

Communicating CSR across cultures: A comparative multimodal analysis of the websites of major oil & gas companies in Russia, the US, Poland and Austria

CSR communication aims at advertising how companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with stakeholders. Previous research shows that country-specific differences in CSR communication emerge with regard to the topics or issues featured and the choice of channel and medium; they are influenced by institutional, economic, societal and cultural factors and characterized by a specific orientation (stakeholders vs. shareholder value) (e.g., Karmasin/Apfelthaler 2017, Bashtovaya 2014, Nielsen/Rittenhofer (eds.) 2013, Jarolimek 2013). The purpose of this study is to examine how major oil and gas companies in Russia (Lukoil, Gazprom, Rosneft), Poland (PKN Orlen), Austria (OMV) and the US (Chevron, ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips) communicate their understanding of CSR via corporate websites (e.g., Pollach 2003, Ingenhoff/Kölling 2011). More specifically, a multimodal discourse analysis (cf. Czachur 2011, 2013; Glausch 2017) of CSR disclosures is conducted in order to determine the culture-specific differences in conceptualising corporate responsibility (cf. Kuße 2015) alongside the following dimensions:

- topical level: Which issues are addressed (e.g., social, economic, ecological) and which activities are presented (e.g., philanthropy and volunteering, community development, etc.)?
- lexical level: Which label(s) are used in order to refer to the CSR-related topics and activities e.g., *odpowiedzialny biznes* 'responsible business', *социальная ответственность* 'social responsibility' *устойчивое развитие* 'sustainable development' or *Nachhaltigkeit* 'sustainability' (cf. Gredel 2017, Rödel 2013)?
- argumentative level: How do companies motivate their engagement in CSR (e.g., avoidance of risks, benefits for employees or shareholders or clients, actions for "the greater good")? Which linguistic and pragmatic strategies (quotes, markers of commitment etc.) are employed in the realization of a specific persuasive strategy (cf. Bondi 2016, Yu/Bondi 2019)?
- multimodal patterns: Which semiotic resources are employed on the websites (e.g. visualization and illustration, videos) and how are they utilized in the discourse (cf. Djonov/Knox 2014, Eckkrammer/Held (eds.) 2006, Stöckl/Klug (eds.) 2016, Kreß/van Leeuwen 2010)? Which discourse-specific multimodal patterns (e.g., content couched in a specific semiotic format, argumentation backed by specific visualizations) emerge? The preliminary findings of our study show that the oil and gas companies conceptualize corporate responsibility in different ways by foregrounding specific issues. The Austrian and the US companies place a greater emphasis on ecological issues and community engagement.

The Polish and Russian companies in contrast mainly feature sponsorship and corporate philanthropy activities not necessarily connected to the company's operating activities but presented as strongly intertwined with the country's social and economic prosperity.

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