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Climate change discourse of the European automotive industry

Climate change is generally considered a major global threat and is also forecast to cause significant financial losses for businesses. To minimize these impacts businesses need to address the issue and partake in mitigation measures. How companies deal with this issue is communicated in their CSR (corporate social responsibility) reports. These reports not only describe what companies do in regard to economic, social and ecological sustainability, but also communicate their attitudes towards these topics.

Previous research on sustainability reporting and, more specifically, on corporate climate change discourse has mainly focused on the oil and gas industry. So far no large scale studies have been conducted. To address this research gap, a corpus comprising the sustainability reports of the five largest automotive companies in the European single market (2018 Forbes Global 2000) from 2014, 2016 and 2018 is analysed following the framework of Leeuwen (2008). The purpose of this study, which is a part of a larger dissertation project, is twofold. First, a keyword analysis is conducted to find out which areas of sustainability are most prominent. Second, the concordances and collocations of climate change related keywords are investigated using AntConc and SketchEngine to acquire a more profound understanding about the climate change discourse of these companies. This quantitative and qualitative analysis will reveal companies' attitudes towards climate change and its mitigation.

The diachronic set-up of this study further allows deeper insights into the companies' changes in climate change communication and illustrates how the focus of climate change reporting has shifted over the five year period. It is hypothesised that due to recent developments, reports from 2018 pay greater attention to the issue than those from 2014.

Leeuwen, Theo van. 2008. *Discourse and Practice: New tools for critical discourse analysis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.