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Politécnico de Coimbra

The Paradox of CSR Communication: Best practices to combat the paradox

Polytechnic University of Coimbra

Department of Management [ESTGOH]
Department of Communication [ESEC]

Master in Marketing and Communication

Escola Superior de Tecnologia e Gestão
Politécnico de Coimbra

Escola Superior de Educação
Politécnico de Coimbra

Bárbara Câmara Ramalho e Costa

The Paradox of CSR Communication: Best Practices to Combat the Paradox

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Abstract

The contemporary concept of Corporate Social Responsibility is the output of a path of academic research and social and political pressures that stem from the 1950's to today. Companies have reinforced their CSR activities in the last decades, and, consequently, their CSR communication. Stakeholders are increasingly informed and demanding, thus communication is key to convey information and properly interact with them, work on reputation and company performance, as well as raise stakeholders' satisfaction.

However, CSR communication sometimes increases scepticism, instead of reaching the desired goal of demonstrating its contribution to society's well-being. And yet, companies are also believed to be essential in solving current social issues. This phenomenon generates a paradox around CSR communication that hinders professionals' jobs.

This study aims to deepen the understanding of this paradox of CSR communication and identify which strategies in this area are worth investing in. A mixed methodology was chosen, with an initial exploratory research, an online survey of Portuguese consumers and interviews with six companies. In the end, by triangulating all information gathered, we were able to produce a set of guidelines on how companies should approach CSR Communication, considering the perspectives of companies, consumers and researchers.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility; CSR communication; Organizational communication.

Resumo

O conceito contemporâneo de Responsabilidade Social Corporativa é o resultado de um percurso de investigação académica e de pressões sociais e políticas que decorrem desde a década de 1950 até aos dias de hoje. As empresas têm reforçado as suas atividades de RSC nas últimas décadas e, consequentemente, a sua comunicação. Os *stakeholders* estão cada vez mais informados e exigentes, pelo que a comunicação é fundamental para transmitir informação e interagir adequadamente, trabalhar a reputação e o desempenho da empresa, bem como aumentar a satisfação dos *stakeholders*.

No entanto, a comunicação de RSC por vezes aumenta o ceticismo, em vez de atingir o objetivo desejado de demonstrar a sua contribuição para o desenvolvimento da sociedade. E, no entanto, as empresas também são consideradas essenciais na resolução dos problemas sociais atuais. Este fenómeno gera um paradoxo da comunicação de RSC que dificulta o trabalho dos profissionais.

Este estudo pretende aprofundar a compreensão do paradoxo da comunicação de RSC e identificar as estratégias que valem a pena investir nesta área. Optou-se por uma metodologia mista, iniciando com uma pesquisa bibliográfica explorativa, recorrendo a um inquérito online a consumidores portugueses e entrevistas a seis empresas. No final, ao triangular toda a informação recolhida, foi possível reunir um conjunto de orientações sobre como as empresas devem abordar a Comunicação de RSE, considerando as perspetivas das empresas, consumidores e investigadores.

Palavras-Chave: Responsabilidade social corporativa; Comunicação de RSE; Comunicação organizacional.

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I. Introduction

1.1. Contextualization of the Topic

The modern concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), still not fully consensual, is the result of a research journey and sociopolitical pressures that began in the 1950s and continue to this day (Carroll, 2021; Ihlen *et al*., 2011).

In one of the more widely accepted definitions, CSR is seen as "the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time" (Carroll, 1979, p. 500). This definition aligns with the Green Paper of the European Commission (2001) and the United Nations Agenda 2030 (2015), where companies are seen as essential agents for sustainable development, with a set of responsibilities that go beyond their legal obligations.

Faced with these expectations, companies have strengthened their social responsibility activities in recent decades and, consequently, the communication of their CSR. With stakeholders becoming increasingly informed and demanding, communication is essential to inform and interact with them, enhance the company's reputation and performance, and increase consumer intent and satisfaction (Viererbl & Koch, 2022; Ihlen *et al*., 2011).

However, "communicating about CSR often increases skepticism about the organization, instead of achieving the intended goal of illustrating its contribution to society" (Waddock & Googins, 2011, p. 24). Currently, there is an atmosphere of mistrust, where stakeholders view CSR communication as a public relations maneuver, a marketing ploy, a status quo instrument, or even greenwashing. Nevertheless, they agree that the business sector plays a crucial role in addressing societal challenges (Viererbl & Koch, 2022; Waddock & Googins, 2011).

This phenomenon creates a paradox that complicates the job of communication professionals. Companies need to communicate their social responsibility efforts to inform all stakeholders about their contributions to society. Only through communication can there be collaborative efforts between citizens, government, and the business sector for sustainable development, as mentioned in the United Nations Agenda 2030. However, studies have concluded that extensive communication can lead to negative consequences for companies (Viererbl & Koch, 2022; Waddock & Googins, 2011; Morsing *et al.*, 2008).

Therefore, it is important for organizations to understand how their communication of social responsibility activities is perceived and what are the appropriate strategies, tools and scope to achieve the best results, for both the company and its stakeholders.

1.2. CSR Communication Research Relevance

The modern concept of Corporate Social Responsibility is the result of the post-World War II era, a time marked by changes in social consciousness, where citizens began demanding more from governments and companies in areas such as civil rights, women's rights, consumer rights, and environmental protection (Carroll, 2015). It is also during this time (the 1960s and 1970s) that CSR began to be the subject of various research efforts, analyzing the concept from various perspectives, including management, economics, ethics, sustainability, etc.

Today, Corporate Social Responsibility is a global concept that has progressed and continues to be of great academic interest. Despite the large number of studies on CSR and the widespread use of this term, there is still no common understanding of the concept (Ihlen *et al.*, 2011; Viererbl & Koch, 2022). Being a concept highly dependent on the development of society and on social, cultural, political and economic contexts, continuous study of the topic is considered pertinent in order to move towards consensus theories that benefit both society and companies.

From an academic perspective, there is a noticeable increase in the number of academic publications on CSR since 2010. As can be seen from the table in Table 1, on the ScienceDirect platform, the number of results related to CSR increased from 1.702 in 2010 to 5.642 in 2022. In the ProQuest online library, with a total of 3.090.390 results, there is also a significant increase in publications, from 61.750 in 2010 to 516.749 results in 2022. In the Portuguese RCAAP platform, although there is a much smaller number of results and less consistent growth, there is also an increase from 46 results in 2010 to 111 in 2022.

	Number of Publications		
Year	**Science Direct**	**ProQuest**	**RCAAP**
2010	**1.702**	**61.750**	**46**
2011	1.924	71.991	45
2012	2.559	78.887	50
2013	2.606	83.807	67
2014	3.370	91.737	75
2015	4.065	97.100	87
2016	3.368	101.950	104
2017	3.244	114.121	95
2018	3.221	119.494	109
2019	3.769	210.494	121
2020	4.170	335.222	130
2021	5.083	387.756	137
2022	**5.643**	**516.749**	**111**
Total of Results	75.356	3.090.390	1.260

Table 1 - Number of results, per year, of scientific publications about CSR Communication, on different research platforms.

At the macro-political level, entities like the European Union and the United Nations have emphasized the role and power of organizations in sustainable development. In the "Green Paper" (2001), the European Commission promotes corporate social responsibility and encourages the development of innovative practices, increased transparency, reliability of assessment and validation, and the creation of closer partnerships so that all stakeholders play an active role. The United Nations, in the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (2015), recognizes the role of private sector companies, from microenterprises to multinational corporations, in implementing the Agenda, which includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (social, economic, and environmental).

At the corporate level, Social Responsibility is a trending topic driven by the various social and political pressures mentioned earlier. Society and stakeholders increasingly demand that organizations act in a way that benefits not only themselves but all of society, especially in social and environmental aspects (Viererbl & Koch, 2022). To fully realize the potential of their CSR efforts, companies must engage in communication. Only by communicating with stakeholders can sustainable development be achieved.

However, as mentioned earlier, communicating Corporate Social Responsibility is a paradox that complicates the work of companies. Despite the paradoxical effects of CSR communication being the subject of study in various research (Viererbl & Koch, 2022; Howaniec & Kasinski, 2021; Bachmann & Ingenhoff, 2016; Waddock & Googins, 2011; Du *et al*., 2010; Morsing *et al.*, 2008), it is evident from the literature review that there are more studies on the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility itself, as there is still little academic consensus on its meaning.

In summary, it is relevant to analyze the topic of Corporate Social Responsibility communication because: 1) it is a subject on the social and political agenda; 2) it is an area that requires continuous updating due to the constant social and political changes; 3) and there are few studies that provide the perspective of not only consumers but also the companies themselves, and that offer concrete directions for effective CSR communication.

II. Literature Review

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has a long historical trajectory, with traces of social concerns in ancient Roman laws (Latapí Agudelo *et al*., 2019). However, the modern concept of CSR is considered a product of the 20th century, particularly the last 70 years, stemming from notions of organizational philanthropy and corporate responses to various social and political pressures that emerged, primarily, after World War II (Carroll, 2021; Latapí Agudelo *et al*., 2019; Ihlen *et al*., 2011).

2.1. Evolution of the Conceptualization of Corporate Social Responsibility

Howard R. Bowen, with his book "Social Responsibilities of the Businessman" (1953), marked the beginning of the modern discussion on Corporate Social Responsibility (Latapí Agudelo *et al*., 2019; Ihlen *et al*., 2011; Carroll, 2008). He defined the social responsibility of the so-called "businessman" as "the obligation to follow policies, make decisions or follow courses of action that are desirable by the objectives and values of our society" (1953, p. 6). With his work, Bowen was one of the first authors to recognize the impact and power that large organizations have on society, and is therefore considered the father of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (Latapí Agudelo *et al*., 2019; Carroll, 2008).

In the 1960s, social movements for civil rights, women's rights, consumer rights and environmental protection were important precursors to the modern CSR movement. During this period, workers, consumers, and citizens were demanding more from companies, emphasizing their responsibilities to society as a whole and not just their stockholders (Latapí Agudelo *et al*., 2019; Carroll, 2015). This decade saw a growing interest among researchers who viewed Corporate Social Responsibility as a response to the problems, desires and demands of modern society (Latapí Agudelo *et al*., 2019).

Davis (1960), one of the most prominent authors of the time, defined social responsibility as the "decisions and actions of businessmen, which are taken for reasons that are at least partially beyond the economic and technical interests of the firm" (p. 70). Davis argued that social responsibility should be viewed in a management context since it could bring long-term benefits and economic gains to the company.

The social transformation of organizations gained more strength in the 1970s, in response to social demands that began in the previous decade, leading to a lack of trust in society regarding corporate activities. In countries like the United States of America, the social pressures of the 1960s also led to new legislation, especially in environmental matters (Latapí Agudelo *et al*., 2019).

Carroll characterized this era as "managing corporate social responsibility" because there was a formalization and institutionalization of organizations' responses to sociopolitical issues (2015, p. 88). It's worth noting, however, that the increasing popularity of Corporate Social Responsibility led to its use in different contexts and consequently resulted in different definitions (Sethi, 1975).

Harold Johnson (1971) defined a socially responsible company as one that, in its management, considers various interests, not only those of its stockholders but also of employees, suppliers, local communities and the country itself. With this definition, Johnson points to the possibility of a stakeholder theory, later presented by Freeman (1984).

Johnson also presents four complementary views of the concept of CSR: 1) CSR is seen as the fulfillment of socio-economic objectives within a sociocultural system in which the company operates and plays a significant role; 2) CSR is viewed as a way to maximize long-term profit; 3) CSR is seen as a means to achieve multiple objectives, not just profit maximization; 4) CSR is not a significant goal for the company but is used as a means to achieve its targets (Johnson, 1971).

Also, in 1971, the work "Social Responsibilities of Business Corporations" by the Committee for Economic Development (CED) emerged - a contribution that marked the concept of CSR. "Businesses operate through public consent, and their basic purpose is to constructively serve the needs of society - up to society's satisfaction" (CED, 1971, p. 11). According to CED (1971), as businesses exist to serve society, their future depends on the quality of managing responses to the constant expectations of the public.

CED presents a definition of three circles of social responsibility: the inner circle includes "basic responsibilities for the efficient performance of the economic function of the company"; the middle circle includes "economic conduct with an awareness of social values and priorities"; finally, the outer circle includes "emerging and still vague responsibilities that companies must take on to be more actively involved in actively improving the social environment" (1971, p. 15).

At the end of the decade, Archie B. Carroll proposed the most unified definition of CSR to date (Latapí Agudelo *et al*., 2019). The researcher defined Corporate Social Responsibility as "the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time" (Carroll, 1979, p. 500). This definition emerged from the social movements of the 1960s, U.S. legislation, the research work of other scholars (including the CED), providing a clear and concise view that can be applied in any context, which was not the case with previous definitions (Latapí Agudelo *et al*., 2019).

In contrast to the previous decade, the 1980s were marked by a decrease in government pressure on business activities, stemming from the priority given to economic growth. However, organizations continued to be accountable to various groups that still expected more responsible behavior from them (Carroll, 2015; Latapí Agudelo *et al*., 2019), especially on issues such as environmental pollution, discrimination, consumer rights, workplace health and safety, urban life deterioration, and abusive practices of multinational organizations (Carroll, 2008).

This sociopolitical context resulted in a shift in the research focus. The emphasis on defining Corporate Social Responsibility gave way to the study of its operationalization, as well as new concepts, theories, models and alternative themes (Carroll, 1999; Latapí Agudelo *et al*., 2019). Thus, complementary or alternative concepts emerged, such as corporate social performance, corporate social responsiveness, public policy, business ethics and stakeholder theory (Carroll, 1999; Latapí Agudelo *et al*., 2019).

In 1983, Carroll updated his definition of Corporate Social Responsibility, reorienting the discretionary component to include voluntarism and/or philanthropy. This is because, according to the author, these areas seemed to provide the best examples of discretionary activities. CSR "involves conducting business in a manner that is profitable, legal, ethical, and socially supportive. [...] Thus, CSR consists of four parts: economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary or philanthropic" (Carroll, 1983, p. 604).

In the 1990s, there was also significant international interest and institutionalization of Corporate Social Responsibility. During the 1990s, important international events occurred that influenced the international agenda for responsibility and sustainable development, such as the "European Environment Agency (1990), the UN Summit on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, which led to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the adoption of Agenda 21, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (1992), and the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol (1997)" (Latapí Agudelo *et al*., 2019, p. 7).

Around the turn of the millennium, there was increasing global recognition of the importance of CSR. In 2001, the European Commission presented the "Green Paper - Promoting a European Framework for Corporate Social Responsibility," which provided an approach to corporate social responsibility in both a European and international context. The Green Paper argued that being socially responsible "is not confined to compliance with all legal obligations - it involves going beyond additional investment in human capital, the environment, and relations with other stakeholders and local communities" (European Commission, 2001, p. 7).

In the discussion of CSR, the concept of Sustainability also emerges and has gained greater interest in the new millennium. Marrewijk (2003) provided an overview of the concepts of CSR and Corporate Sustainability, in which he recognized this new perspective as the contemporary and holistic understanding of CSR, resulting from the evolution of the roles and responsibilities of companies. This full integration of CSR is motivated by the pursuit of sustainability for both society and businesses, where companies realize they have an important role in society and must make strategic decisions to adapt to social contexts (Latapí Agudelo *et al*., 2019). The concept of Sustainability continues to expand in the first decade of the 2000s and has been complementing much of the CSR discussion (Carroll, 2021).

In 2015, the Paris Agreement was adopted, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was launched, which included the adoption of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Latapí Agudelo *et al*., 2019). Although the SDGs do not specifically impose commitments on the business sector, they address various dimensions of sustainable development (social, economic and environmental) and call for "worldwide action by governments, businesses and civil society to eradicate poverty and create lives of dignity and opportunity for all within the planet's limits" (BCSD Portugal, 2022).

This political context fostered the growth of CSR studies, as companies saw CSR as a strategic framework aimed at creating shared value, as encouraged by the SDGs. There has also been a notable expansion in academic literature. Recent publications since 2015 have focused on the implementation of CSR and its impact on specific areas related to the SDGs but have not necessarily contributed to the definition or evolution of the concept of CSR (Latapí Agudelo *et al*., 2019).

In 2016, Chandler introduced a definition for the concept of Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility (CSSR): "the incorporation of a holistic perspective of CSR into a company's strategic planning and core operations, so that the company is managed in the interest of a broad set of stakeholders to optimize medium and long-term value" (p. 248). The author also linked CSSR with the concept of sustainable value creation, arguing that "the company creates more value when it focuses on what it does best, defined by its core operations" (2016, p. 250). This perspective may be considered contrary to Trapp's (2012) view, which argued that an organization's CSR did not have to focus on its core business.

Chandler (2016) describes CSSR with five components that the author considers essential: 1) the holistic incorporation of CSR into the company's strategy and corporate culture; 2) all company actions are directly related to its core business; 3) stakeholder management is a strategic necessity; 4) companies develop a medium and long-term vision and planning for company resources, including their key stakeholders; 5) companies aim to optimize the value created.

Still in the second decade of the millennium, the concept of purpose-driven businesses emerged. Carroll (2021) identifies this new paradigm as an attempt to use a new language in contrast to the traditional CSR perspective. The concept, like many other themes related to CSR, argues that purpose-driven companies seek a "higher purpose" than just profits. "Practically all companies that publicly adhere to a higher purpose or conscious capitalism are the same companies that embrace CSR, sustainability, and other CSR-related concepts" (Carroll, 2021, p. 1267).

With the recent COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increased interest in CSR, and the view of stakeholder management and importance has been reinforced. Companies found themselves somewhat compelled to update their CSR commitments, their purpose, or sustainable value creation. Due to the pandemic context, there was an increase in social concern expressions by the business community. Although it is difficult to assess the authenticity of many of these organizations, as they may be acting defensively (Carroll, 2021), the holistic integration of CSR into a company's strategy is undeniably important in the current context. This is not only to add value to their stakeholders but also to the companies themselves.

2.2. Definition of Corporate Social Responsibility

Through the analysis of its historical evolution, it is understood that Corporate Social Responsibility is a global concept stemming from the social pressures that resulted from the post-World War II period, and it has been gaining relevance since then (Carroll, 2015). It is also understood that, despite the high number of studies and the widespread use of the term, both in academia and the business world, there is still no consensus or dominant paradigm for CSR. The concept is considered complex, flexible and difficult to define, mainly because different definitions focus on various aspects of CSR (Viererbl & Koch, 2022; Sarkar & Searcy, 2016; Ihlen *et al*., 2011).

This lack of common understanding is further exacerbated by the emergence and use of other related and complementary themes and concepts such as business ethics, corporate citizenship, stakeholder management, sustainability, shared value creation, etc (Viererbl & Koch, 2022; Carroll, 2015). However, all these topics are interconnected and incorporate the concept of CSR, which is "the reference and the centerpiece of the socially conscious business movement" (Carroll, 2015, p. 87).

Archie B. Carroll can also be identified as the most renowned author in the study of CSR. His definition was one of the first structured proposals for the concept of CSR and continues to be the most widely accepted within the academic community, serving as the basis for many definitions, models and theories that have emerged over the years (Latapí Agudelo *et al*., 2019; Ihlen *et al.*, 2011).

Carroll (1979) defines CSR as "the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time" (p. 500). This four-category model presents the different responsibilities that society expects from companies: economic (companies are the economic unit of society and have a responsibility to produce and deliver products and services); legal (the legal framework in which the company must operate); ethical (behaviors and activities that go beyond legal obligations but are expected by society); and discretionary responsibilities (voluntary activities resulting from the company's desire to engage in social and environmental issues that not only go beyond the legal framework but also exceed the ethical expectations society has of the business community).

In 1991, Archie B. Carroll updated his definition, presenting the Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility (see Fig. 2). The pyramid represented the four primary responsibilities of organizations, with economic responsibilities at the base, followed by legal, ethical, and finally, philanthropic responsibilities - the author changed the previous term "discretionary" to include society's expectation that companies be good corporate citizens, a concept developed later by other authors (Carroll, 1991; Carroll, 1999). According to the author, this pyramid is more of a graphical representation than a new meaning for his definition of CSR. In summary, a responsible organization should strive to "make a profit, obey the law, be ethical, and be a good corporate citizen" (Carroll, 1991, p. 43).

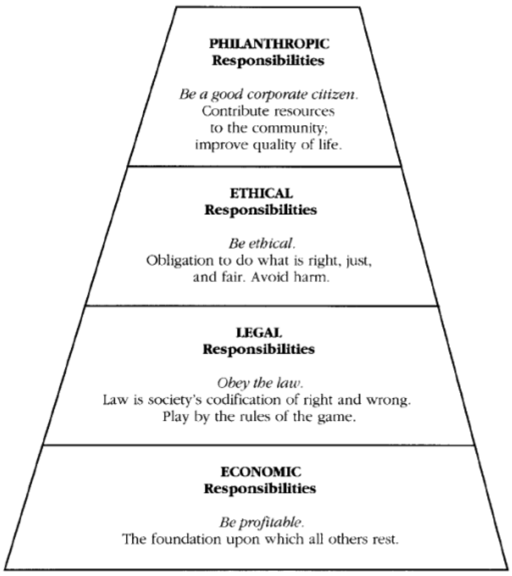

Figure 1 - Carroll's Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility (1991).

Carroll's new model (1991) aimed to help companies find a balance between their economic and legal obligations to their shareholders and their ethical and philanthropic obligations to stakeholders. However, Carroll's Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility received some criticism and disagreements. The author himself acknowledges that he could have explained his model in more detail and that, in some countries, due to their economic model, the model may not adapt as easily (Carroll, 1991). Nevertheless, Carroll continues to defend the connections established by his models between the economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities of businesses.

In the new millennium, new definitions have also emerged that are important to highlight and will serve as the basis for this study. As mentioned before, in 2001, the Green Paper from the European Commission provides a European and political perspective that should be considered. "Being socially responsible is not limited to fulfilling all legal obligations – it implies going beyond through a 'greater' investment in human capital, the environment, and relationships with other stakeholders and local communities" (2001, p. 7).

In 2003, Schwartz and Carroll reflected and present three issues of Carroll's Pyramid model of Corporate Social Responsibility (1991): (1) the pyramid framework suggested a hierarchy of CSR domains; (2) the "philanthropic/discretionary" category could be confusing and seen as unnecessary to some, since it could be simply an example of an ethically motivated activity; (3) an incomplete theoretical development of the economic, legal and ethical domains.

Hence, a new three-domain model of CSR was composed by Schwartz and Carroll (2003), where the three identified responsibility areas - economic, legal and ethical - are depicted in a Venn diagram. The economic domain represents activities that can lead to a direct or indirect positive economic impact on the company. The legal category includes the corporation responsiveness to society's legal mandated expectations. Lastly, the ethical domain refers to all business ethical responsibilities expected by society and stakeholders.

The Venn diagram format highlights the overlapping nature of the domains, which results in the creation of seven categories in which CSR may be conceptualized and analyzed, as illustrated in Figure 2. "The ideal overlap resides at the center of the model where economic, legal, and ethical responsibilities are simultaneously fulfilled, but other pure and overlapping segments of the model create situations which also must be explored and illustrated because they represent situations decision makers may face in the business world" (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003, p.513).

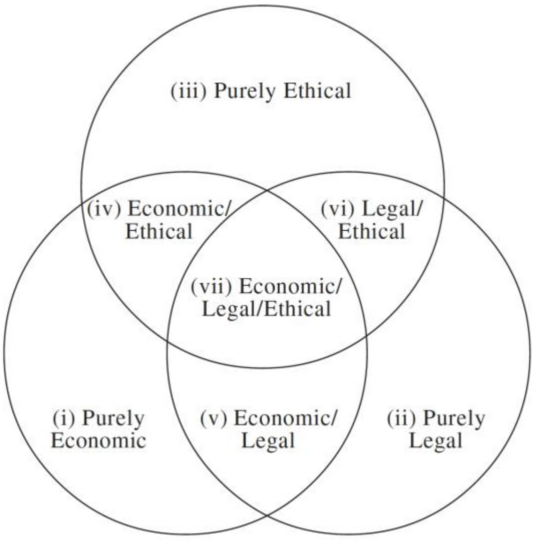

Figure 2 - Schwartz and Carroll's Three-Domain Model of Corporate Social Responsibility (2003).

In 2011, Ihlen, Bartlett, and May presented their definition of CSR in their work "The Handbook of Communication and Corporate Social Responsibility." The authors see CSR as "the corporate attempt to negotiate its relationship with its stakeholders and the general public. It may include the process of mapping and assessing stakeholder demands and developing and implementing actions and policies to meet (or ignore) these demands. At a minimum, CSR focuses on how corporations deal with economic, social, and/or environmental issues" (2011, p. 8).

More recently, with the aim of providing a more comprehensive view resulting from the quantitative analysis of 110 different definitions of CSR, Sarkar and Searcy (2016) propose a broader definition: "CSR implies that companies should assume their central economic responsibility and voluntarily go beyond legal minimums to be ethical in all their activities and consider the impact of their actions on society's stakeholders while contributing to global sustainability" (p. 1433).

In summary, considering the different perspectives presented, a truly responsible company integrates its CSR strategy into its business and overall strategy, operating holistically, analyzing its impact, and seeking ways to contribute to the sustainable development of society. Stakeholders, increasingly informed and demanding, "force" companies to continue strengthening their CSR activities.

This focus on CSR also offers advantages for organizations by working on business reputation, legitimacy and performance; increasing stakeholder satisfaction and retention; attracting, motivating and retaining a satisfied workforce; providing access to investment and financing opportunities; and generating positive opportunities for advertising and media promotion (Viererbl & Koch, 2022; Carroll, 2021; Ihlen *et al*., 2011).

2.3. Corporate Social Responsibility Communication

In addition to its definition, another crucial issue related to the study of CSR is its communication. Studies of Corporate Social Responsibility Communication (CRSC) are considered essential to understand how the meaning of CSR is constructed by companies themselves, to explore what the public (consumers/stakeholders) expects from a company's CRSC, and how they should communicate their social responsibility efforts to society and stakeholders in order to achieve specific organizational goals (Howaniec & Kasinski, 2021; Ihlen *et al*., 2011).

With the increasing expectations and demands of stakeholders in recent decades, the way organizations communicate their CSR to their audiences has become the subject of research. This academic interest has led to a growing body of research and multidisciplinary literature with the overall aim of "understanding the role of different types of communication between companies and their stakeholders in shaping meanings, expectations, and CSR practices" (Crane & Glozer, 2016).

In recent decades, with the increasing expectations and demands of stakeholders, the way organizations communicate their CSR to their audiences has become a subject of extensive research. This academic interest has led to a growing body of multidisciplinary literature with the general aim of "understanding the role of different types of communication between companies and their stakeholders in shaping meanings, expectations, and CSR practices" (Crane & Glozer, 2016).

Podnar (2008) defines CSR communication as "a process of anticipating stakeholder expectations, articulating CSR policies, and managing various communication tools within an organization aimed at providing true and transparent information about the integrity of a company or brand in its business operations, social and environmental concerns, and interactions with stakeholders" (Podnar 2008, p. 75).

Bachmann and Ingenhoff (2016), drawing on Carroll's (1991) CSR definition and complementary concepts, define CSR communication as specific and mediated reports between companies and stakeholders regarding the obligations of the company. These obligations are based on societal standards and expectations that go beyond profitability and legal requirements, such as achieving social, political, and cultural benefits and maintaining or improving environmental quality. CSR communication occurs in social interactions between organizational members and individual members of the public. The former includes individuals authorized to represent the company, such as CEOs, public relations professionals, or CSR consultants (Bachmann and Ingenhoff, 2016).

More recently, Viererbl and Koch (2022) offer a concise definition of CSR communication as "any corporate communication that addresses an organization's CSR efforts and/or related processes" (p. 2). As mentioned by Viererbl and Koch, CSR communication can be integrated into a company's Corporate Communication, which can be characterized as "a management function responsible for overseeing and coordinating the work performed by communication professionals in various specialized disciplines, such as media relations, public affairs, and internal communication" (Cornelissen, 2011, p. 5).

However, other scholars study CSR communication within the context of Management Communication. This form of communication consists of managers communicating with internal and external target groups and is considered essential for maintaining the company's reputation and a positive internal culture (van Riel, 1995). In this regard, CSR communication within the framework of Management Communication presents a more functionalist definition, focusing on enhancing corporate image and reputation among internal and external stakeholders (Nielsen & Thomsen, 2012).

From another perspective, CSR communication can be viewed as an integral part of Marketing Communication, which encompasses direct communication to support sales with the aim of influencing consumers and boosting sales (van Riel, 1995). In this approach, CSR is seen as a tool to improve consumers' perception of a company's products (Nielsen & Thomsen, 2012). The use of CSR as a marketing tool has been closely associated with studies related to the "green" movement that began in the 1980s, where brands started offering more environmentally conscious products. However, many of these studies also show that using CSR as a marketing tool generates skepticism and distrust among consumers.

For the present dissertation, it is considered relevant to study CRSC as an integral part of Corporate Communication. This is because, according to Nielsen and Thomsen (2012), Corporate Communication "provides a useful perspective for assessing CSR management and marketing communication from a critical integrated perspective" (p. 51). The most frequently used concepts in this integrated analysis include stakeholder management, corporate identity, branding and reputation, communication and strategic planning, media relations, internal communication, crisis management and communication, and leadership (Nielsen & Thomsen, 2012).

Similar to the concept of CSR, there has been a growing academic interest in the issue of CRSC over the past few decades. However, many authors believe that there is still no unified CRSC literature but rather heterogeneous research in various disparate areas of management studies. "This plurality means that even basic questions like 'what is the purpose of CSR communication' remain unresolved" (Crane & Glozer, 2016, p. 1224).

However, some authors have made significant contributions to the field of CSR communication. Notably, Ihlen *et al*. (2011) and Mette Morsing (2006) have provided valuable insights into CSR communication. Morsing's work, "Strategic CSR Communication" (2006), introduced a perspective on CSR communication through the lens of a strategic stakeholder group (consumers, NGOs, employees, investors, etc.). In 2006, Morsing collaborated with Majken Schultz to develop a model of three CSR communication strategies, a highly significant contribution to communication professionals, which will be discussed further in this study.

Ihlen, Bartlett and May (2011) published one of the most comprehensive works on CSR communication, titled "The Handbook of Communication and Corporate Social Responsibility" (2011). The book covers different perspectives on CSR communication, including management communication, organizational communication, marketing communication, and public relations. Additionally, May authored "Corporate Social Responsibility: Virtue or Vice?" in 2011, providing valuable insights into the paradox of CSR communication.

2.4. Effects and Challenges of Communicating CSR: The CSR Paradox

The importance of communicating CSR is undeniable and widely accepted by the academic community. Communicating CSR efforts can contribute to the creation of positive perceptions and opinions about the organization. It can help build legitimacy, support the development of trust relationships with stakeholders, communicate the abstract and intangible characteristics of the organization, and provide truthful and transparent information to increasingly demanding and engaged stakeholders (Viererblr & Kosh, 2022; Crane & Glozer, 2016).

However, studies also show that this type of communication can result in skepticism and distrust among stakeholders. In this context of lack of trust, communicating CSR is complicated and creates a paradoxical dilemma: organizations want to respond to the growing demands for accountability and transparency from the public, but they also experience negative effects with increased CSR communication (Viererbl & Koch, 2022; Bachmann & Ingenhoff, 2016; Waddock & Googins, 2011; Ihlen, *et al*., 2011; Du *et al*., 2010).

So, how to communicate Corporate Social Responsibility to combat the effects of the CSR paradox? There is a wealth of research on this topic, where authors have pointed out some of the most important factors that influence the effects of CSR on stakeholders: the type of industry, the extent of communication, the perceived motives of the company by consumers (intrinsic vs. extrinsic), the content of the message, and the communication channels used (Viererblr & Koch, 2022; Bachmann & Ingenhoff, 2016; Du *et al*., 2010).

Regarding the extent of CSR communication, as mentioned earlier, studies confirm that the more a company communicates its CSR activities, the more negative effects it will have on stakeholders (Viererblr & Koch, 2022; Eisenegger & Schranz, 2011). However, it is impossible to define an exact value of CSR communication for a company to achieve positive results. Instead, the extent should be proportional to the actual CSR activities carried out by the organization. To explain this theory, Viererblr and Koch (2022) propose a matrix of the relationship between the quantity of CSR communication and CSR activities of companies (see Fig. 3).

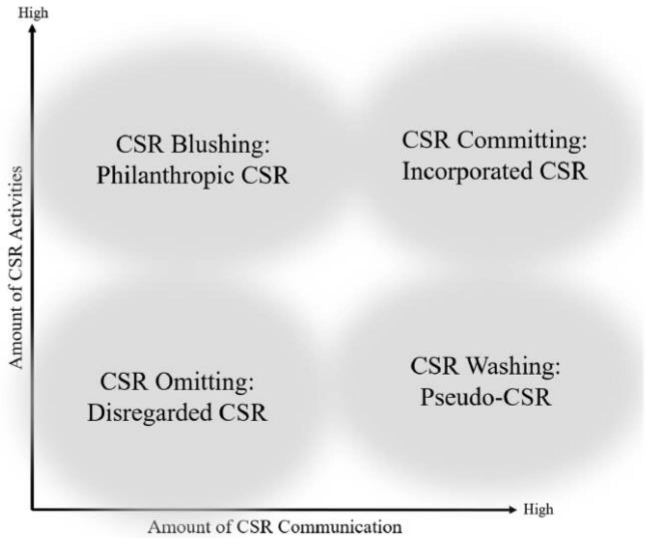

Figure 3 - Model of the relationship between the quantity of CSR communication and CSR activities (Viererblr & Koch, 2022).

According to this matrix, there are four possible pairs of CSR activities-communication: 1) CSR Omitting, when a company is not engaged in CSR activities and CSR communication, resulting in either no effect or negative effects on the public perception of the company; 2) CSR Washing, when there is a lot of CSR communication but the organization has little actual CSR activity; 3) CSR Blushing, when a large number of CSR activities are not communicated to stakeholders, having no impact on public perceptions of the company; 4) finally, CSR Committing, when a company is highly engaged in CSR activities and communicates them frequently and extensively. This last situation is considered ideal by the authors, "as the organization's CSR efforts not only benefit society but, through proper communication, also affect stakeholders' perception of the organization as responsible, which can result in a more positive reputation" (Viererblr & Koch, 2022, p. 3).

Bachmann and Ingenhoff (2016) also studied the CSR paradox, which they called "dilemma", and postulated a model that summarizes the relation between the Extent of CSR Disclosure, a main factor also studied by Viererblr and Koch (2022), to other factors such as Perceived Persuasion Intent, Psychological Reactance, Content Credibility and Corporate Legitimacy. In their study, as we can see in the Figure 4, the extent of CSR communication has a positive effect on Corporate Legitimacy, Content Credibility and a negative effect on Perceived Persuasion Intent. This last factor has a positive effect on Psychological Reactance against the company, which afterwards negatively affects Content Credibility and Corporate Legitimacy.

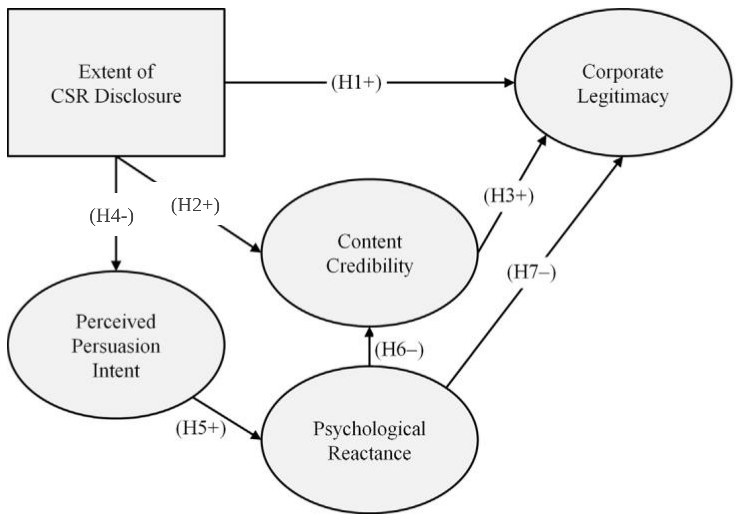

Figure 4 - CSR Disclosure Dilemma model (Bachmann & Ingenhoff, 2016).

In addition to the extent, several studies address the issue of stakeholders' perception of a company's motives. Du *et al*. (2010) identify two types of CSR motives: extrinsic, when a company's CSR is seen as an attempt to increase its profits, or intrinsic, in which a company's CSR is viewed as a genuine concern for the focal issue. Therefore, when stakeholders identify intrinsic motives, it leads to the formation of positive inferences about the company's character, resulting in a positive response. Conversely, perceptions of extrinsic motives by stakeholders lead to a less favorable attitude toward the company (Du *et al*., 2010). It is also understood that this analysis is related to the matrix presented by Viererblr and Koch (2022), as the perceived motives of stakeholders will depend on the communication and CSR activities carried out by companies.

Du *et al*. (2010) also present a conceptual framework for CSR communication (see Fig. 5), which identifies some of the most important aspects of CSR communication, such as message content, communication channels, and specific factors related to the company and stakeholders that influence CSR effectiveness. This summary framework can be a valuable resource for the current research as a context for the application of the chosen research instruments.

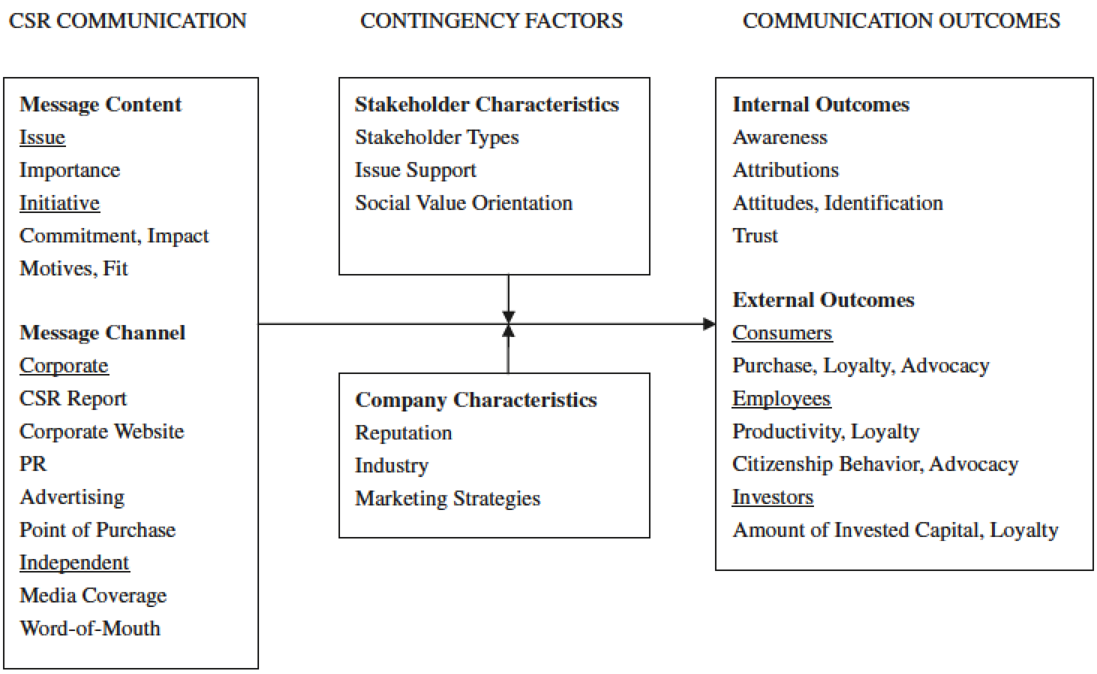

Figure 5 - Framework for CSR Communication (Du et al., 2010).

At the strategic level of establishing the organization's relationship with its stakeholders, Morsing and Schultz (2006) propose, based on Grunig and Hunt's (1984) Public Relations model, three CSR communication strategies:

1) Stakeholder Information Strategy: In this strategy, companies disseminate information about their CSR actions through unilateral communication, where stakeholders only receive information and may either support or oppose it.

2) Stakeholder Response Strategy: This strategy is based on a model of bilateral and asymmetric communication. The company communicates its CSR actions or intentions with the aim of eliciting a specific action or response from stakeholders, although it doesn't necessarily involve them directly in the communication process.

3) Stakeholder Involvement Strategy: This strategy involves symmetrical bilateral communication, representing a joint construction of CSR through dialogue between the company and its stakeholders. This approach is considered the most interesting and beneficial, both for the company and stakeholders, as "stakeholders need to be involved to develop and promote positive support, and for the company to understand and simultaneously adapt to their concerns, i.e., to develop its CSR initiatives" (Morsing & Schultz, 2006, p. 328).

Thus, this exploratory research was very important to understand the many strategies presented by academics to combat the CSR Communication Paradox. It allowed us to identify a lot of concepts and theories that will help construct, conduct and analyze the results of the next two investigation instruments.

III. Methodology

3.1. Characterization of the Study

The present research focuses on the communication of CSR, specifically the paradox of communicating a company's social responsibility efforts. In recent decades, companies have intensified their CSR activities and, consequently, the communication of their CSR to achieve the best results for both the company and society. However, CSR communication often leads to negative effects for the organization due to skepticism and lack of trust from stakeholders. Therefore, it is considered important to investigate how CSR communication is perceived by stakeholders and which strategies, tools, and extent of communication are most suitable for companies to adopt in order to achieve the best results.

After identifying this phenomenon, a few questions come to mind: *should companies communicate their CSR efforts? And if so, what are the best practices for doing it effectively?* To address these issues, it is pertinent to analyze the perspective of consumers since they are situated in the domain of perception and, on the other hand, the perspective of organizations, which operate in the domain of intention. Both of these perspectives are essential to fully understand how the communication of corporate social responsibility activities should be approached, so that it brings benefits to both the companies and society.

With the research problem defined, it is possible to define the following as the main investigation goals: 1) to analyze the paradoxical phenomenon of Corporate Social Responsibility communication; 2) to understand where companies should position themselves in the communication of their CSR efforts and which tools and strategies they should use for effective communication.

Intrinsic to these objectives, the study also includes the following secondary objectives: 1) to analyze consumers' perception regarding the communication of Corporate Social Responsibility by companies; 2) to analyze the goals of companies when communicating their CSR activities; 3) to examine the communication tools and strategies used by companies that aim to be considered socially responsible.

As for the research design, it will be exploratory. Exploratory research aims to deepen an understanding of a phenomenon or gain new perspectives on it, resulting in the formulation of significant hypotheses for future research (Manzato & Santos, 2012), which applies to the current inquiry into the paradoxical phenomenon of CSR communication.

3.2. Research Techniques

To define the proper methodology, some studies on the chosen research topic were analyzed, as shown in Table 2. A trend was identified: exploratory studies of CSR communication focusing on its application by companies tend to use qualitative methodologies like literature research; causal studies focusing on consumer perception tend to use a quantitative methodology with the use of questionnaires. On the other hand, investigations focusing on both consumers and companies tend to use a mixed methodology with both qualitative and quantitative research techniques.

Authors	Year	Article	Methodology / Research Techniques
Viererbl & Koch	2022	The paradoxical effects of communicating CSR activities: Why does CSR communication has both positive and negative effects on the perception of a company's social responsibility?	Quantitative methodology: Consumer questionnaire (2x2 between-subjects design)
Howaniec & Kasinski	2021	How To Communicate CSR Activities? Should Companies Communicate Their Social Commitment?	Mixed methodology: Structured interview with a company representative and an online questionnaire for residents of the city where the company operates.
Lock & Schulz-Knappe	2018	Credible corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication predicts legitimacy: evidence from and experimental study	Quantitative methodology: Consumer questionnaire (2x2 between-subjects design)
Crane & Glozer	2016	Researching Corporate Social Responsibility Communication: Themes, Opportunities and Challenges	Qualitative Methodology: Literature Review
Bachmann & Ingenhoff	2016	Legitimacy through CSR disclosures? The advantage outweighs the disadvantages	Quantitative Methodology: Consumer Questionnaire (Single-Factor Between-Groups Design)
Ingenhoff & Sommer	2011	Corporate Social Responsibility Communication - A multi-method approach on stakeholder expectations and managers' intentions	Mixed Methodology: Content analysis of sustainability reports, interviews with company executives, and a questionnaire for potential stakeholders.
Du, Bhattacharya & Sen	2010	Maximizing Business Returns to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): The role of CSR Communication	Qualitative Methodology: Literature Review
Nielsen & Thomsen	2009	CSR communication in small and medium-sized enterprises: a study of the attitudes and beliefs of middle managers	Qualitative Methodology: Semi-structured in-depth interviews

Morsing & Schultz	2008	The 'Catch 22' of communicating CSR: Findings from a Danish study	Mixed Methodology: Online or Telephone Questionnaire to Danish Residents Regarding the Reputation of Danish Companies, and Case Study of Two Danish Companies

Table 2 - Studies on CSR communication and its research methodologies and techniques.

So, to gain an in-depth understanding of companies' intentions, strategies and tools for CSR communication, a qualitative methodology is typically used, often involving literature reviews, interviews, or case studies. In research aiming to measure the impact of CSR communication on consumers and collect their associations and perceptions, a quantitative methodology is commonly employed, primarily utilizing questionnaires. This analysis provides a solid framework for defining a coherent and effective methodology for the present study, which will be explained in the following sections.

In the CSR communication phenomenon, as mentioned before, consumers fall within the realm of perception, while organizations operate within the realm of intention. Thus, to address the defined research problem, it is considered relevant to analyze the perspectives of both consumers and companies comprehensively, in order to fully grasp how CSR communication should be approached for the benefit of both organizations and society.

Taking this into consideration, along with the research problem and the perspectives to be analyzed, the use of a mixed methodology is deemed pertinent in this research. Mixed methodology refers to the process of linking qualitative and quantitative elements to achieve a more comprehensive answer to the research question (Zhang & Creswell, 2013). This integration of quantitative and qualitative methods can occur at any stage of the research process, but it is essential for the rigor of mixed methodology research (Glogowska, 2011).

By using this combination of methods, mixed methodology research "capitalizes on the strengths of qualitative and quantitative research, while mitigating their weaknesses to provide a comprehensive and integrated understanding of the topic under investigation" (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015, p. 3). There are numerous reasons to adopt a mixed methodology, such as corroboration, complementarity, development, initiation, and expansion (Halcomb & Hickman, 2015). In the case of this study, the complementarity of results and the expansion of the depth and scope of the research are the main reasons for adopting this mixed methodology.

3.3. Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

Firstly, it was conducted a qualitative exploratory research using a literature review, presented in the previous chapter. The goal was to better understand the research object, to understand if it is worth developing a full study on it and add new contributions (Swedberg, 2020). Additionally, two more research instruments will be used: interviews with representatives or communication professionals from selected companies and a questionnaire aimed at consumers living in Portugal. It is important to note that this will be a cross-sectional study, where data will be collected at a specific point in time and only once.

The questionnaire to consumers will be conducted on Google Forms and distributed online. To create it, studies presented in the literature review were studied to understand what questions are typically posed to consumers in this type of research. The data obtained will then be analyzed within the Google Forms platform and with the assistance of Excel.

After analyzing various studies conducted on this topic, as presented in Tables 2 and 3 (Viererbl & Koch, 2022; Bachmann & Ingenhoff, 2016; Ingenhoff & Sommer, 2011), it was deemed relevant to conduct a 2x2 between-subjects design survey. In this survey, two of the main influencing factors on the success of CSR communication identified in the exploratory research are manipulated: communication extent (Factor 1: low vs. high extent of CSR communication) and industry type (Factor 2: trusted vs. untrusted industries).

Article	Questionnaire Model	Questions and Concepts in the Questionnaire
Viererbl & Koch (2022)	4 simulations of a fictional company website: 1st: Low extent of CSR communication 2nd: High extent of CSR communication 3rd: Low extent of CSR activities 4th: High extent of CSR activities The questions had their responses in a Likert scale from Completely Disagree to Completely Agree, except the last three.	**Perceived Persuasive Intent:** - "The purpose of this communication is to influence my beliefs about the company's social interaction." **Reactivity:** - "It bothers me that the company presents itself as a role model for social responsibility/social interaction." - "The way the company self-promotes its social responsibility makes me believe the opposite is true." - "The company tried to restrict my personal freedom of choice." **Perception of Social Responsibility:** - "I believe the company is: *interactive/non-interactive; committed/not committed; responsible/not responsible."* **Extent of Communication:** - "To what extent did the company report on its social responsibility?" *(Scale from low communication to high communication)* **Perception of CSR Activities:** - "How many social projects is the company involved in?"
Bachmann & Ingenhoff (2016)	3 different versions of a fictional company website (based on real companies), with low, medium, and high extent of CSR communication. The questions all had responses on a Likert scale from Completely Disagree to Completely Agree.	**Credibility of the Content:** - "I consider all information about the company's CSR to be credible." - "All information about the company's CSR seems trustworthy to me." **Corporate Legitimacy:** - "It seems to me that the company acts consistently with accepted social values and norms." - "In my opinion, the company appears legitimate to me." - "I have the impression that the company complies with social and ecological standards." **Perceived Persuasive Intent:** - "I have the impression that the company wants to convince people of its primary role in CSR." - "The company deliberately tries to persuade others that it is very responsible." - "I think the company tries to persuade others regarding its CSR." **Psychological Reactance:** - "It bothers me that the company presents itself as a role model in terms of CSR." - "Seeing how the company wants me to believe they do their CSR, I am inclined to think the opposite."
Ingenhoff & Sommer (2011)	The questionnaire began asking if the person was familiar with the concept of CSR. Then, a definition was provided to ensure a similar construct for everyone.	*For those who responded that they were familiar with the term:* - What corporate social responsibility activities of companies do you remember? - Interest in the topic. - Sources of information on the subject. *For those who were not familiar with the term:* - Expectations regarding CSR activities.

Table 3 - Description of the questionnaires used in studies on Corporate Social Responsibility Communication.

The survey was then designed so that participants had to read an "About Us" text from a fictitious company's website, which provided information about its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The texts of the companies were constructed using Artificial Intelligence tools, based on other real texts already present on the internet.

Participants will be randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions (see Appendices III to VII):

Scenario A: Limited extent of communication of CSR activities of a fictitious company in an industry with a low reputation. The energy sector was chosen, and the fictitious company "PowerFuel. Solutions" was created, as it is considered the most polluting industry (Climaximo & Greve Climática Estudantil Portugal, 2021).

Scenario B: High extent of communication about CSR activities of the same fictitious company in the energy sector (PowerFuel. Solutions).

Scenario C: Limited extent of communication of CSR activities of a fictitious company in an industry with fewer reputation problems, such as the food sector. The fictitious company "Unity Foods" was created.

Scenario D: High extent of communication of CSR activities of the fictitious company in the food sector (Unity Foods).

In each experimental condition, using a five-point Likert scale (completely disagree-completely agree), we aim to understand the effect of the presented texts on consumers' perception of the company (see Appendix VIII). Factors identified in Table 3 will be measured, such as perceived persuasive intent, psychological reactance, perception of social responsibility, perception of the amount of CSR-related communication, corporate legitimacy, and content credibility (Viererbl & Koch, 2022; Bachmann & Ingenhoff, 2016). At the end of the questionnaire, the respondents are also faced with five last questions regarding sociodemographic data, to better understand the sample collected (see Appendix IX).

The population for this research instrument is consumers residing in Portugal, i.e., those who have greater access to CSR actions by companies operating in Portugal. Within this population, a non-probabilistic convenience and snowball sampling method was employed. The collected sample will be described in the Results chapter.

Finally, it is considered pertinent to conduct individual semi-structured interviews, in writing (via email) or face-to-face (video call). A semi-structured interview combines closed and open-ended questions, meaning there will be a set of questions that serve as a guide, but the interviewee will have the freedom to speak freely on some of the questions. This will allow for more in-depth responses and reflections (Minayo, 2010).

The population was defined as companies belonging to the GRACE network - Responsible Companies, a non-profit business association that operates in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability. Founded in 2000 to respond to the current needs and evolution of CSR, "GRACE is a platform for sharing and supporting companies in structuring their CSR and Sustainability policies, while simultaneously being an influencer of public policies and national and international trends" (GRACE, 2023).

To analyze and understand the objectives, strategies and tools of CSR communication in companies, it is necessary to study companies that actually engage in CSR activities and communicate them, specifically in Portugal. Choosing the GRACE network as the population allows us to segment the universe of organizations with activity in Portugal, ensuring that companies that intend to be socially responsible and demonstrate it will be investigated.

Thus, and in order to have a diversified sample, from the 270 companies associated with GRACE, 20 companies were selected through a non-probabilistic convenience sampling process, representing different sectors of activity and different levels of reputation (Food Industry; Electricity, Gas, and Water; Wholesale or Retail Trade; Financial and Insurance Activities; and Transportation Sector). The selected companies also had to present their CSR efforts on their communication channels (website and/or social media).

To conduct the interviews, representatives of the selected companies will be contacted via email and invited to participate in the research. Attached to the email, it will be sent a document with the interview context and six questions that will guide the interviews. These questions were based on other studies conducted on the same topic, about the main objectives of the company's CSR communication, major challenges, preferred communication channels, success factors and the importance of CSR within the company's strategy (Howaniec & Kasinski, 2021; Ingenhoff & Sommer, 2011; Nielsen & Thomsen, 2009):

Question 1. What are the main reasons/objectives for the company to invest in the communication of its Corporate Social Responsibility?

Question 2. What are the biggest challenges the company faces in communicating its Corporate Social Responsibility?

Question 3. What do you consider to be the success factors for a company's Corporate Social Responsibility communication?

Question 4. Where does Corporate Social Responsibility sit within the company? Which professionals or departments are responsible?

Question 5. What communication channels do you prioritize for communicating CSR?

Question 6. Do you believe that Corporate Social Responsibility Communication plays an important role in the future of companies? If yes, why?

Once the companies have confirmed their participation, interviews with their representatives will be scheduled. The interviews will be recorded for later transcription and analysis in the context of the research topic and problem.

In the end, after analyzing the results obtained in the exploratory research, interviews and the questionnaire, a triangulation process will be conducted to cross-reference evidence. As a result, it is expected to produce a set of guidelines on how to communicate CSR, considering the perspectives of companies, consumers and researchers in the field.

IV. Interviews: Results' Description and Analysis

4.1. Interviews' Sample Description

As aforementioned, 20 companies were contacted, and they were invited to respond to the questions outlined above. Responses were received from 6 companies representing 3 sectors of activity: two companies in the Energy, Electricity, and Gas sector - Galp and EDP; two organizations in Financial and Insurance Activities - BPI and Fidelidade; and two companies in the Food Industry and Wholesale or Retail Trade - Delta and Auchan Retail Portugal.

EDP is an energy company, that started its industrial activity in Portugal more than 40 years ago, and has grown to become a global energy majority and a leader in energy transition. EDP is currently present in 29 markets and has more than nine million electricity and natural gas customers (EDP, 2023). With more than 2.000 employees and more than 870 million euros in profit, EDP is the 2nd company with the best reputation in Portugal (Merco Monitor, 2022).

Galp is also an energy company that explores and produces oil and natural gas, refines and distributes petroleum products, distributes and sells natural gas, and generates and sells electricity (Galp, 2023). With more than six thousand employees and more than 880 million euros in profit, Galp is considered the 6th company with the best reputation in Portugal (Merco Monitor, 2022).

BPI is a Portuguese bank that defines its mission as "contributing to the financial well-being of Customers and the sustainable progress of Society" (BPI, 2023). The company has more than four thousand employees and makes more than 360 million euros in profit. It is considered the 34th company with the best reputation in Portugal (Merco Monitor, 2022).

Fidelidade is an insurance company, operating in Portugal since 1808. From north to south of the country, Fidelidade has a commercial network with more than eight thousand agents, that are part of a team with more than three thousand employees (Fidelidade, 2023). Fidelidade makes more than 270 million euros in profit and is the 33rd company with the best reputation in Portugal (Merco Monitor, 2022).

Delta is a Portuguese food company, focused on the production, innovation and marketing of various coffee products. Delta has more than three thousand employees and makes annually more than 340 million euros in sales (Delta, 2023). With a strong bet on a people-focused vision, it is considered the company with the best reputation in Portugal (Merco Monitor, 2022).

Auchan Retail Portugal is a food retail distribution company with around nine thousand employees and makes more than 30 billion euros in worldwide sales (Auchan Retail Portugal, 2023). With a strong concern about the selection of the products and producers, focusing on costumers' health and well-being, Auchan Retail Portugal is considered the 20th company with the best reputation in Portugal (Merco Monitor, 2022).

All six companies have different products, services and missions, but all of them present a strong CSR communication in some of their channels, such as websites and social media. Thus, the sample is considered relevant to the present investigation.

4.2. Interviews' Results and Analysis

Table 4 to Table 9 provide a summary of the results obtained in the conducted interviews.

edp	EDP Interview Answers				
Reasons for CSRC	**Challenges of CRSC**	**Success Factors**	**Communication Channels**	**Department in the Company**	**Importance for the Future**
Ensuring the future of the company. Attracting and retaining talent. Profit and Purpose always go hand in hand.	Perceived reasons by the public (greenwashing).	Transparency, effectiveness, and engagement of all stakeholders. "They cannot be just statements, (...) part of the company's mission and purpose, its culture."	- Social Media; - Website; - Community platforms, partners, and collaborators.	Departments of Corporate Social Responsibility, Social Impact, and/or Volunteering. But it cuts across all departments of the company.	It reveals the company's purpose, generating more than just profit: engagement with stakeholders and partnership creation.

Table 4 - Summary of company EDP's responses to the interview questions.

galp	Galp Interview Answers				
Reasons for CSRC	**Challenges of CRSC**	**Success Factors**	**Communication Channels**	**Department in the Company**	**Importance for the Future**
Awareness of the company's responsibility and role in the community. Sustainability is the focus of the strategy.	Building collaboration, trust, and closeness with stakeholders. Creating shared value.	There is a clear strategy with social support pillars. Communicating results in a holistic manner throughout the organization. Transparency and a willingness to evolve.	- Corporate website; - Annual reports; - Press releases; - Social media; - Partner channels; - Newsletter and internal corporate website.	Social Impact Department.	Seeking to listen to stakeholders to improve the company's practices and ensure sustainable management of the value chain.

Table 5 - Summary of company Galp's responses to the interview questions.

BPI	BPI Interview Answers				
Reasons for CSRC	**Challenges of CRSC**	**Success Factors**	**Communication Channels**	**Department in the Company**	**Importance for the Future**
Raise stakeholders' awareness of the company's social responsibility efforts. "To make the public aware of the company's purpose, communication is necessary."	Balance: "How much can we communicate before we are perceived as only communicating for reputation reasons?" Effective and targeted communication to communities.	Genuineness and transparency. Consistency between what is done and communicated and the company's values. Organizational culture based on social responsibility values.	- Social Media (major focus); - Television; - Press (minimal investment); - Proximity Communication (Personalized and Local).	Communication and Brand Department, which includes Internal Communication, Content Production, Social Media Management, Sponsorship Management, and External Communication.	CSR can be a differentiating factor in attracting and retaining talent and in building trust with consumers.

Table 6 - Summary of company BPI's responses to the interview questions.

FIDELIDADE	Fidelidade Interview Answers				
Reasons for CSRC	Challenges of CRSC	Success Factors	Communication Channels	Department in the Company	Importance for the Future
Establishing relationships with the community. The company's responsibility to society, as it is a player in society.	Understanding the company's position in the community. Clarifying areas of action. Innovation and differentiation of projects to stand out from others.	True, transparent, humble, but regular communication (in good and bad times). It must be a mirror of the team's and the company's DNA.	- Internal channels: newsletter, internal website, SharePoint, email, intranet, etc. - External channels: website, social media, podcasts.	Department of Institutional Relations. But a holistic vision within the entire company, distributed across all departments.	CSR cannot be a trend; it must be part of the company's DNA and culture. Helping society also contributes to the sustainability of the business.

Table 7 - Summary of company Fidelidade's responses to the interview questions.

DELTA	Delta Interview Answers				
Reasons for CSRC	Challenges of CRSC	Success Factors	Communication Channels	Department in the Company	Importance for the Future
It's part of the company's culture and values. Responsibility taken towards stakeholders.	Ensure communication al impact aligned with the expected transformation. Creating a culture and organic communication positioning.	Engagement in the organization's culture. Strong promotion of a policy of truth and transparency. Support from Internal Communication. Employees as ambassadors and enhancers of the culture.	- Internal Channels: Email, Newsletter, Workshops, meetings, projects, volunteering, and others. - External Channels: Interviews, publications, lectures.	Executive Committee, Environmental Area team, and Social Solidarity Association (Delta Coração). But there's an emphasis on decentralizing Corporate Social Responsibility.	A decisive factor in facilitating talent recruitment and retention. "The purpose, values, and actions of companies are a reflection of their employees."

Table 8 - Summary of company Delta's responses to the interview questions.

Auchan RETAIL PORTUGAL	Auchan Retail Portugal Interview Answers				
Reasons for CSRC	**Challenges of CRSC**	**Success Factors**	**Communication Channels**	**Department in the Company**	**Importance for the Future**
Create a closer relationship with employees, customers, and the community. Respond to the increasing demands of society. "Our company is guided by placing employees at the center of its human project."	Prioritize CSR communication as an integral part of the company's strategy and activities. Consumers are becoming more demanding regarding the social responsibility of companies.	Careful and transparent communication. "Communicate results that, even if not the most impactful, demonstrate the company's path and commitment."	- Internal Communication Platforms - Institutional Website - Press Releases - Sustainability Report - Communication Initiatives with stakeholders.	People, Culture, and Transformation Management in the area of Environmental and Social Corporate Responsibility.	More than for legal reasons. But due to the growing importance of sustainability in our lives. Consumers are increasingly demanding, favoring brands with greater social responsibility.

Table 9 - Summary of company Auchan Retail Portugal's responses to the interview questions.

The interviewed companies, despite operating in different sectors, share numerous similarities. Firstly, they are large organizations with high annual revenues and a number of employees ranging from two thousand to nine thousand. In addition to these corporate characteristics, all six companies have very similar views on the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and its communication, which is expected as they all belong to the previously mentioned GRACE network.

In terms of goals and reasons for communicating their CSR, there is a common recognition of the impact and responsibility that companies have towards society, with CSR serving as a way to offset the impact of the organization's activities on communities and the planet. Additionally, attracting and retaining talent, and creating and maintaining relationships with communities, are other reasons cited by the interviewed companies. Overall, there appears to be a concern for sustainability and the future of the company, which depends on the sustainability and future of society.

Regarding the challenges of communicating their CSR efforts, the responses from the companies align with what is theorized in the CSR Communication Paradox. There is a concern about consumer perception regarding the extent and motives of CSR. In other words, companies are concerned about striking a balance between actions and communication to create a positive organic reputation. Ensuring that all stakeholders understand the company's purpose and creating innovative, differentiated initiatives and projects that stand out in the community, were other challenges mentioned by the interviewees.

So, attempting to answer the initial question: should companies communicate their CSR efforts? According to the culture, mission, and values of the interviewed companies, yes, CSR communication is essential to ensure a sustainable future for organizations and to maintain relationships with their stakeholders. However, this communication presents some challenges that relate to the explained CSR Communication Paradox. Thus, we move to the second part of the research question: if companies should communicate their CSR efforts, then what are the best practices to do so?

All interviewed companies mention transparency as one of the key factors for effectively communicating CSR. Another frequently mentioned success factor is authenticity, i.e., consistency between the company's purpose, values and internal culture with the communicated CSR efforts. This will allow the organization to reduce levels of skepticism from the public. Company representatives also emphasized the importance of engaging with all stakeholders, and this communication should be regular, not just during good times.

From the interview analysis, it also appears that official, formal and institutional communication channels of the company itself and channels related to the communities and stakeholders involved in the initiatives, are favored for communicating CSR efforts. Additionally, the CSR Communication of the six interviewed companies is always located within a department related to External and/or Internal Communication of the organization. However, three out of the six companies mentioned the need to treat CSR in a holistic manner, integrated into the overall communication, marketing, and management strategy of the entire organization.

V. Questionnaire: Results' Description and Analysis

5.1. Questionnaire's Sample

From the valid sample collected (N=343), the majority of respondents are female (81,6%; N=280). Regarding age, 28,3% (N=97) of individuals are from Generation Z (between 18 and 25 years old), 57,1% (N=196) are between 26 and 45 years old (Generation Y), and 14% (N=48) are between 46 and 65 years old (Generation X). Therefore, most of the interviewees are primarily from the younger generations Z and Y (Beresford Research, 2022).

In terms of occupation, the majority of individuals are employed (72%; N=247), with a significant percentage of students (17,2%; N=59) and working students (9,3%; N=32). Regarding their level of education, individuals with higher education predominate (84,5%; N=290), including those with a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree. Regarding monthly personal income (net), 72,6% of respondents (N=249) have an income higher than the Portuguese minimum wage - 760€ (PORDATA, 2023).

Finally, when asked if they were familiar with the concept of Social Responsibility, the majority of respondents (61,2%; N= 210) responded positively. Additionally, 67,6% of consumers showed some degree of interest and recognition for Social Responsibility communication ("Yes, I am quite interested" and "I sometimes come across this type of communication").

5.2. Questionnaire's Results and Analysis

With the described sample, the results of the four different scenarios presented in the questionnaire will be analyzed and are summarized in Tables 10 to 13. It is important to note that the number of responses in each scenario was not balanced, and the number of respondents is indicated in the respective tables. Therefore, for a more accurate analysis, percentage values will be analyzed rather than response frequencies.

Scenario A: PowerFuel. Solutions - Low Extent (N=130; 37,9%)				
Factors	**Agree or Totally Agree**		**Disagree or Totally Disagree**	
	Average Frequency	%	Average Frequency	%
Perception of Persuasive Intent of the Company	105,33	**81,03%**	10,33	7,95%
Psychological Reactance Against the Company	67,50	**51,92%**	29,50	22,69%
Positive Perception of the Company's Social Responsibility	29,50	**22,69%**	62,00	**47,69%**
Corporate legitimacy and Content Credibility	33,33	**25,64%**	60,33	**46,41%**

Table 10 - Results of Scenario A from the Questionnaire.

In an industry with a worst reputation, such as the Energy Sector, a low extent of CSR Communication appears to lead to a very high consumer's perception of persuasive intent (81,03%) and also psychological reactance against the company (51,92%). The results also indicate that it can lead to some negative perceptions of the company's social responsibility efforts and its legitimacy and credibility. As we can see in Table 10, few respondents answered "Agree" or "Totally Agree" to the questions that assessed these factors.

Scenario B: PowerFuel. Solutions - High Extent (N=75; 21,9%)				
Factors	**Agree or Totally Agree**		**Disagree or Totally Disagree**	
	Average Frequency	%	Average Frequency	%
Perception of Persuasive Intent of the Company	57,00	**76,00%**	9,00	2,62%
Psychological Reactance Against the Company	28,00	**37,33%**	26,00	7,58%
Positive Perception of the Company's Social Responsibility	33,00	**44,00%**	24,00	32,00%
Corporate legitimacy and Content Credibility	32,00	**42,67%**	26,67	35,56%

Table 11 - Results of Scenario B from the Questionnaire.

When studying the same company, a high extent of CSR Communication appears to lead to a small decrease of consumer's perception of persuasive intent than a low extent CSR communication (76% compared to 81,03%) but lead to a bigger decrease on the psychological reactance against the company (37,33% comparing to 51,92%). Also, the results indicate that a higher extent of communication helped consumers to have a more positive perception of the company's social responsibility and its corporate legitimacy and credibility.

In summary, a higher extent seems to be important to explain with more detail the CSR efforts of a company with lower levels of reputation, leading to more credibility and legitimacy. And even though the consumers may see this higher extent communication as more persuasive, it appears to be in a not so negative way, because we can see more positive results in consumers' perception of the company's CSR efforts.

Scenario C: Unity Foods - Low Extent (N=92; 26,8%)				
Factors	**Agree or Totally Agree**		**Disagree or Totally Disagree**	
	Average Frequency	%	Average Frequency	%
Perception of Persuasive Intent of the Company	67,00	**72,83%**	15,00	16,30%
Psychological Reactance Against the Company	22,00	23,91%	41,00	**44,57%**
Positive Perception of the Company's Social Responsibility	55,00	**59,78%**	17,00	18,48%
Corporate legitimacy and Content Credibility	50,33	**54,71%**	21,00	22,83%

Table 12 - Results of Scenario C from the Questionnaire.

In the case showed in Table 12, a low extent of communication appears to also lead to a high perception of persuasive intent by the respondents (72,83%). However, even though there's this recognition of persuasive intent, it appears to not originate psychological reactance and to not affect the positive perception of the CSR efforts of the company and corporate legitimacy and credibility.

Scenario D - High Extent (N=46;13,4%)				
Factors	**Agree or Totally Agree**		**Disagree or Totally Disagree**	
	Average Frequency	%	Average Frequency	%
Perception of Persuasive Intent of the Company	39,67	**86,23%**	2,67	5,80%
Psychological Reactance Against the Company	10,50	22,83%	24,50	**53,26%**
Positive Perception of the Company's Social Responsibility	33,00	**71,74%**	4,50	9,78%
Corporate legitimacy and Content Credibility	30,33	**65,94%**	6,33	13,77%

Table 13 - Results of Scenario D from the Questionnaire.

A higher extent of communication by the same company, appears to lead to an even higher perception of persuasive intent by the respondents (86,23%). However, even though there's this recognition of persuasive intent, it appears to create even more positive results on the other factors such as psychological reactance (decreases), perception of legitimacy and credibility and positive perception of the CSR efforts of the company (increases).

We can see that, when comparing the results between low and high extent of CSR communication of the Food Company, there isn't as big of a difference as the comparison between the sceneries of the Energy Company. A higher extent of communication seems to help corporate legitimacy and credibility, the consumers' perception of the CSR and to reduce the reactance against the company. With higher extent of communication respondents identify a bigger persuasive intent of the company. But when connecting all these results, the persuasive intent identified by the consumers doesn't seem to prevent them from acknowledging the CSR efforts of the company.

VI. Discussion

After analyzing all the research results, are we able to answer the initial question? Is it indeed important to communicate a company's CSR efforts? And if so, what can be the best practices to address the CSR Communication Paradox and achieve successful CSR communication?

Firstly, it is important to mention that the perspectives of the different interviewed companies regarding the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility not only share, as previously mentioned, several similarities among themselves but also align with definitions provided by authors such as Schwartz and Carroll (2003), Ihlen *et al.* (2011), Sarkar and Searcy (2016), and Chandler (2016). In particular, the definition from the latter author appears to be most in line with the majority of the interviewed companies' views, as it presents CSR from a holistic perspective, as an integral part of the organization's overall strategy and aligned with its core business (Chandler, 2016).

Additionally, according to the literature review, there is a consensus among researchers regarding the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) communication. On one hand, with increasing social and political pressure, companies need to communicate their efforts to demonstrate an awareness of their significance in society, reduce the impact of their activities on society, and thus contribute to sustainable development. On the other hand, and consequently, communicating their CSR efforts contributes to creating positive perceptions and trust relationships with the company's stakeholders (Viererblr & Koch, 2022; Crane & Glozer, 2016; Ihlen *et al*., 2011).

This recognition of the importance of CSR and its communication is also evident in the questionnaire and interview results. In the conducted survey, the majority of respondents were familiar with the concept of CSR, and 67.6% showed some degree of interest and recognition for CSR communication, citing 152 brands or CSR campaigns they remembered encountering recently.

In the interviews, all the companies, despite being previously selected for already investing in the communication of their CSR efforts, pointed out various reasons for their strong inclination towards Social Responsibility as an integral part of their business management strategy. All the companies acknowledge their responsibility to society, as they are actors with an impact on society. As EDP mentions, profit and purpose (CSR) always go "hand in hand," and this is how the sustainability of the company is ensured. And, as the representative from BPI stated, "communication is necessary for the public to know the company's purpose."

Therefore, the three research instruments used point to a positive answer to the first part of the study's question: it is important to communicate a company's CSR efforts because it can benefit not only the company itself but society as a whole. But how can this communication be done to maximize these benefits and address the paradoxical phenomenon of CSR communication?

Through the literature research it was possible to identify some of the factors that investigators believe influence stakeholders' perception and acceptance of CSR Communication. Understanding and strategizing these factors will help companies combat the CRSC paradox:

- **Type of industry** (Viererblr & Koch, 2022; Aqueveque, C. *et al.*, 2018)**:** if stakeholders perceive an industry as negative or untrustworthy, CSR efforts will hardly contribute to more positive perceptions;

- **Communication Extent** (Viererbl & Koch, 2022; Waddock & Googins, 2011; Morsing, *et al.*, 2008)**:** several studies have concluded that a large extent of communication can lead to negative consequences for companies (see Viererblr & Kosh's model - Figure 1);

- **Motives perceived by stakeholders** (Viererblr & Koch, 2022; Du *et al.*, 2010)**:** when stakeholders identify intrinsic reasons, this leads to a positive reaction about the company's character. On the contrary, perceptions of extrinsic motives by stakeholders lead to a more negative attitude towards the company;

- **Stakeholders' participation** (Morsing & Schultz, 2006)**:** a joint construction of the CSR communication through dialogue between the company and its stakeholders is the most interesting and beneficial for both parts;

- **Message Content and Communication Channels** (Du *et al*., 2010)**:** importance of internal, corporate and independent channels to create better results.

Some of the ideas mentioned by the researchers studied are also mentioned by the representatives of the interviewed companies. The concern for a balance between CSR actions and their communication (communication extent); transparency, genuineness, and coherence between the company's purpose and its actions (which influence consumers' perceived motives); and engagement and regular communication with all stakeholders (internal and external), which, according to Morsing and Schultz (2006), results in a joint value creation that benefits the company, consumers, the community, and society as a whole.

In terms of communication channels, the interview results also align with the ideas presented by Du *et al*. (2010). Regarding external channels, there is a greater emphasis on institutional websites, sustainability reports, press releases, and, especially, a focus on communication through partners' channels to lend greater credibility and authenticity to the company's CSR efforts.

Both the literature review (Du *et al*., 2010) and the interviews emphasize the importance of internal channels, such as internal websites, newsletters, email, workshops, etc. In the interviews, it becomes even more apparent how much importance these organizations attribute to internal stakeholders. Specifically, BPI, Fidelidade, Delta, and Auchan Retail Portugal mention that a company's Social Responsibility must stem from the creation of an internal culture, with a purpose and values that will then guide the company's CSR efforts. Additionally, for these organizations, employees are seen as brand ambassadors. Therefore, they should be the first to be informed and should be invited to participate in the creation process of the company's CSR strategy. This demonstrates the importance of Internal Communication and its connection to Corporate and Social Responsibility Communication.

Now focusing on the questionnaire, it allowed the study of the relationship between two main factors mentioned in the literature review - communication extent and company reputation. The results may help companies understand how the extent of communication of their CSR efforts affects consumers' perception, considering the reputation of their industry.

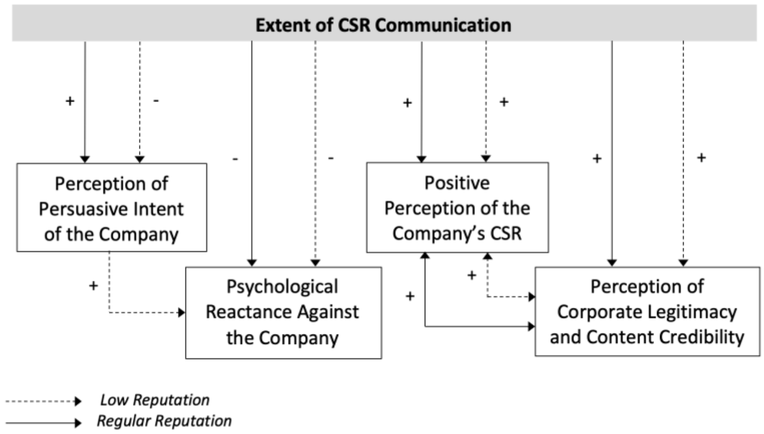

Figure 6 - Conceptual model of the relationship between the extent of CSR communication and the various factors studied in the questionnaire in low and regular reputation industries.

Figure 6 is a proposal of a model that summarizes the results obtained in the conducted questionnaire. According to it, when it comes to a company operating in an industry with reputation problems, increasing the extent of CSR communication reduces the perception of persuasive intent and psychological reactance against the company, while also enhancing the positive perception of the company's CSR efforts and its legitimacy and credibility.

In the case of a company in an industry with normal or higher levels of reputation, increasing the extent of CSR communication, despite reducing psychological reactance against the company, increases the perception of its persuasive intent. Similar to the previous model, increasing the extent also enhances the positive perception of the company's CSR efforts and its legitimacy and credibility. These proposed models, especially the first one, bear many similarities to the CSR dilemma model (see Fig. 4) postulated by Bachmann and Ingenhoff (2016).

Thus, we can understand that increasing the extent of communication may raise consumer skepticism except for lower reputation sectors, where a higher extent of CSR disclosure may seem to help consumers to better understand their CSR efforts, as it lowers the perception of persuasive intent and psychological reactance. However, other factors mentioned by researchers and interviewed companies are essential in managing the extent factor to achieve the best possible results. These include content and channels used, stakeholder engagement, transparency and authenticity, among others already mentioned.

VII. Conclusions

The mixed methodology chosen allowed us to better understand the paradoxical dilemma of CSR Communication and the multiple factors associated with it. Even though each instrument of research can have several limitations, by crossing all information gathered in the exploratory research with the survey and interviews results, we are able to produce a set of guidelines on how companies should approach CSR Communication, considering the perspectives of companies, consumers and researchers.

Here are six guidelines that can help companies everywhere from all different backgrounds, sector and purposes, to combat the CSR Communication Paradox:

1) Holistic View of CSR within the company: Corporate Social Responsibility involves various areas such as management, ethics, politics, public relations, etc. So even though companies should have some departments focused on CSR, their strategy should involve all parts of the company.

2) Start with the Company's Culture: Social Responsibility is created first within the company. Employees are the best ambassadors so they should be up to date with the company's CSR efforts and feel that they are a part of it.

3) Alignment between the organization's rhetoric and practice: companies shouldn't just say it, they have to believe, be it and actually do it. Communication has to be true, transparent and genuine.

4) Be aware of the Communication Extent: there's a fine line between informing and bragging. Consumers value information and transparency, however it should be cohesive with the company's culture, regular and be focused on the good that comes from the CSR efforts, and not the company itself.

5) Stakeholders' participation is the key: companies should involve their different stakeholders throughout the whole process, in order to create shared value and limit negative reactance.

6) Innovation: CSR has become a topic very popular on today's social and political agenda. Every company worried about their future and connection to their stakeholders is betting on communicating their CSR efforts. So, companies have to start to be more innovative to create more meaningful and impactful campaigns, without forgetting all the topics above.

As mentioned before, the mixed methodology allowed us to bypass many limitations of the instrument of research. However, there were still research procedures and analysis that could have been more complete and richer. For example, the questionnaire results could have undergone further analysis using software like SPSS, to increase accuracy of the data and of the model created (Image 3), and also compare differences between sociodemographic factors such as sex, age and academic qualifications.

The usage of a questionnaire also has a lot of limitations, such as infeasibility to verify the truthfulness or clarify the context of the responses and the need to design a questionnaire with a reasonable or reduced number of questions to obtain a higher response rate. So, a focus group could have been a good alternative to obtain more in-depth data.

In terms of the company's interviews, many of them were conducted via email. This led to a reduction of some of the advantages of interviews, which decreased the flexibility and the ability to adapt according to the social dynamics between the researcher and the interviewee. With the possibility, in-person and in-depth semi-structured interviews would have been ideal.

For future studies, it would be interesting to study real case studies of CSR Communication of companies, successful and not successful, to identify what was done correctly and confirm the guidelines originated by the present study. Additionally, as mentioned before, Internal Communication and Organizational Culture appear to have a deep connection to CSR and its disclosures. Hence, it could be interesting to research the link between a well-established Internal Culture and successful CSR Communication.

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Appendices

Appendix I. Questionnaire Introduction

Comunicação da Responsabilidade Social das Empresas

O presente questionário insere-se no âmbito do desenvolvimento da Dissertação de **Mestrado em Marketing e Comunicação, do Politécnico de Coimbra**, com o objetivo de estudar a **Comunicação da Responsabilidade Social das Empresas**. Para obter o seu contributo, solicitamos que assinale a resposta que julgar mais correta ou apropriada em relação a cada uma das perguntas. Note que a participação no presente estudo é voluntária, não existem respostas certas ou erradas e a informação fornecida é estritamente confidencial e anónima.

Para qualquer esclarecimento, por favor contacte: barbara.cam.costa@gmail.com.

barbara.cam.costa@gmail.com Mudar de conta

Não partilhado

* Indica uma pergunta obrigatória

Aceito de livre vontade participar neste estudo e permito a utilização dos dados que de forma voluntária forneço, confiando em que apenas serão utilizados para esta investigação, garantindo o anonimato. *

- Aceito participar no estudo
- Não aceito participar no estudo

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Appendix II. Questionnaire Section 1 with questions regarding consumers knowledge of Corporate Social Responsibility concept.

Responsabilidade Social Corporativa

Esta secção pretende avaliar o seu conhecimento do conceito de Responsabilidade Social Corporativa (RSC). Responda com as opções que considera corretas de acordo com a sua experiência pessoal.

Está familiarizado com o conceito de Responsabilidade Social? *

- Sim
- Não
- Mais ou Menos

Se respondeu sim, costuma acompanhar a comunicação da Responsabilidade Social das empresas/marcas que segue?

- Sim, interessa-me bastante.
- Por vezes deparo-me com esse tipo de comunicação.
- Não é um assunto que acompanhe.

Se respondeu "sim" ou "por vezes" à última questão, qual a última comunicação de Responsabilidade Social de uma empresa que se recorda?

A sua resposta

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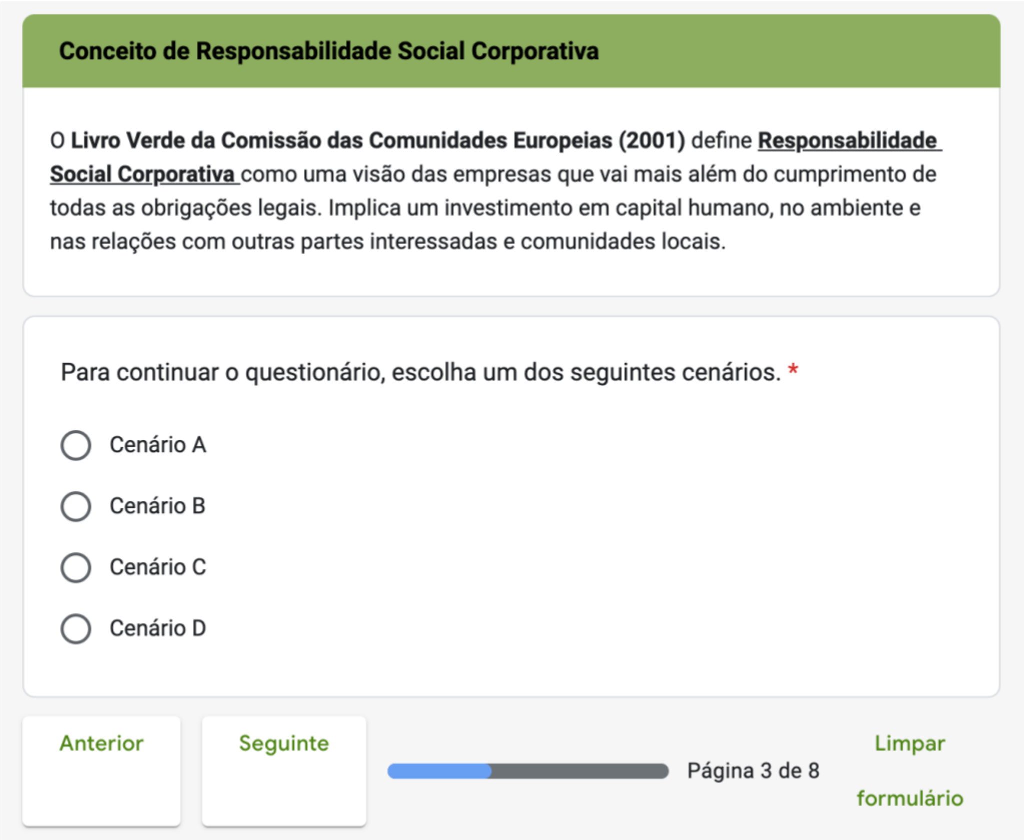
Appendix III. Questionnaire Section 2 where respondents had to choose between four scenarios to continue.



Conceito de Responsabilidade Social Corporativa

O **Livro Verde da Comissão das Comunidades Europeias (2001)** define **Responsabilidade Social Corporativa** como uma visão das empresas que vai mais além do cumprimento de todas as obrigações legais. Implica um investimento em capital humano, no ambiente e nas relações com outras partes interessadas e comunidades locais.

Para continuar o questionário, escolha um dos seguintes cenários. *

- Cenário A
- Cenário B
- Cenário C
- Cenário D

Anterior

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Appendix IV. Questionnaire Scenario A - low extent of communication of CSR activities of fictitious company PowerFuel. Solutions.

Cenário A - Empresa PowerFuel. Solutions

Analise o seguinte texto presente no website institucional da empresa fictícia PowerFuel. Solutions.

PowerFuel. Solutions - a sua parceira de confiança em soluções de energia

*Somos uma empresa de energia comprometida em fornecer **soluções de energia confiáveis, eficientes e sustentáveis** de forma a ajudar os nossos clientes a atingir os seus objetivos de negócio.*

Os nossos Serviços

*O nosso serviço passa pelo **fornecimento de combustível**, seja para uso em veículos, equipamentos ou geração de energia. Oferecemos ainda um serviço complementar de **gestão de frotas**, de forma a auxiliar a eficiência, otimização e sustentabilidade do negócio dos nossos clientes.*

Compromisso Social e Ambiental

*Na **PowerFuel. Solutions**, trabalhamos diariamente para fornecer produtos e serviços de excelência para os nossos clientes. Procuramos manter-nos à frente das tendências do mercado, garantindo sempre um alto padrão de segurança e sustentabilidade em todas as nossas operações. Acreditamos que a responsabilidade social é um aspeto fundamental da nossa identidade. **Estamos comprometidos em fazer a diferença nas comunidades onde operamos e em contribuir para um futuro mais sustentável e próspero para todos.***

Appendix V. Questionnaire Scenario B - high extent of communication of CSR activities of fictitious company PowerFuel. Solutions.

Cenário B - Empresa PowerFuel. Solutions

Analise o seguinte texto presente no website institucional da empresa fictícia PowerFuel. Solutions.

PowerFuel. Solutions - a sua parceira de confiança em soluções de energia

Somos uma empresa de energia comprometida em fornecer soluções de energia confiáveis, eficientes e sustentáveis de forma a ajudar os nossos clientes a atingir os seus objetivos de negócio.

Os nossos Serviços

*O nosso serviço passa pelo **fornecimento de combustível**, seja para uso em veículos, equipamentos ou geração de energia. Oferecemos ainda um serviço complementar de **gestão de frotas**, de forma a auxiliar a eficiência, otimização e sustentabilidade do negócio dos nossos clientes.*

Compromisso Social e Ambiental

*Na **PowerFuel. Solutions**, trabalhamos diariamente para fornecer produtos e serviços de excelência para os nossos clientes. Procuramos manter-nos à frente das tendências do mercado, garantindo sempre um alto padrão de segurança e sustentabilidade em todas as nossas operações. Acreditamos que a responsabilidade social é um aspeto fundamental da nossa identidade. Estamos comprometidos em fazer a diferença nas comunidades onde operamos e em contribuir para um futuro mais sustentável e próspero para todos.*

Levamos a sério a saúde e a segurança de nossos funcionários, bem como a minimização do impacto ambiental de nossas operações. Procuramos continuamente formas de reduzir nossas emissões de carbono para ajudar a mitigar as mudanças climáticas.

Trabalhamos, também, ativamente no apoio às comunidades locais onde operamos. As nossas contribuições incluem patrocínios para programas educacionais e culturais, para instituições de caridade locais ou apoios a iniciativas de desenvolvimento comunitário.

*Na **PowerFuel. Solutions** implementamos diariamente um conjunto de medidas na nossa cadeia de valor de forma a diminuir a nossa pegada ambiental.*

Distribuição e Logística: *Otimização da logística de transporte para reduzir as emissões de carbono, por meio da utilização de rotas mais eficientes, veículos de baixo consumo de combustível e/ou veículos elétricos.*

Uso de Combustíveis: *Promoção e conscientização do consumo responsável de combustíveis e de práticas de condução eficiente para maximizar a eficiência e reduzir as emissões de gases de efeito estufa.*

Descarte e Reciclagem: *Implementação de programas de descarte adequado de resíduos e reciclagem de materiais, como embalagens de combustíveis e lubrificantes, visando a minimização do impacto ambiental. O grande objetivo é criar uma economia circular, com a reciclagem e reutilização de subprodutos e resíduos gerados nas operações.*

Essas preocupações de sustentabilidade são fundamentais para a PowerFuel Solutions. Trabalhamos diariamente para aprimorar as nossas práticas e investir em soluções mais limpas e sustentáveis em todas as etapas da sua cadeia de valor, com o objetivo de minimizar o impacto da nossa atividade.

Appendix VI. Questionnaire Scenario C - low extent of communication of CSR activities of fictitious company Unity Foods.

Cenário C - Unity Foods

Analise o seguinte texto presente no website institucional da empresa fictícia Unity Foods.

Unity Foods - Sabores que unem, qualidade que conquista

Somos uma empresa dedicada a fornecer alimentos deliciosos e de alta qualidade em todo o mundo. Desde a nossa fundação, estamos comprometidos em fornecer aos nossos clientes produtos alimentares frescos e saudáveis, preparados com os melhores ingredientes e com um sabor inigualável.

Os nossos Produtos

Desde frutas frescas e vegetais até grãos integrais e proteínas de origem responsável, trabalhamos diariamente para oferecer opções deliciosas e equilibradas para uma dieta saudável. A nossa linha de produtos abrange uma variedade de alimentos, incluindo snacks, refeições prontas, produtos congelados e ingredientes para o dia a dia.

Compromisso Social e Ambiental

*Na Unity Foods acreditamos que a comida é uma fonte de alegria e prazer, e um componente crucial para a saúde e bem-estar. É por isso que a nossa missão é **criar alimentos nutritivos, deliciosos e acessíveis a todos**.*

*Acreditamos também que podemos fazer a diferença de forma positiva ao trabalharmos de forma responsável e sustentável em todas as etapas da nossa cadeia de valor. **Estamos empenhados em causar um impacto positivo nas nossas comunidades e no meio ambiente.** Trabalhamos em estreita colaboração com fornecedores locais e promovemos práticas de agricultura sustentável para proteger os recursos naturais e apoiar os agricultores locais.*

Procuramos ativamente maneiras de minimizar nosso impacto ambiental. Desde a escolha de embalagens sustentáveis e recicláveis até a implementação de práticas de produção responsáveis, estamos comprometidos em reduzir a nossa pegada ecológica e contribuir para um futuro mais sustentável.

Appendix VII. Questionnaire Scenario D - high extent of communication of CSR activities of fictitious company Unity Foods.

Cenário D - Unity Foods

Analise o seguinte texto presente no website institucional da empresa fictícia Unity Foods.

Unity Foods - Sabores que unem, qualidade que conquista

Somos uma empresa dedicada a fornecer alimentos deliciosos e de alta qualidade em todo o mundo. Desde a nossa fundação, estamos comprometidos em fornecer aos nossos clientes produtos alimentares frescos e saudáveis, preparados com os melhores ingredientes e com um sabor inigualável.

Os nossos Produtos

Desde frutas frescas e vegetais até grãos integrais e proteínas de origem responsável, trabalhamos diariamente para oferecer opções deliciosas e equilibradas para uma dieta saudável. A nossa linha de produtos abrange uma variedade de alimentos, incluindo snacks, refeições prontas, produtos congelados e ingredientes para o dia a dia.

Compromisso Social e Ambiental

Na Unity Foods acreditamos que a comida é uma fonte de alegria e prazer, e um componente crucial para a saúde e bem-estar. É por isso que a nossa missão é criar alimentos nutritivos, deliciosos e acessíveis a todos. Acreditamos também que podemos fazer a diferença de forma positiva ao trabalharmos de forma responsável e sustentável em todas as etapas da nossa cadeia de valor.

A nossa equipa move-se pela paixão de fornecer alimentos saudáveis e deliciosos para todos. Valorizamos a transparência, a qualidade e a satisfação dos nossos clientes. Estamos sempre atentos às necessidades e preferências dos consumidores, oferecendo produtos saborosos, confiáveis e alinhados com um estilo de vida saudável.

Estamos empenhados em causar um impacto positivo nas nossas comunidades e no meio ambiente. Trabalhamos em estreita colaboração com fornecedores locais e promovemos práticas de agricultura sustentável para proteger os recursos naturais e apoiar os agricultores locais.

Procuramos ativamente maneiras de minimizar nosso impacto ambiental. Desde a escolha de embalagens sustentáveis e recicláveis até a implementação de práticas de produção responsáveis, estamos comprometidos em reduzir a nossa pegada ecológica e contribuir para um futuro mais sustentável:

Produção: *Uso de práticas agrícolas sustentáveis e gestão responsável dos recursos naturais, como água e solo, através de técnicas de conservação e uso eficiente. Estabelecimento de parcerias com fornecedores que compartilham os valores de sustentabilidade e responsabilidade ambiental da Unity Foods.*

Embalagem: *Utilização de embalagens sustentáveis e recicláveis, preferencialmente feitas de materiais renováveis. Redução do uso de plástico e adoção de materiais alternativos de baixo impacto ambiental.*

Logística e Transporte: *Otimização da cadeia de abastecimento para minimizar distâncias percorridas e reduzir as emissões de carbono associadas ao transporte. Utilização de veículos eficientes em termos de consumo de combustível e/ou adesão a programas de transporte verde.*

Pós-venda e Descarte: *Implementação de práticas de gestão de resíduos, como reciclagem e compostagem, para minimizar o desperdício e promover a economia circular. Educação e conscientização dos consumidores sobre a importância da redução de resíduos e a adoção de práticas sustentáveis em suas rotinas alimentares.*

Envolvimento com a Comunidade: *Participação ativa em projetos e iniciativas comunitárias relacionadas à segurança alimentar, educação nutricional e acesso a alimentos saudáveis. Colaboração com organizações locais e internacionais para apoiar iniciativas sociais, como programas de combate à fome e nutrição infantil.*

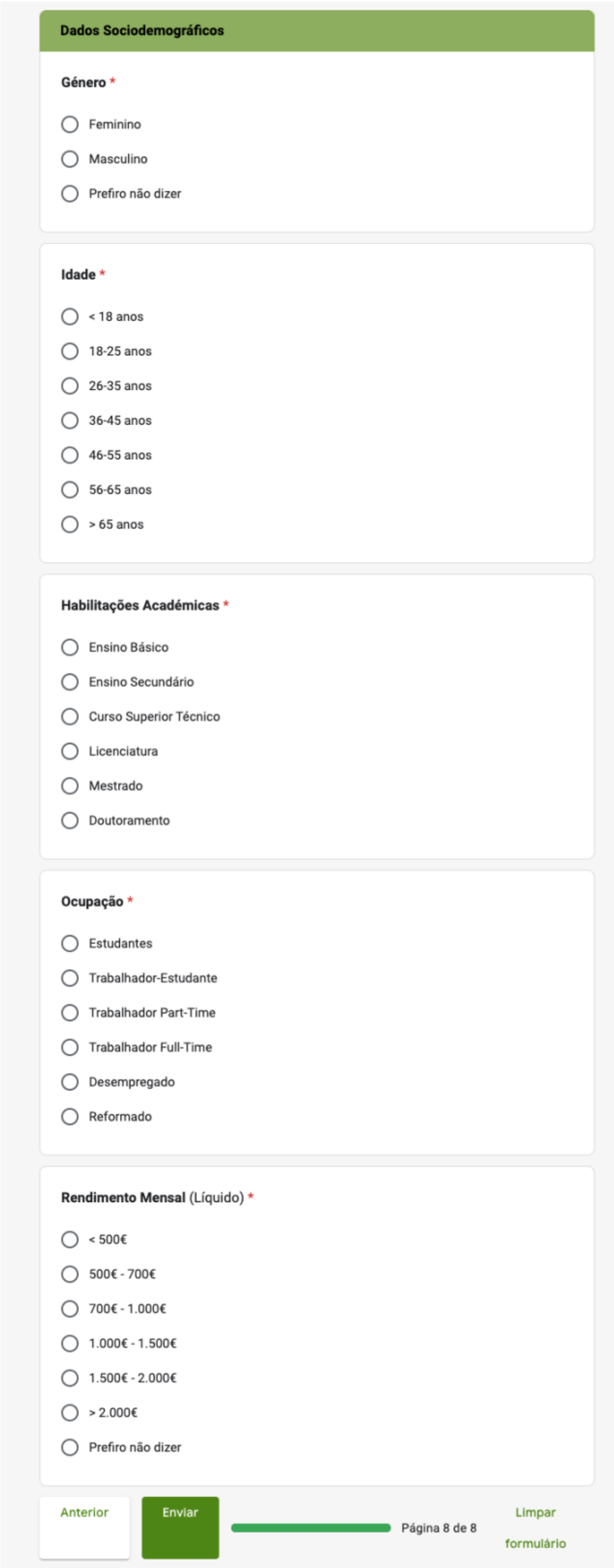
Junte-se a nós nessa jornada de sabores unidos à qualidade e compromisso com a responsabilidade social e ambiental.

Appendix VIII. Questionnaire's questions presented after the text of each scenario.

Classifique, segundo a sua opinião, as seguintes afirmações numa escala de "Discordo Totalmente" a "Concordo Totalmente": *

	Discordo Totalmente	Discordo	Não concordo nem discordo	Concordo	Concordo Totalmente
1. Considero credível toda a informação sobre a Responsabilidade Social da empresa.	○	○	○	○	○
2. Toda a informação sobre a Responsabilidade Social da empresa parece-me fidedigna.	○	○	○	○	○
3. Parece-me que a empresa atua de forma consistente com valores e normas da sociedade.	○	○	○	○	○
4. Na minha opinião, a empresa parece-me ser legítima.	○	○	○	○	○
5. Tenho a impressão que a empresa cumpre com standards sociais e ecológicos.	○	○	○	○	○
6. Considero que a empresa quer convencer as pessoas do seu papel ativo de Responsabilidade Social.	○	○	○	○	○
7. A empresa tenta deliberadamente convencer os outros que é responsável.	○	○	○	○	○
8. Considero que a empresa tenta persuadir os outros em respeito à sua Responsabilidade Social..	○	○	○	○	○
9. Incomoda-me que a empresa se apresente como um exemplo a seguir em termos de Responsabilidade Social.	○	○	○	○	○
10. Vendo a forma como a empresa quer me fazer acreditar nas suas atividades de Responsabilidade Social, sinto-me inclinado a pensar o oposto.	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix IX. Questionnaire's sociodemographic questions.



Dados Sociodemográficos

Género *

- Feminino
- Masculino
- Prefiro não dizer

Idade *

- < 18 anos
- 18-25 anos
- 26-35 anos
- 36-45 anos
- 46-55 anos
- 56-65 anos
- > 65 anos

Habilitações Académicas *

- Ensino Básico
- Ensino Secundário
- Curso Superior Técnico
- Licenciatura
- Mestrado
- Doutoramento

Ocupação *

- Estudantes
- Trabalhador-Estudante
- Trabalhador Part-Time
- Trabalhador Full-Time
- Desempregado
- Reformado

Rendimento Mensal (Líquido) *

- < 500€
- 500€ - 700€
- 700€ - 1.000€
- 1.000€ - 1.500€
- 1.500€ - 2.000€
- > 2.000€
- Prefiro não dizer

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