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**CORPORATE ABILITY OR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY? A QUANTITATIVE
CONTENT ANALYSIS OF FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES' MESSAGE
STRATEGIES AND CONSUMER RESPONSES ON FACEBOOK**

A Thesis in

Media Studies

by

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ABSTRACT

Social media consumption is rising among U.S. adults, and corporations have begun to create online social presences to build relationships with their publics. Recent research has delved into how corporations emphasize their ability to produce quality products/services and highlight their socially responsible behaviors in online communication. These corporate ability (CA) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies have been found to impact how message receivers view the organization and think about the company and its products/services. The current research undertook quantitative content analysis of Fortune 500 companies' Facebook profiles and wall posts seeking to determine whether and how top-performing U.S. corporations use CA, CSR, or hybrid message strategies on Facebook. Further, user comments stemming from corporate Facebook wall posts were also content analyzed to determine whether stakeholders' responses indicated matching CA or CSR mental associations with and evaluations of the company and its products/services.

Results revealed 291 of the Fortune 500 companies owned a main corporate Facebook page at the time of analysis (late spring 2012). All profiles were analyzed, uncovering massive use of a dominant CA strategy in profile communication. Two constructed weeks of 75 of the corporations' wall posts and all resulting user comments were also analyzed, showing support for hypotheses that communicating a CSR message strategy would result in audience CSR associations and company evaluations, whereas communicating a CA message strategy would result in audience CA associations and product evaluations. No differences were found based on industry or performance

ranking in corporate profile communication message strategies, but small differences were found by both industry and performance ranking in corporate wall post communication. Four research questions and two hypotheses were presented and analyzed. Theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research are discussed.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Internet use in general and social media consumption in particular is expansive. More than 210 million Americans logged online in September 2011 alone, with individuals spending an average 28 hours online that month (Nielson Wire, 2011). And among all online activities, use of social media ranks highest. In fact, the social networking site Facebook follows Google as the second most widely accessed brand on the Web (Nielson Wire, 2011), with more than 950 million active users worldwide in 2012 (Facebook, n.d.). As Taylor, Kent, and White (2001) have explained, for businesses – especially for their public relations practitioners – the Internet provides a venue for conveying more content at a lower cost and faster speed than traditional media. Thus, it is perhaps no surprise that with social media's concentrated, engaged audiences and minimal expenses, top-performing corporations have quickly garnered a presence on Facebook (McCorkindale, 2010).

Yet, scholars have not provided a comprehensive account of how top-performing companies, such as those ranked among the Fortune 500, are communicating via social media. How such corporations are presenting themselves on Facebook, especially what kinds of message strategies they promote and, importantly, what kind of consumer responses they receive, has yet to be determined in the scholarly literature. It is the purpose of this work to begin to alleviate this deficit by extending past research (e.g., Ki & Hon, 2006; Kim, 2011; Kim & Rader, 2010) examining successful corporations'

message strategies online and publics' related cognitive and affective associations and evaluations.

Thus, the research presented herein examined message strategies focusing on corporate ability (CA) or corporate social responsibility (CSR), or CA/CSR-hybrid strategies, as well as message receivers' corresponding responses related to the company and/or the product. More particularly, it sought to determine whether and how top-performing companies: (1) communicated CA, CSR, and/or hybrid strategies on their official Facebook pages; and (2) also communicated such strategies via their Facebook wall posts. It also endeavored to uncover whether stakeholders responded via Facebook wall comments on corporate pages in ways indicative of the types of corporate associations and company/product evaluations expected based on the marketing and public relations literature.

Insights gleaned from information about how the country's top-performing corporations are communicating with their publics may provide guidance for public relations professionals and other individuals responsible for enacting corporate communication on Facebook. As will be expanded on below, a gap exists in the literature to describe how the most successful corporations are using the popular medium Facebook to communicate with publics about company abilities and socially responsible initiatives. Similarly, this gap also includes a lack of information about publics' responses to corporate Facebook message strategies. An extensive search of the literature revealed no research that examines real corporate message strategies by Fortune 500 companies along with real consumer responses on Facebook. Thus, the current work contributes the existing literature in three ways. First, it examines top-performing Fortune 500

companies' ability and responsibility message strategies on their Facebook profile pages, extending prior literature that has primarily looked at Web site communication rather than social media communication. Second, and similarly, it examines corporate message strategies on corporate Facebook wall posts. Third, it is the first study to analyze consumer corporate associations and evaluations expressed via publics' naturally occurring comments stemming from corporate Facebook posts, expanding prior results accumulated in a laboratory setting. Collectively, this information provides preliminary field evidence of corporate strategies and consumer associations as they exist in the market, topics thus far examined predominantly in lab experiments or in the one-way communication of corporate Web sites. Additionally, just as research about Fortune 500 company Web sites has provided important directives for corporate-based communication practitioners managing company sites, as explained below, the current research offers directives for those who manage company social media communication, particularly on Facebook.

To accomplish this goal, the upcoming chapter reviews relevant literature, particularly focusing on areas pertaining to social media, the concepts of CA and CSR, their related corporate associations (consumer responses), and the message strategies proposed to elicit those responses. The chapter concludes with resultant research questions and hypotheses. The second chapter describes the research method administered to address the research questions and hypotheses, and the following chapter reveals results of analysis. The final two chapters discuss findings and conclusions, respectively.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Social Media

Social media are Web- or mobile-based applications with content that users may create or influence (Wright & Hinson, 2009). The Internet and especially social media are often capable of facilitating interaction and dialogue between organizations and their publics as well as among any message creators and consumers (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007; Taylor & Kent, 1998; Wright & Hinson, 2009). Unlike traditional media such as newspapers, radio, or television, which primarily disseminate information in one direction from the source to its receivers, social media such as Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn create opportunities for two-way interaction among users. In fact, Bortree and Seltzer (2009, p. 317) explain social media foster an environment in which organizations can “interact with key publics and allow users to engage with one another on topics of mutual interest.”

Although social networking sites are the most popular among all social media (Nielsen, 2011), a variety of forms constitute the social media realm as defined above. For example, in addition to social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), also blogs (e.g., WordPress), microblogs (e.g., Twitter), social bookmarking sites (e.g., Diigo), photo sharing sites (e.g., Pinterest), video sharing sites (e.g., YouTube), wikis (e.g., Wikipedia), and even mobile texting are all popular digital tools that fit the conception of social media noted above.

Among all social media, Facebook is most popular, boasting an average 552 million daily users and 955 million monthly users across the globe in June 2012 (Facebook, n.d.). Industry and academic research alike support Facebook's claim of popularity, with Nielsen data (2011) revealing that during the year 2011, individuals online in the US spent more time on Facebook than any other website, and scholars finding young adult research participants reported using Facebook the most of any other social media (Austin, Liu, & Jin, 2012). Additionally, while Facebook was born by and for the college-aged population (Facebook, 2011), its users are no longer limited to the 18-24 demographic. In fact, Americans older than 35 have been joining and using Facebook at a large yearly growth rate (Pew Internet, 2011), and those age 55 and older are now responsible for the largest Facebook usage growth of any age bracket (Nielsen, 2011). Given social media's dialogic capabilities and Facebook's massive and plugged-in audience, it may come as no surprise that the nation's top performing corporations are visible on Facebook (McCorkindale, 2010), rendering Facebook ripe for study of social media communication between corporations and consumers.

Fortune 500 Company Communication Online

Likely because of their massive financial success, Fortune 500 companies are often examined in applied communication literature, held up as examples for corporate communication practitioners to consider imitating. Indeed, Kim (2011) and Kim and Rader (2010) noted that examining Fortune 500 company communication provides "convincing and realistic insights about contemporary corporate communication strategy and a valuable set of communicative directives to public relations practitioners managing corporate-context communications" (Kim & Rader, 2010, p. 60). However, extant

research in this realm has tended to focus on corporate Web sites, such as the layout and types of communication on Fortune 500 companies' Web sites (Esrock & Leighty, 1998, 2000), or how Fortune 500 companies use dialogic features (Park & Reber, 2008), impression management strategies (Connolly-Ahern & Broadway, 2007), relationship maintenance strategies (Ki & Hon, 2006), media relations tactics (Callison, 2003), demonstrate stewardship (Waters, 2011 – for Fortune 100 only), or target stakeholders (Kim, Park & Wertz, 2010) in their Web site communication.

One of the few studies of Fortune 500 companies' communication on the Internet beyond corporate Web sites involved an examination of corporate communication on Twitter (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010). The content analysis of Fortune 500 companies' Twitter communication sought to identify whether and how these top performing companies used dialogic communication principles. The researchers analyzed both a random sample of company Twitter profiles as well as the companies' tweets. At the time of data collection, they identified far fewer than half of Fortune 500 companies, 170 of them, maintained active Twitter accounts. Ultimately, echoing prior research that failed to find organizations fully using social media for their two-way communication affordances (e.g., Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; McCorkindale, 2010), Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) asserted "Twitter is also being under utilized by organizations to facilitate dialogic communication with stakeholders" (p. 340).

The other major example of research on Fortune 500 companies' online behaviors outside of Web site communication is a study conducted by McCorkindale (2010). A notable exception to the dearth of applied research about top-performing companies' activities on Facebook, the researcher examined 55 Facebook profile and fan pages of

Fortune 50 companies to gather information about number of fans, the types of organizational information made available, and use of multimedia as well as levels of engagement, discussion board use, and feedback. The author remarked that while these top companies were present on Facebook, they were not fully taking advantage of the medium in terms of information dissemination, engagement, relationship-building, and cultivating return visits, similar to Rybalko and Seltzer's (2010) findings on Twitter.

Despite new media's growing audiences and increasing prevalence, scant literature in public relations and applied communication focuses on how the nation's top performing companies are using new media, particularly social networking sites, to communicate with their publics, nor does it focus on the consumer responses these companies receive. Before beginning to fill these gaps, it is important to first discuss the particular consumer associations (CA, CSR, or hybrid associations as well as company or product evaluations) and the related corporate message strategies (CA, CSR, or hybrid strategies) of relevance to the current research – and to link these concepts, which originated in marketing, to public relations.

CA and CSR: Concepts, Strategies and Associations

The current research adopted Brown and Dacin's (1997), Kim and Rader's (2010), and Kim's (2011) conception that delineated corporate obligations into ability-based and social responsibility-based. Likewise, it delineated among corporate ability message strategies, corporate social responsibility strategies, and hybrid strategies, which will be expanded upon below. Similarly, Kim and Rader's (2010) and Kim's (2011) notions of message recipients' corporate associations and company/product evaluations

were examined, also expanded upon below. Thus, the concepts underpinning these choices are laid out next.

Message Strategies, Associations, and Relevance to Online Public Relations

Corporate associations, or all the general and specific information a person mentally holds and ties to a company, have been demonstrated to impact publics' evaluations of the company and its products (Brown & Dacin, 1997). Initially based in marketing and psychology, the influence of associations on evaluations has been an area of scholarly inquiry for decades, particularly expanding since the 1990s (e.g., Batra & Homer, 2004; Brown & Dacin, 1997; Gurhan-Canli & Batra, 2004; Keller & Aaker, 1998; Kim, 2011; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). However, implementing communication strategies to cultivate publics' positive mental associations about a company is relevant and important to public relations, which according to the Public Relations Society of America's (PRSA) practitioner and scholar crowd-sourced definition is the "strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics" (PRSA, n.d., para. 3). Further, this strategic process may in part include: "Researching, conducting and evaluating, on a continuing basis, programs of action and communication to achieve the informed public understanding necessary to the success of an organization's aims" (PRSA, n.d., para. 7, bullet 3). With increasing numbers of top companies creating online social presences, they are undoubtedly engaging in programs of strategic messaging, some of which might be under the purview of public relations professionals – or at least viewed by publics as a public relations function. As Wright and Hinson (2009) confirm: "It's an understatement to suggest that social media have had a huge impact on the practice of public relations" (p. 2).

The indication of social media communication in many cases falling into the hands of public relations practitioners is corroborated by recent industry research. In two surveys conducted in 2011 by the Council of Public Relations Firms of its members, it was revealed that more than 90% of participants deemed digital and social media activities their bestselling services in the previous year (Council of Public Relations Firms, n.d.). Further, among social media services, the overwhelming majority reported that the top three most revenue-producing were content creation, strategic consulting, and engagement/outreach. It is therefore evident that companies are seeking social media communication expertise from public relations professionals, who are in many instances creating message strategy and related content for clients' social media efforts in order to engage consumers.

Thus a question arises: what kind of strategies are being created and used, and perhaps more importantly, what responses are they receiving? Before an answer can be attempted, more information is needed about corporate ability and responsibility, the mental associations and evaluations stakeholders may hold related to corporate ability and responsibility, and the message strategies that may elicit those mental associations and evaluations.

Corporate Ability vs. Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Ability. Research often juxtaposes corporate ability and corporate social responsibility (e.g., Berens & van Riel, 2004; Brown & Dacin, 1997; Kim, 2011; Kim & Radar, 2010). Coming out of the reputation management literature in fields of marketing and advertising, a two dimensional approach has been advanced to explain how publics view corporations' reputations and to predict how corporations can create

communication strategy to foster publics' positive images of the company. Early in this twofold stream of research, Chew (1992) offered the dimensions of (1) economic performance and (2) social conduct, ultimately foreshadowing what Brown and Dacin (1997) would dub (1) corporate ability and (2) corporate social responsibility. Both conceptualizations tap into the idea that publics hold expectations of a company on two levels: first, to produce good and fairly priced products/services while making a profit; and second, to fulfill various other social expectations determined by the community or society.

The notion that corporate ability is the primary responsibility expected of the company by its publics is understandable, as businesses exist in major part to produce products/services and earn a profit for the company and any shareholders (Berens & van Riel, 2004). Thus the concept of CA specifically focuses on companies' expertise and superiority in producing and providing products and services (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Kim & Rader, 2010; Kim, 2011). Recently, research has further explained that corporate ability often focuses on superiority and quality control of products/services, success and leadership globally and within the company's industry, innovation and research/development, and a stakeholder-centered orientation (Kim & Rader, 2010, p. 67; also, Kim, 2011).

Corporate Social Responsibility. The concept of CSR has evolved substantially since Bowen, arguably the "Father of Corporate Social Responsibility" (Carroll, 1999, p. 270), produced a book examining the *Social Responsibilities of the Business Man* (Bowen, 1953). Providing an initial definition of these responsibilities, he explained that "it refers to 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). Throughout the subsequent more than half a century, scholars in business, economics, finance, communications, public relations, psychology, and many related fields have proposed a variety of definitions, theories, and approaches to CSR (for a comprehensive overview of CSR definitions across time through the 1990s, see Carroll, 1999).

Grunig and Hunt (1984) have asserted the practice of public relations demands and entails the practice of social responsibility. Noting that for CSR to contain the entire set of responsibilities corporations hold in society, it must include but also extend beyond procuring profits and maintaining appropriate legal standing, Carroll (1979, 1999) proposed that “the social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time” (Carroll, 1979, p. 500). Although compelling, this definition appears to encompass both CA (i.e., *economic* obligations to produce fairly priced, high quality goods/services and return a profit; and *legal* obligations to adhere to laws and regulations) and CSR (i.e., *ethical* obligations to behave in good but not required ways that society nonetheless dominantly expects, and *discretionary/philanthropic* obligations to give/do more than what is expected by society’s dominant ethical stances and expectations).

Demarcating boundaries between CA and CSR, Brown and Dacin (1997) defined CSR as “the organization's status and activities with respect to its perceived societal obligations,” which can be and often are “unrelated to the company's abilities in producing goods and services” (p. 68), a definition accepted more recently by public relations scholars (Kim, 2011; Kim & Rader, 2010). In a content analysis of Fortune 500

companies' Web sites, Esrock and Leichty (1998) identified more than a dozen categories of such social obligations, including fair business practices, safety and health of employees; products/services safety; cultural diversity; environmental sustainability; charitable contributions; commitments to children, education, public health, and the arts; civic involvement and volunteerism; and care for quality of work life (p. 311). Further outlining the perceived social obligations existing for corporations in more recent society, Kim (2011) and Kim and Rader (2010) asserted that communal expectations of the company's social responsibilities encompass environmental stewardship; philanthropy; employee involvement; and commitment to education, public health, and cultural activities (Kim & Rader, 2010, p. 67).

CSR vs. CA Associations

In order to better understand the value of creating message strategies based on the notions of CA and CSR described above, it is important to understand related corporate associations. Corporate associations are all the feelings, thoughts, and attitudes individuals have about a company, formed from direct or indirect experiences, knowledge about the corporation's prior efforts, or even by snap judgments (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Dacin & Brown, 2002; Madrigal, 2000). In marketing, advertising, and public relations, this is linked to corporate reputation (e.g., Berens & van Riel, 2004; Kim, 2011). Corporate associations were first examined in the marketing literature, which theorized that the cognitive associations consumers tied to company would impact their interactions with that company. Indeed, several scholars in the related earlier marketing and advertising literature argued for the possibility of market advantages when

companies cultivate positive associations in their consumers' minds (e.g., Ghemawat, 1986; Hill, 1962; Weigelt & Camerer, 1988; Winters, 1986).

Similar to the ideas noted above, Brown and Dacin (1997), drawing on prior research, distinguished two types of corporate associations: corporate ability (CA) associations, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) associations. Individuals' CA associations focus on their perceptions about the company's expertise and capability to produce excellent products and services, and their CSR associations emphasize perceived socially responsible behaviors by the company as a decent entity in society. Corporate associations may influence attitudes and beliefs toward the company's new products, and CA associations and CSR associations can produce differing consumer responses, for instance positive CA associations transferring to a company's new product consumers have yet to experience directly (Brown & Dacin, 1997).

And many scholars have found multifaceted positive, albeit sometimes weak, relationships between companies' CSR and publics' positive evaluations. For example, CSR initiatives have been found to lead to more favorable attitudes toward the brand and the product; greater purchase intentions and behaviors; and more positive perceptions of corporate image, reputation, and credibility (e.g., Brown and Dacin, 1997; David, Kline, & Dai, 2005; Keller & Aaker, 1998; Pfau, Haigh, Sims, & Wigley, 2008; Sen, Bhattacharya, & Korschun, 2006; Sen, & Bhattacharya, 2001; Smith, 2003). Considering that publics' knowledge about CSR initiatives may be key to reaping many of the benefits CSR can provide (David et al, 2005; Dawkins, 2005), it follows that engaging in dialogue with publics based on CSR activities is important. Given that social media are touted for dialogic, two-way communication facilitating features (e.g., Bortree & Seltzer, 2009;

Taylor & Kent, 1998; Taylor, Kent & White, 2001), and recent research has provided evidence of both direct and indirect effects of CSR on corporate associations and positive company and product evaluations (Kim, 2011), communication about corporate CSR on Facebook seems reasonable and potentially beneficial for the company and its publics.

Dacin and Brown (2002), with input from knowledgeable scholars in this domain, implored for future research to answer among other questions: “What role do direct communications from the corporation play in the formation of corporate associations?” (p. 260). Answers have begun to emerge from public relations scholars, who have demonstrated that this typology of corporate message strategies (i.e., CA, CSR, and hybrid) exists in company Web site communication (Kim & Rader, 2010) and have lab tested those strategies’ impact on publics’ corporate associations and company/product evaluations (Kim, 2011). Although the following research cannot directly speak to how corporate communication might result in the “formation of corporate associations,” a question that requires extensive quantitative and qualitative research to parse out and answer, nonetheless this research can contribute to its answer. That is, the current research does seek to reveal real corporate publics’ sentiments that indicate their corporate associations that presumably stem, at least in some instances or in part, from corporate communication strategies. The purpose of this work is to provide additional insights into the topic from the field, based on real corporate messages and real publics’ responses on real corporate Facebook pages.

CSR vs. CA vs. Hybrid Message Strategies

The literature cited above supports the proposition that publics’ perceptions of a corporation, their corporate associations, are chief to their responses to the company’s

products, even new products. It also reveals that publics transfer or extend their corporate associations to new or additional facets of the corporation and its brands or services (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Kim, 2011). Thus, it is important for corporations to foster positive corporate associations based on enhancing corporate reputation and developing stakeholder relationships through communicating with publics (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Dacin & Brown, 2002; Kim, 2011; Kim & Rader, 2010). Based on the above notions that delineate organizational obligations into CA and CSR, and also demonstrate publics' similar corporate associations, company evaluations, and product evaluations, the final area requiring more information pertains to how organizations may facilitate stakeholders' corporate associations/evaluations that correspond to the obligations the corporations are fulfilling. In other words, how do companies link their CA and CSR initiatives to the impressions of CA and CSR in the minds of their publics? From a public relations perspective, part of the answer involves strategic communication.

As noted above, Brown and Dacin (1997) and Kim and Rader (2010) have supported the dual obligations of business: to produce excellent products/services and to engage in socially responsible behaviors beyond making products and profits. To communicate they are satisfying these obligations, organizations engage in public communication containing strategic messaging. It is thus not surprising that these scholars assert such messages could include an emphasis on CA, an emphasis on CSR, or components of both – the latter being a hybrid strategy. This idea is rooted in marketing literature pre-dating Brown and Dacin's, which also focused on three-pronged communication possibilities, for example (1) sales related, (2) good-will related, or (3) umbrella message strategies as some researchers proposed (Schumann, Hathcote, &

West, 1991), or (1) economic, (2) noneconomic, or (3) mixed message strategies (Drumwright, 1996) as another contended, each set of which bear resemblance to CA, CSR, and hybrid strategies respectively.

At this point it is worth noting that although the following research stems from this researcher's stance that the public relations function extends beyond managing reputation or image, or purely symbolic relationships (e.g., Grunig, 1993), it nonetheless recognizes that public relations in part entails communication campaigns with message strategies meant to cultivate positive relationships, including encouraging positive corporate image or reputation to that end. Other public relations scholars engaging in this line of scholarly inquiry concur. In fact, Kim (2011) calls for attention to a "gap that needs to be closed" (p. 222) between public relations research perspectives about behavioral-based, relationship-building efforts and communication-based, perception management efforts. It is contended in the research herein that both symbolic and behavioral communication are complementary elements of positive, mutually agreeable relationship building between organizations and their stakeholders. Thus, while acknowledging the importance of behavior-based efforts, similar to Kim's (2011) acknowledgement, this research nevertheless endeavors to shed light on some of the communication-based perception management efforts that take place as corporate public relations practitioners build relationships by having online conversations with publics surrounding strategic messages about their companies' actual behaviors regarding corporate ability and social responsibility.

Returning now to the discussion of corporate message strategies and expanding on some of the concepts and research noted above, Kim and Rader (2010) launched an

effort to verify that Brown and Dacin's (1997) typology of message strategies (i.e., CA vs. CSR vs. hybrid) was in fact apparent in top corporations' online messaging. That is, all Fortune 500 companies at the time of Kim and Rader's (2010) study disseminated on their corporate Web sites message strategies that focused either on CA, CSR, or a hybrid of both types. Through conducting quantitative content analysis of all Fortune 500 company Web sites, the researchers found differing message strategies in varying frequencies. For example, companies used the CA strategy of mentioning expertise in product or service quality most frequently, and the overwhelming majority of those using this strategy highly emphasized it. Of all the CSR indicators, the most frequently used strategy was based on mentioning employee involvement, with about half of all companies highly emphasizing such activities (e.g., employees' community service). Overall, results revealed about 83% of Fortune 500 companies used the hybrid strategy in their Web site communication. About 16% used only CA strategies, and barely any (0.4%) used only CSR strategies. While a little more than half used an emphasized CA strategy, a little fewer than a quarter used an emphasized CSR strategy. However, results revealed differences among variously ranked companies, such that those in the top 100 of the Fortune 500 had a higher average use of CSR-focused strategies than their lower ranked counterparts.

Additionally, Kim (2011) expanded on the above findings to test this typology of strategies' effects on publics' corporate associations and company and product evaluations. In a between-group experimental design, the researcher exposed consumers between 25- 65 years old with stimuli created to exhibit the three different strategies (CSR, CA, or "true" hybrid, which contains equally weighted attributes of CSR and CA

strategies) for both of the Fortune 500 companies examined (p. 226). CA associations included linking the corporation to innovative products, market leadership, good quality products, efficient manufacturing facilities, expertise in manufacturing, and global success. Similarly, CSR associations also linked the corporation to six responsible initiatives, those based on environmental responsibility, philanthropic giving, social diversity, great care for communities, educational commitment, and commitment to public health. Results showed that while CA associations may foster CA associations, CSR strategies result in greater CSR associations as well as CA associations – creating what Kim (2011) called the synergistic effect of CSR. The researcher suggested this indicates that among Fortune 500 companies, CSR messages are more effective than CA or hybrid strategies in fostering perceptions that the company is both socially responsible as well as strong in ability to produce products/services, rather than solely a leader in product/service expertise.

Further, Kim (2011) found hybrid strategies also created simultaneously robust CSR and CA associations, but notably, CSR strategies were more effective in creating both types of associations. Thus, “transferring effects” of CSR associations to CA associations were observed only stemming from CSR strategies. That is, consumers with strong CA associations did not therefore tend to believe the company was also socially responsible, while those with strong CSR associations did tend to also believe the company had high expertise related to products and services. The author also found some links from corporate associations to company and product evaluations. She surmised that dependent on industry type, there could be direct influences of CSR association on product evaluation. Finally, it is also important to recognize that the relationships

between associations and evaluations is reciprocal, as corporate public relations messaging enhanced previous associations or created new associations, which then influenced product and company evaluations. This perhaps points to two important areas: (1) it corroborates the conceptualization of corporate associations as the accumulation of all thoughts and feelings about a company, and perhaps more importantly (2) it exposes the possibility for public relations professionals to shape and enhance positive corporate associations among its publics regarding the company's behaviors, both CA-based and CSR-based.

Expanding Prior Research: Presenting Research Questions & Hypotheses

Grounded in the research reviewed above, several areas based on corporate message strategy and stakeholder response are ideal for continuing to develop knowledge in this arena. First, McCorkindale's (2010) research did not focus on relationship building that differentiates CSR and CA message strategies, nor did it examine publics' comments in terms of corporate associations and product/company evaluations, but focusing on both would add to limited knowledge in these areas. And while McCorkindale's (2010) work provided important insights into communication surrounding Fortune 50 companies, it could also be extended substantially by sampling from a population of all Fortune 500 companies, not only the top 50, and sampling only the pages maintained by the company rather than any fan or corporate pages related to the company. This would assist in determining message strategies hundreds of top companies are employing on social media. Finally, focusing not only on corporate message strategies but also publics' responses for a portion of those top companies would provide externally valid publics-based evidence of message effectiveness.

Similarly, as discussed previously, it has been determined that Fortune 500 companies are exhibiting the message strategy typology expressed above (i.e., CA, CSR, and hybrid) on their corporate Web sites (Kim & Rader, 2010), yet this typology has not yet been demonstrated to be employed on corporate-run social media. Scholarship expanding on this finding has also showed that, in a controlled laboratory setting, these message strategies can exert indirect and direct effects on corporate associations (CA or CSR), company evaluations, and product evaluations (Kim, 2011); yet it has not yet been uncovered whether these message strategies and the related associations, evaluations, and evaluations exist simultaneously in the market. The social networking site Facebook provides a platform for naturally occurring message strategies to be disseminated by corporations and responded to organically by publics. Therefore, to address these gaps in the literature and extend and test previous work, the following four research questions and two hypotheses are posed:

RQ1: How do corporations employ CA, CSR, and hybrid corporate message strategies on their official Facebook profile page?

RQ2: How, if at all, do dominant message strategies on Fortune 500 companies' Facebook profile pages and wall posts differ by industry sector or performance ranking status?

RQ3: How do corporations employ CA-, CSR-, and hybrid-based corporate message strategies on their Facebook wall posts?

RQ4: Do corporate associations (CA or CSR) exhibited in users' comment posts

differ based on the corporate message strategy (CA, CSR, or true hybrid) employed in the corporate wall post from which the comment response stems?

H1: When corporations post messages with dominant CSR message strategies on their Facebook page walls, publics' subsequent comments will exhibit higher levels of CSR associations than CA associations and higher levels of company evaluations than product evaluations.

H2: When corporations post messages with dominant CA strategies on their Facebook page walls, publics' subsequent comments will exhibit more CA associations than CSR associations and more product evaluations than company evaluations.

Chapter 3

Methods

To answer these research questions and examine the hypotheses, Fortune 500 companies' Facebook pages were content analyzed. Berelson (1952) describes content analysis as “the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (p. 18). Riffe and colleagues (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 1998) point out several advantages of this technique, among them its ability to reduce large amounts of data, making it more “wieldy” (p. 26), and its capability to provide important preliminary description of content or messages in unexplored research areas (p. 27). These advantages are relevant to the current work. That is, there is a large and unwieldy amount of data regarding message strategies on corporate Facebook pages, and examination of CA and CSR communication on social networking media constitutes a new research area.

However, although content analysis also affords advantages in quantification and replicability, one must nonetheless use caution when using solely its results to infer consequences of media exposure or underpinnings of production such as intent (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 1998). Instead, to make such arguments one must compliment results of content analysis with prior findings in relevant literature. Because this research attempts to determine how and whether successful companies use certain message strategies on the social networking site Facebook, and how or whether consumers respond in kind, this analysis in part seeks to connect certain corporate message strategies (communicated via wall posts) to certain consumer responses (communicated via wall comments in response to the corporate post). Because this work extends prior literature that has begun to

demonstrate causality (e.g., Brown & Dacin, 1997; Kim, 2011), and because the chosen media platform allows for consumers to link their comments to specific company posts, which at least loosely indicates a relation between the two, this research cautiously endeavors to make some assumptions about consequences of message exposure. Namely, it postulates support for an argument that consumers exhibit evidence of certain mental associations and company/product evaluations as a result of exposure to certain corporate message strategies.

The content analysis was conducted in two phases. The first phase analyzed the Facebook profile pages of all Fortune 500 companies found to be using the medium. The second phase analyzed each of the original Facebook wall posts across a constructed two-week time frame for corporations among a random sample of 75 Fortune 500 companies; it also analyzed every user comment attached to each of the company posts in the sample. More information about the methods for each phase follows.

Phase One

Sample. For the first research phase, the unit of analysis was the company Facebook page profile. The sample comprised the official Facebook page maintained by each Fortune 500 company, as determined by *Fortune* magazine based on the top-performing companies in the year 2011 (available at: <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune500>). These financially successful corporations have been the subject of much previous research, as noted above. The sample for this phase constituted a census of the sampling frame. Of the full list of companies ($N = 500$), slightly more than half ($n = 291$) met requirements for inclusion in analysis. The sample included only the main, official Facebook page for each company, not ancillary pages such as those devoted to

affiliated philanthropic organizations, brands the corporation subsumes, specific functions within the corporation (e.g., career options or company programs), or fan-owned pages. To ensure full inclusion in the sample, two search methods were employed to seek out each of the 500 companies. First, a search of the company's name, as well as possible abbreviations or derivations of the name, was engaged using Facebook's internal search function. If the company was not located by the first method, then a second search of the company's name followed by the search term "Facebook" was attempted using a popular online search engine. Thus, nearly half of the Fortune 500 companies were omitted from the sample because they lacked a locatable seemingly *company-owned* Facebook page or because the company-owned Facebook page(s) exhibited a primary focus other than the main corporation (e.g., a charitable cause, a brand of the company, a non-US based page, etc.). It was deemed important to only include company managed profiles for the main company, as opposed to fan pages as were included in McCorkindale's (2010) research, because the nature of the current research in part seeks to determine corporate message strategies, which are by definition not communicated by fans or entities other than the corporation. For a full list of included companies, please see Table 1 below. The sample was gathered during May, 2012.

Table 1: Companies Meeting Requirements for Sample
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Variables. This research phase adapted and extended Kim and Rader's (2010) content analysis of Fortune 500 companies' Web sites, discussed above. To form operational definitions, Kim and Rader (2010) used prior literature to develop six items

each for CA and CSR strategies. In their study, CA strategies included information about a company's: (1) expertise in product or service quality, (2) global success, (3) implementation of quality control programs, (4) industry leadership, (5) market orientation, and/or (6) innovation and research and development efforts. CSR strategies included information about the company's: (1) environmental stewardship, (2) philanthropic contribution, (3) educational commitment, (4) employee involvement, (5) public health commitment, and/or (6) sponsorship of cultural activities (p. 67).

Additionally, the researchers devised a method for capturing corporations' emphasis on any particular strategy, which they operationalized by presence of related content text, hyperlinks or bolded text, and graphics. Corporations' use of the above message strategies was of interest in phase one of the current research, so Kim and Rader's work was adapted to code for presence of these message types on Fortune 500 companies' Facebook profile tabs, including using the emphasis items to help determine the dominant message strategy per profile tab and across all the company's profile tabs.

To examine differences by industry, this research adopted Standard and Poor's (2012 [S&P]) Global Industry Classification Standard (GICS) sectors, self-proclaimed to be "widely accepted among investment researchers, portfolio and asset managers as one of the most commonly used industry classifications in the world" (McGraw-Hill Companies, n.d.). The S&P GICS sectors include: energy, materials, industrials, consumer discretionary, consumer staples, health care, financials, information technology, telecommunication, and utilities. This operationalization is similar to that employed by Ki and Hon (2006), who randomly chose 30 Fortune 500 companies from

each S&P GICS sector for their examination of relationship maintenance strategies on corporate Web sites.

In total, this phase analyzed the number of tabs contained on the Facebook profile page, the presence or absence of corporate social responsibility and corporate ability message strategies on all profile page tabs, the predominant message strategy of each tab (CSR, CA, or hybrid – true hybrid constituted an exactly equal mix of CA and CSR), the predominant message strategy across all tabs (CSR, CA or hybrid), and the strictness of the page posting policy if present. Reliability statistics are reported below.

Procedure. Before analyzing content, the researcher trained a graduate student on the codebook. To aid in reliable application, the codebook included extensive definitions and examples for each variable (please see Appendix C: Phase One Codebook), as suggested by content analysis experts (e.g., Riffe et al., 1998). After many hours of training, the researcher and the trained coder practiced on a random sample of 14 Facebook profile pages of companies ranked between 600 to 800 on the Fortune 1,000 list. After independently coding the practice sample, the coders discussed slight discrepancies in ratings until agreement was reached and the coders were confident about their ability to accurately apply the codebook to the actual sample.

To assess intercoder reliability, two well trained coders independently coded an identical random sample constituting more than 15 percent of the total sample size ($n = 50$), above the recommended 10 percent (Riffe et al, 1998). Reliability was calculated using Krippendorff's alpha (Krippendorff, 2004; Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007), which provides a more conservative estimate than percent agreement and allows for assessing variables at all levels of measurement as well as those with missing values. All variables

in this research phase reached excellent levels of agreement. Krippendorff's alpha holds values between 0 – 1, with lower values indicating less coding agreement between raters. Broadly, values in the range of .60 are acceptable for preliminary research, .70 are acceptable in general, .80 are good, and .90 are excellent. All values in the present research phase registered at or above Krippendorff's $\alpha = .95$, demonstrating the coders similarly identified the overwhelming majority of items during coding.

More specifically, the coders reached perfect agreement about the number of tabs contained on each corporate Facebook profile page. Among the CA strategy variables, the coders reached nearly perfect agreement (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .99$) when identifying strategies related to corporate expertise in quality products/service, global success, quality control programs, and industry leadership. Also among CA strategy variables, very high levels of agreement were reached when identifying strategies related to corporate innovation and research development (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .97$) and market orientation (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .95$). Among CSR strategy variables, raters again reached near perfect agreement (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .99$) when coding message strategies related to corporate commitments to environmental sustainability, commitments to education, highlighting of employees' good deeds, and sponsorship of cultural activities. Also among CSR message strategies, very high agreement was reached for strategies related to corporate philanthropy (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .98$), and commitment to public health (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .97$). Similarly high levels of agreement were reached for determinations of each tab's dominant message strategy (i.e., CA, CSR, or true hybrid), Krippendorff's $\alpha = .97$, as well as for the overall Facebook profile message strategy, Krippendorff's $\alpha = .95$. Thus, given the extremely high reliability of data and the census

sampling frame in this research phase, this research makes confident assessments about Fortune 500 companies' message strategies on their corporate Facebook profile pages. The remainder of the sample was divided for independent coding, with about one-third coded by the coding assistant the rest by the author.

Phase Two

Sample. In the second phase of this research, the sampling frame remained Fortune 500 companies, but the unit of analysis shifted to the Facebook company wall post(s) and comment(s). The sample constituted a random construction of two weeks from a full three months (February – April) of wall postings of a random sample of about fifteen percent ($n = 75$) of all Fortune 500 companies, or slightly more than 25 percent of the companies who owned a main corporate Facebook page at the time of analysis. Companies and post dates were determined using separate true random numbers tables created by Random.org (available at <http://www.random.org/>).

For some additional background about this unit of analysis, on Facebook a company can “post” a statement on its page. That post can then be responded to by others, by being liked (given a thumbs-up approval by fans), shared (posted for others to see), or commented on (replied to with a written response post). The posts and comments, that is both initial posts by the company as well as publics' comments in turn, made up the sample. For the included companies' corporate posts, each post falling within the constructed two-week sample, along with all user comments posted in response, were analyzed. For a list of random dates constructing the two-week sample analyzed, please see Table 2. The sample was gathered during May, 2012. As with phase one,

Krippendorff's alpha was used to calculate reliability, and those statistics are reported below.

Table 2: *Dates of Randomly Constructed Two-Week Sample*
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Variables. Variables of primary interest included posts containing CSR strategy, CA strategy, or hybrid strategy, similar to the operationalizations noted in Phase One, as well as comments containing evidence of CSR associations, CA associations, and/or evaluations about the company or its products (see codebook in Appendix D for operational definitions and indicators of these variables). In total, the variables included for coding were date of post; post source; video, links, or photos in the post; comments, likes, and shares related to the post; company comments to the post, and message strategies (CA, CSR, hybrid) used in those comments; and consumer comments' evidence of predominant corporate associations (CA or CSR) or evaluations (product or company). For the company posts, the dominant message strategy, either one of six CA strategies or one of six CSR strategies, or a true hybrid with the same emphasis on both strategies (or none of the above) was noted. For the publics' comments, the number of comments featuring a predominant CA association, number of comments featuring a predominant CSR association, number of comments featuring a predominant company evaluation, and number of comments featuring a predominant product evaluation (or none of the above) were tallied.

Procedure. The researcher trained the same graduate student coder who coded phase one on applying the phase two codebook to analyze the sample. The coders

engaged in a pilot test that included several companies' posts and comments from the same constructed two-week timeframe as implemented for the full sample under study, but pilot companies were randomly drawn from those ranking between 600-800 on the Fortune 1000 list. After independently simultaneously coding the first six companies on the pilot test list and comparing results, the coders found they had reached full agreement for all data so were confident about entering into reliability analysis.

Of the 75 companies randomly selected from which to constitute the two-week constructed sample of posts and comments, more than 10 percent ($n = 9$), an acceptable percentage to calculate reliability (Riffe et. al, 1998) were randomly chosen to evaluate reliability, resulting in 36 posts and 1,752 related comments for analysis. The coders analyzed each company post, indicating presence or absence of variables of interest and categorizing the predominant message strategy; they also analyzed every comment made to the post, noting the number of comments made by the posting company and categorizing the message strategy for those comments, and tallying the number of comments made on a topic that predominantly indicated either CA associations, CSR associations, company evaluations, or product evaluations.

More specifically, for the company post, predominant CA, CSR, or true hybrid (exactly equal emphasis on CA and CSR) strategy was coded using similar indicators as in Phase One. For user comments, the number that predominantly featured references to the company in conjunction with, or as being somehow associated with: innovative products, market leadership, good quality products, efficient manufacturing facilities, expertise in the manufacturing of products, or achieving global success (adapted from Kim, 2011, and based on the literature review), were counted as a *CA association* based

comments. The number of comments that predominantly featured references to the company in conjunction with, or as being somehow associated with: environmental responsibility, philanthropic giving, social diversity, great care for communities, or commitment to public health or education (also adapted from Kim, 2011, and based on the literature review), were counted as *CSR association* based comments. Comments that predominantly focused on the person thinking the company was attractive, reliable, trustworthy, generally liking the company or having an overall favorable impression of the company (adapted from Kim, 2011, and based on the literature review) were coded as *company evaluation* based comments. Finally, the number of comments that predominantly focused on the person expressing interest in the company's products, thinking the company's products were reliable, trustworthy, or of good quality; or otherwise having an overall favorable expectation or impression of the company's products (also adapted from Kim, 2011, and based on the literature review) were coded as *product evaluation* based comments.

Unlike the first phase's excellent intercoder reliability across all variables, the second research phase demonstrated variation in reliability, ranging from acceptable to excellent. Perfect agreement was reached for date of company post (from the two-week constructed sample), and source of the wall post. Number of comments listed on the post (Krippendorff's $\alpha = 1.00$), likes the post received (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .97$), and shares the post received (Krippendorff's $\alpha = 1.00$) each indicated very high reliability. Whether the post contained a video (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .93$), link (Krippendorff's $\alpha = 1.00$), or photo (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .90$) each exhibited excellent reliability, as did number of comments to the post made visible to the researchers (for example, after being removed by the

company or user), Krippendorff's $\alpha = 1.00$. Determinations of the predominant overall message strategy of the post registered good reliability, Krippendorff's $\alpha = .84$. The tallied number of comments the company made in the comments section linked to the original post was quite reliable, Krippendorff's $\alpha = .95$. Tallied numbers of public comments to the post indicating whether each comment reflected a predominantly CA association (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .80$), CSR association (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .70$), company evaluation (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .76$) or product evaluation (Krippendorff's $\alpha = .90$) all reached at least acceptable levels of reliability.

Given that this is the first time these variables have been applied to social media in general and Facebook in particular, and that social media research of this type itself is new, the lower reliability levels in phase two were considered acceptable for current analysis, with the caveat that relationships determined among variables with lower reliability would be considered cautiously.

The following chapter will reveal results of analysis, which used frequencies, chi-squares, t-tests, and ANOVAs to address the research questions and hypotheses.

Chapter 4

Results

To analyze data, inferential statistics were not required for phase one because the population under scrutiny was Fortune 500 corporations, and the census sampling frame gathered for analysis reveals results for the entire population. However, inferential statistics were run to answer questions pertaining to phase two variables, because in doing so the probabilistic sampling frame could speak for the larger population of Fortune 500 corporation Facebook pages from which the sample was drawn. Basic information about the sample for both phases will be reported first, followed by results pertaining to each research question and hypothesis.

Of the Fortune 500 companies on Facebook meeting requirements for sample inclusion in phase one ($N = 291$), all ten S&P industries were represented. Of all companies with corporate Facebook profiles, the *industrials* industry was most prevalent (21.3%, $n = 62$), closely followed by *consumer discretionary* (20.3%, $n = 59$); next by *financials* (16.2%, $n = 47$); *consumer staples* (13.7%, $n = 40$); *information technology*, (8.6%, $n = 25$); and *utilities* (4.8%, $n = 14$); followed up by *materials* ($n = 12$) and *energy* ($n = 12$), both 4.1%; and finally by *health care* (3.8%, $n = 11$); and *telecommunication services* (3.1%, $n = 9$). Also see Table 3 for this breakdown.

Across industries, the majority of corporate Facebook profiles among Fortune 500 companies included more than half of the 13 possible tabs allotted by Facebook ($M = 7.61$, $SD = 3.03$), although companies' profiles ranged between 3 and 13 total tabs. All companies included an "About" tab, but other tabs demonstrated wide variability based

on the individual company's specific industry or initiatives (some examples of tab names included: "Ideas Bank," "Member Rewards," "Energy Smart," and "TechAd Europe," among many others).

Of the sample in phase two, all industries except that with the lowest count in the full sample, *telecommunication services*, were represented by the sample of posts on corporate Facebook walls. Specifically, the industry with the largest proportion of posts was *consumer discretionary*, with 22.9% of posts ($n = 83$); followed by *industrials*, 21.8% ($n = 79$); and *consumer staples*, 15.5% ($n = 56$); then *financials* and *information technology*, both 12.7% (both $n = 46$); next *utilities*, 6.1% ($n = 22$); and *energy*, 5% ($n = 18$); and finally *materials* and *health care*, both 1.7% (both $n = 6$). Again, there were no posts from companies in *telecommunication services* to analyze across the constructed two-week sample.

Also in the second phase, across the randomly constructed two weeks, all companies in the sample ($n = 75$) posted a combined 362 corporate wall posts ($n = 359$ after missing values), and users posted a total of more than 25,000 ($n = 25,859$) comments in response to those posts. However, due to comment posts hidden or removed by corporations or post creators prior to data collection, slightly fewer ($n = 25,431$) comments were visible and subject to analysis.

Research Questions

RQ1: Strategies used in profiles. The first research question inquired about the frequencies with which corporations used CA, CSR, or true hybrid message strategies in their Facebook profile communication. Throughout the sample, the most commonly used overarching message strategy was clearly CA, with 83.8% of companies ($n = 244$)

implementing this as the dominant profile-wide strategy across all tabs. Far fewer corporations used a predominantly true hybrid strategy, which indicates exactly equal use of CA and CSR strategies communicated across all profile tabs, with 10% of the sample exhibiting chiefly hybrid messages ($n = 29$). The fewest corporations (4.1%, $n = 12$) used CSR messaging as their dominant overall profile strategy. The frequencies of dominant message strategies employed on corporate Facebook profiles are represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: *Dominant Message Strategies across Facebook Profiles*
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Additionally, to determine whether and how Fortune 500 companies were using specific strategy dimensions within CA and CSR messaging on their profile pages, frequencies were analyzed for each of the 12 strategy types for each profile tab. A company that used the particular strategy at least once in any profile tab was considered to have used the strategy in its profile. Analysis revealed the CA strategy of expertise in producing quality products/services was used the most of any CA strategy, with 87.6% ($n = 255$) of corporations on Facebook evoking their expertise in quality products/services at least once in their profile (including all profile tabs). Conversely, the CA strategy of emphasizing the implementation of quality control programming was used least ($n = 51$, 17.5%). For CSR strategies, the messaging employed most often in companies' Facebook profiles highlighted their environmental stewardship, with 22.3% ($n = 65$) of companies using the strategy at least once. Also for CSR message strategies, the smallest percentage of Fortune 500 companies ($n = 15$, 5.2%) communicated messages regarding employee

involvement at least once in their profiles. Table 4 depicts the number of companies that used each message strategy at least once across all profile tabs.

Table 4: *Companies Using Message Strategy Type at Least Once in Profile*

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RQ2: Strategy differences by sector or ranking. The second research question sought to find out whether message strategies on Fortune 500 companies' Facebook profile pages and/or wall posts differed by industry sector or performance ranking status. To determine whether dominant strategies (CA, CSR, or hybrid) differed by company industry, a chi-square test was employed. Results revealed that among all ten industries, there were not significant differences in the overall dominant use of CA vs. CSR vs. hybrid strategies on corporate Facebook profiles ($\chi^2(27, N=291) = 23.76, p = .64$). However, because of the overwhelming use of predominantly CA strategies across industries, as noted above, many cells related to CSR and hybrid strategies exhibited lower than optimal counts. For example, in the *energy, health care, and information technology* industries, none used a predominant CSR strategy in its Facebook profile. Conversely, the industry with the lowest percentage of predominant CA strategies was *consumer staples*, 75% of which used CA messages as their dominant profile strategy – and a full 100% of the *industrials* industry in the sample predominantly used CA strategies across their profile tabs.

Likewise, to determine whether dominant message strategies implemented differed by company ranking, companies were divided into five ranking categories reflecting increments of 100, based on their Fortune 500 ranking standing. As with the

industry analysis, a chi-square test examined the relationship between ranking and dominant message strategies (CA, CSR, or hybrid) across all profile tabs. Results again uncovered no significant differences, $\chi^2(12, N=290) = 16.89, p = .15$. Because the “About” tab is the first and most prominent profile tab and is used by every company, it was also analyzed individually for differences in dominant message strategies among industries and performance rankings. Chi-square analysis revealed that although strategies by industry appeared varied, the differences were not significant, $\chi^2(36, N=291) = 48.50, p = .08$, and the same finding resulted from analysis of message strategy by performance ranking, $\chi^2(16, N=290) = 21.87, p = .15$.

To further investigate this question, a Mann-Whitney *U*-test was conducted. A Mann-Whitney *U*-test may generally be considered the nonparametric equivalent to an independent sample *t*-test. However, this test allows for unequal cell sizes, which are apparent between CA and CSR strategies, and it provides more precision in terms of the ranking measurement at the ordinal/ratio level. Accordingly, a Mann-Whitney test of dominant CA vs. dominant CSR message strategies and Fortune 500 ranking revealed that although the average corporate ranking for both CA and CSR strategies was in the top 200, there were significant differences between the mean rank of those companies employing overall CA strategies (ranking $M = 130.86$) and those companies employing overall CSR strategies (ranking $M = 80.58$), $U = 889.00, p = .02$.

To answer the same questions related to corporate wall posts, additional chi-square analyses were run to examine differences in corporate wall post strategy (CA, CSR, or hybrid) by industry and then by performance ranking. Unlike analysis for the corporate profiles, results based on corporate wall posts did uncover significant

differences in strategy based on industry, $\chi^2(24, N=356) = 68.82, p < .000$, Cramer's $V = .25$. To examine pairwise comparisons while controlling for Type I error (inflating the alpha, or finding a statistically significant relationship where one does not exist), post hoc tests using the Bonferroni method at the .05 level were conducted. Results revealed the main source of these differences was solely attributable to the utilities industry, which used CSR messaging in significantly more posts (77%) than did all other industries except for health care, which did not differ significantly from any other industry in use of CSR messaging. Table 5 displays all pairwise comparisons of percentage use of the three message strategies by industry; those with no subscript in common differ at the $p < .05$ level using the Bonferroni method.

Table 5: *Percent Differences in Dominant Post Strategy by Industry*
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Similarly, a chi-square test showed significant differences in post message strategy among companies in different performance ranking levels, $\chi^2(12, N=356) = 28.50, p = .005$, Cramer's $V = .163$. Bonferroni post hoc tests revealed the main differences were within the CSR message strategy domain, particularly by companies ranked 100-199 and 300-399. Contrary to prior research that has showed the top 100 companies use primarily CSR-based strategies on their Web sites (Kim & Rader, 2010), the current results on the two-way social medium Facebook found that when posting on their corporate walls, companies ranked between 100-199 and 300-399 communicated using a significantly *lower* percentage of dominant CSR-based message strategies (13.3% and 21.1%, respectively) than did the companies ranked between 200-299 (32%). Yet, the top 100 companies and the bottom 100 companies ("bottom" being those ranked between

400-500) did not differ from any other group in percentage of CSR-based strategies (26.3% and 28.6%, respectively), diverging from Kim and Rader's (2010) results that found significant differences between these two groups. Table 6 reveals all the related percentages of dominant post strategies for CA, CSR, and hybrid messages based on performance ranking.

Table 6: *Percent Differences in Dominant Post Strategy by Performance Ranking*

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To follow up, because previous research has shown that the top 100 companies exhibit dominant CSR strategies more often in comparison to the remaining 400 companies (Kim & Rader, 2010), a chi-square test was undertaken to test for differences in wall post strategies between the Fortune 100 and the remaining 400. When the companies ranked between 200-500 were collapsed and compared to the top 100, significant differences emerged based on message strategy, $\chi^2(3, N=356) = 15.24, p < .01$, Cramer's $V = .21$. However, again, the differences did not quite align with prior research (i.e., Kim & Rader, 2010). Instead, it was found that companies ranked 200-500 used CA strategy significantly more in their wall posts (50%) than did the top 100 (35.2%). In other words, although the top 100 used CA strategies less than did the remaining companies, the top 100 did not use CSR strategies (nor hybrid strategies) more, or any differently, than did the remaining companies. That is, no significant differences were found among the group in use of CSR or hybrid strategies.

RQ3: Strategies used in wall posts. The third research question regarded how corporations employed CA-, CSR-, and hybrid-based corporate message strategies on

their Facebook wall posts. Similar to communication on corporate Facebook profiles, CA strategies were dominant; however, the difference between frequency of CA-based and CSR-based strategies was not so stark on company wall posts as it was on their corporate profiles. When posting on their Facebook walls and using a CA, CSR, or hybrid strategy, corporations used a predominantly CA strategy in 47% ($n = 170$) of the sampled posts, and they used a predominantly CSR strategy in 22.4% ($n = 81$) of posts. Only 3.6% of posts used a predominantly hybrid strategy, and 25.4% of posts used no discernible CA, CSR, or hybrid strategy. Breaking this down further by specific indicators revealed that 33% of all posts used a CA strategy pertaining to the company's expertise in product or service quality. The strategies used least often were CSR messages related to employee good deeds (.3%, $n = 1$) and CA messages related to implementation of quality control programming (.8%, $n = 3$).

Analysis related to the third research question revealed that as a whole, corporations demonstrated more variability of messaging on their wall posts than on their profile pages, with companies exhibiting a larger percentage of wall posts with CSR-based messages than on profile tabs. However, CA strategies remained dominant overall across profiles tabs and wall posts, similar to previous research that has shown an overall tendency for Fortune 500 companies to use CA-based messaging more than CSR-based messaging (Kim & Rader, 2010).

So in sum, it was also found that throughout all profile tabs created by Fortune 500 companies online, and in the most prominent profile tab itself (i.e., "About"), CA strategies were most dominantly used across the board, regardless of industry or performance ranking. Yet regarding corporate wall posts, it was found that significant

differences existed among industries in the types of message strategies they posted on their corporate Facebook walls. Namely, the companies in the utilities industry published significantly more CSR-based posts than did those in the energy, materials, industrials, consumer discretionary, consumer staples, financials, and information technology industries (but not significantly different from those in the health care industry). Pairwise comparisons revealed no significant differences in percentages of CA or hybrid strategies by industry. Further, significant differences were uncovered in the message strategies posted by corporations based on their performance ranking, such that those companies ranked between 100-199 and 300-399 on the Fortune 500 list published significantly fewer posts with a dominant CSR strategy than did those companies ranked 200-299. CA strategies or hybrid strategies were not used differently in wall posts by corporations in different industries nor by corporations with different performance rankings.

RQ4: Wall comment differences by corporate post message strategy. The final research question inquired whether corporate associations (CA or CSR) evident in users' comments differed based on the corporation's related post's dominant strategy (CA, CSR, hybrid – 'other' strategies not included). First, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether there were mean differences in CA associations in wall comments based on the dominant corporate post's message strategy. Results revealed no significant effects, $F(3, 352) = 1.24, p = .24$. Another one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether message strategy impacted CSR associations. Levene's test of equality of error variances was significant, however, indicating violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance, so follow-up examinations of cell sizes and F_{\max} were undertaken. It was determined that this potential violation was due to the extremely

low number of hybrid strategies ($n = 13$) in comparison to CSR-dominant post strategies ($n = 81$) and CA-dominant post strategies ($n = 170$), with cell size ratios greater than 4:1 and hand calculated $F_{\max} > 10$. Because ANOVA is robust to violations of assumptions, statistics were analyzed, but given the homogeneity of variance violation coupled with a small effect size, results can be interpreted cautiously, $F(3, 352) = 5.20, p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$. Tukey's post hoc examinations revealed this significant result was due to a difference in CA-based vs. CSR-based posts, such that dominantly CSR posts from the company received more dominant CSR-association response comments than did CA-based message strategies, conceptually consistent with prior research (Kim & Rader, 2011).

Hypotheses

H1: CSR strategies and related associations. Hypothesis one predicted that “when corporations post messages with dominant CSR message strategies on their Facebook page walls, publics’ subsequent comments will exhibit higher levels of CSR associations than CA associations and higher levels of company evaluations than product evaluations.” It was expected that CSR-based message strategies would elicit CSR associations (as opposed to CA associations) and company evaluations (as opposed to product evaluations). Thus, hypothesis one asserted that when corporations published Facebook wall posts with dominant CSR message strategies, publics’ comments would show higher levels of CSR associations and company evaluations than CA associations and product evaluations. To examine this hypothesis, data were filtered by CSR-based corporate posts, and paired sample t-tests were employed on comments stemming from those posts with predominant CSR messaging. Results found significant differences in

indications of CA and CSR associations stemming from CSR-related company posts, $t(80) = 2.13, p = .02$. As hypothesized, more comments exhibited CSR associations ($M = .72, SD = 2.22$) than CA associations ($M = .20, SD = .66$). However, no significant differences in company evaluations and product evaluations were found, $t(80) = 1.32, p = .19$. Thus, hypothesis one was partially supported.

H2: CA strategies and related associations. Similarly, hypothesis two predicted that “when corporations post messages with dominant CA strategies on their Facebook page walls, publics’ subsequent comments will exhibit more CA associations than CSR associations and more product evaluations than company evaluations.” That is, H2 asserted that when corporations published posts with dominant CA message strategies, publics’ comments would contain higher levels of CA associations than CSR associations and higher levels of product evaluations than company evaluations. As expected, when companies posted predominantly CA messages in on their Facebook walls, commenters exhibited greater CA associations than CSR associations, $t(169) = 2.25, p = .01$. Of the 170 audience comments made on CA-message-dominant corporate posts, significantly more showed CA associations ($M = 2.36, SD = 13.46$) than CSR associations ($M = .08, SD = .49$). Similarly, more of the comments were based on product evaluations ($M = 7.86, SD = 34.83$) than company evaluations ($M = 2.17, SD = 12.24$), $t(169) = 2.72, p < .01$. Thus, the second hypothesis was fully supported.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Despite previous research that found extremely high numbers of Fortune 500 companies online, such as holding websites (Kim & Rader, 2010) or having company-related Facebook pages owned by the company or fans (McCorkindale, 2010), the current research found only slightly more than half of Fortune 500 companies have a Facebook presence that is devoted specifically to the main corporation and seemingly owned by the company. Of all Fortune 500 companies, some members from each of the ten S&P industries own a Facebook profile, with the industrials industry taking the lead, responsible for more than 21% of all Facebook profiles.

Of the thirteen profile tabs Facebook allows companies to create, Fortune 500 companies are generally taking advantage of more than half, with Fortune 500 companies averaging about seven Facebook profile tabs, some using as few as three and others as many as the full 13. All corporations feature an “About” tab on their profiles, with other tabs exhibiting variability.

Related to the research questions and hypotheses, the above analysis revealed several findings of interest. First, it found that CA strategies were overall strongly dominant among strategies used across Fortune 500 corporations’ Facebook profiles, with hybrid strategies used next most frequently, and CSR strategies used least. Further analysis of individual message strategies showed that when it came down to particular CA and CSR messages, all CA strategy types were used at least once more often than any

CSR strategy in company profiles, with the exception of only one CA message strategy (emphasizing implementation of quality control programs), with a difference of about 5% between it and the most frequently used CSR strategy. Considered from the flipside, CSR strategies were communicated less than were CA strategies, and in some cases substantially so. For example, five of the six CSR message strategies were used by fewer than 15% by companies, whereas five of the six CA message strategies were used by more than 25% of companies.

Also related to particular message strategy indicators, this research found that emphasizing expertise in quality products/services was the CA strategy most often implemented across corporate Facebook profile tabs, corroborating prior research that also found this was the most widely used CA strategy on the corporations' Web sites (Kim and Rader, 2010). This begins to indicate that Fortune 500 companies are using consistent strategy across media platforms. However, to the contrary, the same prior research found the most popular CSR message strategy type found on Fortune 500 companies' Web sites was employee involvement, different from the finding above, which showed environmental stewardship was most the dominantly highlighted CSR strategy implemented in corporate Facebook profiles. However, the next most popular strategy type in Kim and Rader's work (2010) was a focus on philanthropic activity, a finding echoed herein.

Analysis to answer the second research question revealed that the Fortune 500 companies' industries did not play a substantial role in their use of CA, CSR, or hybrid message strategies in their Facebook profiles. However, somewhat consistent with prior research (Kim, 2011; Kim & Rader, 2010), it appears companies ranking higher on the

Fortune 500 list tended to more often use an overall dominant CSR strategy than did those lower on the list. Absence of differences in profile message strategy by industry was particularly surprising, as recent research has begun to hint that corporations may use CA and CSR messaging differently to complement or offset factors inherent in their industries (Kim, 2011; Kim & Rader, 2010). However, inconsistent strategy was found between profile messaging and wall post messaging, as significant differences were found in message strategy based on industry, such that the utilities industry used CSR strategy substantially more in their wall posts than almost any other strategy and all other industries. This backs up Kim and Rader's (2010) notion that some business may appear to publics to participate in harmful behavior, such as contributing to environmental damage or exhausting natural resources in the case of utilities, so they engage in CSR initiatives and messaging to offset the negative image.

Inconsistent strategy was also found between profile messaging and wall post messaging, with companies ranked between 100-199 and 300-399 differing significantly in their lower use of CSR strategy than used by the companies ranked between 200-299. This was entirely different than Kim and Rader's (2010) findings on corporate Web sites, which showed the top 100 companies used CSR strategies far more than did the bottom 100, two groups that showed no differences in the current study. Why these particular groups, those ranked 100-199 and 300-399 differed from the companies falling between them is an open question for future research. A follow-up chi-square analysis to check for differences in industries by ranking that could perhaps help explain this finding revealed significant differences in industries by performance ranking, but pairwise comparisons showed that the differences would not be of relevance to shed light on this finding. Also,

further analysis of message strategies used by the top 100 and the remaining 400 did show that those ranked 200-500 used CA strategy in their wall posts more often than did the top 100, but the top 100 did not use CSR strategies any differently than did the rest of the companies, further highlighting the difference between corporate communication on Facebook as opposed to Web sites.

The final takeaway from analysis of research questions is regarding whether corporate post strategy appears to have exerted an effect on commenters' corporate associations. Although it was found that user comments did not differ based on the corporation's post strategy when the post strategy was based on CA, when the corporation posted a CSR dominant post, it received significantly more comments containing indications of CSR associations. However, the latter finding should be interpreted cautiously, as the ANOVA assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated, the findings exhibits a low effect size, and one of the six CSR indicators also reached low intercoder reliability.

Moving on to a review of results of hypotheses, it was expected that when corporations published Facebook wall posts with dominant CSR message strategies, publics' comments would show higher levels of CSR associations and company evaluations than CA associations and product evaluations. While data showed evidence of greater CSR associations in comments stemming from CSR-based posts, as hypothesized, the data did not show greater company evaluations than product evaluations. Thus, the first hypothesis was partially supported. However, the lack of differences between company and product evaluations stemming from CSR posts may indicate evidence supporting the synergistic effects of CSR proposed by Kim (2011). In

Kim's (2011) experiment, it was found that CSR message strategies prompted higher evaluations of both the company *and* the product, whereas CA message strategies prompted only higher product evaluations. The researcher posited that CSR strategies can directly impact company and product evaluations because of the transferring effects on CA associations and product evaluations. That is, publics likely assume that businesses that are social responsible also create good products, whereas businesses that create good products are not necessarily socially responsible. Thus, evidence of company and product evaluations stemming from CSR messages makes sense in this context, especially considering similar results were not found for CA-based company message strategies.

Similarly, the current research hypothesized that corporate message strategies based on CA would elicit comments from publics that indicate they have made greater CA associations (as opposed to CSR associations) and greater product evaluations (as opposed to company evaluations). In a laboratory setting, Kim (2011) found that when exposed to CA-based messaging, participants exhibited greater CA associations and product evaluations, and the current research corroborated this lab finding in the market. Here it was found that when Fortune 500 companies published wall posts featuring a dominant CA message strategy, publics responded with comments featuring higher levels of dominant CA associations and product evaluations than CSR associations and company evaluations. Thus the second hypothesis was fully supported, providing evidence that real-world corporate message strategy does indeed appear to prompt indications of real-world related corporate associations in the minds (and written speech) of its publics.

Implications

There are several theoretical contributions to the field and practical implications for the industry resulting from this research. In brief, perhaps the most important contribution of this work was to provide an initial but in-depth study of how top corporations are using Facebook to disseminate specific message strategies (i.e., either CA or CSR or hybrid) and how publics respond, via wall comments, in ways that indicate they hold related corporate associations and company/product evaluations. It is the first known work to systematically examine such wall posts and wall comments, thereby adding to the body of scholarly literature and providing new information for corporate communication practitioners.

This work also joins a few scholarly conversations emerging in communication, particularly public relations. Broadly, it adds to recent work that is beginning to increase understanding of how organizations use social media to communicate with their publics (e.g., Austin et al, 2011; Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; McCorkindale, 2010; Rybalko, & Seltzer, 2010; Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007; Wright & Hinson, 2009). Also broadly, it adds a public relations perspective to understanding of the impact of certain corporate message strategies, which have thus far primarily been examined in marketing and advertising (e.g., Berens & van Riel, 2004; Bhat & Reddy, 2001; Brown & Dacin, 1997; Dacin & Brown, 2002; Keller & Aaker, 1998; Madrigal, 2000). But specifically, this work is situated to fill a gap in current research regarding Fortune 500 companies' message strategies in online communication (e.g., Kim, 2011; Kim and Rader, 2010; McCorkindale, 2010).

More specifically, as is noted above, research has shown that Brown and Dacin's (1997) proposed typology of CA, CSR, and hybrid messages strategies exists in the market, at least in Fortune 500 companies' Web site messaging (Kim and Rader, 2010). Scholarship has also demonstrated that lab experiment participants experience effects of corporate message strategies on their resulting psychological corporate associations, when exposed to corporate message strategies from a Fortune 500 company (Kim, 2011). The research presented above links these areas by showing that (a) the typology exists in the corporate social media market (Facebook in particular) as well, and (b) there are indications that corporate message strategies do appear to induce corporate associations naturally in the real world, confirming with strong ecological validity what has previously been found in a controlled laboratory setting.

From a practical standpoint, this work allows insights into how the nation's top performing companies are communicating about their abilities and social responsibility via the social medium Facebook, providing examples to corporate communication practitioners about the ways top performing companies use message strategies online. As rising numbers of Americans spend increasing time online, and on social media in particular (PEW Internet, 2011), businesses will likely continue to sign up and log in to reach their stakeholders. The current research found just more than half of Fortune 500 companies owned a Facebook account. Analyzing their communication and consumer responses, it was found that when corporations posted message strategies dominantly based on their abilities (e.g., to produce superior products/service, expand globally, ensure quality, etc.), publics responded with comments that showed they were dominantly associating the corporation and/or its products with superior ability in that

regard (e.g., associating the company with industry leadership, thinking the products are excellent, etc.). When corporations posted message strategies dominantly based on their social responsibility (e.g., environmental stewardship, philanthropic contributions, sponsorship of cultural or artistic events, etc.), public responded with comments that showed they were dominantly associating the company with responsible behaviors (e.g., thinking the company cares about public health, education, and the environment, or having favorable thoughts about the company, etc.) . This is important information for corporate communicators to consider when crafting social media messaging. For example, one finding here that carried through from prior research (Kim & Rader, 2010) was that corporations in industries perhaps perceived as being somehow dangerous or damaging to society (e.g., in this case, utilities) may bolster stakeholders' CSR associations by communicating responsible initiatives using CSR message strategies on Facebook.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Although this research adds to the scholarly body of literature and provides practical insights, there are nonetheless several limitations to consider as well as ways to improve upon and expand knowledge gleaned from the results above. The first set of limitations is related to sampling. Social media are ever evolving (Wright & Hinson, 2009), thus an ideal sampling method would collect data from the same exact points in time in order to ensure the most accurate comparisons. Although this researcher attempted first to use an offline Web browser service (i.e., a provider that captures and preserves content of Web sites, maintaining the integrity of its structure and navigability as if the user were online) to capture all data from the same time points, collection in this

manner was thwarted by Facebook security measures and password protected content. Thus, the researcher use less ideal methods of coding the profile pages directly from the corporate Facebook sites across a three week time period (for Phase 1) while during the same timeframe copying and pasting the related wall posts and comments for later coding (for Phase 2). Although this collection method was less than ideal, its impact could be negligible. This research intended to assess message strategies and indications of cognitive responses during routine times, and the few weeks' difference in some data points likely does not substantially diminish the reliability of findings. Nonetheless, future research should seek social media catching software that will allow for temporally precise comparisons across content.

Similarly, and more generally, these findings only represent a snapshot of communication from a constructed two weeks in spring 2012. However, the notion that certain corporate message strategies prompt related mental associations in publics is likely a finding that is robust to changes in time of year or passing of time. Yet, types of communication strategies corporations employ on social media could differ across time or with the addition of more data to analyze. Thus, as this research only looked at two weeks in the spring, additional research could look at corporate message strategies at times sampled throughout the year, perhaps using two constructed months rather than two weeks to also be sure to include corporations that communicate less often (e.g., recall the telecommunication industry corporations published no posts in this study's sampled time frame).

The final sampling limitation in this set pertains to the criteria corporations must have met for inclusion in the full sample. To make accurate comparisons among

companies and to tap into specifically corporate messaging, only the one main Facebook page, seemingly owned by the company and pertaining only to the core company, was included for analysis. This sampling omitted some corporations that owned solid presences on Facebook yet did not have a page dedicated specifically to the main company, instead focusing on brands or charitable causes. For example, Apple Inc., which did not have a main corporate page for its overarching company, did have a page for Apple App Store and another for Apple iPad, among others. The Apps Store page alone had nearly 4.9 million "likes" and more than 70,000 people talking about it at the time the sample was gathered. Thus future research could study all corporate-owned pages to provide more insights into the landscape of corporate social media use.

A measurement limitation is that the profile pages were coded in terms of presence or absence of indicators (coded as 1 or 0), with emphasis measures like size of text, hyperlinking, and size of visuals considered when determining the overall profile strategy but not for specific indicators on each profile tab. The researcher originally planned and attempted to tally the number of times each CA, CSR, and hybrid strategy indicator was used on each profile page, but this proved prohibitive in terms of time commitment and reliability. However, now that this research has provided a baseline census of all profile communication of all Fortune 500 companies found to own a main company profile on Facebook, future research could attempt to tally the number of times each indicator is used on a smaller subsample of corporations, providing richer, more descriptive, ratio-level data.

More overarchingly, there are several areas for future research to consider. The current work helped fill in a gap between what is known about corporate online

communication and what is known about consumer responses, using convincing naturally-occurring evidence from social media. Other theories and frameworks could be studied in this way; for example, researchers have begun to look for evidence to support dialogic communication theory on social media (e.g., Bortree & Seltzer, 2009), and this stream of research would be well suited to study of corporate Facebook pages. This study looked at corporate communication during routine times, but seeing how corporate message strategies impact stakeholders' response comments during times of organizational crisis is another area ripe for future research. Finally, this work looked at only one social medium, Facebook, but top performing corporations are using a variety of social media (see Waters, 2011). Adapting the current research to study corporate message strategy and publics' responses on microblogs like Twitter, comment-enabled corporate blogs, and even comment-enabled video/photo sharing sites like YouTube, Instagram, and Pinterest would add greatly to knowledge in both the academic field and the professional practice of public relations. Finally, testing the effects of CA, CSR, and hybrid strategies on a host of behavioral and cognitive outcome variables will enable practitioners to better understand when and how to use these strategies to cultivate the most mutually beneficial corporate associations in the minds of their publics.

Conclusion

As mentioned above, Americans of nearly all ages are increasing their consumption of social media (Nielsen, 2011; PEW Internet, 2011). With ready-and-waiting audiences congregated in one virtual spot, corporations are beginning to build social media presences (McCorkindale, 2010; Waters, 2011). What and how corporations communicate can affect stakeholders' beliefs, perceptions, and thoughts about the

company, its products, and its product extensions (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Dacin & Brown, 2002; Kim, 2011). Thus, online corporate messaging strategy should be carefully planned and highly important to public relations professionals and others managing corporate communication (Kim & Rader, 2010). As one integrated marketing communication and social media specialist noted on her company's blog, "the importance of large companies using social media can't be overstated. Not only can a strategic, well-executed social presence lead to increased revenue, new business development opportunities and other ROI-worthy outcomes, research also shows that executives who use social media are viewed as more trustworthy. And the same can probably be said of the companies they lead" (Kramer, 2012, para. 1). The research above has added greater understanding to what such a "strategic, well-executed social presence" might entail.

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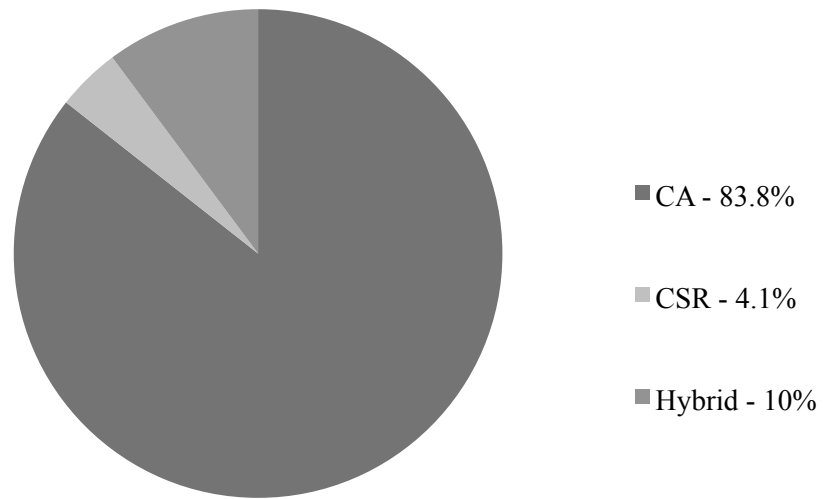
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Appendix A

Figures

Figure 1:

Dominant Message Strategies across Facebook Profiles



Appendix B

Tables

Table 1

Companies Meeting Requirements for Sample (alphabetical order)

Advance Auto Parts	Best Buy
Advanced Micro Devices	Big Lots
AECOM Technology	BJ's Wholesale Club
Aflac	Boeing
AGCO	Booz Allen Hamilton Holding
Agilent Technologies	C.H. Robinson Worldwide
Alcoa	Campbell Soup
Allstate	Capital One Financial
Amazon.com	CarMax
American Electric Power	Caterpillar
American Express	CBS
American Family Insurance Group	Celanese
American International Group	CenturyLink
Amerigroup	CH2M Hill
Ameriprise Financial	Charles Schwab
AmerisourceBergen	Charter Communications
AMR	Chesapeake Energy
Anixter International	Chevron
Aon	Chrysler Group
Apache	Cigna
Applied Materials	Cisco Systems
Assurant	CIT Group
AT&T	Citigroup
Atmos Energy	Cliffs Natural Resources
Auto-Owners Insurance	Clorox
Automatic Data Processing	Coca-Cola
AutoNation	Coca-Cola Enterprises
AutoZone	Colgate-Palmolive
Avaya	Computer Sciences
Avery Dennison	Con-way
Avnet	ConAgra Foods
Avon Products	ConocoPhillips
Baker Hughes	Consol Energy
Ball	Constellation Energy
Bank of America Corp.	Corning
Bank of New York Mellon Corp.	Costco Wholesale
Barnes & Noble	Cummins
Becton Dickinson	CVS Caremark
Bed Bath & Beyond	Dana Holding

Deere	Hewlett-Packard
Dell	Home Depot
Delta Air Lines	Humana
Dick's Sporting Goods	Ingram Micro
Dillard's	Insight Enterprises
DirectTV	Intel
DISH Network	International Business Machines
Dole Food	Interpublic Group
Dollar General	ITT
Dollar Tree	J.C. Penney
Dow Chemical	J.M. Smucker
Dr Pepper Snapple Group	Johnson & Johnson
DTE Energy	Kellogg
Eastman Chemical	Kelly Services
Eastman Kodak	Kimberly-Clark
Eaton	Kohl's
eBay	Kraft Foods
Ecolab	Kroger
EMC	Land O'Lakes
Emcor Group	Las Vegas Sands
Entergy	Levi Strauss
Erie Insurance Group	Liberty Mutual Insurance Group
Estée Lauder	Lincoln National
Exxon Mobile	Lockheed Martin
Family Dollar Stores	Loews
FedEx	Lowe's
First Data	Macy's
FirstEnergy	Manpower
Foot Locker	Marriott International
Ford Motor	Marsh & McLennan
Franklin Resources	MasterCard
Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold	Mattel
GameStop	McDonald's
Gap	McGraw-Hill
General Cable	McKesson
General Electric	Medtronic
General Motors	Merck
Genworth Financial	MetLife
Google	Microsoft
Group 1 Automotive	Monsanto
H.J. Heinz	Morgan Stanley
Halliburton	Motorola Solutions
Harley-Davidson	Mutual of Omaha Insurance
Harris	Nationwide
Hartford Financial Services	Navistar International
Health Net	NCR
Henry Schein	New York Life Insurance
Hershey	Newell Rubbermaid
Hess	Newmont Mining

Waste Management
Wells Fargo
Western & Southern Financial Group
Western Digital
Western Union
Weyerhaeuser
Whirlpool
Whole Foods Market
Winn-Dixie Stores
Xcel Energy
Xerox
Yahoo
YRC Worldwide
Yum Brands

Table 2*Constructed Two-Week Sample Dates*

	<u>Day</u>	<u>Random date assigned</u> (Year 2012)
Week 1	Sunday	April 8
	Monday	February 13
	Tuesday	March 13
	Wednesday	March 7
	Thursday	February 9
	Friday	March 30
	Saturday	February 18
Week 2	Sunday	April 22
	Monday	March 5
	Tuesday	April 10
	Wednesday	April 11
	Thursday	April 26
	Friday	April 20
	Saturday	April 28

Note: Dates assigned using a random numbers table, chosen among all possible dates ranging from February 1, 2012 – April 30, 2012.

Table 3*Facebook Profile Sample (Phase One) by Industry*

<u>Industry</u>	<u>%</u>	<u><i>n</i></u>
Industrials	21.3	62
Consumer Discretionary	20.3	59
Financials	16.2	47
Consumer Staples	13.7	40
Information Technology	8.6	25
Utilities	4.8	14
Materials	4.1	12
Energy	4.1	12
Health Care	3.8	11
Telecommunications Services	3.1	9

Note: Industries categorized using S&P Global Industry Classification Standard.

Table 4*Companies Using Message Strategy Type at Least Once in Profile*

<u>Strategy</u>	<u>n* =</u>	<u>%</u>
<i>Corporate Ability (CA)</i>		
Expertise in product/service quality	255	87.6
Global success	175	60.1
Quality control programs	51	17.5
Industry leadership	209	71.8
Market orientation	74	25.4
Innovation, research & development	116	39.9
<i>Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)</i>		
Environmental stewardship	65	22.3
Philanthropy	42	14.4
Educational commitment	27	9.3
Employee involvement	15	5.2
Public health commitment	40	13.7
Sponsorship of cultural activities	16	5.5

*Refers to number of companies using the strategy at least once in its profile (including all tabs).

Table 5*Percentages of Dominant Post Strategy by Industry*

	<u>CA</u>	<u>CSR</u>	<u>Hybrid</u>
Energy	38.9 _a	16.7 _a	0.0 _a
Materials	83.3 _a	0.0 _a	0.0 _a
Industrials	34.6 _a	30.8 _a	6.4 _a
Consumer Discretionary	59.0 _a	13.3 _a	1.2 _a
Consumer Staples	49.1 _a	20.0 _a	1.8 _a
Health Care	40.0 _a	40.0 _{a,b}	0.0 _a
Financials	56.8 _a	18.2 _a	4.5 _a
Information Technology	51.1 _a	11.1 _a	8.9 _a
Utilities	22.7 _a	77.3 _b	0.0 _a

$\chi^2(24, N=356) = 68.82, p < .001, V^* = .25$

Note: Percentages with no subscript in common differ at $p < .05$ using Bonferroni post hoc comparisons.

Note: Percentages are reported only for those messages that displayed a dominant strategy of CA, CSR, or Hybrid (not Other – e.g., “beautiful day today on our corporate campus”).

Table 6*Percent Differences in Dominant Post Strategy by Performance Ranking*

	<u>CA</u>	<u>CSR</u>	<u>Hybrid</u>
Companies Ranked 0 – 99	41.9 _a	26.3 _{a,b}	0.0 _a
Companies Ranked 100 - 199	48.9 _a	13.3 _b	3.3 _a
Companies Ranked 200 - 299	41.7 _a	32.0 _a	2.9 _a
Companies Ranked 300 - 399	54.9 _a	21.1 _b	4.2 _a
Companies Ranked 400 - 500	53.1 _a	28.6 _{a,b}	8.2 _a

$\chi^2(12, N=356) = 28.50, p > .01, V^* = .163$

Note: Percentages with no subscript in common differ at $p < .05$ using Bonferroni post hoc comparisons.

Note: Frequencies are reported only for those messages that displayed a dominant strategy of CA, CSR, or Hybrid (not Other – e.g., “beautiful day today on our corporate campus”).

Appendix C

Phase One Codebook

PART ONE. Content Analysis of Fortune 500 Companies Official Facebook Pages

CA, CSR, and hybrid operationalizations adapted primarily from Kim and Rader (2010), also Kim (2011).

1. [NAME] Company Name: _____
2. [FB_URL] Facebook Page URL: _____
3. [LIKES] Number of “likes” of company: _____
4. [VISITORS] Number of visitors (“X# were here”): _____
5. [TALKING] Number of “people talking about this” at the time data gathered: _____
 Fill in the exact number, if none:
 N/A = 12345
6. [TL] “Timeline” version?
 No = 0
 Yes = 1

Analysis of Profile Tabs:

7. [NUM_TABS] # of homepage tabs: _____ (note: do not forget to count the “About” tab, which is often all the way to the left and does not have a graphic)

Directions for following “TAB...” variables: Click on each profile tab to determine whether the following information is present (note: Again, **remember the ABOUT tab**, often all the way to the left and without a graphic).

Analyze the content by clicking through each tab. Remember that *graphics matter*, so also code the tab graphic itself as well as any graphics contained on the tab’s page.

8. [TAB1] TAB 1: What is the tab name? (e.g., About, Photos, Philanthropy, etc.)

Tally the number of teams each strategy is present in each tab. Do NOT analyze the “Likes” tab, “Photo” tab, if present. Just state the name of the tab for the variable [TAB1/2/3/...] above and then use the N/A option for all message strategy analysis.

For the Video/YouTube tab, Notes tab, or any other tab with massive/imported text (e.g., importing the company blog), analyze HEADLINES only.

Does this tab’s content mention:

Corporate Ability Strategies:

a. [T1a_QUAL] The tab mentions the company’s *expertise in product or service quality*

Any indicator of this strategy is absent = 0

Any indicator of this strategy is present = 1

N/A = 3 (use only if there is no tab for this question or if the tab is Likes, Photos, or Twitter)

Hints: Expertise in product or service quality: look for positive adjectives before a product/service (= quality). Company should be focusing on themselves as an expert. Note: “expertise” is not leadership.

- b. [T1b_GLSUC] The tab mentions the company's *global success*

Any indicator of this strategy is absent = 0

Any indicator of this strategy is present = 1

N/A = 3 (use only if there is no tab for this question or if the tab is Likes, Photos, or Twitter)

Hints: Company notes its successes in other countries, expansion into other countries, etc. [ex: company recently opened a new chapter in Dubai; enjoy our cell services while vacationing abroad, etc.]

- c. [T1c_QCP] The tab mentions the *company's implementation of quality control programs* is mentioned

Any indicator of this strategy is absent = 0

Any indicator of this strategy is present = 1

N/A = 3 (use only if there is no tab for this question or if the tab is Likes, Photos, or Videos)

Hints: Quality control programs deal with reviewing the product/services during production. Look for words like "inspection" or "tested" or "evaluated" (or avoiding defects, blemishes, etc.). [ex: our foods are triple tested by experts on the assembly line to ensure high quality; we have inspectors on site; our autos undergo extensive crash testing; etc.]

- d. [T1d_LDRSHP] The tab mentions the company's *industry leadership*

Any indicator of this strategy is absent = 0

Any indicator of this strategy is present = 1

N/A = 3 (use only if there is no tab for this question or if the tab it Likes, Photos, or Videos)

Hint: note, as long as the company is mentioning any industry and saying they are leaders or at the top of the pack, etc., this applies

e. [T1e_MKT] The tab mentions the company's *market orientation*

Any indicator of this strategy is absent = 0

Any indicator of this strategy is present = 1

N/A = 3 (use only if there is no tab for this question or if the tab it Likes, Photos, or Videos)

Hint: This has to do with a customer-focused approach – gathering info about customers' wants/needs, anticipating their desires, and ultimately providing what they ask for or want. This can also include specifically talking about marketing campaigns/tactics. [Ex: based on customer feedback, we are now offering product x; give us your thoughts/feedback on product y; we share your feedback with all employees so they can serve you best, etc.]

f. [T1f_DVPMT] The tab mentions the *company's innovation and research & development efforts*

Any indicator of this strategy is absent = 0

Any indicator of this strategy is present = 1

N/A = 3 (use only if there is no tab for this question or if the tab it Likes, Photos, or Videos)

Hint: Use this category whenever you see the word “new”. Also look for “expanded” or “growing” or “creative” as possibilities.

Corporate Social Responsibility Strategies

- g. [T1g_ENVIRON] The tab mentions the company’s *environmental stewardship*

Any indicator of this strategy is absent = 0

Any indicator of this strategy is present = 1

N/A = 3 (use only if there is no tab for this question or if the tab it Likes, Photos, or Twitter)

Anything “green” or environmental. Also, even if the company is not talking about its own initiatives (e.g., using energy saving bulbs in their corporate offices), if it is providing information about how to be sustainable, that also counts. Sustainability.

- h. [T1h_PHIL] The tab mentions the company’s *philanthropic contribution*

Any indicator of this strategy is absent = 0

Any indicator of this strategy is present = 1

N/A = 3 (use only if there is no tab for this question or if the tab it Likes, Photos, or Twitter)

Hints: This includes any mention of the company’s monetary donations as well as partnerships with charitable organizations or its in-kind donations. If the tab mentions CSR but doesn’t say what dimension, put that in this category.

- i. [T1i_EDU] The tab mentions the company’s *educational commitments*

Any indicator of this strategy is absent = 0

Any indicator of this strategy is present = 1

N/A = 3 (use only if there is no tab for this question or if the tab it Likes, Photos, or Videos)

Hints: Education commitments include any interactions/programs with elementary, middle, or high school and/or college or professional schools. It also includes factual information dissemination in an educational style (not just random information, but a clear intent to educate/inform). [Ex: Learn all about Kenya's water shortage by clicking this link; here is a list of 10 ways that you can decrease your energy consumption; apply for the Walmart College Scholarship; our employees visited the local middle school this week to teach kids about healthy eating, etc.]

- j. [T1j_EMPLOYEE] The tab mentions the company's *employee involvement* (e.g., employees' community service)

Any indicator of this strategy is absent = 0

Any indicator of this strategy is present = 1

N/A = 3 (use only if there is no tab for this question or if the tab it Likes, Photos, Twitter)

Hint: anything mentioning employees in the community doing something socially responsible/good counts! [ex: employee community service hours this month reached 60, employees visited local hospital last week, view pics of employees cleaning the highway, etc.]

- k. [T1k_HEALTH] The tab mentions the company's *public health commitments* are mentioned _____

Any indicator of this strategy is absent = 0

Any indicator of this strategy is present = 1

N/A = 3 (use only if there is no tab for this question or if the tab it Likes, Photos, or Videos)

Hint: A company's commitment to public health includes their tacit or explicit endorsement of health-related activities, such as offering flu shots, running a 5k, offering tips for getting fit, hunger, providing information for people with diabetes, or partnering with a known health org (e.g., SGK for the Cure, American Heart Assoc, etc.)

1. [T1L_CULTURE] The tab mentions the company's sponsorship of cultural activities

Any indicator of this strategy is absent = 0

Any indicator of this strategy is present = 1

N/A = 3 (use only if there is no tab for this question or if the tab it Likes, Photos, or Twitter)

Hint: Cultural activities are enrichment events the public gathers for, such as arts (Arts Fest), dance, concerts, humanities-related activities, history-knowledge activities (Coal Mine Tour, Civil War Bus, etc.), diversity activities (American Indian jewelry show, etc.), air shows, etc.

8. [T1_DomStrat] Indicate the tab's dominant strategy

1 = Corporate Ability

2 = Corporate Social Responsibility

3 = True Hybrid

4 = Cannot discern

5 = The tab is a video, photo, or likes tab, or there is no tab

Note:

Consider emphasis on strategies:

Low emphasis (i.e., 1 of the items below)

Medium emphasis (i.e., 2 of the items below)

High emphasis (i.e., 3 of the items below)

ITEMS:

Graphics (i.e., any related photos or images)

Screen space (i.e., more than one paragraph of related text content)

Hyperlinks (i.e., any link within the related text)

9. [TAB2] TAB 2 (repeat A – M and DomStrat)
10. [TAB3] TAB 3 (repeat)
11. [TAB4] TAB 4 (repeat)
12. [TAB 5] TAB 5 (repeat)
13. [TAB 6] TAB 6 (repeat)
14. [TAB7] TAB 7 (repeat)
15. [TAB 8] TAB 8 (repeat)
16. [TAB 9] TAB 9 (repeat)
17. [TAB 10] TAB 10 (repeat)
18. [TAB 11] TAB 11 (repeat)
19. [TAB 12] TAB 12 (repeat)
20. [TAB 13] TAB 13 (repeat)

21. [OVRLSTRAT] What is the company's overall message strategy across all profile tabs?
 - 0 = neither CA nor CSR or indiscernible
 - 1 = Predominantly CA (corporate ability strategy, as defined by indicators above)
 - 2 = Predominantly CSR (corporate social responsibility strategy, as defined above)

3 = True Hybrid Strategy (exactly equal number of CA and CSR message strategies present)

Calculate this by looking at the dominant strategy per tab. (e.g., Tab 1 had a higher number of CA indicators than CSR indicators; Tab 2 had a higher number of CSR indicators than CA indicators; Tab 3 had a higher number of CA indicators than CSR indicators = overall strategy of CA). If an equal number of tabs have CA and CSR dominant strategies equally emphasized, it is a True Hybrid overall strategy.

22. [POLICY] Does the company have a page policy regarding policing of comments?

0 = There is no page policy

1 = Non-restrictive (there is a page policy but it only minimally restricts or deletes comments – e.g., only deletes those that contain profanities or insults toward other commenters)

2 = Restrictive (there is a page policy and it allows the company to restrict or delete comments as it sees fit)

3 = Unclear (there is a page policy but it is unclear regarding what it does(n't) restrict)

Appendix D

Phase Two Codebook

PART TWO: Analysis of Official Corporate Facebook Wall Posts and Comments

Note: Corporate Association, Company Evaluation, and Product Evaluation categories were primarily adapted from Kim's (2011, p. 228) experimental questionnaire items.

1. [P2NAME] Company Name: _____
2. [P2FB_URL] Facebook Page URL: _____

Company Post Information

3. [POSTID] Post ID #: _____
4. [POSTDATE] What is the date of the post?
 - 1 = Sunday, April 8 (Week 1, Day 1)
 - 2 = Monday, February 13 (Week 1, Day 2)
 - 3 = Tuesday, March 13 (Week 1, Day 3)
 - 4 = Wednesday, March 7 (Week 1, Day 4)
 - 5 = Thursday, February 9 (Week 1, Day 5)
 - 6 = Friday, March 30 (Week 1, Day 6)
 - 7 = Saturday, February 18 (Week 1, Day 7)
 - 8 = Sunday, April 22 (Week 2, Day 1)
 - 9 = Monday, March 5 (Week 2, Day 2)
 - 10 = Tuesday, April 10 (Week 2, Day 3)
 - 11 = Wednesday, April 11 (Week 2, Day 4)
 - 12 = Thursday, April 26 (Week 2, Day 5)
 - 13 = Friday, April 20 (Week 2, Day 6)
 - 14 = Saturday, April 28 (Week 2, Day 7)
5. [SOURCE] Who is the source of the post? (it should be the company)

1 = Company

2 = Other

6. [COMMT] Number of comments on the post: _____
7. [POSTLIKE] Number of “likes” on the post: _____
8. [POSTSHARE] Number of “shares” on the post: _____
9. [POSTVIDEO] Does the post include a video?
 0 = No
 1 = Yes
10. [POSTLINK] Does the post include a link?
 0 = No
 1 = Yes
11. [POSTPHOTO] Does the post include a photo (or multiple photos)?
 0 = No
 1 = Yes
12. [POSTSTRAT] What is the one **PREDOMINANT** message strategy (one only) of the *company* post? Only analyze posts by the company (Source = 1). Note: For posts that include links, photo album titles, or videos, analyze the text content of what is visible on the FB wall page. Do not click through to analyze any content outside of the wall post.

The message is dominantly based on the company’s:

Corporate Ability Strategies (CA)

1 = expertise in product or service quality

(anything that focuses on manufacturing expertise, quality of products/services, cites an internal expert/CEO/etc., or anything generally product/service-oriented that doesn’t fit into other CA categories goes here)

2 = global success

(anything focusing on expansion, growth, product, or services OUTSIDE of the U.S., where the global aspect is the dominant message)

3 = implementation of quality control program

(anything having to do with product manufacturing checks
– e.g., inspectors/inspections, reviews, testing, etc.)

4 = industry leadership

(anything focusing on the company or its employees being
leaders, at the top, better than competition)

5 = market orientation

(this could be in the form of asking a question or just noting
how the company uses customer feedback, wants, desires,
etc. to create customer-focused products/services)

6 = innovation and research/development efforts

Corporate Social Responsibility Strategies (CSR)

7 = environmental stewardship

(anything focusing on the company's product/behavior
sustainability, green initiatives, environmental awareness,
etc.)

8 = philanthropic contributions

(post focuses on the company's monetary donations,
time/service donations, in-kind donations, etc., or
partnership/sponsorship of nonprofit work)

9 = educational commitments

(post focuses on programs affiliated with any recognized
school system as well as any of the company's own
attempts to educate others – e.g., how to be more energy
efficient, "tips" for fill-in-the-blank)

10 = employee involvement

(post focuses on the employees good deeds in the
community)

11 = public health commitments

(post focuses on the company's commitment to or
endorsement of public health initiatives – e.g., eradicate
hunger, self-breast exams, vaccinations, cancer awareness,
etc.)

12 = sponsorship of cultural activities or commitment to diversity

(post focuses on an event for which the public gathers,
perhaps related to arts/humanities/history or focuses on the
company's commitment to diversity or diversity-related
initiatives)

Hybrid Strategies

13 = an exactly even mix of CA and CSR strategies is dominant

Others

14 = no CA or CSR strategy is present in the message, or cannot discern (message does not fall into one of the two categories, e.g. “It’s a sunny day in Texas today!” Or, the message is solely an emoticon, punctuation, it is a response to an outside post, or there is only a link or a photo album title with not enough information available in the post to determine strategy. Or, cannot otherwise discern)

Comment Information

13. [CMTVIS] What is the total number of visible comments (should be the same number as “comments on post” above, but could be fewer) _____

For each *company* post, analyze all comments beneath it to tally the number of comments falling into each of the following categories.

Note: Choose only the PREDOMINANT association or evaluation per comment. Choose just *one*, either an association OR evaluation (or none), that is the dominant topic of the comment.

Do NOT tally associations/evaluations for comments by the company. Only analyze consumer (i.e., non-company) comments.

For comments that include links, photo album titles, or videos, analyze the text content of what is visible on the FB page. Do not click through to analyze any content outside of the FB page wall.

14. [CMTCOMP] What number of comments are responses *from the company*?

Tally the number of company comments containing the following message strategies (note: COMMENTS only – NOT posts)

15. [CMTCOCA] Tally the number of company COMMENTS (not posts) that contain a PREDOMINANT corporate ability message strategy (see above for indicators) _____
16. [CMTCOCSR] Tally the number of company COMMENTS (not posts) that contain a PREDOMINANT corporate social responsibility (see above for indicators) _____
17. [CMTCOHYB] Tally the number of company COMMENTS (not posts) that contain an exactly equal number of CA and CSR indicators predominantly _____
18. [CMTCA] What number of comments contain a **Corporate Ability Association** as the dominant comment topic (do not include the company's comments)? _____

Indicators for **Corporate Ability (CA) associations**: The person commenting references the company in conjunction with, or as being somehow associated with:

- innovative products
- market leaderships
- good *quality* products
- efficient manufacturing *facilities*
- *expertise* in the manufacturing of products
- global success

19. [CMTCSR] What number of comments contain a **Corporate Social Responsibility Association** as the dominant comment topic (do not include the company's comments)? _____

Indicators for **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) associations**: The person commenting references the company in conjunction with, or as being somehow associated with:

- environmental responsibility
- philanthropic giving
- social diversity
- great care for communities
- educational commitment

- commitment to public health

20. [COMPEVAL] What number of comments contain a **company** (not product!) evaluation as the dominant comment topic (do not include the company's comments)? This is different from product evaluations (see question 18) _____

Indicators for **Company evaluations**: The user posts a comment indicating he/she generally:

- thinks the company is attractive
- thinks the company is reliable
- thinks this company is trustworthy
- likes this company
- has an overall favorable impression of the company

21. [PRODEVAL] What number of comments contain a **product** evaluation as the dominant comment topic (do not include the company's comments)? This is different from company evaluations (see question 17) _____

Indicators for **Product evaluations**: The user posts a comment explicitly stating he/she:

- is interested in the company's product(s)
- thinks the company's product(s) is/are reliable
- thinks the company's product(s) is/are trustworthy
- thinks the company's product(s) has/have good quality
- has an overall favorable expectation or impression of the company's product(s)

22. [CMMTNONE] What number of comments contain no identifiable CA, CSR, company evaluation, or product evaluation message as the predominant comment topic? _____