able to report both positive and negative disclosures, as well as evidently prove that they are operating ethically and morally in each phase of their business.

In conformity with this growing demand from the public, to enhance credibility and show openness and transparency, companies should satisfy the customers' need to be more engaged and informed by establishing proper dialogues. It has been recognised that official responsibility reports issued by companies might serve as useful information sources for some stakeholders. However, this kind of channel does not allow the communication to flow two-ways, and it can also be argued that firms may control the information by inserting only positive notions, rendering reports out of customers' interests. On social media, instead, users are empowered and able to interact, expressing their thoughts and reactions on certain topics.

Therefore, it is remarkably important that companies do not limit to post and inform users about what they have done and achieved, but instead they constantly need to monitor what it is discussed in response to those disclosures and what is the reaction of the public.

It is acknowledged that social media also constitute a threat for companies, because the users are empowered to such an extent that a firm's reputation can be severely damaged. Companies should take into consideration their vulnerability when operating on these online platforms, and they need to recognise that it is not feasible to attempt to have a control over the way public might react, because it is unpredictable. Thus, they should not be hesitant to be present online, but rather they need to be open and transparent in every communication and also prepared to seize users' comments, requests, feedback and critics as opportunities to directly connect with them.

To conclude, in order to effectively disclose their transparent and honest sustainable commitment on social media, conventional companies should take into consideration and practically combine all the reflections and indications abovementioned.

6.1. Perspectives

While conducting this research, a few considerations for further research have been made which ought to be mentioned. Hence, the following section aims at analysing some of the limitations detected in the current study that could serve as a starting point for future investigations.

With respect to the first part of the study analysis, this thesis considered exclusively the beliefs and thoughts of individuals which belong to the environment of social enterprises. The reason for this choice, as previously evidenced, was to gather views from expert highly qualified in the field of CSR and sustainability, and to provide recommendations about how traditional companies can learn from SEs in the field of CSR communications.

Nonetheless, it has been acknowledged that some of their answers might have been biased by their own negative reputation towards for-profit businesses. Therefore, for further research, it could be creditable to investigate the study's topics entirely from a customer perspective. The results and findings gathered from the current study could be employed as starting assumptions or hypotheses in order to verify whether they are valid or not among customers' beliefs. The focus should be set on asking what the public expects from firms in terms of sustainable development and how does it perceive conventional organizations which disclose their CSR-related practices. The findings might evince different or additional elements which render a CSR communication trustworthy.

Eventually, as a further study, individuals dealing with CSR operations employed in traditional companies could be interviewed. In this way, it could be more thoroughly examined the communications strategy implemented by the firms to face the scepticism and mistrust of the external stakeholders, as well as deeply discuss which role CSR is covering within different businesses.

With regard to the case analysis, the choice of the personal care industry relied on the fact that sustainability is expected to be a pivotal element in the coming years. However, certain CSR issues within this sector, such as animal testing and harmful ingredients, are among the most debated concerns in all the business scenario. For this reason, the public might be exceedingly sceptical towards traditional firms operating in this market. This could have made the findings only adaptable to extreme cases and thus difficult to generalise to a broader number of instances. Further research may investigate companies belonging to different sectors, in order to verify whether the findings are consistent and hence generalizable.

Moreover, the current study employed the use of company cases with the primary purpose to verify and concretely observe the findings resulted from the in-depth interviews. A prospective research might select and focus on a particular company, to combine all the aforementioned suggestions of including customers and sustainability managers in order to investigate the overall strategy that relies behind the CSR communications decisions.

7. Conclusion

The research has been conducted on the basis of one of the phenomena which is greatly affecting the business scenario at an international level: the growing attention towards sustainability concerns. The study built on previous literature demonstrating that stakeholders are further and further concerned and committed in respect of solving societal and environmental matters, and they are therefore exhibiting a great level of expectations towards companies to operate sustainably. In order to address this demand, organizations are increasingly including corporate social responsibility practices within their core strategies, and an always greater number of businesses are beginning to operate to primarily accomplish a social mission.

Considering these trends, the study investigated how different types of enterprises communicate their sustainable development to the public. The focus has been set on social media, being this

channel recognised not only as the most common and advanced communication tool employed in nowadays markets, but also the most suitable for the research purpose, since external stakeholders have been exposed their intention to be always more actively engaged in companies' practices, and not mere observers.

More specifically, the study aimed at answering the following research question: *"How can traditional for-profit companies effectively disclose their transparent and honest sustainable commitment on social media, overcoming the stakeholders' mistrust and scepticism deriving from the phenomenon of greenwashing? In which way can traditional companies learn from Social Enterprises to attain credibility?"*.

The analyses conducted have emphasised that conventional organizations face an evident greater degree of users' mistrust if compared to SEs. The analysis showed that the accusations and criticism to whom for-profit companies are subject to, are primarily attributable to the public perception that the approach and the motives behind the choice of implementing CSR are not honest and transparent as the ones which drive SEs. As a consequence, in order for traditional firms to demonstrate their righteous sustainable commitment, they need to prove that sustainable practices are not undertaken to contribute to raise profits or to disguise negative actions.

Afterwards, it has been evidenced that to overcome this mistrust and attain credibility, there are two elements that companies can leverage in their disclosures: the concrete impact achieved, which can be effectively demonstrated reporting precise and globally recognised metrics such as the SDGs, and the congruence that CSR actions have with the business strategy.

Moreover, firms can lean on the personal relevance of communication by providing subjective examples of people supported by the companies' activities, expressed in a factual message tone. In addition, the research outlined that firms' reputation is enhanced when the communication shows transparency, highlighting not only the benefits but also the negative aspects of operating in a sustainable way.

Besides what has to be encompassed in a CSR disclosure, the study revealed the importance of enforcing a stakeholder involvement strategy, consisting in establishing a two-way symmetric communication with users by being thoroughly open to interact in a dialogue whenever the public comes up with recommendations, critics or expresses the wish to take active part of the sustainable development.

8. References

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8.1. Interview References

Interviewee Quote	
Interviewee 1:	
a.1	<i>If you ask customers, maybe 86% will tell you that they want to purchase from a company that has a social profile, they want companies to take larger social responsibility.</i>
a.2	<i>(...) companies benefit from +20% of profits if they implement CSR policies. CEOs would be irresponsible to shareholders if they are not adopting CSR policies: everything proves that sustainability is a good business.</i>
a.3	<i>Many companies believe that greenwashing is a very good financial strategy: you can cheat people by claiming fake facts for instance for decreasing prices. The fact is that you cannot cheat all of the people all of the time. Eventually, reality will catch up with you.</i>
a.4	<i>Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been playing a central role in what is happening now. They represent a sort of framework of sustainable actions, which are then more described.</i>
a.5	<i>(...) it makes no sense to have a business model not linked to it (the social mission), it is becoming more and more obvious.</i>
a.6	<i>Impact reports is probably the best way, and always more companies are doing it. By impact report I mean a very simple report with infographics showing your impact and how many people are benefit from your CSR activities, and then a detailed communication in addition to that.</i>
a.7	<i>We also have very good experiences with short videos telling stories of people whose life has been changed, or how the environment and local communities have benefit.</i>
a.8	<i>Not that much because of the financial model, it makes no sense to greenwash if you have a social mission. Greenwashing is claiming to do more than what you are actually doing.</i>
a.9	<i>For traditional businesses, they have to present with a fact. (...) It is very important to tell a story and demonstrate the impact that you have.</i>
a.10	<i>Transparency and honesty. You do it (communicating CSR) because you really want to make a difference.</i>
Interviewee 2:	

b.1	<i>(...) another cluster that perceive sustainability as a dreamy way thanks to which is not possible to make money, make things more at hand, affordable and profitable.</i>
b.2	<i>(...) it is the scope: sustainability should create sustainability <u>to</u> the whole business. Sustainability includes makes the whole business more sustainable. I know thousands of companies that failed because of this.</i>
b.3	<i>Cosmetics and makeup companies are using sustainability to be better in contact with customers, and because it is necessary, and because they were starting to lose market.</i>
b.4	<i>I don't have a specific opinion about companies doing fake claims, it could be bad faith, because of regulations, for competition, prices, the economy, but most of all, could be the philosophy that these people don't understand.</i>
b.5	<i>You have to focus on the purpose and proposal of your business, but it has to be linked to every aspect: team, production, logistics, delivery (...)</i>
b.6	<i>In our business 10% of revenues are re-invested on Google, Facebook and Instagram. In our case, online channel is the only channel to use.</i>
b.7	<i>Instability is the major issue, it makes social media a science difficult to learn.</i>
b.8	<i>10% of very critic clients are really into natural products, procedures (...) it's so difficult to meet the needs of this restricted, picky and demanding market.</i>
b.9	<i>You have to find partners and suppliers that share your same idea, the same purpose of your business, do something together. Look for partners that are in the same identity than us. Not to help but to support each other.</i>
b.10	<i>The problem is not how to connect with people, but how they react. It can be very favorable and positive or very negative. The problem is that is a group reaction: one starts and then so many people follow.</i>
b.11	<i>The public changes really fast, it is so fluctuating. To reach the right people is very difficult. Companies don't know how to behave on social media because the public changes continuously.</i>
b.12	<i>Online, people over react considerably more than in real life. (...) Internet is very related to psychology. The reactions of people make it difficult, it is a very dangerous tool that needs to be taken carefully.</i>
b.13	<i>We have to meet all the needs of the customer portfolio.</i>
Interviewee 3:	
c.1	<i>What we hopefully will see is that CSR is going to be more incorporated in the DNA of the corporation.</i>
c.2	<i>So, I think CSR is changing in many ways. First of all, in communications: companies are waking up to see that stakeholders are increasingly demanding visibility, transparency.</i>

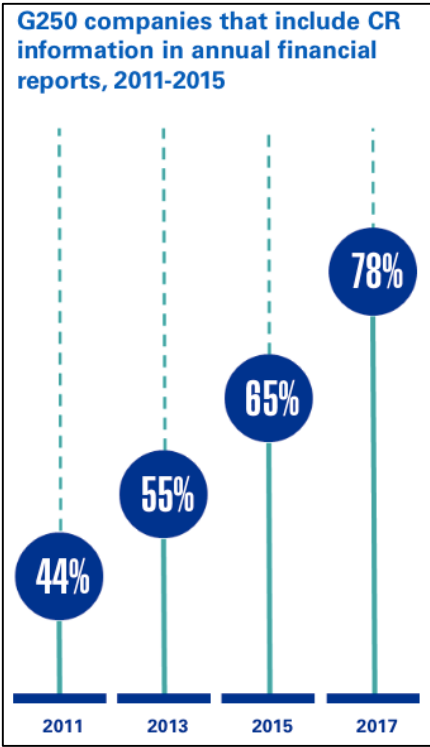
c.3	<i>I don't think we will see CSR making traditional companies becoming social enterprises. But there is a big potential in making CSR part of the core business.</i>
c.4	<i>The more the economic growth, the more the social impact. The more the social impact, the more the economic growth.</i>
c.5	<i>(...) sustainability is a huge growing topic, so if you can link yourself with something sustainable, you can increase your market share.</i>
c.6	<i>The important thing to see is that these are not CSR strategies, but they are business strategies. These are strategies for the all company, that is why they have to be incorporated in the core business.</i>
c.7	<i>It would not be enough for companies to say: 'we are working with these SDGs', you have to choose the sub-targets, choose the metrics and then pull out concrete goals and metrics and say: 'this is what we are going to achieve' and start from that.</i>
c.8	<i>Nobody reads CSR reports, right? So, if you want to communicate CSR, you have to do it in the same way as you communicate in general. You have to communicate it in the 21st century: videos, images, personal narratives, stories that relate to people in everyday life.</i>
c.9	<i>I think social media are a good platform to provide a dialogue, that is engagement with customers and stakeholders. What we are seeing is that the relationship between companies and stakeholders have been changing and is going to change even more. People relate always more to the plans. Loyal customer is always more important because market is changing so quickly, disruptive. Keep customer's loyalty is very important: let customers tell stories, increase customized experiences. So, it makes a lot of sense to have a direct engagement with customers, on social media.</i>
c.10	<i>(...) a lot companies are hesitant to this openness, to put everything on social media, because they are afraid that something might backlash or they get caught in some sort of social media shit storm. But this is the new way that it works, so companies have to make themselves more vulnerable and show off because this allows people to relate, this is what people want to be involved. They want to have a say, they want customized products. You have to do it if you want to compete.</i>
c.11	<i>Companies surely make themselves more vulnerable. The traditional companies structure is very closed off, so I could imagine that a lot companies are hesitant to this openness, to put everything on social media (...)</i>
c.12	<i>The main challenge for SEs is becoming profitable and scale solutions, so that the impact is scalable as well. So, they have to convince their stakeholders that their solutions have an impact and are good for the society. The main challenge is to convince that their financial and economic business models are sustainable as well. SEs started out with an entrepreneur wanting to change how things are, with a social or environmental goal, and then making a business. Traditional companies instead started thinking how to make profits, and now have to think how that profit can be turned into something that is sustainable as well.</i>

Interviewee 4:	
d.1	<i>Now it (CSR) evolved a lot more, to become not just a little side project for companies, but actually it becomes more and more like a root for the company, the core aspect of the company.</i>
d.2	<i>Our whole idea is related to CSR, based on doing something good for the society. That's why we exist. But other companies like the bigger ones, you would say maybe like Danske Bank, or maybe Maersk, I don't think they do it out of the goodness of their heart.</i>
d.3	<i>(...) a lot of the younger generations also, they are demanding a lot more from their employers. They want to know, what the meaning of their work is, and if it has a positive influence on the society they work in, why it is important that they do what they do. They need a purpose.</i>
d.4	<i>(...) people are demanding that we do something both externally and internally. So we need to do something, but we don't want to spend too much money on redoing our whole value chain because of sustainability.</i>
d.5	<i>(...) if there weren't a financial aspect, I think a lot of companies would implement CSR more.</i>
d.6	<i>Show impact, but not long-term goals. Like 2050 is too far. That's not concrete enough. It's nice to set long term goals but people want here and now.</i>
d.7	<i>So, when we reach out to people in organizations, and we say impact, or Sustainable Development Goals both in one sentence, people tend to be way more excited.</i>
d.8	<i>I think that using reports is always good but not for your customers. For certain types of stakeholders is fine, but using social media, in terms of engagement, is definitely the best option.</i>
d.9	<i>(...) if you if you use it (social media) like influencer marketing, where you don't tell the story yourself, but you get other people to tell your story for you. So, it becomes really personal for people. And also maybe sharing personal stories about your customers. So, making it very personal for people. And people don't really want to, I don't think it's ever going to work for anybody, to do just a post about the things you are doing. It might get some likes, but it is not going to work a lot. So, they need to go with a special story, move people's feelings and emotions in a certain way. Make it really touching, and something that people really relate to. And I think in that way, you can use social media positively.</i>
d.10	<i>But that's the risk anywhere so that's just part of the game. You can't just not be in the social media game, because you're afraid, of course you have to be there. And you just have to manage it. Just have to be careful that doesn't happen.</i>
d.11	<i>(..) need to be aware of these high expectations all the time in every action we do, and every step we take, and every partnership we make; we need to ask ourselves if we are sustainable in every aspect, because people are going to ask us many questions.</i>

Interviewee 5:	
e.1	<i>I have worked in very big corporations and there is definitely no talk about sustainability. It's all about money and being ahead of the competition.</i>
e.2	<i>The reports need to be simple and to the point. You have a simple, little indicator, key legend for each company. It could be SDGs, but the important thing is that they have to be uniform.</i>
e.3	<i>(...) through social media you have to tell the world what you are doing, also through live sessions where you are streaming and people come to discuss. Or also offline, with blogs where you can have a sort of interaction.</i>
e.4	<i>The traditional method is one-way, but we have seen that it doesn't work, because customers lose confidence in the company, they band together and online can do bad things against the company. So, companies must engage with customers to have a better reputation.</i>
e.5	<i>For social enterprises, I think the bar is set lower, because we come from different worlds. I think customers lower the bar expectations towards SEs, but as the company grows the bar also raises. Customers raise their expectations, like: are you assessing this and that? As a small company, I want to generate revenues in order to be more sustainable and create a more sustainable world to everyone.</i>
e.6	<i>I truly believe companies need to be fully transparent when disclosing these things (CSR practices). (...) I want everyone to see what I am doing, I want open source. I want people to see where the money is going to, that there is not a hidden agenda. I want companies to be very open and engage with the users.</i>
e.7	<i>You have to say to customers: this is what we are doing. How can we get better? You have to ask for inputs.</i>
e.8	<i>People are lazy, they want to cut corners. Maybe they do not have the resources, the funding to do what they are supposed to do, and to cut corners and make it happens they lie about it.</i>

9. Appendices

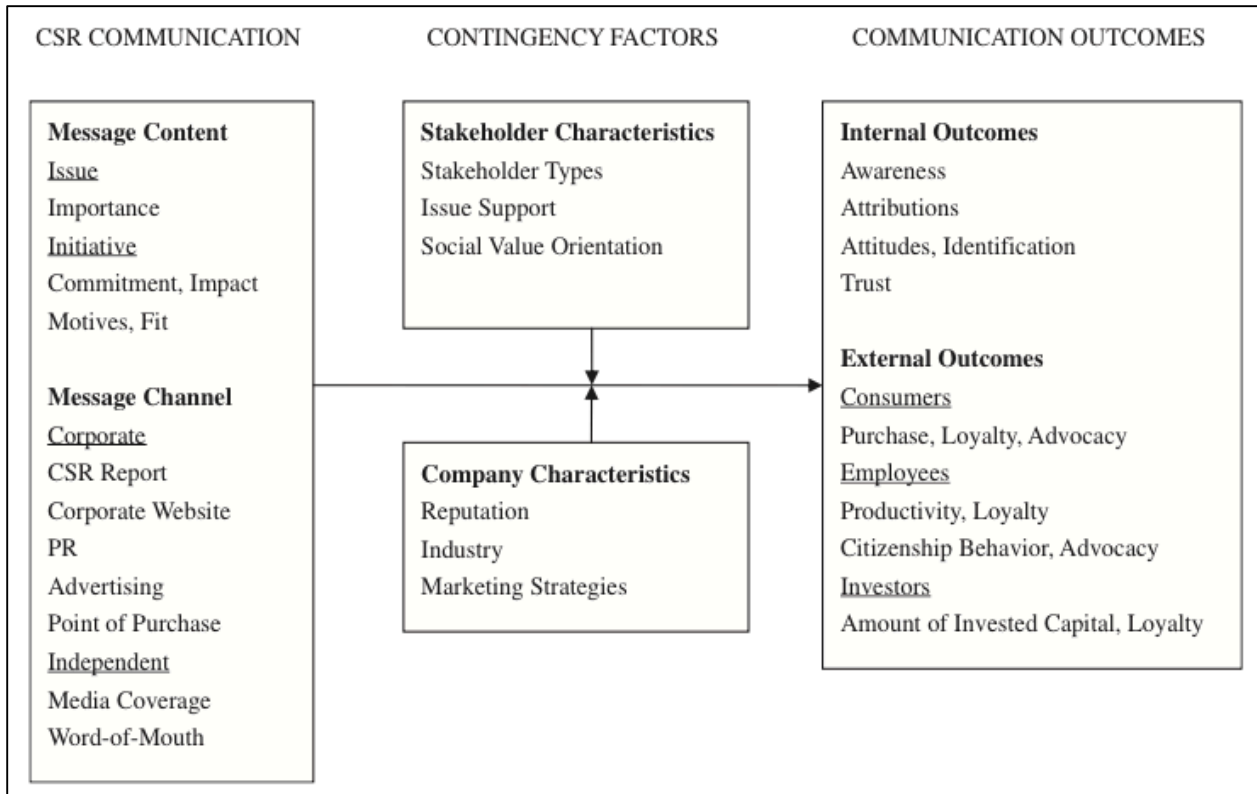
Appendix 1. G250 Companies that include CR information in annual financial reports, 2011-2015. (KPMG, 2017).



Appendix 2. UN Sustainable Development Goals.



Appendix 3. A framework of CSR communication (Du et al., 2010).



Appendix 4. Three communication strategies (Morsing & Schultz, 2006)

	The stakeholder information strategy	The stakeholder response strategy	The stakeholder involvement strategy
Communication ideal: (Grunig & Hunt 1984)	Public information, one-way communication	Two-way asymmetric communication	Two-way symmetric communication
Communication ideal: sense-making and sensegiving:	Sensegiving	Sensemaking ↓ Sensegiving	Sensemaking ↕ Sensegiving – in iterative progressive processes
Stakeholders:	Request more information on corporate CSR efforts	Must be reassured that the company is ethical and socially responsible	Co-construct corporate CSR efforts
Stakeholder role:	Stakeholder influence: support or oppose	Stakeholders respond to corporate actions	Stakeholders are involved, participate and suggest corporate actions
Identification of CSR focus:	Decided by top management	Decided by top management. Investigated in feedback via opinion polls, dialogue, networks and partnerships	Negotiated concurrently in interaction with stakeholders
Strategic communication task:	Inform stakeholders about favourable corporate CSR decisions and actions	Demonstrate to stakeholders how the company integrates their concerns	Invite and establish frequent, systematic and pro-active dialogue with stakeholders, i.e. opinion makers, corporate critics, the media, etc.
Corporate communication department's task:	Design appealing concept message	Identify relevant stakeholders	Build relationships
Third-party endorsement of CSR initiatives:	Unnecessary	Integrated element of surveys, rankings and opinion polls	Stakeholders are themselves involved in corporate CSR messages

Appendix 5. Interview Questions

- (Q.1) Do you think CSR and its role have changed over time?
- (Q.2) If yes, why do you think companies are always more committed to a sustainable development and are increasingly implementing CSR activities?
- (Q.3) Do you think CSR positively affects company's reputation? To what extent reputation represents a competitive advantage?
- (Q.4) What do you think is it the principal reason why traditional companies promote their CSR practices?
- (Q.5) What do you think, instead, it is the reason why Social Enterprises promote their CSR practices?
- (Q.6) What are the main reasons for companies to greenwash (that is claiming for fake sustainable actions)?
- (Q.7) What does it take to communicate CSR?
- (Q.8) What should be the content element of CSR message?
- (Q.9) Is it important that the social/environmental issue is directly related to the company's business? Would it enhance the credibility?
- (Q.10) Which is, in your opinion, the best channel to disclose CSR practices?
- (Q.11) To what extent do you think a communication coming from social media, a neutral source, is more effective and make the communication more trustworthy?
- (Q.12) Is it your opinion that social media have empowered stakeholders and that companies to some extent fear the modern conscious consumer and these uncontrollable sources?
- (Q.13) Do you think that CSR-related issues, more than others, require a greater dialogue with stakeholders/users? Will this increase credibility and reduce scepticism?
- a. If not, what could enhance credibility?
- (Q.14) What is, in your opinion, the best way to engage with stakeholders on social media?
- (Q.15) Do you feel that Social Enterprises have to overcome stakeholders' scepticism as well?
- (Q.16) Do you think that having a social mission make SE's reputation positive without prejudice? or does it have to be built by communicating concrete actions?
- (Q.17) Do customers of SE buy products primarily because the company is involved in social issues and they want to show support or simply because they like the products? In what proportion?
- (Q.18) In your opinion, how can traditional companies learn from SEs in terms of communicating their sustainable development?

Appendix 6. Overview of people interviewed

Interview #	Person Interviewed	Organization	Title	Date of the interview	Organization Description
<u>1</u>	Per Bach	Sociale Entrepreneuror i Danmark	Chairman of the Board	17 April 2019	National association which operates in the context of social entrepreneurship, social innovation, social enterprise, co-production and other solutions to welfare issues across the civil, public and private sectors. It acts as a network for social entrepreneurs to get help and support, exchange experiences and ideas.
<u>2</u>	Maria Soledad Figueroa	Gran Oils	Co-founder	18 April 2019	Brazilian-based social enterprise which internationally operates in the personal care industry.
<u>3</u>	Kristoffer Ravnbøl	NaboSkab	Co-founder	22 April 2019	Danish social company which provides initiatives and solutions to other organizations in terms of circular economy, waste reduction and resource areas.
<u>4</u>	Katrine Arevad	TechBBQ	Head of PR and Communication	24 April 2019	International tech-startup summit which aims at providing startup ecosystems with cutting edge insights, opportunities and networking.
<u>5</u>	Maxwell Hartman	Humanitrack	Founder	26 April 2019	Social enterprise that functions as online news, data, resource, and idea aggregator for humanity's challenges, dreams, and ambitions.


Appendix 7. Post from Lush Cosmetics



Appendix 8. Posts from Lush Cosmetics

Fair trade cocoa butter

With your help, we've planted 50,000 cocoa trees on our farms in Guatemala and Uganda.



lushcosmetics • Segui

lushcosmetics And that number keeps growing. By 2022, we hope to have over 150,000 cocoa trees planted at our regenerative farm in Guatemala, which will fulfill 25% of Lush North America's cocoa butter needs. We love this ingredient for its rich, hydrating goodness, and we love it even more when it's helping regenerate areas devastated by deforestation. Link in bio to learn more. 🌱💚

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graceroseturner @yasabella ✨


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7 MARZO

Coconut oil

Our regenerative farm in Guatemala will be home to 9,000 coconut trees by the end of 2020.



lushcosmetics • Segui

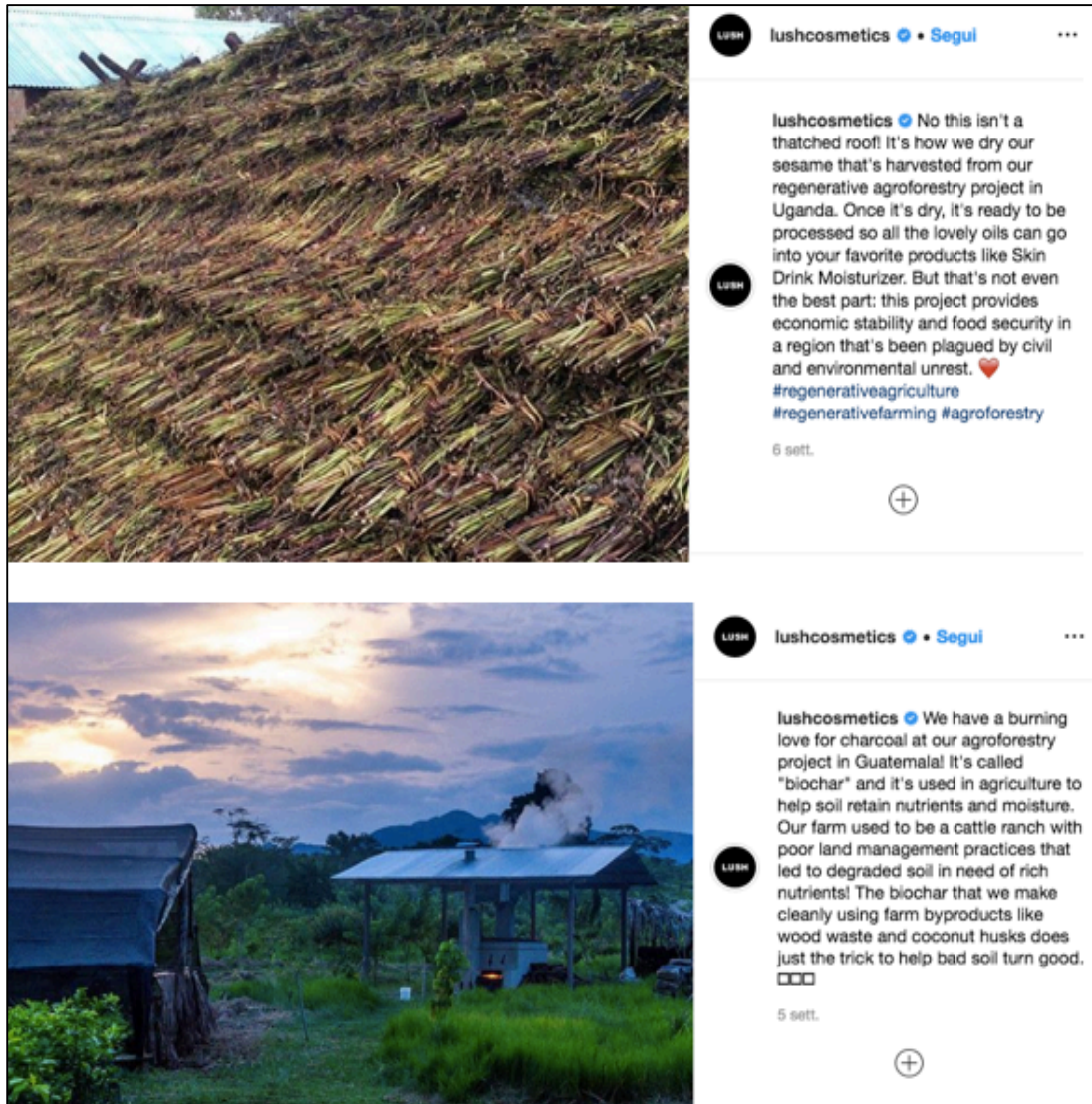
lushcosmetics In just the last 16 years, Guatemala has lost an astonishing 17 percent of its forest cover, driven by illegal logging and clearance for cattle grazing, rubber, sugarcane and palm oil. Land is left eroded while communities face unreliable means to support themselves and risk of deadly landslides after heavy rains. Lush invested in a 225 hectare former cattle ranch in Izabal, Guatemala and since 2016 has slowly been turning it back into a jungle, where we can organically grow fresh indigenous plants like coconut and vanilla while reversing the effects of deforestation. 🌿

#regenerativeagriculture
#regenerativefarming #agroforestry

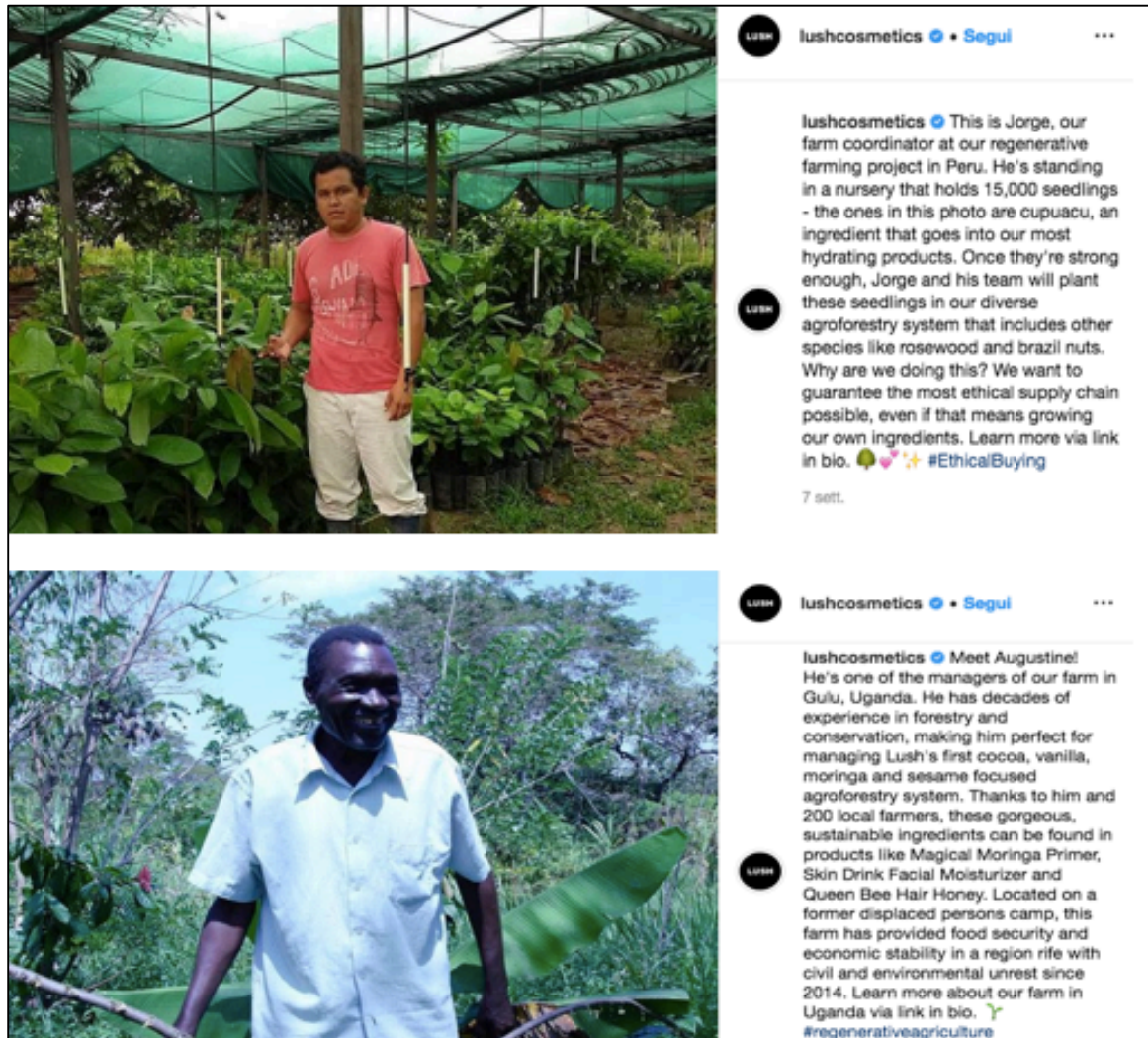
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2 MARZO

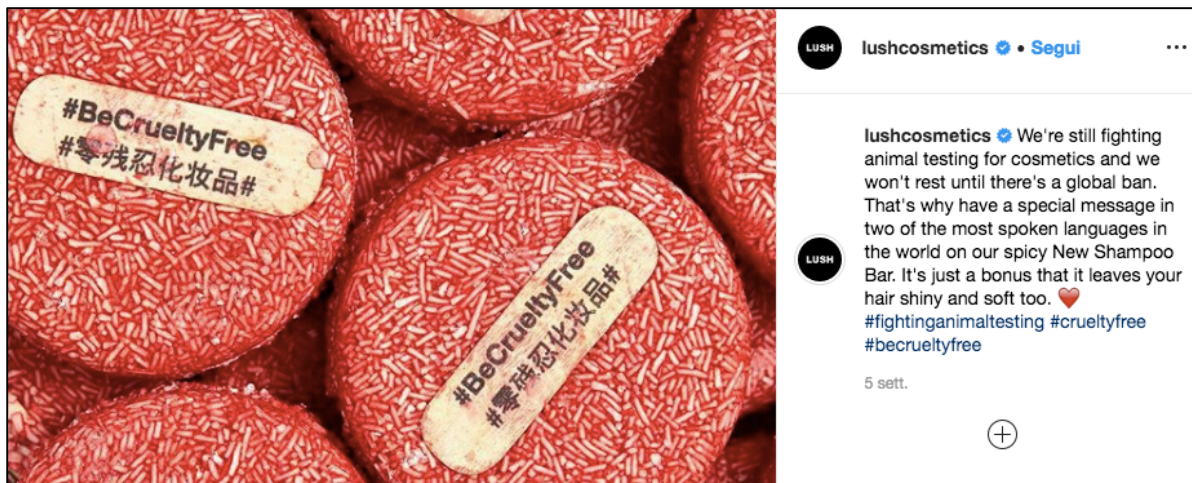
Appendix 9. Posts from Lush Cosmetics



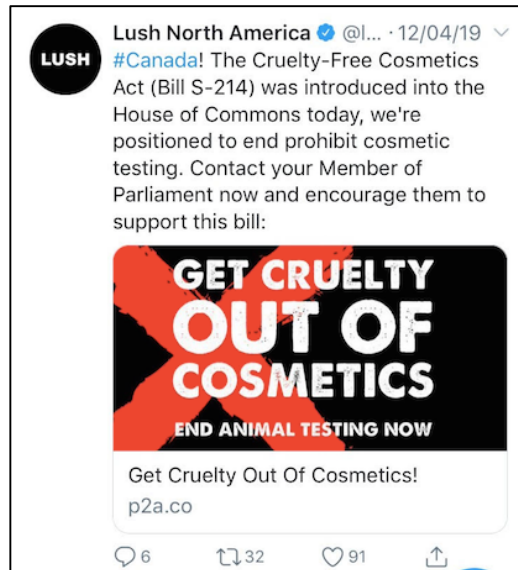
Appendix 10. Posts from Lush Cosmetics



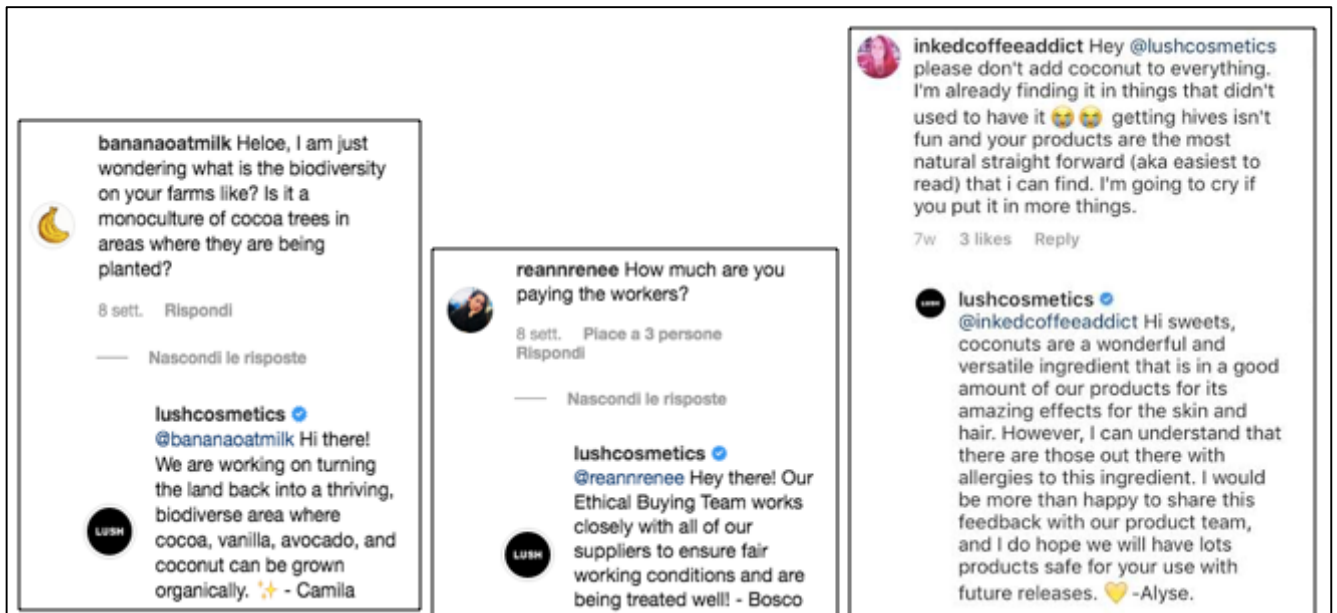
Appendix 11. Post from Lush Cosmetics



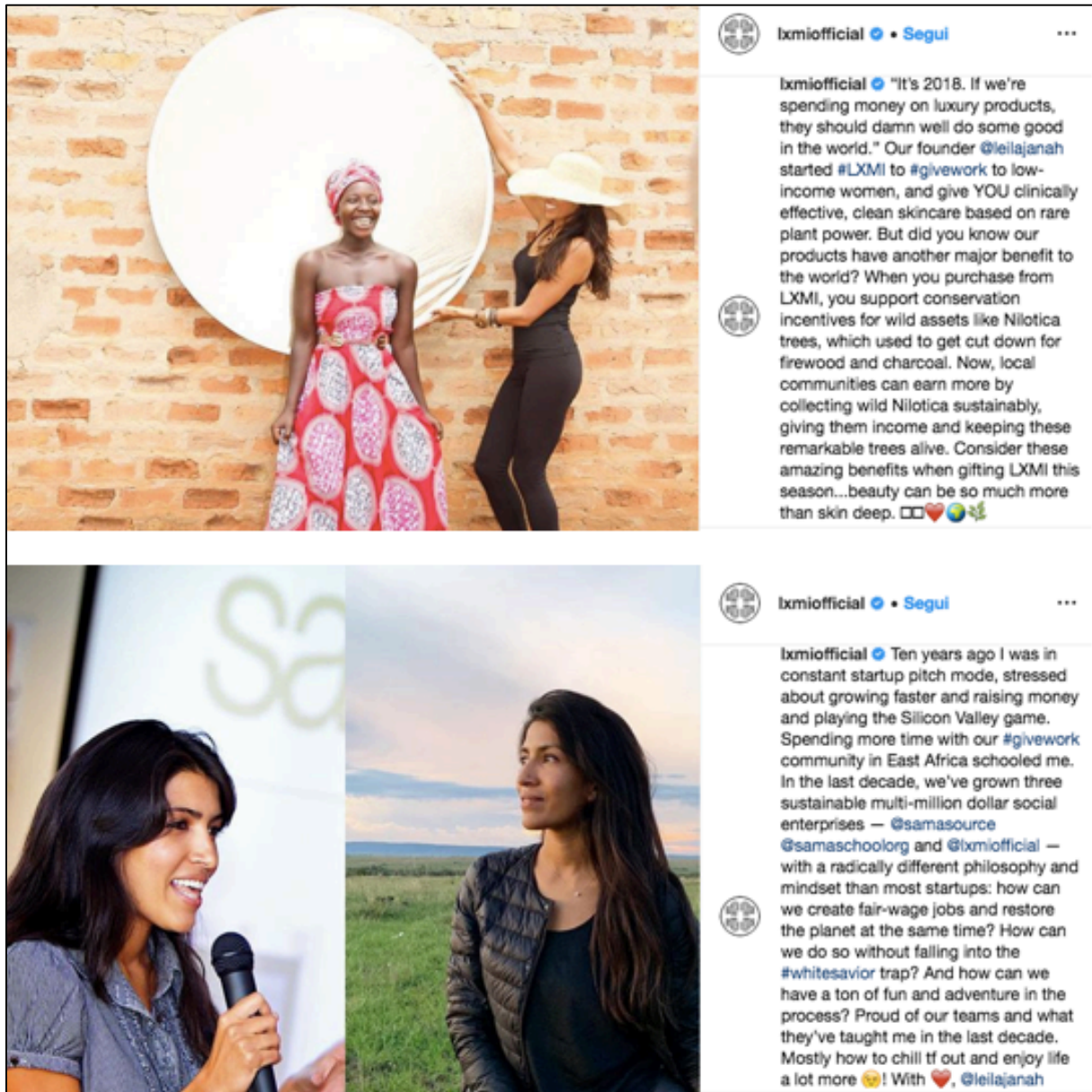
Appendix 12. Post from Lush Cosmetics North America



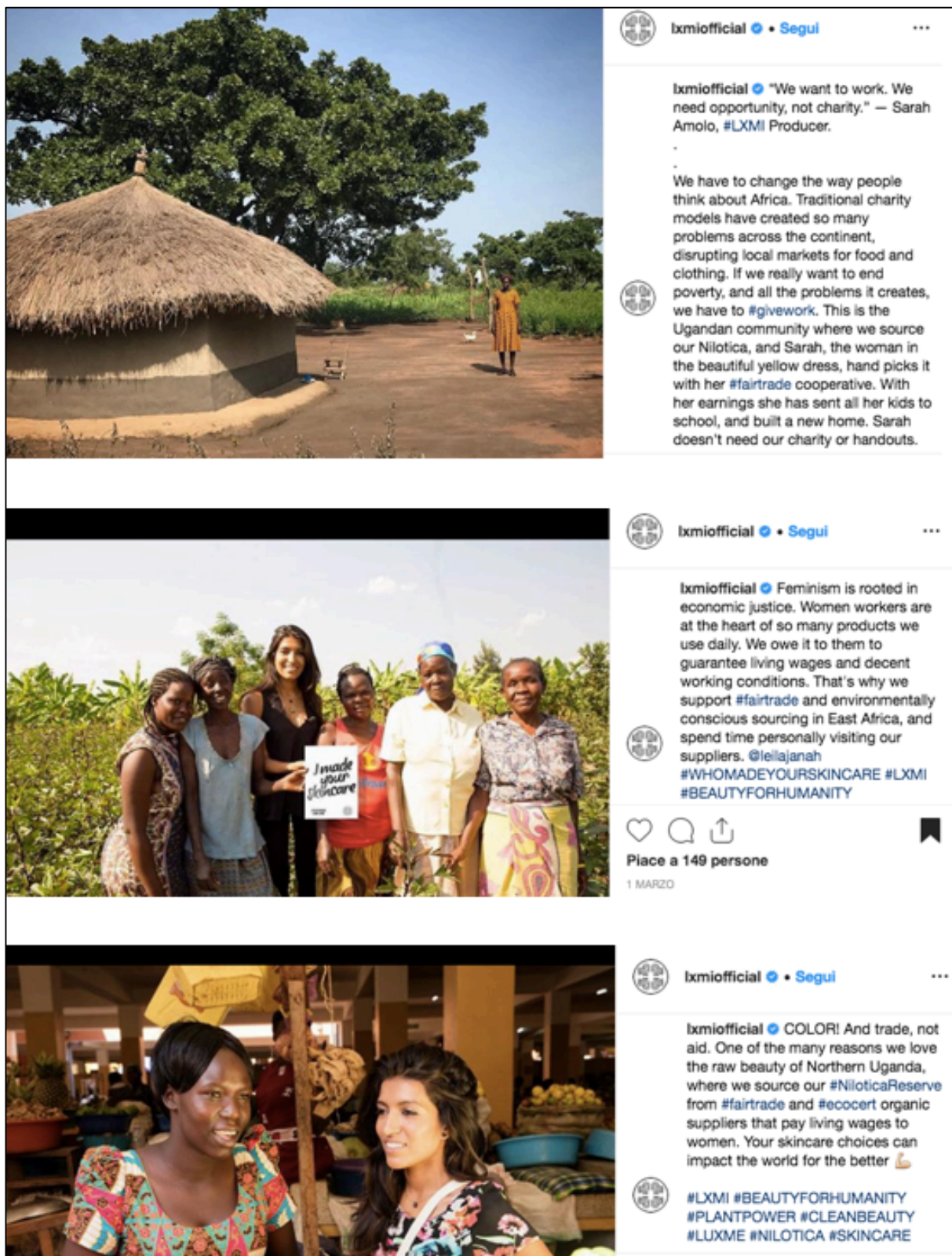
Appendix 13. Comments of users under Lush Cosmetics' posts



Appendix 14. Posts from LXMI



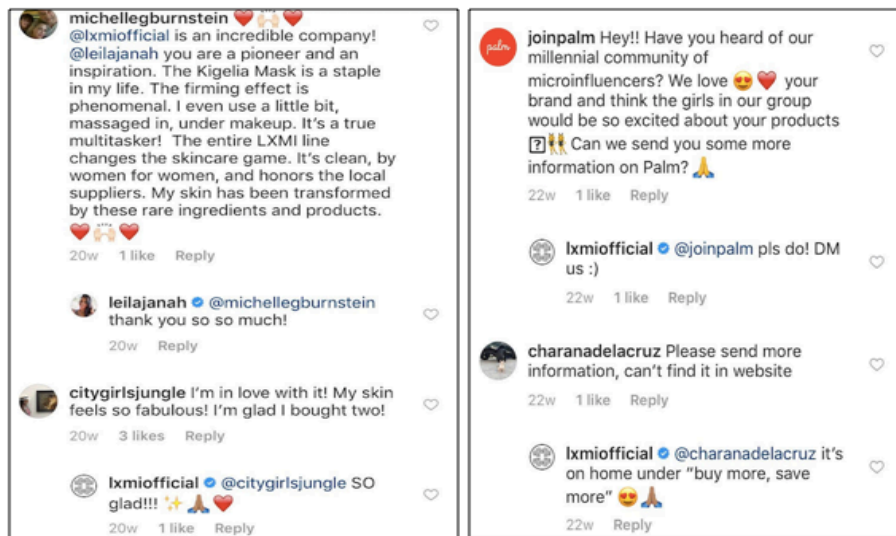
Appendix 15. Posts from LXMI



Appendix 16. Post from LXMI



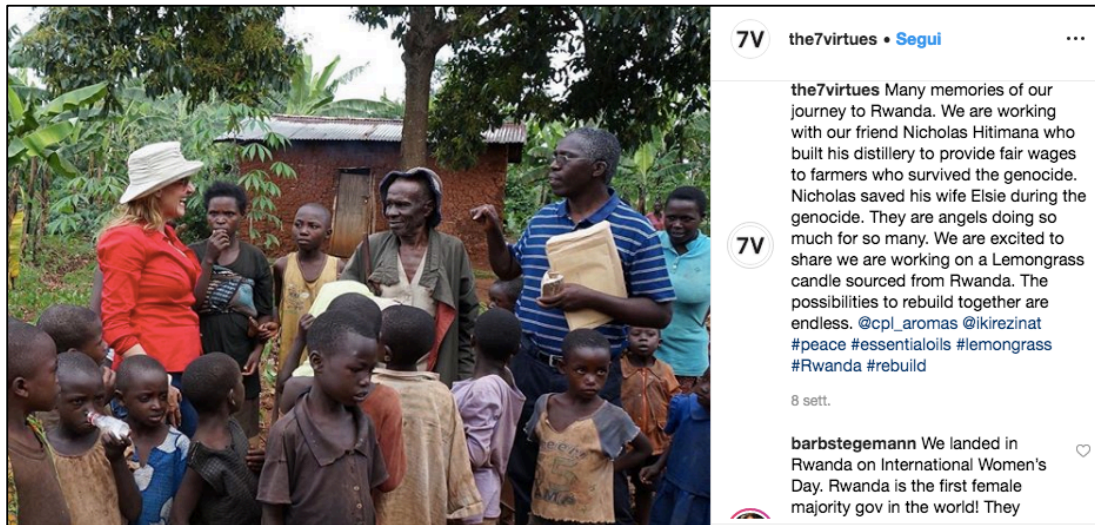
Appendix 17. Comments under LXMI's posts



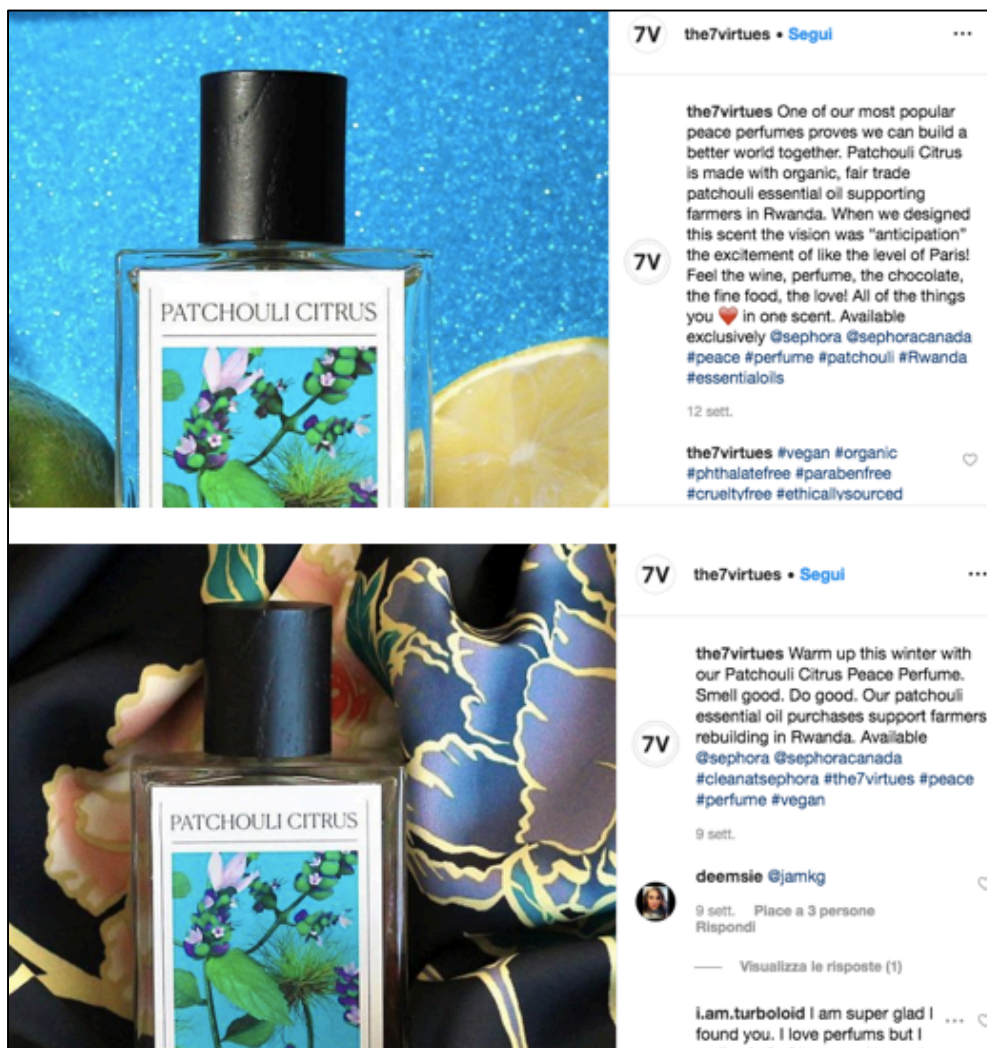
Appendix 18. Interaction between The 7 Virtues and an user



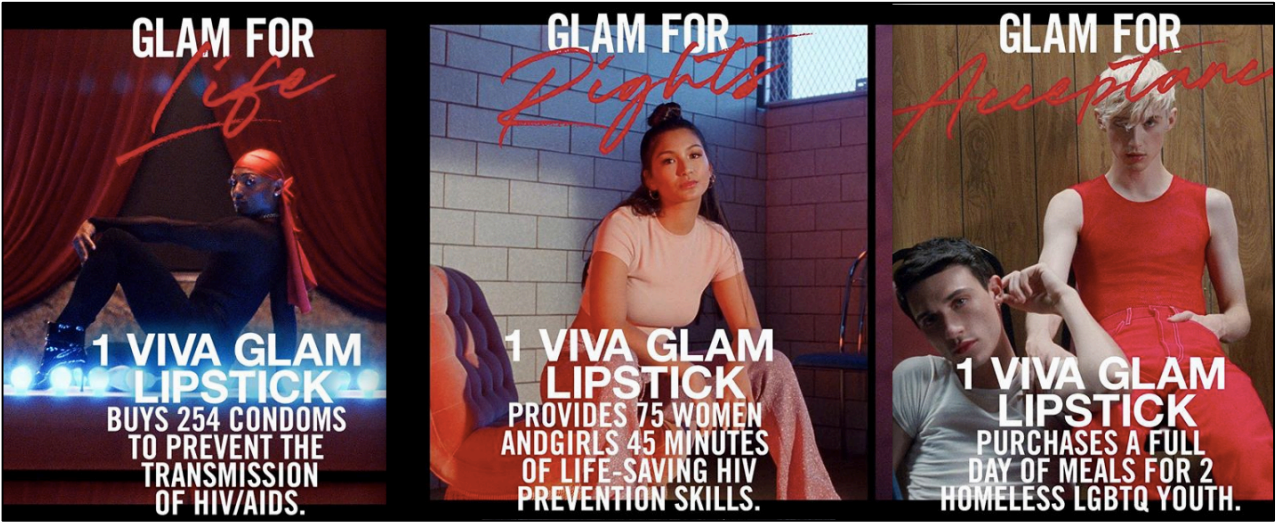
Appendix 19. Post from The 7 Virtues



Appendix 20. Posts from The 7 Virtues



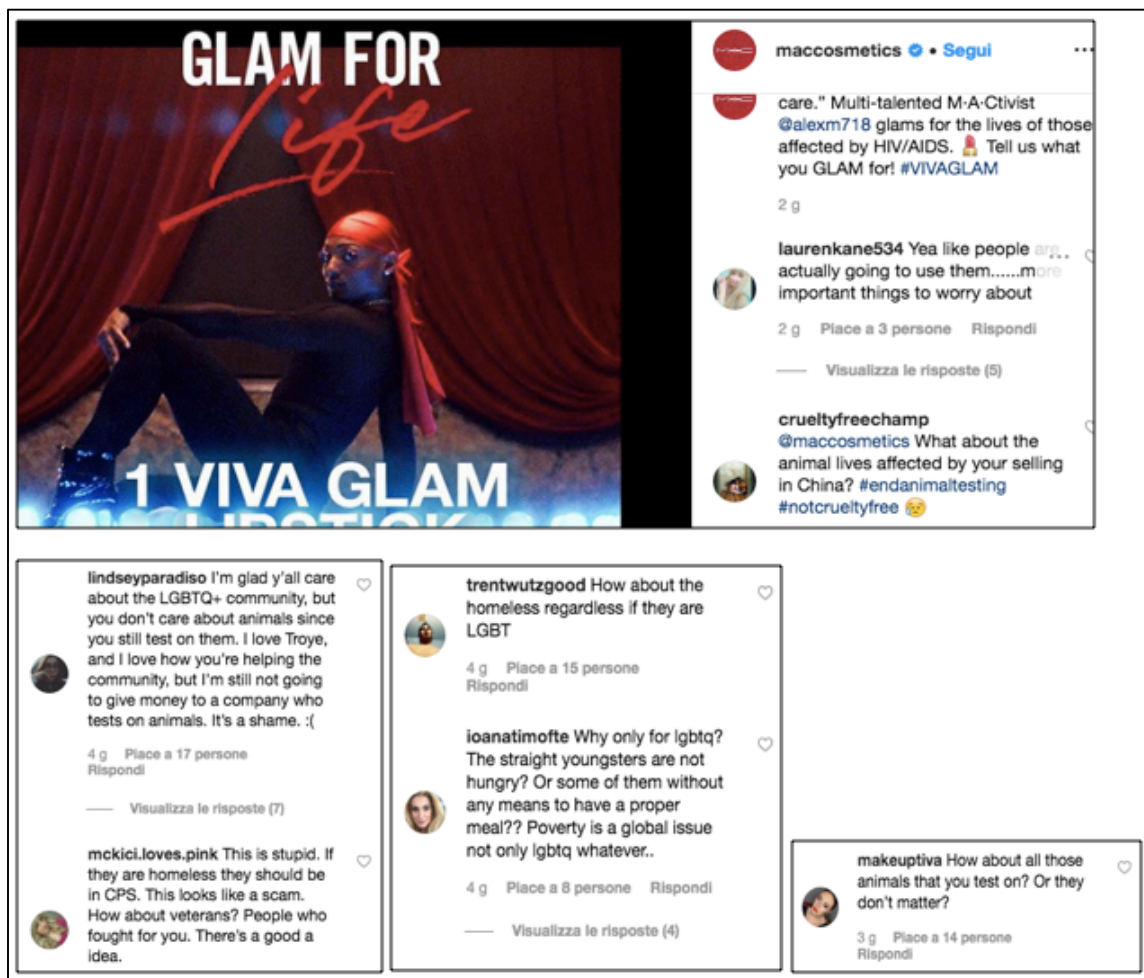
Appendix 21. Posts from MAC Cosmetics



Appendix 22. Instagram Shopping in MAC Cosmetics' post



Appendix 23. Accusation comments under MAC Cosmetics' posts




Appendix 24. Post from Origins




Appendix 25. Origins Website

Our packaging reflects our values. It's inspired by the **beauty of the natural ingredients** we use. It's simple, highly functional and **environmentally friendly**.

As we always have, we keep packaging to a minimum. We do our best to avoid unnecessary waste and reduce our impact on the planet by:



Appendix 26. Accusation comments under Origins posts



FORMULATED WITHOUT PHTHALATES

origins • Segui

origins We rigorously research & evaluate naturally-derived ingredients & non-toxic-to-skin alternatives—for purity, efficacy & safety. ✓ And we don't formulate with parabens, phthalates and others. 🌱 Want to learn more? Just visit our website! #discoverorigins #parabenfree

2 sett.

jennybeanzz Love your products, but was super upset to learn that your brand is not officially cruelty free and your products are tested on animals! While I appreciate your statement that you are working towards the goal of ending animal testing, I won't be purchasing your products again until that happens. I really hope this happens soon. 💕

skiaware why do you test on animals?

2 sett. Place a 2 persone Rispondi

jenniferemily.rf Would you be able to start a return/reuse with your cream pots? I have an empty just watching me from my bathroom shelf that I have no use for but dont want to throw away, if it were returnable you could just wash and reuse to save even more plastic!