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Laranjeiro**

**O Desafio da comunicação da Responsabilidade
Social Corporativa: O Caso da Coca-Cola**

**The Challenge of Communicating Corporate Social
Responsibility: The Case of Coca-Cola**



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Dissertação apresentada à Universidade de Aveiro para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Marketing, realizada sob a orientação científica da Professora Doutora Susana Regina Bacelar de Vasconcelos Marques, Professora Adjunta do Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração da Universidade de Aveiro.

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palavras-chave

Responsabilidade Social Corporativa, RSC, RSC Aspiracional, Valor Partilhado, Marketing Crítico, Coca-Cola

resumo

A comunicação de responsabilidade social empresarial tem vindo a sofrer alterações ao longo dos últimos anos, tendo evoluído para um novo paradigma de valor partilhado pelas empresas e sociedade, através do qual se sugere uma atividade económica lucrativa da qual possam também surgir benefícios a nível social e de progresso societal.

Neste contexto, o presente trabalho averigua os desafios, tensões e complexidades da comunicação da responsabilidade social empresarial usando como caso de estudo a empresa Coca-Cola, através de uma perspetiva de marketing crítico. Representa uma investigação realizada através de métodos qualitativos de pesquisa secundária e primária, que se traduziram na análise dos relatórios de sustentabilidade da empresa bem como de um documentário de investigação jornalística e ainda das evidências de entrevistas a consumidores.

Assim, através de uma triangulação dos dados, foi possível determinar as divergências e tensões entre as três perspetivas – empresa, media e consumidores – e concluiu-se que, embora se sugira que os consumidores possuam perceções positivas acerca da comunicação de responsabilidade social, a emergência por questões de sustentabilidade na sociedade pode levar à manipulação e sugestões de performance ambiental desfasadas da realidade, comunicadas através de documentos como, por exemplo, relatórios empresariais e/ou anúncios de produto, situação essa que está sob a cobertura dos media.

keywords

Corporate Social Responsibility, CSR, Aspirational CSR, Shared Value, Critical Marketing, Coca-Cola

abstract

The communication of Corporate Social Responsibility has undergone changes in recent years. It has evolved into a new paradigm of shared value between companies and society; one that suggests that it is possible for companies to engage in profitable activities which provide for benefits on a social level.

Given this context, this work explores the challenges, tensions and complexities of the communication of corporate social responsibility, using The Coca-Cola Company as a case study and from a critical marketing perspective. The study involved qualitative methods of secondary and primary research based on an analysis of the company's sustainability reports, a journalistic investigatory documentary and evidence from consumer interviews.

A triangulation of the resulting data made it possible to determine the divergences and tensions between the three perspectives – company, media and consumers. This then allowed the conclusion that, although consumer perceptions of the communication of corporate social responsibility are positive, the emergence of sustainability issues in society can lead to manipulations and suggestions of unreal environmental performance, communicated through documents as sustainability reports and/or product advertisements, a situation that has attracted the attention of the media.

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List of Abbreviations

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CP	Corporate Philanthropy
CSI	Corporate Social Initiatives
CSO	Chief Sustainability Officer
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CSV	Creating Shared Value
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
GPAP	Global Plastic Action Partnership
IMC	Integrated Marketing Communications
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NPO	Non-profit Organisations
PAC	Public Affair and Communications
PET	Polyethylene Terephthalate
PRAISE	Packaging and Recycling Association for Indonesia Sustainable Environment
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Nowadays, consumers are more likely to choose brands that actively communicate sustainable aspects of their products and themselves (Houlihan & Harvey, 2018), a situation that creates a growing need for companies to keep up with this type of external pressure. Furthermore, not only does awareness of environmental impact rise but so does the impact of products on consumers' lifestyles. In fact, the trend of being conscious and self-aware of everything that is being consumed does not need to be thoroughly investigated in order to acknowledge that it exists and is on the rise.

With this in mind, companies continuously commission ads and publicity to convince the public about how eco-friendly they are (Jeevan, 2014), since this is the aspect that may differentiate them from the competition or put them under the spotlight. Marketing, as a concept, shifts from the traditional model, that defines it as an activity in which sales and market share matter the most, to a new paradigm, under which it is approached as a more humane activity, where value, utility and environmental impact are constantly considered (Khan & Rafat, 2015). The green consumer, once not that easy to find, claims a presence in the market and becomes one of the most important variables in the achievement of market success.

Consequently, companies must now take their environmental impact and the green level of their products more seriously, in order to not be left behind and to thrive economically. To satisfy their consumers, a lot of manufacturers have taken significant steps aimed at making their products and their companies "greener". They then communicate this strongly through a Corporate Social Responsibility posture.

However, since the 1960s, more attention has been given to the "dark side of marketing" (Tadajewski & Brownie, 2008). From a sustainability perspective, many companies started to characterize their products as "green" and "eco-friendly", but

only as a marketing strategy to increase sales and profit (Jeevan, 2014). The approach adopted by sellers and corporations seems to be to shade out the negative, while blindly empowering the positive. This is usually called greenwashing.

1.1. Research Study

Anchored in the current literature, this dissertation aims to explore the phenomenon of the corporate communication of social responsibility. More specifically, it will prospect and analyse the implications, challenges and tensions firms may face when they opt to communicate sustainability in a society where this type of communication can be targeted from several perspectives. The work of the study took the form of a case study of The Coca-Cola Company, from a critical marketing perspective, and involved analysing three distinct perspectives: that of the company, that of the media and that of the consumer. The methodological approach taken is to triangulate the data from multiple sources to provide a basis for the final discussion.

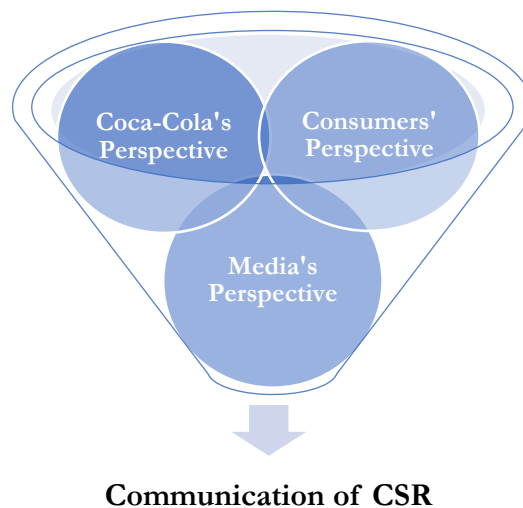


Figure 1. Research study scheme.
Source: study author.

1.2. Justification for the Research

A personal objective of mine has always been to contribute to the evolution of sustainability studies in marketing. Initial research into this area brought up a number of companies, including Coca-Cola, which was often related to effective shared value initiatives or, in contrast, greenwashing practices. Examples include recognition of the company's positive performance in places such as Brazil (Shared Value Initiative, n.d.), or public callouts of the negative environmental effects of its business activity in other parts of the world (Sauven, 2017).

With this in mind, it seemed important to address this type of case, to better understand the phenomenon of corporate communication of good environmental, social and economic performance versus the actual performance of the company. This dual and complex theme engenders issues of transparency and credibility.

Additionally, given the specifications and particularities of these issues, it was determined that this dissertation would adopt an analysis from a critical marketing point of view. This would allow for the exploration of the above-mentioned issues, whilst incorporating the perspectives of the company and those of its various different stakeholders.

1.3. Objectives

The main objective of this dissertation, to be achieved through the application of the methods proposed in **Chapter 3. Methodology**, is to analyse the phenomenon of corporate communication of social responsibility, while exploring the specific example of The Coca-Cola Company. The study scrutinises a previously noticed existing duality between the communication of environmentally friendly practices regarding its packaging and plastic waste and the implications that emerge when internal activities indicate otherwise. Specifically, the work will explore the tensions between different stakeholder's perspectives and, through a cross-analysis, help explain why corporate social responsibility is such a complex phenomenon.

1.4. Dissertation Structure

Following this introduction, **Chapter 2. Literature Review** provides an essential overview of the theoretical basis for this investigation. It starts by defining corporate social responsibility and philanthropy, the concept of shared value, and, given that the study focuses on communication practices, it will also cover the concepts of aspirational corporate social responsibility, misleading marketing and greenwashing. Academic insights into critical marketing, the main underlying theme of the study, will also be presented.

The study itself will be described in **Chapter 3. Methodology**, which addresses the grounds for and methods of data collection and the way in which the empirical work was conducted.

Chapter 4. Findings will detail the results obtained from the study and the main conclusions drawn, in the light of the proposed objectives, by creating a connection between the threads of evidence gathered during the empirical research.

Lastly, **Chapter 5. Final Considerations** will contain the study's main conclusions, its main managerial implications, limitations and suggestions for further research. The dissertation structure is shown in **Figure 2** below.



Figure 2. Dissertation structure.
Source: own elaboration.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

As stated earlier, this chapter will provide the concepts necessary to fully understand the research methodology and research study objectives. It is divided into five sections:

- The first section will introduce the concept of corporate social responsibility;
- Section two will focus on corporate philanthropy and shared value;
- Section three will describe the merge between the concept of CSR and marketing communications;
- Section four will explore ethical issues that may result from it, namely on the universe of misleading marketing;
- Lastly, section five will provide notions of critical marketing.

2.1. Defining Corporate Social Responsibility

“Despite beneficial innovations, inspiring personalities and societal progress, many negative human-induced impacts like climate change, ruthless urbanization, loss of biodiversity, destructive resource extraction, waste, and so forth have happened as well” (Jankov, 2013, p.10). In this context, the need for sustainability is constantly increasing. Individuals are becoming more aware of it as time goes by, and this rising level of awareness seems to be continuously influencing purchasing behaviour. From an economical survival point of view, corporations must constantly search for new strategies to satisfy consumers’ needs and demands, that are substantially more aligned with “green” causes.

According to Galpin, Whittington and Bell (2015) “Sustainability has become the strategic imperative of the new millennium. The phrases sustainability, corporate social responsibility, corporate social performance, going green and the “triple bottom line” all refer to organizations enhancing their long-term economic, social and

environmental performance” (p.1). Within this determination, the concept suggests that there is a possibility for it to be fully incorporated into a business strategy. In this scope, companies have started to implement sustainability into their daily activities, in a practice called Corporate Social Responsibility.

As said by Frederick (2018) Corporate Social Responsibility (henceforth also addressed as CSR) “occurs when a business firm consciously and deliberately acts to enhance the social well-being of those whose lives are affected by the firm’s economic operations” (p.4). It involves companies that deliberately incorporate their positive environmental and social aspects into their businesses and stakeholders communication (Mickels, 2009) and it means that company’s managers and owners are not only responsible for the financial management and legal aspects of their activity, but, in some aspects, they are also responsible for the society as a whole (Piasecki & Gudowski, 2017).

To completely integrate CSR into its business practices and policies, companies “should have in place a process to integrate social, environmental, ethical human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy in close collaboration with their stakeholders” (European Commission, 2012).

With this in mind, it is possible to understand that these terms support a premise of a balanced society, in which business is positively incorporated and firms are important contributors to social progress.

However, as stated by Piasecki and Gudowski (2017) the concept of CSR varies widely, given that “it depends on social norms, cultural factors and the level of economic advancement” (p.147). Nonetheless, a particularly important characteristic of it is that it attempts to move away from exclusively prioritizing the maximization of profits (Piasecki & Gudowski, 2017). With this in mind, the concept suggests contributing positively to society, without specifically bearing in mind profits that may emerge from that practice.

Though there is not a particular right definition for the term, Carroll (1991) defends a perspective on which there are four main corporate responsibilities:

- An economic responsibility that concerns activities related to providing satisfaction to consumer's needs, compensation to its employees, creation of jobs and helping the overall economy, as well as performing as the global capitalism requires, have profit;
- A legal responsibility, that includes the duty of obeying the law and regulations on its field of activity, such as particularities related to taxes, safety of consumers, etc.;
- An ethical responsibility, that regards the actions of not causing harm, "doing the right thing" and making efforts to reduce or not be involved in practices such as child labour, waste, etc., as it is expected from its stakeholders;
- A philanthropic responsibility, which includes the actions that are "beyond" all other responsibilities, such as making donations to charity and participating in projects that "enhance a community's quality of life" and do what is desired by global stakeholders.

From these definitions, the author constructed the Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility, illustrated in **Figure 3**.

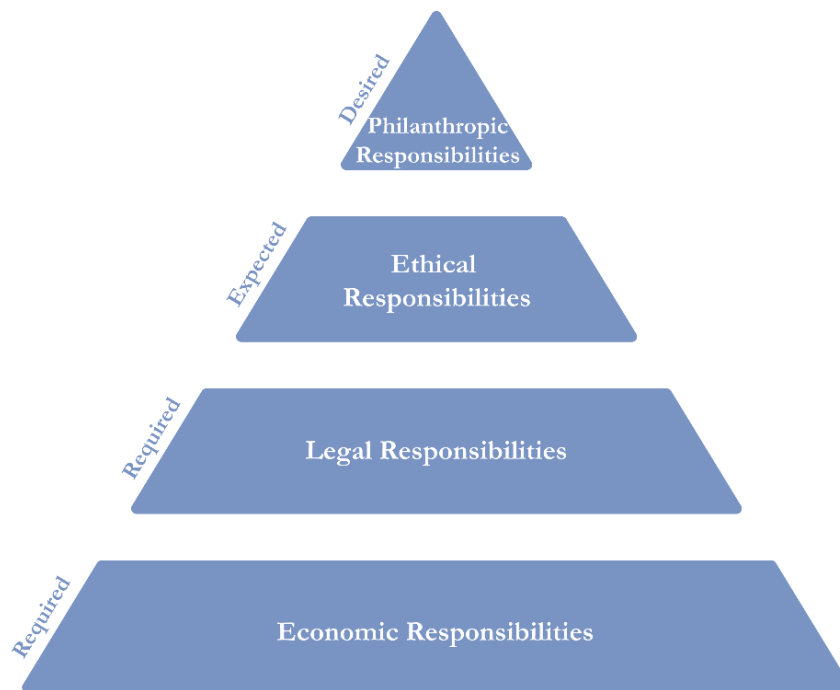


Figure 3. The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility.
Source: Adapted from Carroll (1991).

More recently, Rego, Cunha, Cabral-Cardoso, Gonçalves, and Costa (2006), have determined these levels of CSR to be three, namely:

- Proactive change for “the greater good”, where management uses the company’s power to help society without using it as a marketing strategy;
- Enlightened self-interest, where management engages in social responsibility as a marketing strategy;
- Minimum legal requirements, where management limits its sustainability activities to simply follow the law.

In literature, the concept of CSR also connects highly with the Triple Bottom Line or, as named by Roberts and Cohen (2002) People, Planet, Profit (**Figure 4**). Hammer and Pivo (2016) state that it refers to the “economic, environmental and social value of an investment and is related to the concept of sustainable development” (p.1). In the business context, sustainability happens when all economic, social and

environmental performances are all held in account and the three elements are approached with the same level of importance in business. This balance between the three concepts is what guarantees that the corporate society works in a sustainable way.

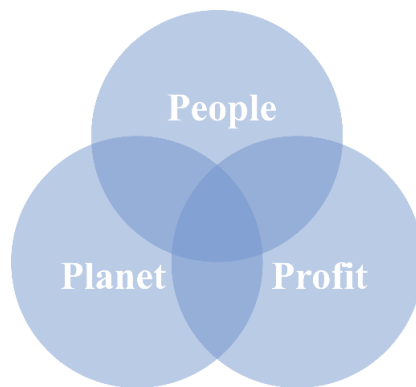


Figure 4. The Triple Bottom Line

Source: own elaboration.

Additionally, Garriga and Melé (2004) have studied CSR further and mapped the concept as it has been described among academics throughout the years. They have summarized theories and approaches in the groups as stated in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Theories of CSR.

Source: adapted from Garriga and Melé (2004)

Integrative
The company's business integrates social demands, given that it depends on society for existence, continuity and growth; Laws are a constant reference.
Political
Companies have a strong power in society which makes them have an obligation to use it responsibly; The corporation is seen as a citizen with obligations and duties.

Instrumental
CSR policies are strategic tools to achieve profit, create wealth; Altruistic activities are socially recognized, used as a marketing tool; There is a concern about long term shareholders' value maximization.
Ethical
CSR is based on the "right thing to do" to achieve a good society; Reference the human, labour and environmental rights and its protection.

Furthermore, to better understand how this activity applies in practice, Kotler and Lee (2005a) suggest several types of corporate social initiatives, that include cause promotion, cause-related marketing, corporate philanthropy, community volunteering and socially responsible business practices. With this, it is possible to notice that there are countless ways to address this concept, from its implied moral obligation and sustainability aspect to its possible usage as a business tactic opportunity.

With all these concepts in mind, academics seem to agree that CSR is necessarily connected with ethics, philanthropy, well-being, shared value and even legislation, and also that when company behaviour is associated with a philosophy of CSR, it may mean profits to the firm (Jagd, 2013), whether the main motivation for the practice is for it to be profitable or not.

In addition, stakeholders themselves are increasingly becoming more aware of wellness and about protecting the environment, and may tend to choose to buy from companies that communicate those same worries. According to Porter and Kramer (2017), companies are getting ranked in relation with their performance on social issues, and these rankings seem to attract important amounts of publicity, which results in an emergent priority given to CSR in every country.

As stated by Nidumolu, Prahalad, and Rangaswami (2009), "the quest for sustainability is already starting to transform the competitive landscape, which will force companies

to change the way they think about products, technologies, processes, and business models” (p.2). This is supported by Boztepe (2012) that states that the “corporate ethical code of the 21st century is being green” (p.7). In this context, green marketing thrives, as the “response to the environmental effects of the design, production, packaging, labelling, use, and disposal of goods and services” (Lampe & Gazda, 1992, p.303).

From the company’s perspective, answering to these effects by communicating its sustainability preoccupations starts to develop to an efficient way of maintaining relationships with its customers given that, if they can offer something that makes a significant green difference, in an intuitive, supported and not much contested by expert evidence way, they are probably “onto a winner” (Grant 2008, p.28). With this in mind, green marketing becomes one of the preferred practices of companies, in terms of communication. Indeed, from 2006 to 2009, green advertising in developed countries has grown about 300 per cent (X. Du, 2014).

However, in the new century, green marketing does not translate into the only way of communicating sustainability. Addressing social aspects such as human rights, labour laws and general welfare of society may also mean profit thus making it have a strong emphasis on marketing practices. With this, marketing communications shift from a practice that communicates product features to generate sales, to a new trend, that searches for connecting the company with causes that the world is worried about. This new trend of cause-related marketing not only addresses environmental topics but also social issues such as abortion rights, child abuse, alcohol abuse, drunk driving, minimum wage, politics, literacy, religion, social security, women’s rights, health, etc. (Fine 1981).

To strengthen this, consumers have also been creating proof that the marketing of these aspects may be beneficial. The green consumer is generally defined as one who adopts environmentally friendly behaviours or who purchases green products over the standard alternatives (Shamdasani, Chon-Lin, & Richmond, 1993), thus a good

definition of the type of stakeholder that demands companies to address its social and environmental responsibilities to society.

Within all of these perspectives, it is once more identifiable the complexity of the analysis of CSR communications practices. There is a necessity to understand it thoroughly in order to decouple its complexity and understand what makes this communication so particular regarding other marketing practices.

2.2. From Philanthropy to Shared Value

As it was determined, CSR can be interpreted as a group of activities, performed by firms, that relate to the expectations of stakeholders regarding what is good for society in general. Within definitions to this concept, an additional term of Corporate Philanthropy, or CP has been thoroughly mentioned. However, this concept seems to generate definitions that create somehow a critical controversy.

Leisinger (2007) sees the practice of philanthropy as sign of corporate responsibility excellence, which towers above the level of good management practices, and defines the concept as “the donation of resources such as a money, goods, time, training and use of facilities or services for an extended period of time, derived from these practices beneficial social purposes. The author addresses the difference between philanthropy and charity, which mostly relates to the durability of practices: charity works as a short-term, while corporate philanthropy is about donating for a cause but within a long-term, durable effect. In this scope, it is proposed a different hierarchy of corporate responsibilities as illustrated in **Figure 5**.

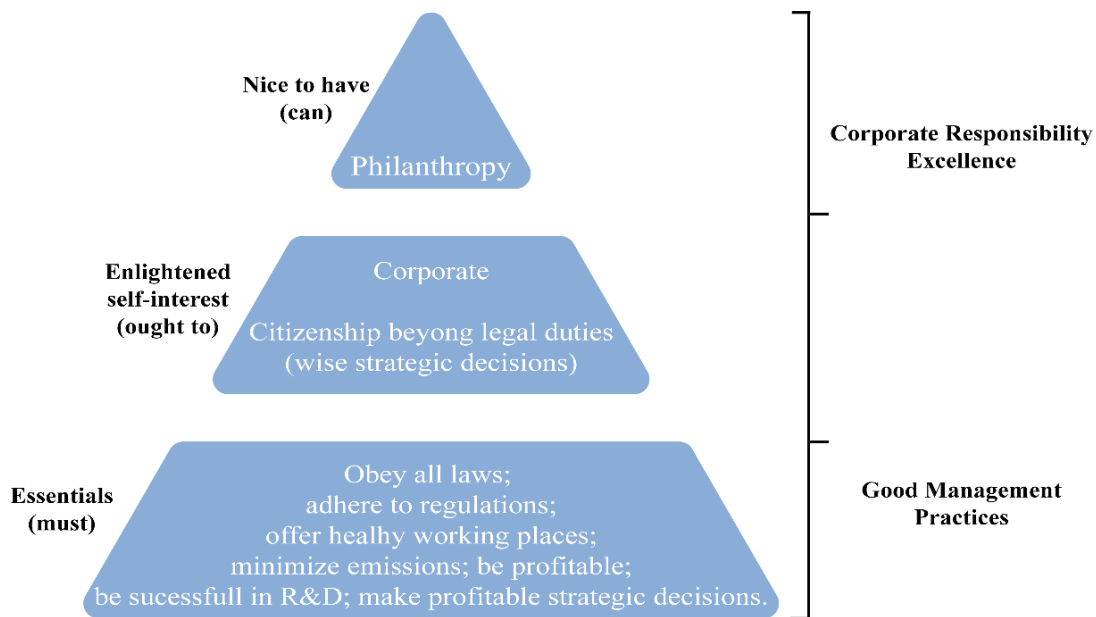


Figure 5. The Hierarchy of Corporate Responsibilities.
Source: adapted from Leisinger (2007)

As for the motives that get companies to engage in these practices, they are indicated as being the creation of good feelings among consumers/suppliers/employees, attraction of valuable human resources to the company, a decrease of the risks of government or activist actions, the enhancement of overall corporate image and brand recognition for goods and services (Henderson & Malani, 2009; Leisinger, 2007).

The controversial aspect of this concept, however, is that the altruistic model of philanthropy in business requires engagement in social charitable activities with the intent of benefiting society without connecting those practices with business gains and enhanced image or performance, but “pure altruism can hardly be seen as a driving force for corporate philanthropy” (Kubíčková, 2018, p.71).

On the other hand, there are arguments which state that enlightened self-interest and ethical conduct work well together, with two values being necessary to assure the proper functioning of a corporation: ordinary decency - being just, fair, honest - and

assuring that “the benefits within the corporation are aligned to the contributions made in adhering to the aims of the corporation” (Piasecki & Gudowski, 2017).

On this topic, Kotler and Lee (2005b) specify five main characteristics of philanthropy as a strategic activity. Firstly, they establish it regarding a firm’s selective approach to social issues, connected to its goals and objects. Secondly, it is characterized by long-term determination of relationships and partnerships with non-profit organizations (NPO’s), followed by the diversity of the donation’s options. The fourth characteristic relates to the employee involvement in the decision-making process and lastly, strategic philanthropy is characterized by the corporative efforts to measure outcomes and determine return contributions.

From this perspective, it is understandable why companies may engage in the communication of social responsibility aspects since philanthropic and cause-related activities seem to provide many benefits.

With this, Smith (1994) suggests that corporate philanthropy may allow for the company to align an economic self-interest with a “greater good”, thus encouraging not only economic progress for the company but also the integration of social and environmental contributions to society (as cited in Kubičková, 2018). This progressive stance emerges from different, updated concept, determined as “shared value”.

In this new context, the conceptualization of CSR, CP, etc., shifts to a new paradigm that suggests going beyond the concepts’ core characteristics which, though may generate benefits for society, are not particularly reliable in the long run (Porter and Kramer, 2011).

Porter and Kramer (2011) articulate this new business model, by comparing it to the previous, “outdated” concept of Corporate Social Responsibility and suggesting, instead, a more recent version of it that suggests the creation of shared value, as indicated in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Comparing CSR with Creating Shared Value.
Source: adapted from Porter and Kramer (2011).

Corporate Social Responsibility	Creating Shared Value
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value: doing good • Citizenship, philanthropy, sustainability • Discretionary or in response to external pressure • Separated from profit maximization • Agenda is determined by external reporting and personal references • Impact limited by corporate footprint and CSR budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value: economic and societal benefits relative to the cost • Joint company and community value creation • Integral to competing • Integral to profit maximization • Agenda is company-specific and internally generated • Realigns the entire company budget

To fully align this new business context into its practices, Porter and Kramer (2012) suggest the importance of creating the ideal business case, by aligning the variable of resolving issues of social indole while, from the resolution, obtain a financial return. With this in mind, they suggest four main steps to follow:

1. Identify the social issues to target, which should generate as output a “ list of prioritized social issues that a shared value strategy can target” (Porter et al., 2012).
2. Making the business case, which should provide for details on how the social issue will be fully incorporated in the company’s activity.
3. Tracking the progress, which implies comparing current results with what was planned in previous steps;
4. Measuring results and use insights to unlock new value, which will translate into “validating the anticipated link between social and business results and determining whether the outlay of corporate resources and efforts produced a good joint return” (Porter et al., 2012).

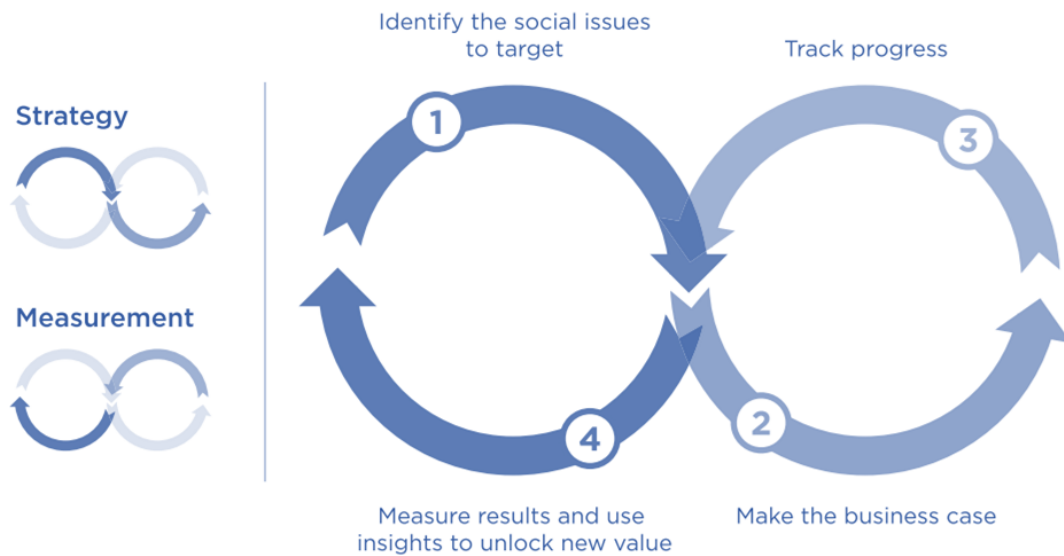


Figure 6. The steps into creating the ideal business case for obtaining shared value.

Source: Porter et al. (2012)

With this in mind, the vision of the companies will start to present a different mindset, which will move the companies from the activist, philanthropic field, and will align it with shared value's pragmatic approach.

2.3. Communicating CSR

As stated by S. Du et al. (2010) and Gruber and Kalauer (2017), the investment in communicating responsible messages end up translating in a positive impact of CSR communications, namely in terms of purchase intention of consumers, customer loyalty, satisfaction, corporate reputation, brand equity, awareness, advocacy and a bigger amount of capital injected in the company.

However, communications, especially advertising have a contradictory role in the marketing and sustainability debate: they help to both promote a conspicuous consumption but can be extremely necessary to enhance the diffusion of sustainable

products, services and lifestyles (Belz & Peattie, 2009). This makes it necessary that companies carefully plan these practices.

The study *Authentic Insights: The Dying Days of Spin*, has polled UK consumers and concluded that while 60% of the participants believe it is important for companies to express their views, half of them admitted that they are less likely to purchase a product from a brand that behaves in a way that contradicts its corporate values (Fleishmanhillard Fishburn, 2018). In the same context, “businesses will face extra scrutiny and scepticism when undertaking corporate social initiatives efforts that may be too closely related to issues in which the company contributes negatively or has a vested financial stake” (Austin & Gaither, 2016, p.12). Additionally, more than 38% of consumers expected companies to act on issues such as diversity, climate change, fake news, and several other aspects (Fleishmanhillard Fishburn, 2018).

In the same topic, conclusions of Hupfer and Gardner (1971) defend that the communication of social aspects generally draws more involvement to regular products and that “once a product has been related in the consumer's mind to an issue, something important to him, the probability of this person's retaining knowledge of the product is increased” (p.10). For example, “a person becomes more involved in joining a civil rights movement than he/she becomes when purchasing a commodity item” (Fine, 1981, p.105). Additionally, the “exposure to any type of well-conceived promotional initiative for a brand leads, in theory, to more positive feelings and judgements about the brand in a consumer’s mind” (Bloom, Hoeffler, Keller, & Basurto Meza, 2006, p.51).

On this specific topic, Taylor (2014) states that there has been recently a surge of interest in how advertising and promotion can be used to communicate with consumers about corporate social responsibility aspects. Bachnik and Nowacki (2018) answer to this question, by defending that socially responsible advertising regards marketing activities which “do not arouse negative emotions and do not breach ethical values or ideas shared by customers” (p.4).

In addition, determining an adequate cause is also important. Nan and Heo (2007) defend that an ad with a cause-related message provides more favourable consumer responses compared with a similar ad without that component, and it's beneficial regardless of the level of brand fit to the cause. However, others argue that initiatives with low fit to the organisation are likely to diminish overall attitude as well as perceptions of corporate credibility, corporate position, and purchase intention (Becker-olsen, Cudmore, & Paul, 2006).

On the other hand, when discussing consumer fit, Grau and Folse (2007) concluded that consumers seem to demonstrate a bigger eagerness in participating in causes on which they are more involved in. This may be a driver for companies to address global issues when advertising their products, since it may generate more engagement. Maheswaran and Meyers-levy (1990) also dwell on this, stating that when the involvement is high, consumers process relevant issues' messages with more detail which makes negative ads more persuasive. In contrast, for less involved consumers, positively framed messages may be more effective, because they process information in simple inferences (Grau & Folse, 2007) However, most company advertising with a social dimension appears to be well-received among consumers with a majority of consumers accepting it favourably (Drumwright, 1996).

With this in mind, other authors explore a set of specifications that they defend the company that is advertising must meet. Advertising of all kind of information has been reaching to consumers traditionally, through the radio, TV, printed media, outdoor, which show a good return on investment (Pfeiffer & Zinnbauer, 2010), but also through the internet and other new channels. To perform proper communication, companies should use a variety of communication channels, or at least focus on one or two that are more relevant (S. Du et al., 2010). These channels can be internal (the company's own platforms) or external (independent media coverage, independent organizations) (Gruber & Kaliauer, 2017). However, it is important to note that channels under the control of the own company may be less trustworthy (Becker-olsen et al., 2006).

Additionally, when specifying communication channels, and given the emergence of online marketing, it is important to address the activity of communication of CSR through the internet. Indeed, nowadays, using the internet as a means of communication has acquired a significant role when social responsibility efforts are being publicized (Reid & Nwagbara, 2013). This recent channel of communications provides features which are not available in traditional communication channels, such as electronic document retrieval, search tools and multimedia applications (Wanderley, Lucian, Farache, & De Sousa Filho, 2008). In terms of CSR, this channel represents an added feature to marketing communications, by providing, for example, the contents of an annual report, a sustainability report or a corporate homepage (Rosca, Sarau, & Vontea, 2015).

From the context of a corporate website, according to (Capriotti & Moreno, 2007) most of the available content is primarily found between the second and third hierarchical levels, which favours accessibility to the information.

On another context, Kendrick et al. (2013) merge CSR with advertising by elucidating the concept's connection with Carroll's Pyramid of Social Responsibility: "Advertising agencies have the economic responsibility for creating jobs, facilitating the competition in the free market, and thereby maintaining a healthy national economy. Legal responsibility of advertising agencies is no simpler than that of other businesses. (...) deceptive, misleading, and unfair advertising is subject to regulation" (p.144). Additionally, from the ethical responsibility perspective, the authors mention unethical advertising as "the omission of key facts, manipulation of the presentation order of information, and use of potentially misleading rhetoric are not overt lies but may result in deception. Thus, the truthfulness of advertising can be seen as an ethical responsibility as much as, if not more than, a legal responsibility" (p.144)

From the particularity of truthfulness in advertising, the concept of trust starts also to represent a big part of marketing communications. As stated by Bachnik and Nowacki (2018) advertising appeals seem to constitute one of the main tools for fostering

consumer trust. On this scope, S. Du et al. (2010) have proposed a framework that suggests reducing stakeholders' scepticism by focusing on message content and the channels these are communicated in, while understanding the contingency factors such as the stakeholders' characteristics and those of the firm itself.

In addition, to also gain credibility while advertising CSR, it is necessary to:

- educate consumers about CSR efforts, by providing information about it;
- carefully choose the CSR communication channel, with external sources being more credible to consumers;
- make contributions explicit, with clear, high in information and with specific content messages.

(Gruber & Kaliauer, 2017)

Moreover, the core concept of Corporate Social Responsibility has matured to have an addendum related to communication, with the emergence of an aspirational dimension. As stated by Koep (2017) aspirational CSR regards communications which announce intentions and plans for the future (p.1).

Additionally, there is a distinction between CSR as an action, which relates to CSR practices that have happened in the past and CSR as a talk, which relates to communications of intentions for the future (Christensen, Morsing, & Thyssen, 2013). Koep (2017) has developed a framework which determined contrasting forces mentioned in the literature on aspirational communication of CSR (**Figure 7**).

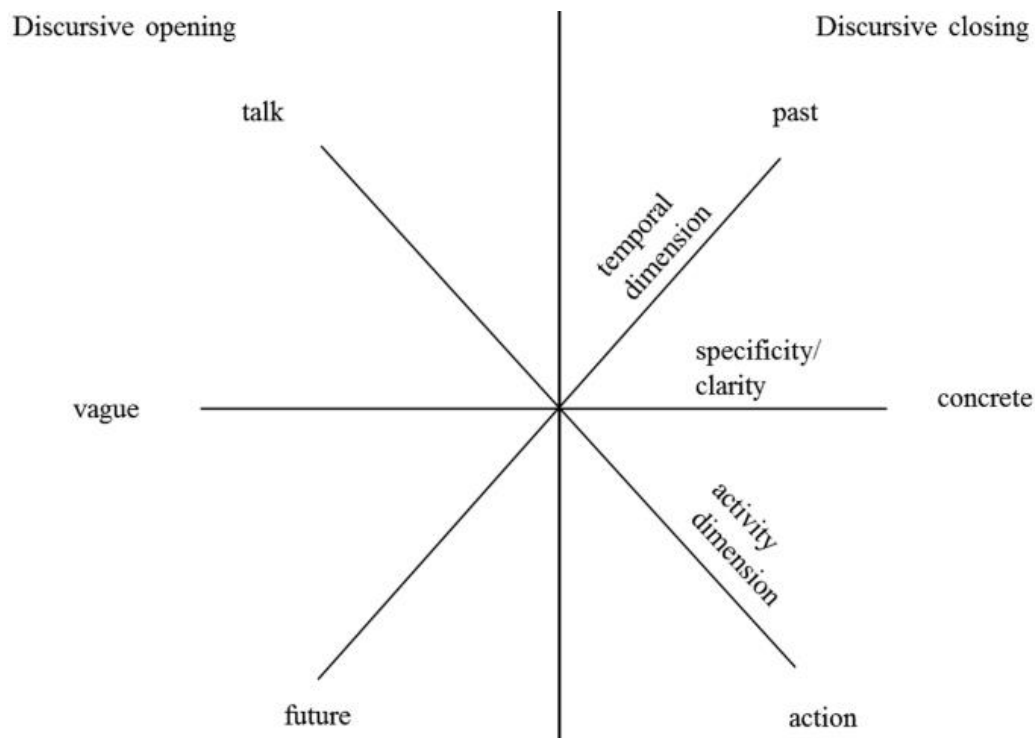


Figure 7. Opposing Forces in Aspirational CSR Communication.
Source: Koep (2017)

As it is possible to determine, aspirational CSR communication is related to a set of polarizations which create an emphasis in distinguishing between an open and closed discourse. From the perspective of open discourse, academics have connected it more with vaguely talking and focusing on the future, while that, from a close discourse perspective, more concrete, well-founded claims and actions of the past are addressed.

In addition, Koep (2017) concluded that “combining the sometimes opposing poles of talk and action poses difficulties due to the consequent tensions and clashes between organisational self-promotion and factual reporting style” (p.17).

In fact, one of these difficulties regards the rise of inherent corporate profits with practices of CSR. This context seems to have created a good environment for CSR activities to be appropriated by corporations to seem caring and socially conscious, when actual behaviour may contradict the CSR’s premise (Budinsky, 2011). In fact,

“without a demonstrable history of doing good and evidence-based outcomes of these deeds, audiences will rightly greet CSR claims with scepticism and distrust” (Pomeroy, Johnson, & Noble, 2013, p.10).

This happens because

many of our everyday items can now be found in a luxurious shade of green.

In fact, business can be a vehicle for doing better in the world and making a comfortable living with a guilt-free conscience as well. But in an increasingly crowded green business sphere, knowing who's authentic presents a challenge.

(Jeevan, 2014, p.4)

This type of marketing communication turns into a difficult process, since truthful claims from the own organisation or even from external third parties start to become difficult to identify (Gosselt, van Rompay, & Haske, 2019).

2.4. Ethics and Greenwashing

In the past, “business actions were overwhelmingly profit-driven with little regard for the effects of these actions on employees, consumers or the greater social good” (Davis, 1994, p.873) Now, conversations about ethics, value, integrity and responsibility is practically required (Stodder,1998).

Joyner and Payne (2002) cite a Walker Information survey to consumers, where “47% of those polled responded that they would be much more likely to buy from a “good” company given parity in quality, service and price” and 70% of the consumers answered that they would not do business with a firm that was not socially responsible, regardless of price.” (p.298). They also point out that “good business is good ethics” (p.298).

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, ethics stands for the moral principles that govern a person's behaviour and the moral correctness of specified conduct. Statements of ethics or value judgements “attempt to ascribe value to actions, so the actor can determine whether or not he should engage in the action” (Joyner & Payne, 2002, p.299). In relation, business ethics, is the study of appropriate business policies and practices regarding potentially controversial subjects (Twin, 2019) Business ethics can either be understood from an internal perspective – such as by attitudes between workers and managers, conflicts between personal and corporate values – or externally – when it relates to influences from the society and public authorities (Halttunen & Inkilä, 2014). For companies, business ethics are mainly determined by stakeholders’ pressure to, for example, reduce the environmental impact created out of their business-related activities (Longoni, Luzzini, & Guerci, 2018).

To answer to this pressure, companies started to, as stated before, produce self-reporting initiatives such as the publication of green advertisements, creation of social issues-related campaigns, and sustainability reports. These practices have been trending so much that companies with board-level sustainability committees have increased from 5% to 24% and the number of companies releasing sustainability reports has grown 20% to 80% on the United States alone, but with these phenomenon manifesting globally (Ioannou & Serafeim, 2017).

However, while it is easy to conclude that consumers expectations and pressure takes a big part in forcing companies to be sustainable, in many cases this could be the result of regulations created to incentivize companies to improve their environmental, social and governance performance (or ESG). Additionally, the emergence of sustainability and social problems addressing has caused the companies to start shadowing their negative aspects, while blindly empower the positive ones. Under this new reality, academics started to address issues related to aspirational communication of CSR, or, as a highly serious problem in communication ethics, greenwashing.

Defined as “the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of organizations (firm-level greenwashing) or the environmental benefits of a product or service (product-level greenwashing)” (Delmas & Burbano, 2011, p. 66) Greenwashing involves suggesting a better environmental performance than the actual environmental behaviour justifies (De Jong, Harkink, and Barth, 2017, p.3). These suggestions are often vague, unsubstantiated and potentially misleading (Fernando, Sivakumaran, and Suganthi, 2014, p.224). To Steiner, Geissler, Schreder, and Zenk (2018), “Greenwashing expresses an incongruence between the reputational intention and the actual, real sustainability performance of the company”(p.1002). In addition, Lyon and Montgomery (2015) defend that the term “greenwash” encompasses a range of communications that mislead people into adopting overly positive beliefs about an organization’s environmental performance, practices, or products (p.225). Some authors also named this trend as “the green spin” (Alves, 2009) or the “disclosure-performance gap” (Font, Walmsley, Cogotti, McCombes, & Häusler, 2012). Additionally, when describing greenwashing, Laufer (2003, p.254) states that some corporations will hold themselves out as fully committed to compliance when that commitment is in fact absent.

In the American Continent, the consciousness on this problem rose with a publication of a set of studies called Greenwashing Reports. According to Terra Choice (2010), the company that conveyed the studies, since the first “Sins of Greenwashing study was published in 2007, which explored environmental claims in products, the world has re-awakened to the issue of false and misleading environmental claims. The latest of these reports took place in 2010 and analysed a total of 4,744 products. From its analysis, the company was able to determine that greenwashing was still considered a significant problem, with over 95% of the products advertised as “green products” revealing greenwashing traits (Terra Choice, 2010).

With this in mind, the classification of greenwashing as a marketing trend that intends to mislead consumers and other stakeholders seems to be a point of agreement within the literature on the subject. However, since environmental performances can be

present in an enormous scope of actions, taken by different people and in different situations, even within the same company, the corporations that practice greenwashing may be difficult to identify.

Furthermore, though what the word “green” implies, greenwashing as a term is mostly but not specifically used for claims about the environment, thus conveying more a misleading type of communication. For example, the suggestion of misleading marketing in the food sector, this phenomenon is also perceptible.

Sometimes, food companies use green on their packaging to suggest health in the nutritional qualities of a product; but sometimes healthy is about fewer toxins in agriculture or the health of the environment in general. The confusion can benefit food and beverage companies because if consumers equate green with either their own health or with the health of the environment, they are likely to extend that favourable association to the product and to the company.

(Berkeley Media Studies, 2008)

This informs that the concept of greenwashing has shifted and evolved, and gained a new subsector called nutriwashing, that happens when companies in the food sector use the colour green to generate consumer’s health-related thoughts to benefit sales of products. Most of the times, the colour green is used to wrongly communicate health benefits just to acquire sales from concerned consumers. Additionally, Corpwatch (2001) has identified other variations of greenwashing, such as bluewashing, sweatwashing and deep greenwashing.

Table 3. The variants of greenwashing.
Source: adapted from Corpwatch (2001)

Greenwashing	Misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of organizations.
Nutriwashing	Using the colour green, slim packaging shapes, etc., in the food industry, to guide the consumer to associate health-related thoughts to a certain product.
Bluewashing	Corporations wrapping themselves in the blue flag of the United Nations in order to be associated with UN themes of human rights, labour rights and environmental protection.
Sweatwashing	Diverting the attention of production practices in the company's factories, that are associated with child and hard labour.
Deep greenwashing	Lack of efforts by the world's government to stop the corporations from publicizing themselves through voluntary codes of conduct, win-win partnerships and best practices learning models.

With all these concepts in mind, it is possible to conclude that, with a bigger concern for sustainability, the communication on its behalf rises. This type of marketing will then strengthen consumers who prefer green products and companies that are involved with social causes over others. Consequently, with the intent of seducing this base of consumers, corporations will increasingly opt with communication their positive aspects, since these are the ones who will make the consumer chose between them or the competition. The disruption of this timeline is that, sometimes intentionally, sometimes not, companies may compromise the truthfulness of the facts they communicate about themselves and their practices, thus committing greenwashing.

2.5. Green, Social and Critical Marketing

In sustainability, green marketing and social marketing are constantly mentioned. As it was possible to determine previously, green marketing facilitates the development and marketing of more sustainable products and services while introducing sustainability efforts into the core of the marketing process and business practice (Gordon, Carrigan, & Hastings, 2011, p.143).

In the early 20th century, however, Wiebe (1951) expressed that marketing tools and methods could be used outside the domain of commodities. He firstly asked, in 1951, “Can brotherhood be sold like soap?” starting the debate that would have originated the term of Social Marketing as a discipline of the School of Marketing that dedicated itself to the promotion of social aspects and society’s wellbeing.

However, other academics see that the emergence of social marketing can be a further augmentation of marketing as a “technique”, that translates into the uncritical application of various methods, tools and ways of thinking in relation to marketing activities (Moorman, 1987). Indeed, marketing is a social activity and critical stances should impact its topics (Diniz, Petroll, Semprebon, & Rocha, 2016). The activity itself has a role that highly interacts with society, and its exclusion from the critical discussion might be harmful, especially given its ideological and economic consequences to society (Maranhão & Paula, 2012). With this in mind, it is perceptible that there is a necessity for marketers to be flexible and prepared to adapt their practice into a more thorough application than sales augmentation.

From this, critical marketing emerges as an activity that is defined through a range of critical positions under one label that is not, as traditional marketing suggests, undertaken with the sole interest of developing knowledge to enable the maximization of sales (Tadajewski & Brownie, 2008). It is, naturally, an activity that should be practised carefully, with thought, because its effect can have negative effects in society when applied negatively. In the scope of this topic, Gordon et al (2011) propose a new framework for sustainability marketing, as illustrated in **Figure 8**.



Figure 8. A framework of sustainable marketing.
Source: adapted from Gordon et al (2011)

In other words, critical studies propose analysing practical influences of marketing practices, driven by the growth of corporations, the quick implementation of communication technologies, globalization, changes in work nature, professionalization of workforces, stagnated economies and ecological problems everywhere and in every market (Deetz & Alvesson, 1999). With this in mind, these studies should reflect worries regarding these and several other social issues.

Chapter 3. Methodology

As stated in **Chapter 1. Introduction**, this dissertation aims to explore the phenomenon of the corporate communication of social responsibility. To this end, the methodology adopted was designed to identify the way in which companies communicate corporate social responsibility through such documents as annual sustainability reports, examine how the temptation to engage in potentially misleading marketing practices can be a high risk strategy for the companies and also determine possible consumer perceptions of the corporate communication of sustainability, in terms of the trust in and credibility of advertising.

The methodology adopted was a case study of The Coca-Cola Company. A case study proposes a strategy for doing research through which an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon is illustrated by a real-life context, using multiple sources of evidence (Robson, 2002). The work performed in the field suggests a qualitative study would be the best approach. This would be conducted in three distinct parts and rooted subsequent triangulation. Triangulation refers to the use of different data collection techniques within one study (Lewis Adrian Thornhill & Thornhill, 2012). With this in mind, this chapter will describe the nature of the research methodology in more detail.

3.1. Case Study: The Coca-Cola Company

Coca-Cola's history begins on the 8th of May 1886, in Atlanta, USA, with a pharmacist named John Pemberton, who created a syrup to solve digestive problems and give energy to drinkers. At the time, a cup of this beverage cost 5 cents per glass and an average of nine cups were being sold daily.

However, Frank Robinson, Dr. Pemberton's accountant, started marketing the drink, by idealising the brand and designing its first logo. In 1892, the Coca-Cola Company was founded and two years later, the product was registered at the National Industrial Property Institute of the USA. Today, it operates in more than 200 countries and runs the largest beverage distribution system in the world. It has reached a level of brand recognition that many companies would like to have, mostly due to its homonymous product, Coca-Cola (or Coke), and its easily recognizable logo (**Figure 9**).



Figure 9. The Coca-Cola Company logo.
Source: Wikipedia.

Despite the unquestionable popularity of Coca-Cola, the company now offers more than 500 equally successful brands and 4,300 different products worldwide and has net operating profits of 31.9 billion dollars (The Coca Cola Company, 2018). Other famous products are Diet Coke, Coca-Cola Zero Sugar, Sprite, Fanta, Mello Yello, Surge, Powerade, glacéau vitamin water, Dasani, Honest Tea, Costa Coffee, among many others.

The company serves its consumers in more than 200 countries through a network of company-owned and/or controlled bottling and distribution operations, independent bottling partners, such as distributors, wholesalers and retailers, all of which make up the world's largest beverage distribution system (The Coca-Cola Company, 2017). It has reached a brand positioning where it is viewed as a fun, friendly, youthful company, that sells "happiness" at an affordable price. More recently, however, it seems to have

shifted to a wider set of word associations, through numerous corporate responsibility campaigns and public environmental commitments.

This has emerged from a huge Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) effort. The analysis in this dissertation would not be possible without referring to this effort, given that it focuses not just on a specific set of documents – the sustainability reports – but also on other promotional activities and campaigns. The IMC aims to “coordinate and control the various elements of the promotional mix - advertising, personal selling, public relations, publicity, direct marketing, and sales promotion - to produce a unified customer-focused message and, therefore, achieve various organizational objectives (Boone & Kurtz, 2007, p.488). One reason for the increased importance of this concept over recent decades has been its important role in the development and maintenance process of the brand entity and equity (Belch & Belch, 2008).

By integrating its marketing communications, Coca-Cola contributes to creating brand equity, since it has a big value in the market and a wide number of consumers emotionally attached to it. Feldwick, (1996) has simplified this term by collating several definitions, These include brand equity being defined as the total value of the brand as a separable asset, brand equity being the measurement of the consumers strength of attachment to the brand and brand equity being the description of the associations and beliefs consumers have about the brand. To achieve this, the company has engaged in several marketing initiatives, such as integrating conventional media and new media. This approach helps convey socially responsible messages, thus constructing its brand image as a sustainable, ethical company. Naturally, Coca-Cola would not disregard the online public relations element in its marketing strategy, and actually integrates it in a very robust way.

On November 12, 2012, it invited the world to join it on its new “journey” by replacing its corporate website with an interactive digital magazine – The Coca-Cola Journey website¹

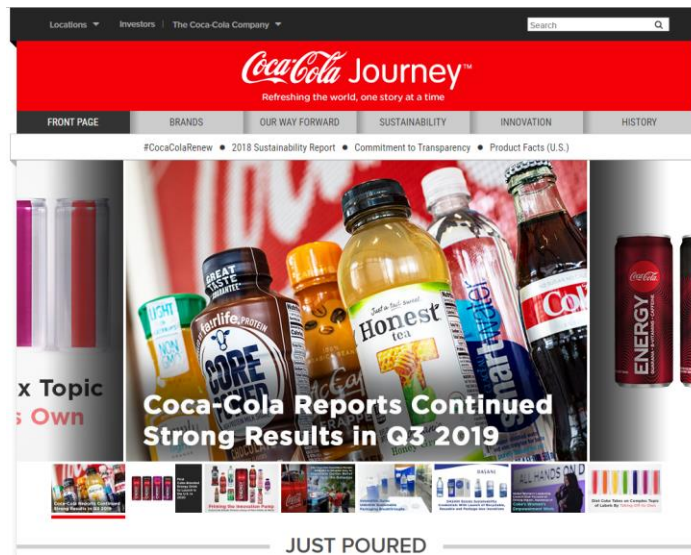


Figure 10. Coca-Cola Journey website landing page from October 2019.
Source: The Coca-Cola Company

This website takes the form of a whole promotion tool and represents a strong content marketing strategy, which offers dynamic content that approaches a wide range of social responsibility subjects, from recycling to women’s rights, via water consumption reduction, diversity inclusion and the company’s eagerness to “give back”. Additionally, it is also possible to find out how the company is doing regarding its goals. Indeed, it can be seen as a platform that focuses on updated sustainability topics, communicated through videos, infographics, and consumer-oriented articles. It is also used as a tool for promoting the credibility and transparency that all companies want

¹ <https://www.coca-colacompany.com/>

to achieve. In fact, the journey website actively communicates the company's social policies and contributions to making a better world, rather than focusing on its products and selling them.

Ashley Brown, director for digital communications and social media at the company, stated at the time of launching the website that "although the content comes with a point of view, we want it to be a credible source" (Elliott, 2012). From this, we may deduce that it is a core platform for the sharing of sustainability practices and the communication of the company's corporate social responsibility.

More specifically, on the 9th of July 2013, Coca-Cola first introduced its 2020 environmental goals to the world (see **Annex 1. "Our 2020 Environmental Goals" infographic.**). These are depicted as follows:

- **Water Stewardship:** Improve water efficiency by 25%, help ensure healthy, resilient freshwater systems through conservation efforts with World Wildlife Fund and replenish 100% of the water the company uses;
- **Energy and Climate:** Reduce CO2 emissions embedded in "the drink in our hands" by 25% through the company's entire value chain;
- **Packaging:** Reach a 75% recovery rate in developed markets of the equivalent amount of bottles and cans they introduce in the marketplace;
- **Agriculture:** Sustainably source key agricultural ingredients.

(The Coca Cola Company, 2013)

In the light of this company's self-proclaimed goals, this dissertation chooses to scrutinise the communication of environmentally friendly initiatives on the plastic problem the world faces nowadays.

A key factor in selecting plastic as a focus is Parker's (2018) affirmation: “We made plastic. We depend on it. Now we’re drowning in it”. Scientific studies can help maintain the relevance of this problem and make companies feel that it is necessary to address them. Additionally, a first reading of Coca-Cola’s materials suggests that the company is engaged in helping the world with this problem, as the analysis will show.

3.2. Research Methodology

To conduct any research, it is necessary to choose between systematic procedures to describe and explain the phenomenon being studied. For this, two possible methods are applicable: the quantitative and the qualitative.

A quantitative analysis deals with data in the form of numbers and uses mathematical operations to investigate their properties. Some of the primary purposes of this approach are to measure, compare, examine relationships, make forecasts, test hypotheses and construct theories (Walliman, 2011). The quantitative method relies on surveys, questionnaires and pools to collect quantitative data and obtain objective measurements and numerical analysis.

The qualitative method, on the other hand, “examines the way people make sense out of their own concrete real-life experiences, in their own minds and in their own words” (Cropley, 2009, p.5). This method aims to understand the social realities of people and their culture, thus making it primarily exploratory research. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations, explaining the “how” and “why”. Qualitative data collection methods include focus groups and individual or group interviews.

Research can also mix these methods, thus allowing for a combination of numerical measurement and in-depth data. This means it is also possible to investigate subjects by dividing the study into several parts, each explored by both quantitative and qualitative methods.

A study can also be conducted through a multimethod approach, which includes the use of more than one method of data collection in a study or set of related studies.

With these concepts in mind, this dissertation proposes an analysis of qualitative data, gathered through both primary and secondary methods. To achieve this, a single case study of The Coca-Cola Company was conducted. A single case study is, as the name suggests, a case study which relies on the use of a single unit for the purpose of research (Gerring, 2004). This is valid where the single unit represents a critical case or, alternatively, an extreme or unique case (Lewis Adrian Thornhill & Thornhill, 2012).

Within this specific definition, The Coca-Cola Company was chosen firstly for its mediacy and its world-wide recognisability and secondly because the literature research revealed several studies that dealt with Coca-Cola's marketing strategy, under distinct subtopics in marketing studies (Lanthorn, 2013; Halttunen & Inkilä, 2014; Mayureshnikan & Patil, 2018).

Furthermore, the company's level of recognition puts it under a spotlight, which creates an environment in which it can be positioned from various perspectives, both positive and negative. To analyse the company from a critical marketing stance, this methodology proposes investigating three different perspectives: firstly, the company's own policy regarding sustainability, as found in its reports; secondly, the media perspective, through the analysis of a journalistic investigative documentary; lastly, from the point of view of consumers, through one-on-one interviews.

Finally, after this work has been done, the data will be triangulated. According to Heale and Forbes (2013) triangulation in research is the use of more than one approach to researching a question, that has as main objective to provide a more comprehensive picture and increase the value of findings. This study will separate out the main highlights and determine what the possible challenges, implications, tensions and complexities are regarding the communication of corporate social responsibility.

Additionally, and as mentioned above, critical marketing is the lens through which conclusions will be drawn. This is justified by the sources of data collection selected: while the three perspectives of the company, media, and consumers will be cross analysed, the main differences between contrasting and/or differentiated visions will perpetuate the notion that marketing is not a simple scheme where everything is linear and simple. It is a complex activity, which must be analysed in depth in order to deconstruct its postulates and processes and which must take different points of view into consideration, in order to progress as a social activity.

The following sections will specify how the various parts of this research were conducted.

3.3. Sources of Data Collection

As determined previously, this case study will cover three distinct parts (**Figure 11**), in order to better understand the Coca-Cola Company's communication of sustainability and the challenges that may emerge from its strategy. The study will look at the tensions and divergences between the different perspectives of the company's communication strategy: that of the company, through the sustainability reports and communication on the company's environmentally friendly plastic policies; that of the media, through the description and analysis of "A Plastic Surgery: Coca-Cola's Hidden Secrets" documentary, which explores those same policies of the company and its potentially misleading green marketing communication; that of the consumer, through one-on-one interviews, which will explore the consumers thoughts regarding the same issue.

Case study: CSR Communication of Coca-Cola

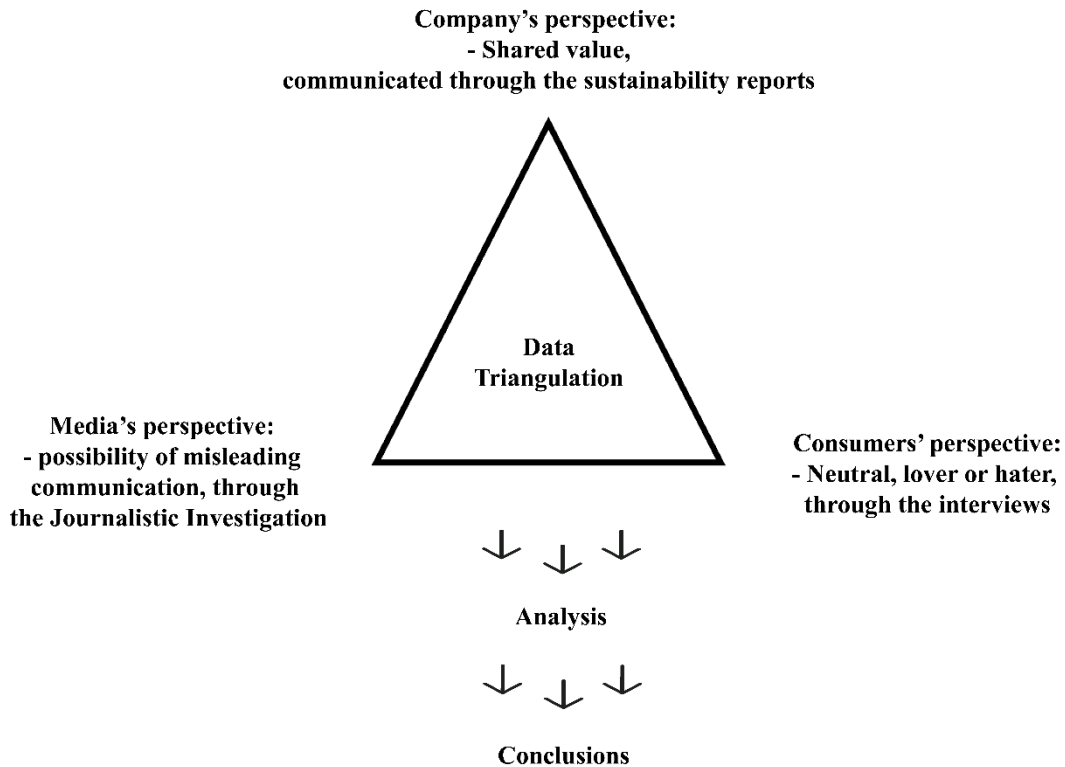


Figure 11. Methodology model.
Source: own elaboration.

3.3.1. Company Perspective

The first step in gathering evidence on Coca-Cola's communication of sustainability is to gain an understanding of Coca Cola's corporate social responsibility initiatives and communication in relation to PET plastic, a clear, strong, and lightweight type of plastic, widely used in packaging.

To this end, secondary research – research into existing data - was carried out. The data were collected through the internet and take the form of marketing data provided

by Coca-Cola. In this specific case, the principal source of data collection were the sustainability reports from 2016², 2017³ and 2018⁴.

This analysis will indicate the ways in which companies may communicate their corporate social responsibility policies.

3.3.2. Media Perspective

From the literature review, this dissertation has determined that the practice of misleading marketing is a serious issue and can occur when companies express their policies regarding the environment and society in general.

This practical challenge will be thoroughly investigated and connected to The Coca-Cola Company through an analysis of Sandrine Rigaud's 2018 documentary entitled "A Plastic Surgery: Coca-Cola's Hidden Secrets"⁵. As with the previous source, the data were collected through secondary research into external sources.

3.3.3. Consumer Perspective

Being highly related to ethics, CSR has revealed itself to be a complex topic to study. When addressing this phenomenon, it is also important to understand the consumers' perspective, since they are the drivers of a company's activity. With this in mind, and as stated in the introduction, this dissertation also proposes to discuss corporate responsibility from the perspective of the consumers.

The method selected for this was one-on-one semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview is "a verbal interchange where one person, the interviewer,

² <https://tinyurl.com/urjzbjg>

³ <https://tinyurl.com/ycebgrzp>

⁴ <https://tinyurl.com/y56pymdh>

⁵ <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/cocacolaplasticsecret>

attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions. Although the interviewer prepares a list of predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important.” (Longhurst, 2010, p.103)

Interviewing offers several advantages when investigating a topic. First of all, people tend to be more responsive than when they are asked to participate in a survey and the problem of expressing themselves through writing does not apply. Additionally, the dynamic between interviewer and interviewee allows for spontaneous answers and more proximity, which may help when asking more complex and delicate questions (Boni & Quaresma, 2005).

Sample selection

Qualitative sampling usually requires a flexible, pragmatic approach (Marshall, 1996). A non-probabilistic technique was applied to this part of the study. Non-probabilistic sampling is a sampling technique in which the researcher selects the study samples based on the subjective judgement of the researcher rather than the random selection that the probabilistic sampling technique suggests. This method was chosen because of the nature of this part of the study: analysing perception given a determined subject.

The final sample was selected using the convenience and snowballing techniques and comprised a total of 10 people that have resided in Portugal since childhood. Though the sample size does not specifically justify differentiation between individuals, there was an interest in those who somewhat identified with an extreme level of green consumerism, such as individuals who participated in demonstrations for the planet or were engaged in awareness-raising on social issues. With this in mind, when one of the first people interviewed indicated they had participated in street activism, that person was asked to indicate other participants. It was thought that this would lead to a richer set of well-founded opinions and perceptions about this type of issues.

Interview Design

The interviews were conducted in Portuguese over two days. Participants were given two consent forms which authorized the usage of their data and of audio recordings. They also provided their demographic data. They were informed that this study aimed to explore the role of companies in society, given the social and environmental problems it faces nowadays.

Interviews were divided into two main parts. Part one's main objective was to understand what the participants thought about general aspects of corporate social responsibility, the communication of social and environmental issues, what they believed a firm's role in society was and if they connected the concept of corporate responsibility with Coca-Cola. They were also asked a few questions to complete their psychographic profile, so it would be possible to better understand their personal characteristics when speaking of consumerism.

Part two explored how consumers feel about specific advertising related to an environmental problem. Visual imagery was used in this part.

Since these interviews are conducted in the scope of a case study of The Coca-Cola Company and its communication regarding plastic packaging, the advertisements shown during the interviews were of this company and were related with this problem. The introduction of a visual support during the interviews was expected to enhance the possibility of more detailed and tapered opinions. The images are illustrated in **Figure 12** and **Figure 13** and available in **Annex 3. Original interview guidelines.**



Figure 12. PlantBottle advertisement.
Source: Google Images



Figure 13. “Round in Circles” campaign.
Source: The Coca-Cola Company UK (2019)

Other Coca-Cola images addressing the same issues could have been used, but these were chosen for a number of reasons.

In **Figure 12** it is possible to see a PlantBottle advertisement, a product which, according to The Coca-Cola Company, is a PET plastic bottle made of 30% sugar cane and 100% recyclable. This image was chosen because it is related to the plastic problem, but also because it represents a way the company has chosen to contribute to solving this problem. It represents specific changes in packaging and commitment at a level that led the company to start changing its practices and production methods.

The image depicted in **Figure 13**, on the other hand, represents an awareness campaign, which is related to the Coca-Cola's promoting a "World Without Waste" and a "Circular Economy", two campaigns whose premises rely on the same aspects: the "World Without Waste" promotes the recycling of plastic bottles in order for them to be reused, thus creating a circular economy in which plastic bottles go "round in circles". However, this campaign represents awareness, and not specifically something that the company is doing.

The interview questions were designed, firstly, to identify the social and environmental problems that worry consumers. This was determinant to deciding if there would be a significant need to interview on the topic of plastic and plastic packaging. Subsequent questions would explore what consumers thought the company should do, in general, to help the environment and support social causes and the problems they first mentioned. In this context, Coca-Cola would be gradually mentioned by the interviewer, in order to understand if consumers would generally connect that company with "responsible marketing" and recognize it as an environmentally friendly enterprise. The questions also focused on the participant and his/her personal experience regarding socially and environmentally conscious advertising, and perception of the companies who connected themselves with important causes. The goal with this set of questions was to perceive if the brand positioning and level of consumer love varied with this factor.

Lastly, to close the interview, participants were asked to add something to the conversation and were, thus, given an opportunity to introduce a different topic.

This methodology aims to reveal consumer perceptions on cause-related marketing communications, what the effects are on the positioning of companies that practice it, and also to investigate if this communication is likely to address problems that can compromise the corporate image.

Analysis of the Interviews

As stated before, the interviews were conducted in Portuguese. Despite this, the analysis was all in English, with the codes and themes being attributed directly in this language and with quotes being directly translated. The analysis was carried out in the following way:



Figure 14. Content Analysis.
Source: own elaboration.

In qualitative research, coding means to search for repetitive patterns or consistency, by grouping things together based on similarity or, paradoxically, difference (Witt, 2013). Creswell (2007) notes that codes can emerge in response not only to expected patterning, but also to what you find to be striking, surprising, unusual or conceptually captivating. This approach made it possible to simplify the themes of the interviews and the description of the main findings.

Chapter 4. Findings

This chapter aims to present the findings and analysis of the data gathered in the course of the investigation described in **Chapter 3. Methodology**. It is divided into four sections, subdivided into several other sections, as shown in **Figure 15**.

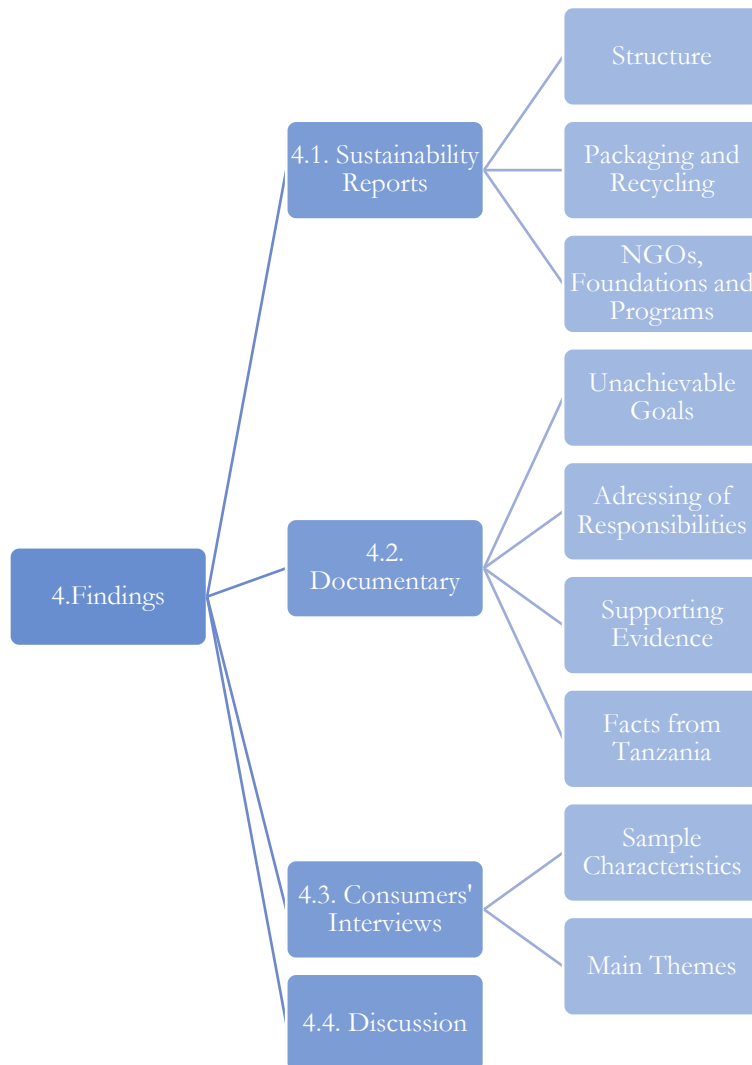


Figure 15. Findings structure.
Source: own elaboration.

4.1. Sustainability Reports

Ioannou and Serafeim (2017) state that “the number of companies that have developed governance processes to measure, analyze, drive and communicate sustainability efforts has dramatically increased in the last few years” (p.2). On this subject, Coca-Cola has a “longstanding commitment to reporting its sustainability journey” (The Coca-Cola Company, n.d.-a). It issues sustainability updates annually that encompass both their Company’s and the broader Coca-Cola system’s global operations.

Structure

The firm’s reports are available at the company’ global website, “Coca-Cola Journey”. The first report with emphasis on sustainability specifically dates the year of 2016, but the company provides an archive that allows determining that previous years reported material already focused on sustainability topics. Moreover, there are also available reports of 2017 and 2018.

To the date, the 2018 is the longest of these documents. In fact, when analyzing structures, the page quantity difference is what is first noticed. It may come to mind questioning why the 2018 report is more extensive than the others. According to the literature, this can be because sustainability is practically demanded from stakeholders and the principle of shared value supports that businesses incorporate it is their economic activities.

Despite this change, they all have sections in common, namely the topics of a world without waste, water issues, agriculture, human and workplace rights and woman’s empowerment. Regarding plastic, waste, and packaging, specifically, the company dedicates to it one page in the 2016 report, one page in the 2017 report and 5 pages on the 2018 report. An overview of the reports addressed issues is available in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Detailed reports structure and addressed issues.

Source: own elaboration.

2016	2017	2018
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Letter from the president 2. Letter from the Public Issues and Diversity Review Committee 3. Letter from the Chief Sustainability Officer 4. Highlights 5. Our Way Forward 6. Agriculture 7. Climate Protection 8. Giving Back 9. Human & Workplace Rights 10. Packaging & Recycling 12. Water Stewardship 13. Women’s Economic Empowerment 14. Points of Intersection 15. Tracking our Progress 16. Progress Update 17. Approach to Reporting 	<p>Business Overview</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who we are 2. Our Value Chain 3. CEO/CSO Letter 4. Strategic Business Priorities 5. Key Sustainability Topics <p>Our Sustainability Goals</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. 2020 Goals progress 7. Our way forward 8. World Without Waste 9. Water 10. Women’s Economic Empowerment 11. Agriculture 12. Climate 13. Giving Back 14. Human Rights, Inclusion and Diversity <p>Our Approach</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Board Letter 16. Global Snapshot 17. Our People 18. Stakeholder Engagement 19. Our Approach to Reporting 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Letter from James Quincey 2. Letter from our Board of Directors <p>Our Company</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. At a Glance 4. The Coca-Cola System Total Beverage Portfolio 5. Business Transformation Timeline 6. Selected Financial Data 7. Progress Against Our Sustainability Goals 8. Our System in Context <p>Priority Issues</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Our approach to managing our priorities 10. Priority Issues: Risk and Opportunities <p>Portfolio Transformation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Providing Choices to Consumers 12. Reducing Calories – Expanding Portfolio 13. Shared Opportunity: Sugar Reduction – Refreshingly Less Sugar <p>World Without Waste</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Shared Opportunity: Waste PRAISE <p>Water Leadership</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Shared Opportunity: Water Replenishment <p>Sustainable agriculture</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Shared Opportunity: Agriculture

At **Table 4**, it is possible to analyse that the company always shows interest in providing for closure within the same general topics. However, once more it is possible to address the particularity of the company engaging in shared value by the topics 13, 14, 15, and 16 from the table, regarding the 2018 report. As it is possible to determine, Coca-Cola specifically addressed the term “Shared Opportunity” regarding the topics of sugar, water, agriculture, and a world without waste. Additionally, though not present in any topic of the table of contents, specifically, this term was already mentioned several times throughout the 2017 report.

This guides the analysis in another aspect that must be taken into consideration, which is the discursive flow of the reports. Generally, at the documents first pages, there are available letters from the company’s direction, which translate in corroboration of its commitment into putting the consumer first and finding innovative solutions to the complex challenge’s society faces nowadays. The 2016 report shows a small limitation in the direct addressing of CSR aspirations, which translates in the company focusing much more in past activities, though there is a noticeable, but vague, commitment in continuing good practices in the future.

- “We’re listening to the consumers (...). We’ve responded with our way forward, the company’s long term plan to reshape our business (...)” – CEO, James Quincey at The Coca-Cola Company's 2016 report.
- “As this year’s report makes clear, we’ve achieved significant progress, but remain constructively discontent. There’s much more to do, and we are ready to continue the work – together with you.” – CSO, Bea Perez at The Coca-Cola Company, 2016 sustainability report.
- “Our long-term vision is to contribute meaningfully to the “circular economy” (The Coca-Cola Company, 2016)

When compared to the 2017 report, a small change in the company's CSR talk is possible to notice, with more clear goals for the future being mentioned:

- “We have set a global goal to help collect and recycle a bottle or can for every one we sell by 2030” (The Coca-Cola Company, 2017)

However, it is at the 2018 report that a difference in the CSR talk is more depicted, where it is possible to see a change regarding the addressing of the future of the company, with clear, quantified and time-framed objectives being mentioned continuously along the pages:

- “Make our packaging 100% recyclable globally by 2025 - and use at least 50% recycled material in our packaging by 2030:
 - 88% of The Coca-Cola Company's consumer packaging is recyclable - up from 85% in early 2018.
 - 30% recycled material was used in our packaging globally in 2018.”

(The Coca-Cola Company, 2018)

Simultaneously, as mentioned before, a more detailed approach to performance reporting can be observed, with a specific Data Appendix section being provided “to respond to stakeholder interest and provide greater disclosure and transparency” (The Coca-Cola Company, 2018). Overall, it is possible to determine that discourses of aspiration and past and future performance begin to firmly coexist, creating a more coherent, transparent and complete speech.

From a visual perspective, though not used to advertise directly to the public regarding products of the company, these reports can be addressed as marketing tools. Firstly, they all are extremely interactive when read online, full of colour and icons that keep the reader interested in knowing more. Furthermore, they all depict testimonies and harmonized workers in pictures, which highlight the companies

concerns with people. In addition, from one topic to the other, it is simple and easy to navigate, whether it is an 18 or a 71 pages document. Commonly to all the reports analysed, at each page, it is possible to find a link between the topics the company has decided to address, so that it is not even necessary to keep visiting the table of contents page. These documents also provide, as said previously, a possible way of knowing how the company is doing regarding its 2020 goals.

Packaging and Recycling

One of Coca-Cola's most controversial goal is the one regarding packaging and waste. The company has communicated that as of 2020 it wants to have reached a 75% recovery rate in developed markets of the equivalent amount of bottles and cans it has introduced into the marketplace (The Coca Cola Company, 2013). This goal is intended to be achieved through several actions.

When skimming the pages that addressed "Packaging" and "Recycling", two expressions were mentioned: A "World Without Waste" and "Circular Economy". These expressions, though different, work together into the explanation of the company's ambitious goal: it involves that companies do their part, by making sure the packaging is recyclable and also relies on people to embrace their role and recycle the packages they buy.

In this scope, Coca-Cola states in its 2016 Sustainability Report, that waste prevention is more than reducing. It is optimizing the company's efficiency in packaging, by increasing renewable material use and recover packages to recycle, thus contributing meaningfully to the "circular economy" (The Coca-Cola Company, 2016). To this, it has long introduced the PlantBottle, which is marketed thoroughly throughout the company's communication channels. On their website, for example, is possible to read:

Our consumers expect us to deliver the beverages they know and love in a package that meets their needs such as convenience and safety, but also in

a package that is environmentally considerate. PlantBottle™ packaging has been meeting consumer expectations since 2009. The first-ever fully recyclable PET plastic beverage bottle made partially from plants looks and functions just like traditional PET plastic but has a lighter footprint on the planet and its scarce resources.

(Anderson, 2015)

Within the same strategy, in the 2016 report, the company provides a whole section dedicated to explaining its packaging mix, with the image as shown in **Figure 16**.



Figure 16. Packaging mix at the 2015-2016 report
Source: (The Coca-Cola Company, 2016)

At the 2017 report, this section unveils in a small corner the same information, thus transmitting that the same amount of their packaging is recyclable (**Figure 17**).



Figure 17. Packaging mix at the 2017 report.
Source: The Coca-Cola Company (2017)

These packaging-mixes refer to the percentage of packaging material the company had available to create new packaging. In 2017, it reported that approximately 59% of bottles and cans introduced in the market were refilled or helped to recover other bottles and cans (The Coca-Cola Company, 2017).

In the 2018's report, however, both the information of the packaging-mix and recovered material was reported differently. Instead, the company communicated the number of packages introduced in the market in 2018 as **Figure 18** indicates.

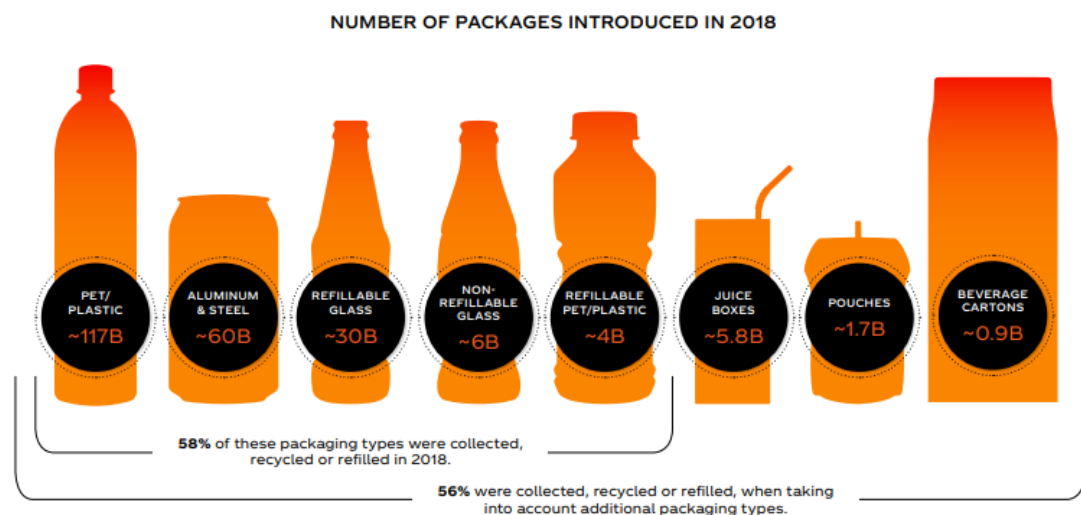


Figure 18. Number of packages introduced in 2018
Source: The Coca-Cola Company (2018)

The company reports that the percentage of material recovered for that year was 58%. Additionally, at the data index on page 61, this 1% difference is footnoted with the following information:

Our percentage calculations of progress toward collection of 100% of the equivalent of the consumer packaging we sell has been internally vetted using relevant scientific and technical methodologies, but those methodologies are evolving as the industry learns more about calculating

collection in different markets. We are working to improve our data collection and measuring systems. As systems and methodologies improve, we will revisit our prior estimates to ensure their accuracy and make any necessary corrections to our public reporting.

(The Coca-Cola Company, 2018)

In this context, the company additionally mentions in the report that the main difference in the approach is related to stopping to address a bigger and a smaller container as the same, which to it is a way of accounting for its packages (The Coca-Cola Company, 2018).

NGOs, Foundations and Programs

Throughout Coca-Cola's communication, several references to other organisations are possible to find, and the reports are not an exception.

At the 2015-2016 report, the company stated its participation in collective actions towards packaging solutions with Ellen MacArthur Foundation, Closed Loop Fund, Fost Plus and others (The Coca-Cola Company, 2016).

Additionally, the 2016-2017 report mentions a company called PetStar, one of the largest PET plastic recycling plants, and mentions that it was funded by Coca-Cola Mexico.

At the 2017-2018 report, however, it is where this topic is further detailed. The company reports that it has established 10 additional global partnerships, with Global Plastic Action Partnership (GPAP), Ellen MacArthur Foundation, UN Environment New Plastics Economy Global Commitment, The Packaging and Recycling Association for Indonesia Sustainable Environment (PRAISE) and the Ocean Conservancy and the Trash Free Seas programs (The Coca-Cola Company, 2017).

Furthermore, the PRAISE program and “Zero Waste Cities” were enhanced, two programs which translated in the creation of recycling initiatives in Indonesia and creating the first zero-waste municipality in Greece, respectively.

In **Table 5**, it is possible to find further details on the programs and partnerships mentioned in the reports, when addressing the company’s activity in working towards a “World Without Waste”.

Table 5: Coca-Cola reported initiatives and programs detailed.

Source: Own elaboration.

Name	Relationship	Description
Ellen MacArthur Foundation	Collaboration	The Ellen MacArthur Foundation works with business, government and academia to build a framework for an economy that is restorative and regenerative by design (Ellen MacArthur Foundation).
Closed Loop Fund	Coca-Cola is an Investor	Sustainable consumer goods, advanced recycling technologies and the development of the circular economy (Closed Loop Fund)
PetStar	Coca-Cola is a Founder	Leading Mexican company in PET bottles recycling worldwide and an example of circular economy, we also contribute to global sustainability through our PetStar's Sustainable Business Model (PetStar)
Global Plastic Action Partnership	Coca-Cola is a partner	Fosters collaboration to tackle plastic waste issues (The Coca-Cola Company, 2018)
UN Environment New Plastics Economy Global Commitment	Initiative of Ellen MacArthur Foundation (see above)	Global Commitment already unites more than 400 organisations on its common vision of a circular economy for plastics, keeping plastics in the economy and out of the ocean (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2019)
PRAISE	Strategic Partnership	This strategic partnership of industry leaders has a bold 2030 vision: to bring economic, social and environmental benefits to Indonesia by transforming packaging waste into a high-value resource (The Coca-Cola Company, 2018).
Ocean Conservancy and the Trash Free Seas programs	Coca-Cola is a partner	Works to invest in trash collection and recycling systems to make sure trash never gets in the ocean (The Coca-Cola Company, 2018).
Zero Waste Cities	Program launched by The Coca-Cola Company.	A new program that aims to make Thessaloniki the first city in Greece with the potential to become a zero-waste municipality (The Coca-Cola Company, 2018)

Overall Analysis of the Reports

By analysing the sustainability reports, The Coca-Cola Company seems to be simplifying its communication of sustainability by providing easily readable and interactive reports, which are made accessible in its global website within only a few clicks. Communication is upfront and comprehensible, and when changes of the way information provided are made, such as the one regarding the packaging mix, it is explained the why of the decision in communicating it differently. Additionally, the company searches for illustrating the good in its sustainable business with images and real situations where its actions were successful. Furthermore, Coca-Cola's eagerness in solving the plastic packaging problem and societal actions to help the ones who are most affected by it is also represented as a success factor of contribution, since it is involving itself with NGOs dedicated to the cause, and even contributing as a founder for others. The programs it launches are too good examples of this.

With this, the company demonstrates the creation of a balance between people, planet and profit, which are addressed soberly throughout these documents. Additionally, it engages in a seemingly proud communication of achievements, by illustrating real-life examples of its activities which, as stated by Christensen et al. (2013), represents that the company is practising CSR an action. However, it should be noted that ever since 2017, aspirational CSR as a talk started to be highly present and in the 2018 report, the discourse was continuously addressing specific, measurable and quantifiable objectives and goals for the future regarding its sustainability practices.

In addition, by providing for the "Shared Opportunity" sections, it is noticeable a big change in CSR of the company, which started to create business cases, just as the premise of the shared value of Porter & Kramer (2011) suggests.

4.2. Documentary

The analysed documentary is entitled “A plastic Surgery: Coca-Cola’s hidden secrets” and is a 52-minute-long piece of investigation on the company’s pledges about its plastic bottles while also mentioning other corporate responsibility related problems.

It was first broadcasted on September 11th, 2018, on France 2. Its main subject is very clear: it focuses on the company’s responsibility claims on the plastic epidemic that the world has been living for the past decades, and how they are a case of greenwashing. The investigation revolves around the company’s January 2018 announcement of promising a “World Without Waste” and James Quincy’s, its CEO, statement about the world needing to create a circular economy, which is, by his words, “absolutely doable”.

In fact, ever since 2013, and as it was possible to determine earlier in this dissertation, the company has been actively engaging in communicating its sustainable side and has been involved in creating and helping several actions related to environmental and social practices. On her documentary, Rigaud refers to several of these corporate social responsibility actions.

Firstly, it mentions the “World Without Waste”, a plan connected with the goal of collecting and recycling the equivalent of every bottle or can that Coca-Cola sells globally, by the year 2030. This implies that consumers recycle their plastic in order for new products to be created out of it. For this, there is a whole global campaign marketed by the company, that involves the promotion of recycling activities, supported by promotional videos, advertisements, public relations statements, etc. In terms of commercials and products, it also shows how the company communicates the cleanliness and pureness of its Dasani water bottles and mentions some facts about its PlantBottle, the company’s breakthrough innovative packaging, designed to change the way the world thinks of plastic bottles, by being

the first-ever fully recyclable PET plastic made partially from plants (The Coca-Cola Company, n.d.-c).

Additionally, it also shows how actively the company promotes recycling through promotional videos and constant linkage to NGO's. These societal actions are, as determined by the analysis of the reports, reasoned throughout all the corporate external and internal communication. However, *A Plastic Surgery: Coca-Cola's hidden secrets* do not focus on these practices, but on the truthfulness in them. And, on this, the team's opinion seems clear and easily understandable: the company represents a case of misleading marketing and practices, or greenwashing.

Testimonials

The producer, Sandrine Rigaud, has supported her premise throughout her work with the help of several testimonials.

Firstly, Jessica Perelman a biologist of the Department of Oceanography at the University of Hawaii, that helps to specify the plastic problem in the word: it is everywhere.

Secondly, the investigators get together with Bart Elmore, best-selling author of "*Citizen Coke: The Making of Coca-Cola Capitalism*". Bart adds value to this documentary by stating what Coca-Cola tried to do when it first started to get related to the plastic problem in the world. He specifies that the company passively attributed responsibilities to the consumers, and exposes the Coca-Cola's attempt to greenwash its consumers by connecting itself with Keep America Beautiful, a non-governmental organisation with the mission "To inspire and educate people to take action every day to improve and beautify their community environment" (Keep America Beautiful, n.d.).

Additionally, this investigation is also corroborated with H el ene Bourges, the head of Ocean and Forest campaigns of Greenpeace France. Her contribute relates

mainly to the case of Coca-Cola's PlantBottle and refers to the greenwashing present at the company's reports.

Representing a fourth expert testimony, the documentary also relies on Arsen Darnay, the first engineer to ever study the impact of PET plastic bottles by providing a comparison with the glass ones.

On a last moment of the cinematographic piece, three other people emerge, representing the largest group of individuals related to The Coca-Cola Company's activity: it's direct and indirect workers. The investigators travelled to Tanzania, East Africa, a place they call the "Land of Coca-Cola", to gather first-hand statements of James, a local worker from the production line of Coca-Cola in one of its factories in the country, Marta and Muaramu that work for a company that recycles plastic to resell. From their perspective, the investigators make a premise regarding labour laws and the human side of the production of products.

Lastly, there are also other participants that are important to mention. Derek Robertson, the director of Keep Scotland Beautiful that is, in similarity with Keep America Beautiful, an organisation funded by beverage companies such as Coca-Cola, and Michael Goltzman, the vice-president of The Coca-Cola Company Environmental and Social Issues.

Each person takes a different part in the documentary, and their contributions will be in detail throughout the following sections.

An unachievable goal

The first shots of the documentary firstly establish the premise that plastic is everywhere, and it is a serious problem. With the help of Jessica Perelman, it is concludable that even in a remote location as the north of Hawaii, even in the inside of a fish that lives about 400 metres deep in the ocean, plastic is present.

Regarding this problem, Coca-Cola has performed clear statements in order to express how important it is and how it is working as a company to reduce its impact. The investigators have read the reports, and in 2008 they also found this eagerness in helping, by pointing out that the company stated the desire to add 25% of recycled plastic in its bottles by 2015.

What the investigators concluded, however, was that this was more used as a marketing strategy to make consumers keep buying their products guilt-free, and that the 2015 report mentioned 12,4% of the packaging made of renewable and recycled materials.

At this, Greenpeace's France Head of Ocean and Forest Campaigns H el ene Borges was a crucial element to uncover the misleading marketing practice. She pointed out the necessity of distinguishing recycled and renewable. A recyclable resource is one that can be used over and over but must first go through a process to prepare it for re-use (Deiterich, 2018). Renewable, on the other hand, characterizes something that naturally restores or replenishes itself. It is constantly available without human or other outside influences. H el ene then discarded the validity of The Coca-Cola Company recycling solution to the plastic problems in the world, since the impact on the environment from the PlantBottle is not significant to make changes on its own.

Additionally, the investigators provide yet another example that supports the premise that Coca-Cola's communication is more related to marketing rather than actually do good for the environment. They mention an important topic that helps to identify that the sole action of communicating its concerns regarding packaging is still a greenwashing fault: the eradication of the deposit system. According to the documentary, the deposit system was how The Coca-Cola Company began. Understanding this system's core concept is simple: people buy the product with an extra fee – the deposit – and, if they return the packaging, they get the deposit

value back. With the help of Arsen Darnay, investigators concluded that this was the most ecological alternative for the beverage industry.

However, Coca-Cola decided that it was going to slowly stop producing glass bottles. Knowing this fact considerably reduces the credibility of any attempt in claiming sustainability by redirecting directly to its packaging. If the motive is sincerely to reduce the environmental impact, then maybe the solution should be to opt by the most ecological solution possible, which, according to the documentary, is not the case.

As for the reasons that may make the company choose plastic packaging instead of traditional glass bottles, it is later possible to find out that by the words of a worker that people prefer plastic because it is more aesthetic. Additionally, plastic offers better and easier portability, by being lighter and more resistant. With this, it may be arguable that the company is more interested in making a profit, by creating a convenient product rather than a product that is a little less convenient to produce and sell but more environmentally friendly.

Addressing of responsibilities

Apart from the possible unrealistic feature of Coca-Cola's goals, the documentary also focuses on an important indirect claim from the corporation. As it is explained in the film, when the issue of plastic first starts to be noticed, in the '60s, Coca-Cola has quickly disconnected from it.

To support this premise, the documentary refers to two NGOs, Keep Scotland Beautiful and Keep America Beautiful. The way companies are addressed represents a duality between how the industry behaved back then, and how the industry is behaving now. While Keep Scotland Beautiful is depicted as being funded by Coca-Cola, Keep America Beautiful is directly mentioned as being created by the beverage industry, from which a famous clip emerged. In this clip, a

native Indian is shown crying over pollution emerged from civilization and ends with “People start pollution. People can stop it.”

As Bart Elmore states, the main premise in that commercial was to “let the consumers know they’re the bad ones”. This is more recently supported by the words of Derek Robertson, director of a similar NGO, Keep Scotland Beautiful that states that:

“Plastic and plastic packaging have a very useful function in society, and we need to remember that. The products are very creative, and they are very, very useful. (...) It’s how we, again, as individuals dispose of this packaging; We want people to start thinking about personal responsibility”.

In conclusion, though the company engages in the communication of its sustainability, by linking itself to these NGO’s, it also safeguards itself, not by contributing directly to the problem, but by keeping away from it. For Coca-Cola, the problem is complex, but the solution is simple: recycling. And the responsibility of recycling products is of the consumers who buy it, not the industry which produces it.

Supporting evidence

Halfway through the documentary, the investigators start to mention a set of documents that represent a big role when linking Coca-Cola to greenwashing. The company’s sustainability reports are first introduced and used to investigate the company’s goals as previously mentioned. On a second moment, the documentary starts to focus on a confidential Coca-Cola Europe Public Affairs and Communications anonymously leaked document. The document presents a screening of the EU public policies that might affect the company, as illustrated in **Figure 19**. (in detail in **Annex 2. Public Policy Risk Matrix and Lobby Focus**.)

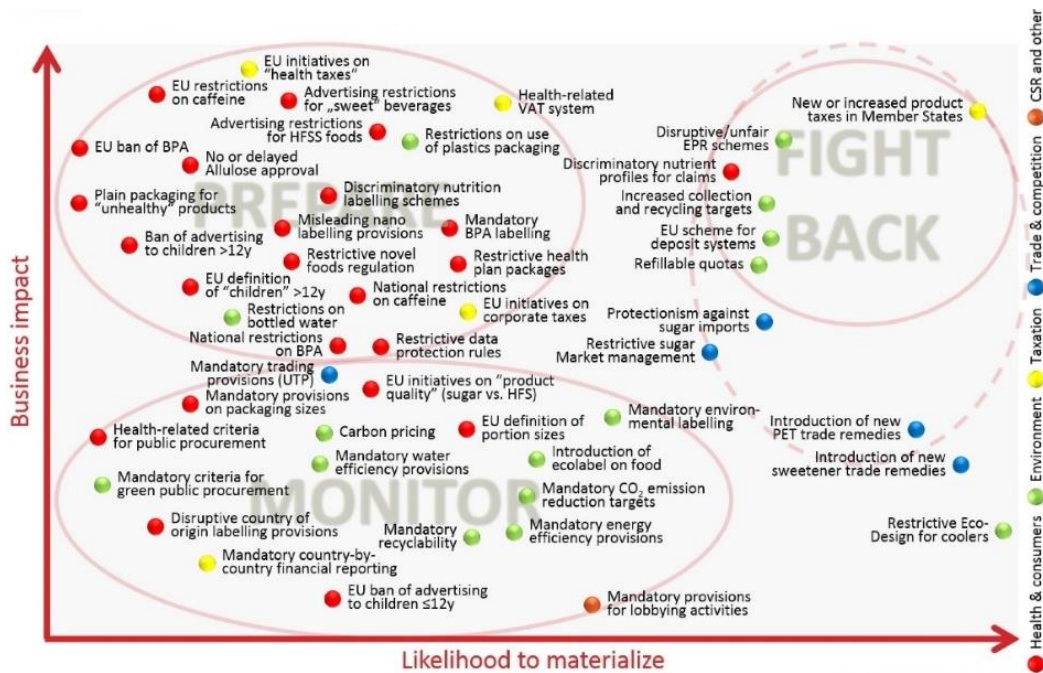


Figure 19. 2016 public policy risk matrix and lobby focus of Coca-Cola.
Source: Chrystopoulou (2016)

The soda company has categorized its priorities into three groups: “Fight Back”, “Prepare” and “Monitor” based on business impact and its likelihood to be materialized in the EU. These groups have sets of policies that are distributed between the topics “Health & Consumers”, “Taxation”, “Environment”, “Trade & Competition” and “Corporate Social Responsibility”. From this, the investigators point out the company’s intention to “fight back” the deposit system and the increased collection and recycling targets, which goes on the opposite direction when analysing the company’s marketing communication strategy. Additionally, they emphasize the company’s attentiveness to carbon pricing, restrictions on caffeine and the EU ban of advertising to children under twelve.

The document is signed by Sophia Christopoulou, Senior Manager for Government Relations with Coca-Cola Europe and a member of the Public Affairs and Communication (PAC) team at the time. Along with it, several internal e-mails were

also made public. On these e-mails, the PAC team is said to have as an objective “to remain focused on the mission to promote, shape and protect the reputation of Coca-Cola across Western Europe, and continue to deliver data-driven campaigns to earn Trust across all audiences” (Jane Lawrie, Public Affairs and Communications Director for Coca-Cola Europe - 7/22/15).

When confronted with this, Michael Goltzman, Vice-President of The Coca-Cola Company Environmental and Social Issues, does not deny the existence or veracity of the referenced documents but affirms instead that they do not reflect Coca-Cola’s current strategy.

Facts from Tanzania

A third moment of the documentary takes place in Tanzania, East Africa, which they entitle as “The Land of Coca-Cola”. This segment is enriched with the testimonials of James, Marta and Muaramu, direct and indirect workers of The Coca-Cola and elements of its supply chain.

James is presented as the Manufacturing unit manager of a production line in Coca-Cola Kwanza, where 10 plastic bottles are prepared a second. At the country’s biggest city, Dar es Salaam, Marta and Muaramu are introduced as workers that collect empty bottles in enormous plastic piles.

Their testimony exposes the precarity of the conditions the circular economy of Coca-Cola creates: working nine hours a day, earning 20 cents per bottle collected, finding needles while digging through piles of waste and carrying 70 kilos of plastic in the hot sun. As one worker states in the documentary “We are exhausted, but we’re prisoners of the system. They impose the prices and if one of us accepts, we all have to go along with it”.

Watching the world of Coca-Cola from this perspective can also connect more topics regarding the company’s current marketing policy and its problems regarding misleading marketing practices.

In the sustainability reports, there is always available one section for “Human & Workplace rights” (The Coca-Cola Company, 2016), “Human Rights, Inclusion Diversity” (The Coca-Cola Company, 2017), “Human Rights” (The Coca Cola Company, 2018) and “Women’s Economic Empowerment” (The Coca-Cola Company, 2016, 2017, 2018). But, in the light of Rigaud’s documentary, the company once more seems to be engaging in false claims only to be recognized as responsible and sustainable, when its actions state otherwise.

Overall Analysis of the Documentary

The documentary exposes important challenges which companies that so willingly communicate environmental concerns as Coca-Cola must face, which is the veracity of claims in a society where these can be constantly covered by media and expert evidence.

As it was possible to determine, the company had failed into abiding for its statement regarding the 2015 target to source 25% of its plastic bottles from recycled material, which turned out, as investigators concluded, in the company not even being able to pass the 7% mark. This may represent a problem regarding future claims credibility.

Additionally, references to the early years of Coca-Cola’s deposit system may strengthen interest in maximizing profit, rather than actually perform better to protect the environment or people. On an even more serious note, leaked emails and internal documents of the company may show that the company is trying to fight against legislation intended to protect public health and advocate for sustainability. However, and generally speaking, by practising this kind of actions a corporation may immerse itself into a double-standard policy, that communicates positively to the outside when its internal behaviour may indicate negative practices.

Within the scope of Rigaud’s documentary, and in the light of the literature, problems regarding ethics, value and integrity are raised, which translate into

illustrated examples of inappropriate business policies and practices. The case exposed by the journalists seems to represent the acts of misleading its consumers, by greenwashing practices through false labels and products characteristics, holding itself as fully committed when that commitment is absent, suggesting a better environmental performance than the one it actually possess and even connecting itself to NGOs as almost an escape to being linked to these issues. This illustrates issues of firm-level and product-level greenwashing, as suggested by Delmas and Burbano (2011). In the next page, an overall scheme of the documentary is presented.

Table 6. Overall participants and main exposed cases of the documentary.
Source: own elaboration.

Participants	<p>External to the Coca-Cola Company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jessica Perelman (biologist); • Bart Elmore (writer of Citizen Coke) • Helène Bourges (Greenpeace France) • Arsen Darnay (Engineer)
	<p>Related to the Coca-Cola Company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Goltzman (Vice-president) • Derek Robertson (NGO)
	<p>Affected by The Coca-Cola Company:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers James, Marta and Muaramu
Unrealistic Goals, unsupported and not-credible claims	<p>Goal to “Add 25% recycled plastic in bottles by 2015 – exposed as not achieved, by far (recycled plastic content in the year of 2015 was a little over 7%)</p>
	<p>Link to environmental-related NGOs – The company is the founder of some, which gives possible unbelievability</p>
	<p>Exploitation issues regarding Marta, who earns 20% per bottle collected, James and Muaramu – they show the World Without Waste and Circular Economy principles from an unsustainable perspective.</p>

4.4. Interviews

The third source of data collection of this case study proposed to analyse emergent challenges of sustainability communication through the perspective of consumers, in order to provide for an extra point of view regarding social and environmentally friendly corporate communication. This section first discusses the topic of interviewees demographics and some personal habits regarding consumerism they have shared during the interview followed by a detailed section regarding interviews the main themes addressed.

Sample characteristics and profile

As indicated, the sample consisted of ten people. To facilitate interpretation of results, interviewees were name coded within the following logic: **id_1, id_2, ... id_10**. To better analyse the sample, demographic characteristics – nationality, marital status, age, gender, education and occupation - were asked. All participants affirmed being Portuguese, except for **id_5** who was born in Spain but resided in Portugal since childhood. Given this, this individual contribute was considered as valid for the research purpose. Furthermore, there was also consistency in terms of marital status, with participants being single.

As for gender and age, these characteristics were distributed as shown followingly in

Figure 20 and **Figure 21** Information regarding the education and occupation, as well as the field of studies, are available in **Table 7**.

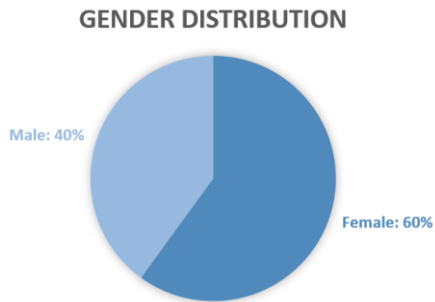


Figure 20. Interviewees gender distribution.

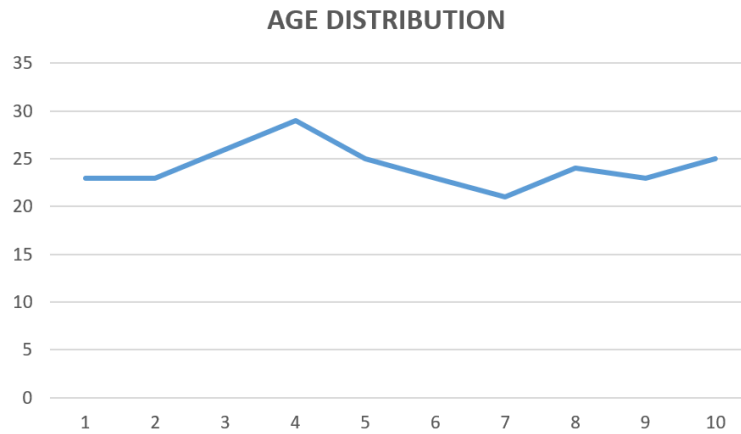


Figure 21. Interviewees age distribution.

Table 7. Participants academic level, field of studies and occupation.

id	Academic Level	Field of Studies	Occupation
1	Master's Degree	Design	Designer
2	Bachelor's Degree	Nursing	Nurse
3	Master's Degree	Pharmaceutical Sciences	Pharmacist
4	Master's Degree	Software Engineering	Software Engineer
5	Bachelor's Degree	International Business	Student
6	Bachelor's Degree	Translation	Student
7	Bachelor's Degree	Social Sciences	Student
8	Bachelor's Degree	Management	Retail Manager
9	Bachelor's Degree	Biotechnology	Researcher
10	Bachelor's Degree	Marketing	Marketing Manager

Additionally, the interview started with the question of what environmental and social problems made participants more worried, which also translated in characteristics of the sample. Topics differed, but both participants who identified themselves as activist and participants who did not were quickly prompted to mention problems that regarded both the environment and society. In total, seven environmental and six social issues were mentioned. No participant mentioned only one problem.

Tables 8 and 9. Distribution of worrying social and environmental issues mentioned by participants.

Environmental Issues	Mentions
Industry-caused problems	1
Deforestation	2
Gas Emissions	1
Material Waste	1
Plastic Pollution	2
Pollution	7
Global Warming	5

Social Issues	Mentions
Immigrant crisis	1
Poverty	4
Exclusion/Inclusion	3
War	1
Abandonment	1
Hunger	1

As it is possible to determine, 8 people stated that they have worries regarding pollution, while of those 8 people, 7 specifically mentioned the plastic problem. In a total sample of 10 people, this demonstrates some level of pertinency in the sample selection.

Main themes

After conducting and transcribing the interviews and coding the data available, it was possible to determine 6 main relevant themes, identified below.

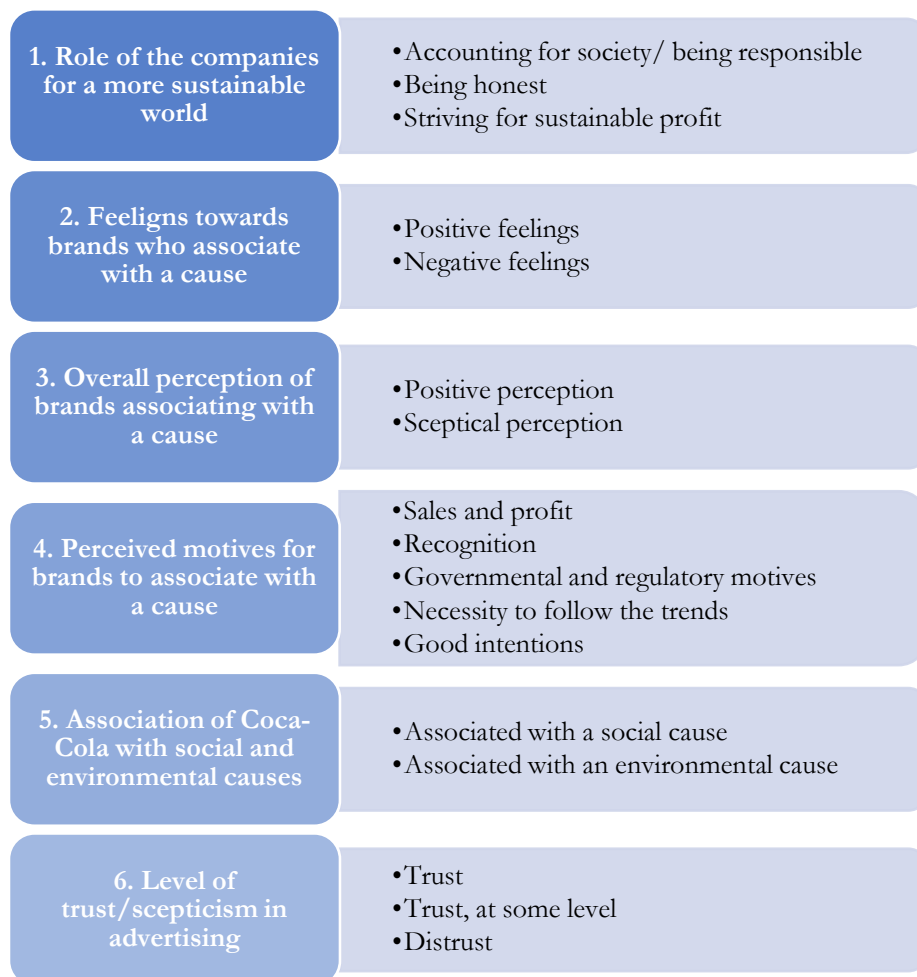


Figure 22. Overall main themes of the Interview.

1. Role of the companies for a more sustainable world

When asked about what role should companies occupy in the quest for a more sustainable world, **id_5** and **id_7** mentioned actions such as “promote recycling in the workplace”, “change packaging for more sustainable alternatives”, and making sure “the quality department is working”. As for the other participants, they provided specific individual perceptions that can be categorized in three groups: the role of accounting for society/being responsible, the role of being honest and the role of striving for sustainable profit.

a. Accounting for society/being responsible

Some participants mentioned the necessity for firms to see themselves as a part of society, like **id_3** who stated “I believe companies should work as a collective citizen”, or **id_4** who said “We all have a fundamental role to resolve this kind of issues (...) where you are an individual or a company, we all live here”. **Id_2** also mentioned this, by stating that “companies possess the biggest responsibility in consumption reduction and waste control because... How should I say this in a way that makes sense? ... In the precise moment they adopt more ecological measures, society is forced to adopt them too, right? Given that companies are the ones who supply the products, if those products are ecological, all society is. That is how we reach a sustainable world”. In the same context, **id_9** mentioned “they (the companies) have the duty to treat their workers with dignity, wage-wise and work-conditions wise... not exploring, nor seek to install themselves in poorer countries just because they will have cheap labour”.

b. Being honest

Other participants mentioned that the most important thing companies could do would be to not engage in dubious practices. As **id_6** stated, “We should highlight companies’ eagerness... the truthfulness and honesty with which they do things... I especially care about that”. One participant, who was educated on the term of greenwashing, mentioned this too. After providing an example of a company which he discovered was exposed for misleading environmental practices, **id_8** said

“Companies should stop caring so much about money, find other ways to profit, that are not prejudicial (...) this has a name... it’s greenwashing”.

c. Striving for sustainable profit

Others approached the questions within a strategic point of view. **Id_1** firstly mentioned profit negatively “There is always the profit thing... I have been there, I know how it is...” but when redirected to what he specifically thought about the role of the company for a more sustainable world, he said he believed “they are not sustainable because they don’t think about it” and “they can be both sustainable and intelligent (...) sometimes, less sustainable things happen from poorly taken decisions”. In the same context, **id_10** acknowledged too that the role of the companies was “to find a way in surviving without compromising the profit, which is important to them and, most importantly, not compromising the planet and people who live in it”.

2. Feelings towards brand who associate with a cause

When asked about brands which they knew were communicating actively their worries with social and environmental causes and if those brands had their preference because of it, the consumers interviewed split into contrasting answers. While they all mentioned specific nouns, some talked about negative associations, while the others have indeed praised companies who were engaging in this specific type of communication.

a. Positive feelings

Id_1 promptly mentioned a famous Portuguese retail brand which has recently introduced new bags made of raffia in its “Fruits and Vegetables” area, but when asked about giving preference to that brand, mentioned that there is an app to see where products are cheaper and that it is what truly creates the decision of what supermarket to shop at. **Id_5** also mentioned this brand, but because of it having a specific section and brand for biological products. **Id_2** mentioned a beauty brand which it's now preferable because “their main concept is selling biological material

which is not tested in animals” and which had a “pretty conscious paper bag policy”. Furthermore, this company conquered that preference because “I started to buy the products and liked them”. Additionally, a famous plastic container brand is also mentioned by this participant, because “despite of its containers being made of plastic, they are very resistant, and this enhances its durability... (...) people need to know that the true danger is single-use plastics, that is put in the trash”. **Id_3** also mentioned a beauty brand, and a clothing brand which possess a social and environmental responsibility policy but disregarded giving special preference when buying because of that perception. This same clothing brand was also mentioned by **id_8**. **Id_4** talked about a local public transportation service, which had switched entirely to electric vehicles, and another company for promoting formative and practical actions that regarded the environment to its employees. **Id_6** mentioned a brand which is now preferred because of the taste of its vegan products, communication of environmental messages, and providing for “excellent sustainability reports at their website”.

b. Negative

When asked to name a brand that was communicating actively its worries with social and environmental causes, **id_9** was prompt to mention a brand which had previously been in contact with through an advertisement about an environmentally friendly packaging, to which the first reaction was to not believe in it. Additionally, **id_7** and **id_10** shared the same disbelief. As **id_7** stated “I don’t specifically recall a brand right now, but I mostly actually disassociate brands with the environment. They don’t care about it, it is pure marketing and so they would not gain my preference” and **id_10** said “Now, now, I don’t actually recall any, but I have heard about a lot of brands who associate with environmental causes and my first stand is to actually avoid it until I know more... To me, the more they talk about it, the less I trust and the less I buy... unless I know the true intentions”.

3. Overall perceptions of brands associating with a cause

To analyse the overall perception of brands associating with a cause, participants were asked what would they feel and what would they think of the brand which communicated its association. Answers varied significantly but they could be categorized into a good perception or a somehow sceptical perception.

a. Positive perception

Id_1 stated that a brand aligning with a cause would allow to establish a steadier connection with it, because of the level of relation to the cause, which translated in a feeling as positive as **id_3** that mentioned to “obviously be happy and feel more identified with the brand” and would be eager to opt more in buying that brand. **Id_4** also stated it would create happy feelings because “beyond people, now companies would too turn to a problem that until nowadays many have been ignoring” and also mentions that it has “weight in company’s image”. On another hand, **id_5** mentioned it would positively influence the overall perception of the brand, but if there was a more sustainable alternative, it would be chosen instead. **I_8** would also be positively influenced: “I think it is great that brands associate themselves with these causes, I would definitely feel good”. **Id_9** presented another point of view, while addressing that yes, there would be satisfaction, but, as stated “maybe I wouldn't believe in it right away... sure that, after I know and see things clearly, I would have a better perception of the brand... but then again, I would always make a little research to understand in what way the brand was contributing to that cause”. **Id_10** shared that “I would like it because the brand would be advocating for the cause... but I know it is only for money... but... I guess it's ok... even for profit, they do rights things so I can live with that”.

b. Sceptical perception

Id_2 highlighted that “nowadays one needs to study what one is consuming... A brand can associate itself to a million causes, however, the motives that get it to do so are unknown to us. It may be because they really care as it can be to obtain money, to profit”. **Id_6** said that her perception would depend on the brand, while

acknowledging that it is good that brands have an interest in more sustainable practices but “it is also important that they do not do it only to fit in what they consider a trend”. Additionally, she addressed that maybe, when buying she might remember the association and would prioritize that company because her money “would be supporting ideals that represented” her “values as a consumer”.

4. Perceived motives for a brand to associate with a cause

When directly asked regarding what motives they thought made companies associate themselves with a cause, overall opinions regarded sales and profit, public acceptance, brand recognition and a necessity in obeying the law. While some consumers mentioned only one, some consumers mentioned several. In this context, the general distribution of numerated motivations varied.

a. Sales and profit

In detail, **Id_1** stated that the main motivation was “Sales... it’s always sales... profit, money... if they address a mediatic subject, brands will always take advantage of it”, and **id_2** who shared the same opinion, but from another perspective: “I think this is the main motive for the brand to assume those worries... the break of sales”. Additionally, **id_2** introduced another perspective: “nowadays, the consumer has become more conscious, more worried, making him end up being more selective in what he consumes (...) if a certain brand doesn’t correspond with society’s demands, its sale will decrease”. **Id_3** also mentioned profit.

b. Recognition

Id_3 mentioned that “the propagation of social and environmental policies is mostly a marketing manoeuvre and not a worry... most brands use a sustainable and inclusive positioning in order to have more recognition on a social level and, in that way, increase their profit”. **Id_4** stated that they do it “to create a good image before a society that gives more and more importance to social and environmental worries.”

c. Governmental and regulatory motives

On another scope, **Id_5** mentioned regulatory motives: “It’s because of the recent consciousness, the government... new laws... mandatory recycling and so... and also to be well seen... because it looks good and consumers will like it”, an opinion which was shared by **id_7** “they align with these practices because the government forces them”, and **id_10**, who said “Well, the main motivation is to keep the company going... they have laws to follow, a society to please”. With additional detail, **id_8**, stated that “it is never the environment, I think... (...) They do it because they are forced or pressured... because they have backlash from the public, or pressure from the directors... I don’t believe that the priority is to be environmentally friendly.... They do it because they will be more desirable to consumers... or from political-economic pressures... the law says so, so I have to, the consumer says so, so I have to... because if I don’t then I will be forced to close activity, because I don’t have money, because no one buys my thing because my competitor is environmentally friendly and they (the consumers) prefer that”.

d. Necessity to follow the trends

Id_9 also mentioned that “it seems to be a trend now... it’s a trend to have environmental and social worries... not only companies and brands... but also people and so... and this is cyclic... people have them, brands will adopt them too, because then people will buy...so, I think that that is the motive... it’s people pressure, and the money that it makes them lose...”

e. Good intentions

From a brighter perspective, only **id_6** mentioned the possibility of companies doing it because of real concerns, who stated that “I believe that for one side, it’s the search for profit.... They take advantage of the trend that now exists.... but it can also be a true willingness, a true concern with the environment”.

5. Association of Coca-Cola with social and environmental causes

Of those interviewed, **id_3**, **id_4**, **id_6** and **id_7** did not associated Coca-Cola with environmental or social practices, and some associated with at least one of these concepts.

a. Associated with a social cause

Id_1 mentioned Santa Claus as being Coca-Cola's, which remembered him about religion, and **id_2** communicated worries about sugar and obesity. **Id_8** mentioned the company's worries in social inclusion, by specifically mentioning its LGBT supportive practices and **id_10** spoke about friendship and the "Share a Coke" Campaign.

b. Associated with an environmental cause

Id_2 mentioned a documentary where "it was exposed that the company had practices which were little to sustainable" and that given its impact "it is not taking the right measures to today's reality". **Id_5** associated the company negatively to environmental causes. "They produce millions of cans and bottles, and they have a lot of consumption and so they go in the trash... and they should opt for alternatives". **Id_9** also stated that the brand is associated negatively with environmental practices by referencing a study that made the distinction regarding how much more ecological glass bottles were, when compared with aluminium cans. "They understood that cans were worse, but the company didn't change anything anyway... because costs now were fewer than when they used only glass".

6. Level of trust/scepticism in advertising

Part two of the interviews regarded credibility and feelings when participants were exposed to specific content provided by a company. To better reach this, two questions were asked. Firstly, participants were questioned if they attributed different feelings to Coca-Cola when they saw that the company seeks to align itself with the environmental problem of plastic pollution and secondly, if they trusted the information that the material provided. Results revealed the following:

a. Trust

Id_3 stated that to be faced with the advertisements “substantially increases my consideration regarding the brand, especially because it is one of the biggest and best-positioned brands on a global level... I like Coca-Cola a lot and I feel better to know that the company worries with it. However, I believe it should adopt other measures in terms of packaging production (...), plastic usage reduction and minimization of marketing campaigns, which are a big source of resource consumption”. When asked if about the trust and credibility regarding the information provided, **id_3** stated “I assume they are telling the truth... because brands can’t lie”. **Id_4** shared the same positive feeling of trust by referring that “I don’t think a brand like Coca-Cola has anything to gain with false information” and that “an attitude of this type by a brand like Coca-Cola can inspire related companies to take a stand regarding this problem. Additionally, it a good attitude to sensitize people in general to this environmental problem”. **Id_5** mentioned to like the initiative of the PlantBottle, though never having heard of it, and stated that she trusted the information because Coca-Cola “is a prestige brand” which may have problems if uncovered.

b. Trust, at some level

In a first moment, **id_1** stated that “it’s good that this preoccupation exists”, but supported the answer by pointing out that “plastic is not the only cause for the pollution problems”, and referred to the company’s aluminium cans: “everything that is packaging is associated to pollution, because in general it is not biodegradable (...) and packages are normally of single-use, and if you relate the time you use it and the time it takes to degrade, then it’s concerning”. Additionally, when asked about how the feelings for the company change when confronted with the advertisements, stated that “the responsibility of recycling is of us (consumers). I think it is an obligation for Coca-Cola to do this type of promotion, but they have to make sure that the packaging is environmentally friendly, not simply ask consumers to recycle... the company isn’t doing anything, in that way”. Regarding credibility, he stated that “no one confirms this type of information... nevertheless,

I never believe it 100%”. This opinion was shared by **id_6**, who stated: “Though I applaud any measurements that reduce the ecological footprint of a company (...) only in the long run I could take my conclusions regarding Coca-Cola... I would need to go get informed”. Furthermore, **id_6** highlighted the necessity of obtaining information, when asked about the trust level “Somehow (I trust) ... but I always appeal for the consumer to get informed by himself and tries to go beyond the declaration’s companies do... especially these like Coca-Cola, which is a giant multinational”.

c. Sceptic

Id_2 stated that “I would like that this would tranquillize me, to know that... somehow... the brand does take ecological measures... but I don’t trust this because of the documentary that I saw...”, “if they would opt by glass bottles, it would be easier to discard responsibly than plastic”, “I don’t trust it... but this is because I am informed”.

Id_7 said that the feelings for the company don’t change because of this, given that “nowadays we cannot trust anything we see, and we definitely can’t trust marketing at the first sight”. **Id_8** said that he is always sceptic, too. “I always suspect”. “In my mind, the company (Coca-Cola) isn’t even environmentally friendly... they use plastic in huge quantities, it is impossible to be environmentally friendly... (...) this PlantBottle means nothing to me... I mean, this is written in here, but how do I know that these plants they use in the bottle are good? Are them from sustainable agriculture? I don’t know, right? It looks like a good bottle, but it may as well not be”. **Id_9** referred a negative feeling for Coca-Cola when seeing the advertisements, though recognizing the positiveness in using recyclable plastic: “unfortunately, it is just one more brand that uses the trend to make money... if they really wanted to protect the environment, they would have glass bottles”. Additionally, **id_9** stated that “they shouldn’t approach these problems, because, in reality, they are hypocrites (...) they don’t do nothing”, “I only see them promoting consumption because they are green and promoting recycling, I don’t see them doing nothing...”

any brand can promote this practice (...) it doesn't involve an effort by the Coca-Cola's side (...) What they try to do is put the responsibility on the side of the consumer, when should be them, the ones who actually produce the stuff, to do something". In the same scope, **Id_10** mentioned that "the brand shouldn't be praised to promote something that everyone should be doing" and that, though there is a personal support for PlantBottle, there is no trust the information in the advertisement because of how little it says "I look at this and seeing so little information seems distrustful...If you have something so good, you should tell everything about it rather than telling it in a half a dozen words".

Overall Findings of the Interviews

All of the individuals who were interviewed revealed well-founded opinions and eagerness into expressing them. In general, all participants showed that they do not expect much from a company rather than the minimum for it to work aligned with the environment. On this topic, while some provided responsibility related answers, others stated that what companies can do is to be honest about its communication. Additionally, a minority seemed to provide answers related to the possibility of companies being both sustainable and profitable, which suggests some similarities with the practice of creating shared value.

Regarding the feelings about brands they knew were associated with social and environmental issues, the majority mentioned specific names they knew and two people said that the brand mentioned has gained their preference because of that mental association. However, some promptly mentioned brands negatively and justified their opinion based on misleading communication stories they knew about and on a personal impression of general communication distrust.

When asked about what could possibly motivate companies into associating themselves with causes, each person addressed more than one cause, with money-related words, like sales, profit, and economic survival, being mentioned by a huge majority of the interviewees. However, this topic was well-founded in the mind of

these consumers, and a majority of them had additional thoughts regarding firms' motivations. With this in mind, popularity related words, such as brand recognition, brand image and necessity of following the trends were also mentioned by almost half of the participants. Additionally, one of the interviewees mentioned the possibility of a true intention of doing good as being a motive for a company to associate itself with a social or environmental cause.

Furthermore, testimonials revealed a negative overtone regarding The Coca-Cola Company, mostly related to issues of the packaging of products.

Lastly, on the thematic of trust in information advertised by companies and Coca-Cola, findings revealed to be balanced among the participants, with some people saying that they trusted the information because brands have a distinction in society which made them unable to risk that position. In the same scope, some participants stated that they trust the information advertised, but only at some extent, while mentioned a necessity to go get informed on the matter in order to withdrawn specific conclusions on the veracity of the information. Finally, revealing a sceptical position, a similar amount of participants stated that they felt doubtful because they did not even connect the brand with environmentally friendly practices and that the company should not even be promoting itself in that way when, in reality, all of the work is on the side of the consumer. Only one person did not believe at all in the advertisement.

4.4. Discussion

Considering the provided analyses, it was first possible to determine that The Coca-Cola Company greatly aligns with the theoretical concept of what a sustainable company that communicates its sustainable practices is supposed to represent. Indeed, this firm's sustainability practices are aligned with current definitions of CSR (Frederick, 2018; Piasecki & Gudowski, 2017), which regard corporate social responsibility as a set of organizational practices that seek to diminish the overall negative effects of companies activities by providing something to society that goes beyond profit. On additional terms, through the connection of the reports to the hierarchic model of Leisinger (2007), it is possible to determine that the engagement of Coca-Cola occurs on a long-term, philanthropic level which distinguishes the company practices as ones of corporate responsibility excellence.

To add up, as Bloom et al. (2006) suggest, the consumers interviews demonstrate that their overall perceptions of companies associating with a cause – such as the plastic problem – generally translates into positive feelings and a bigger level of identification to the brand, with a total of 8 of the interviewed people supporting this type of initiative. This determines that not only is The Coca-Cola Company able to enhance society throughout its corporate policies, but also it can benefit from it, just as Porter and Kramer (2017) state in the theoretical concept of corporate shared value.

However, the investigation carried out by Rigaud and her journalists defend that the emergence for sustainability and the addressing of the plastic problem has caused the company to start misleading its consumers by suggesting a better environmental performance than it actually has, thus breaking the barrier of appropriate business policies and practices (De Jong et al., 2017; Longoni et al., 2018). In fact, this is exposed as a company's practice ever since the '60s - where it first started to link itself to NGOs that operate in favour of the environment - and even in the present day – where it is possible to see green advertisements to its PlantBottle at newspapers and magazines. From these two examples alone, it is

possible to conclude that, as Delmas and Burbano (2011) suggest, the company may be guilty of firm and product level greenwashing.

Additionally, problems regarding credibility and trust can emerge from this communication. As it was possible to determine, Coca-Cola used objectiveness by being very direct when telling consumers about all the good things it does, and keeps communicating value propositions regarding its production methods and how they are perfectly aligned with the environmental cause. However, the tone of the reports may create other feelings to the reader's thought, given that the company seems to be only addressing regions and company areas where good performance is occurring, thus disregarding any less impressive activities. Then again, the consumer's interviews emerge as good evidence of this issue. By this method specifically, it was possible to determine that, though participants generally mentioned positive feelings towards brand associating with causes that were important to them, there was already some negative association regarding Coca-Cola - specifically on its packaging – regarding external sources, such as documentaries and/or studies, just as Becker-olsen et al. (2006) have previously determined.

Furthermore, the documentary also raised an issue related with Koep's (2017) definition of aspirational CSR. As it is possible to determine by the reports, there is a strong emphasis regarding the company's intentions and plans for the future. However, the journalists have determined that, regarding the 2015 environmental goal, it would not surpass the characteristic of a "talk" thus not expressing a real commitment from the company, which strengthens the importance of a CSR communication well supported by facts. This is because, though not being greenwashing, future-oriented claims should eventually take place, in order to not classify as misleading marketing.

Chapter 5. Final Considerations

As stated in Delmas and Burbano (2011) the consumer market for green products and services was estimated at \$230 billion in 2009 and predicted to grow to \$845 billion by 2015. In a time where green consumerism rises and consumer attitude towards green products increases the consumer's purchase willingness (Handayani & Prayogo, 2017), it may be expected that 2020's numbers may be much higher.

In this scope, companies seem to be continuously engaging in marketing communications that specify the level of environmental friendliness of its products and themselves, which makes it important to study not only from the side of the consumers but also from the side of the firms. And this necessity can address both the good and the bad side of marketing. In this era, critical marketing studies emerged with this necessity of creating critical appraisal of marketing theory and practice, and they ask for a necessity of marketers to practically analyse the marketing practices and drive them to society's good, using critical theory as a lens to see beyond practical marketing practices and explore its potential negative implications to society.

Under this perspective, and within this investigation, it was possible to explore the fact of the communication of CSR being such a complex matter. It was possible to determine that it is a compounded topic, with far for simplistic specifications. The three perspectives cross-analysed showed that there are tensions, limitations and challenges for the development of environmental-related product and firm advertisements, and that society itself has evolved to develop a general critical stance regarding firm's internally produced communications.

5.1. Managerial Implications

Through the methods determined, it was possible to understand that though corporate sustainability may be hard to reach, given the production methods, level of sales, the necessity to profit, etc., the communication of sustainability has only one true criterion for it to be successful, which is to be honest. Specifically, the studies have proposed some main specifications that companies must bear in mind, should they engage in this type of marketing practices:

- Reporting is a successful tool to provide for business-related news to consumers, and the simpler the reports are, the better it is for them to read and get a good overview of how the company which is issuing the report is doing. However, it is necessary to design them in a way which conveys trust and true transparency, where it is possible to have updates of all business areas, whether the performance is favourable or less impressive;
- It is important to consider that, though there is a possibility to segment the market to perpetuate messages in accordance with the public that will receive them, the information provided is information that is going to be available for everyone: brand lovers, people who do not have feelings for the brand, and even people who have negative feelings for the brand. In this context, when providing for sustainability facts regarding a company or product, these must be easily interiorized as true, which will only happen if they are supported by well-founded justifications.
- It may be better for companies to communicate sustainable facts only when all of its sectors are sustainable. If this is not the case, then the company must first work towards it or at least publicly recognize that, in some fields, there is a necessity to highly improve.

5.2. Limitations and Further Research

As of any research, the study proposed was not conducted without limitations. First of all, though it has addressed several company-related aspects, it has provided for a focus in the packaging sector of the firm, when CSR is something which applies to a company as a whole. Additionally, by being a 100% qualitative study, it was under the possible bias of the investigator's own perspectives. Additionally, by translating into a single case study, this study is constrained by external validity, reliability and replicability.

Regarding the sources of data collection, though each one of the three contributed to a more robust research design, they all were somehow limited. The company's communication practices could be supported by additional documentation and internally produced items, the documentary was clearly one-sided and critical of Coca-Cola and the interviews translated in self-reported data, which must be noted as potentially biased given that not only do consumers tend to address the "politically correct" when the subject approaches ethics, but also they are heavily influenced by media and potentially unreliable data.

With this in mind, this dissertation main suggestion for future work would be to appeal for a more replicable research design, within a higher number of sources of data collection for the representation of the three perspectives analysed and, possibly, several others to identify. This will allow for a more well-founded possibility to generalize.

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Annexes

Annex 1. “Our 2020 Environmental Goals” infographic.

OUR 2020 ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS

At Coca-Cola, we are dedicated to contributing to a healthier, happier world. That’s why we are committed to:



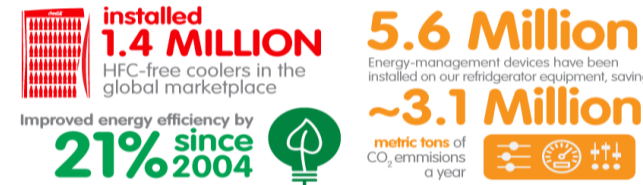
WATER STEWARDSHIP

Goals: Improve water efficiency by 25%, help ensure healthy, resilient freshwater systems through conservation efforts with World Wildlife Fund and replenish 100% of the water we use



ENERGY AND CLIMATE

Goal: Reduce CO₂ emissions embedded in ‘the drink in your hand’ by 25% through our entire value chain



PACKAGING

Goal: Reach a 75% recovery rate in developed markets of the equivalent amount of bottles and cans we introduce into the marketplace



AGRICULTURE

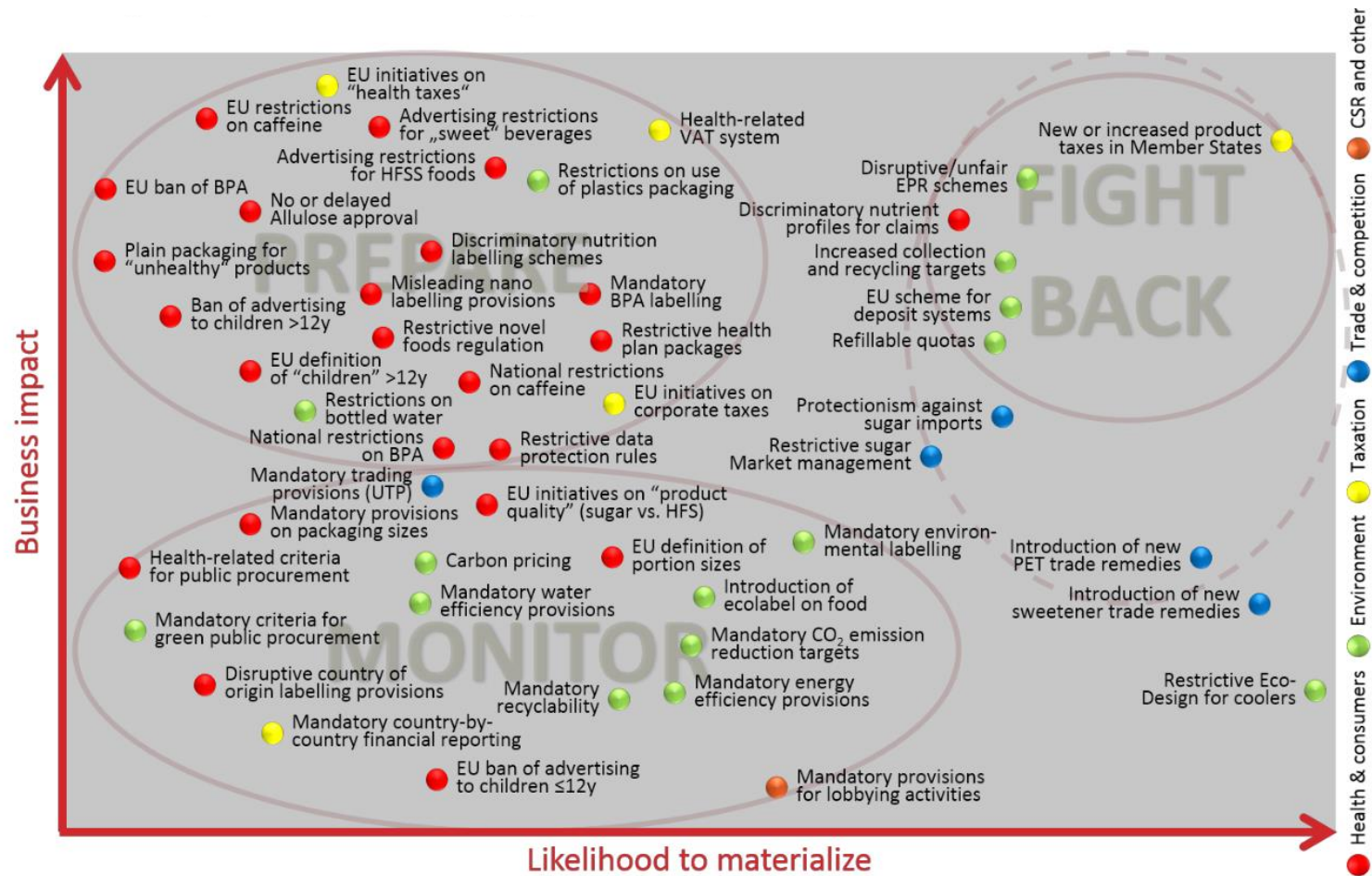
Goal: Sustainably source key agricultural ingredients



Coca-Cola and World Wildlife Fund are jointly working on sustainability goals for the Coca-Cola system—the Company and its nearly 250 bottling partners in more than 200 countries. These goals include sustainably sourcing key agricultural ingredients, helping to ensure healthy, resilient freshwater systems, working to reduce CO₂ emissions across the entire value chain, responsibly sourcing material for PlantBottle™ packaging and improving water efficiency.



Annex 2. Public Policy Risk Matrix and Lobby Focus.



Annex 3. Original interview guidelines

Guião de entrevista

Dados demográficos:

Idade:

Nacionalidade:

Género:

Estado Civil:

Nível de escolaridade e área de formação:

Profissão:

Em primeiro lugar, gostaria muito de lhe agradecer por ter aceite participar neste estudo. Como já sabe, esta entrevista vai ser realizada no contexto da minha dissertação de mestrado em Marketing, que pretende investigar o papel ambiental e social das empresas na sociedade. Para isto, gostaria de conversar consigo informalmente acerca de diversos tópicos.

Parte 1

- Que problemas sociais e ambientais mais o preocupam?

- O que poderão/deverão os consumidores fazer para alcançar um mundo melhor, mais sustentável?

- O que poderão/deverão as empresas fazer relativamente a esses problemas?

- De que forma poderão/deverão contribuir para um mundo melhor, mais sustentável?

- Lembra-se de alguma marca que comunique ativamente a sua preocupação com causas sociais ou ambientais, ou que relacione a um desses problemas?

- Essa empresa, que falou, dá preferência para comprar ou não comprar os seus produtos/serviços?
- Já alguma vez parou totalmente ou parcialmente o uso de algum produto/marca dado a um problema ambiental ou social? Qual?
- Porquê?

- E a Coca-Cola? Associa essa marca a causas sociais ou ambientais?

- O que é, para si, a marca? Como é que se sente em relação à marca? Qual é a sua relação com a marca?
- Lembra-se de algum anúncio da Coca-Cola relativo a aspetos sociais ou ambientais?

- Se visse uma marca a associar-se a uma causa importante para si, como acha que se sentiria? Como é que isso poderia ou não influenciar a sua perceção acerca dessa marca?

- Que motivos acha que levariam uma marca a assumir preocupações sociais ou ambientais?

- Como consumidor, adota alguns comportamentos para lidar com os problemas sociais e ambientais que o preocupam? Pode dar-me alguns exemplos?

- E nos seus tempos livres? Como os ocupa? Faz voluntariado, considera-se um ativista ativo?
- Quais são os seus hobbies?

Muito obrigada pelas suas considerações. Como já o tinha informado, gostaria então de passar para o segundo momento da nossa entrevista.

Como pôde reparar, questionei-o se achava a Coca-Cola uma empresa responsável. Assim sendo, vou usar essa marca para lhe mostrar dois anúncios acerca dos quais gostava também de conversar consigo.

Estes anúncios não são portugueses, e, portanto, existe a possibilidade de ainda não os ter visto.

Um deles é de 2009, e é um anúncio à PlantBottle, nome que a empresa deu a uma garrafa que desenvolveu, 30% feita de plantas e 100% reciclável, que, segundo a empresa, ajuda a reduzir as suas emissões de CO2.

O outro é relativo a uma campanha de 2019, realizada no Reino Unido, que é um incentivo à reciclagem.

- Saber que a Coca-Cola procura incorporar o problema ambiental do plástico na sua comunicação, fazem-no atribuir algum sentimento diferente à marca?

- Existem outros problemas que acha que esta marca deveria tratar? Quais?

- Ao olhar para estes anúncios, confia na informação que eles comunicam?

- Procura informar-se quando é confrontado com este tipo de informações?

- Em relação a toda a entrevista, existe mais alguma informação que gostaria de acrescentar?

Muito obrigada pela sua participação!

The future of our bottle
is taking shape.



Look for the **plantbottle™** logo on pack.
up to 30% plant-based
100% recyclable bottle

Let's go round
in circles

Our plastic bottles can
be recycled many times. We've
made sure that all of our bottles are
100% RECYCLABLE
so they're easier to recycle and turn
into new ones again.

recycle | **Coca-Cola** Great Britain

Brands shown are Coca-Cola zero sugar, Sprite, Fanta zero, GLACÉAU smartwater.
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Annex 4. Interview guidelines translation.

Interview Guidelines

Demographic data:

Age:

Nationality:

Gender:

Marital status:

Academic level and field of studies:

Occupation:

First of all, I would like to thank you for accepting to participate in this study. As you know, this interview will be conducted within the context of my master's degree dissertation in Marketing, which aims in investigating the environmental and social role of companies in society. In order to perform this, I would like to talk informally with you about diverse topics.

Part 1

- Which social and environmental problems worry you the most?

- What can or should consumers do to reach a better, more sustainable world?

- What can or should companies do regarding those problems?

- In what way can or should companies contribute for a better, more sustainable world?

- Do you recall any brand which communicates actively its preoccupation with social or environmental causes, or that you relate to any such problem?

- That company, that you mentioned, do you give preference in buying or not buying its products/services?
- Have you ever totally or partially stopped using a product or brand given an environmental or social problem? What product/brand?
- Why?

- How about Coca-Cola? Do you associate that brand with social or environmental causes?

- What is Coca-Cola to you? How do you feel regarding the brand? Which is your relation to the brand?
 - Do you remember any advertisement from Coca-Cola related with social or environmental problems?
- If you saw a brand associating with an important cause to you, how do you think that would make you feel? How could that influence or not your perception regarding that brand?**
- What motives do you think would take a brand to take a stand regarding social or environmental problem?**
- As a consumer, do you have any behaviour to deal with social and environmental problems that worry you? Can you give me some examples?**
- And in your free time? How do you occupy your free time? Are you a volunteer? Do you consider yourself as an active activist?
 - What are your hobbies?

Thank you for letting me know about your thoughts. As I have previously informed you, I would like now to go to the second moment of our interview. As you were able to tell, I mentioned The Coca-Cola Company and questioned you whether you found it to be a responsible firm. With this in mind, I will use this brand to show you two advertisements which I would like to talk with you about, too. These advertisements are not Portuguese, so there is a chance that you have never seen them. One is from 2009 and regards the PlantBottle, the name that the company attributed to a bottle it has developed, made 30% from plants and which is 100% recyclable, which, according to the company, helps in reducing its CO2 emissions. The other relates to a campaign from 2019, communicated in the United Kingdom, which is an incentive to recycling.

- To know that Coca-Cola looks to incorporate in its communication the environmental problem of plastics make you attribute a different feeling to the brand?**
- Are there any problems that you think the company should worry about? What problems?
- By looking at this advertisement, do you trust the information they communicate?**
- Do you look to get informed, when you are confronted with this type of information?
- Is there anything you would like to add?**

Thank you for your support!

Annex 5. Declaration of Consent for Participating

Termo de Consentimento

Solicito a sua participação num estudo de investigação inserido no âmbito da disciplina de Dissertação do Mestrado em Marketing realizado no Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração da Universidade de Aveiro.

Pretende-se explorar a perceção dos consumidores relativamente ao papel ambiental e social das empresas na sociedade.

A sua participação é fundamental e, neste sentido, gostaria de contar com o seu consentimento para a realização de uma entrevista semiestruturada, cujos resultados serão integrados na investigação acima proposta.

Acrescento que a informação será tratada de forma confidencial e anónima e os dados que proporcionar serão utilizados unicamente para o fim indicado.

Adicionalmente, informo que poderá desistir da entrevista a qualquer momento, uma vez que a sua participação é voluntária.

Assinatura do voluntário/da voluntária:

Assinatura da investigadora:

Annex 6. Declaration of Consent for Recording.

Termo de Consentimento

No contexto de facilitar a transcrição e tratamento dos dados, peço o seu consentimento para a gravação da entrevista.

No final do trabalho de investigação, todo o material gravado será destruído a fim de preservar o seu anonimato e confidencialidade.

Assinatura do voluntário/da voluntária:

Assinatura da investigadora: