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CSR ON DISPLAY: USING SPECTACLES AND STORYTELLING AS STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT MECHANISMS

ABSTRACT

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is increasingly used by communication professionals, not only to bolster the image and reputation of organisations, but as a means to facilitate stakeholder engagement. Recent literature suggests that social networking sites (SNSs) are suitable platforms to communicate CSR messages as these media aid organisations in creating meaningful dialogic interactions with stakeholders through purposeful engagement and the co-creation of meaning. While notions of trust creation and the forging of organisation-stakeholder bonds have been investigated, this article proposes that theoretical constructs such as archetypal plots, social visibility, spectacles and spectatorship inherent to storytelling have not been explored comprehensively within the context of CSR communication. To ascertain whether these theoretical categories manifest in practice in corporate communication, the authors examined the CSR communication of First National Bank (FNB), which was communicated on its SNSs. Through a hermeneutical analysis, it was established that FNB incorporated three archetypes, namely the Caregiver, the Innocent and the Hero, in its CSR communication. These archetypes functioned within created archetypal narratives such as the quest, adventure and transformation. Lastly, FNB framed its CSR activities as spectacles, and appropriated elements of collective fun such as viral, interactive message content to engage with its stakeholders.

Keywords: corporate reputation management; corporate social responsibility; spectacles; stakeholder engagement mechanisms; storytelling

INTRODUCTION

A number of seminal authors have shown that corporate social responsibility (CSR), which constitutes one of the six dimensions of reputation, is used to signify, enforce and build the reputation of organisations (Fombrun & Gardberg 2000; Rindova & Fombrun 1999; Van Riel 1997). Consequently, when organisations overtly base their reputation on principles directly related to CSR, such as benevolence (Berens & Van Riel 2004; Djelic 2012), humanity (Djelic 2012; Gleason 2011), acting in the best interest of stakeholders (Porter & Kramer 2006; Rossouw & Van Vuuren 2010), sound corporate governance, as well as corporate citizenship (Hamann & Kapelus 2004; King IV 2016), it is assumed that stakeholders anticipate organisations to fulfill these expectations (Berens & Van Riel 2004). Similarly, Fombrun and Shanley (1990: 239) note that stakeholders assess whether organisations meet their CSR targets and "judge how well [organisations] respond to their noneconomic agendas".

While norms and values derived from moral philosophy are inherent to CSR, it is explicitly manifested in the overarching CSR strategy of organisations and its related outcomes such as the corporate social investment (CSI), corporate philanthropy or CSR initiatives that the organisation supports (Matten & Moon 2008). These initiatives serve a two-fold purpose, namely to signal the organisation's receptiveness to stakeholders' social needs and/or expectations (i.e. a means to exhibit or express its moral agency) and, secondly, to serve as a yardstick used by stakeholders to gauge if the organisation fulfilled its societal contract (Andriof & Waddock 2002; Amaeshi *et al.* 2008; Fombrun & Shanley 1990).

As a result of continued research efforts, CSR as a dimension of corporate reputation has been solidified in the communication management and public relations disciplines (Bermiss *et al.* 2013; Dahlsrud 2008; Fombrun & Gardberg 2000). More recently the aforementioned fields have shifted their focus to investigate the correlation between stakeholder relationships and "reputational capital" (Doorley & Garcia 2011: 5); fostering trust on social networking sites (SNSs) through stakeholder engagement and CSR messages (Abitbol & Lee 2017; Hart 2011; Lim & Greenwood 2017); the facilitation of meaningful, interactive dialogue on communication platforms (Benecke & Oksiutycz 2015; Kent & Taylor 2016); the use of narrative techniques in communicative practices (Kent 2015); and the participatory aspects inherent to communication on SNSs (Moe *et al.* 2016; Uzunoğlu *et al.* 2017).

Whereas the aforementioned literature concentrates on dialogic strategies that could be employed by organisations to enhance stakeholder engagement, the authors propose that the content of CSR messages is rarely deconstructed. There is, therefore, limited research that investigates the visual and/or textual narratives inherent to CSR communication, along with the underlying stakeholder engagement mechanisms that are utilised in these messages.

The aim of this article is to address this gap in the literature by utilising theories from visual culture studies and film theory to briefly explore the visual and textual narratives inherent to CSR initiatives that are communicated to stakeholders on a variety of online platforms. To achieve this, a South African financial institution, First National Bank's

(FNB) CSR communication was surveyed for a period of six months. In particular, FNB's sponsorships and its "You can help"/"Stories of help" campaign, that was communicated on a dedicated blog, its website, Facebook and Twitter timelines and its YouTube channel, formed part of the sample. Secondly, the authors aim to identify the characteristics of the CSR communication by drawing on theoretical categories pertaining to spectacles, storytelling and public displays of positive self-presentation that are used to facilitate audience/stakeholder engagement.

The argument is developed as follows. Firstly, the authors review the current literature on CSR and its relation to reputation management as well as the use of stakeholder engagement mechanisms on SNSs. Thereafter, the qualitative methods used in the research are discussed in brief. Thirdly, the findings, which relate to the theoretical foundation of the article, are presented. Finally, concluding remarks and suggestions with regard to future research directions are made.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

CSR and reputation management

It is widely accepted that corporate reputation encompasses the historical representation of an organisation's past actions along with its ability to deliver on its core brand promises made to stakeholders (Fombrun *et al.* 2000: 87; Gardberg & Fombrun 2002: 305). Moreover, an organisation's corporate reputation is related to the manner in which stakeholders judge its actions, services and/or products, as well as its communicative messages. Not only are these issues factored in when organisations' reputations are measured, CSR is regarded as a primary component of corporate reputation (Bertels & Peloza 2008: 56; Aksak *et al.* 2016: 80). Although one can argue that a simplistic definition of CSR does not adequately encapsulate the multidimensionality thereof, the authors utilise the following definition for the purpose of this research: in short, CSR activities are the result of an organisation's overarching CSR strategy in which focal areas for investment along with social issues it wishes to address have been clearly identified (Du *et al.* 2010: 9). Hence, CSR initiatives are an organisation's corporate social actions; that is, actions that exhibit humanistic values and a degree of social consciousness, aimed at addressing specific societal needs (Brønn & Vrioni 2001; Derwall 2007; Du *et al*. 2010: 8).

In the context of reputation management, CSR activities are utilised to build, sustain and preserve organisations' reputation as good corporate citizens (Bertels & Peloza 2008: 57). Relatedly in their review of literature on the relationship between reputation and CSR, Aksak *et al*. (2016: 79-80) argue that stakeholders take organisations' CSR activities into account when "purchasing decisions or reputation attributions" are made, and CSR activities are often used to ascertain whether an organisation can be regarded as reputable. Likewise Du *et al*. (2010: 8) posit that stakeholders are more prone to "reward good corporate citizens". Organisations that engage in CSR activities can also reap a number of benefits such as "consumer loyalty" and prompting stakeholders not only to engage in CSR initiatives but also to exhibit "advocacy behaviours" (Du *et al*. 2010: 9). Additional benefits include the

reinforcement of social reputation and brand image (Wei *et al.* 2014: 117). From the surveyed literature, it is clear that organisations continue to integrate CSR as a pillar of reputation in their reputation management strategies, while being mindful of the impact CSR activities and CSR communication have on stakeholders. Admittedly, CSR communication can solicit stakeholder scepticism, distrust and suspicion (Bertels & Peloza 2008: 61; Del Mar García-De los Salmones & Perez 2018: 205). The authors are cognisant of this, but seeing as the aforesaid issues do not form part of the article's scope, it has been omitted intentionally.

Reputation management strategies: CSR communication and communication platforms

Lee (2016: 444) comments that the role of CSR communication is to bridge the gap between an organisation's "CSR activities and the public's CSR perception" of the organisation. As for the content of CSR messages it has been argued that it usually draws attention to the organisation's "involvement in various social causes, rather than on the social causes themselves" (Du *et al.* 2010: 10). Du *et al.* (2010: 11) note that instead of merely proclaiming its involvement in an array of CSR activities, an organisation should rather convey the underlying reasons for its involvement, to which extent it is committed to the selected projects, and the actual impact of its initiatives. Correspondingly Porter and Kramer (2006: 80) have argued that CSR initiatives – and the associated communication – should include the impact of the projects and whether there are tangible commitments to future CSR targets. Likewise CSR activities should be "genuine", communicated in concrete ways and manifest as continuous efforts to empower communities (Del Mar García-De los Salmones & Perez 2018: 205).

In an attempt to improve their CSR communication to stakeholders, organisations frequently seek new communication avenues that are better suited to their and their stakeholders' needs. The resultant effect is the development of novel reputation management strategies and various assessments into which communication platforms should be exploited to more effectively communicate CSR information to stakeholders. Earlier research on CSR communication and the platforms that should be utilised by organisations to communicate their CSR activities have predicted that SNSs and other online media, such as blogs as well as video or image sharing sites, would become increasingly important to disseminate corporate communication (Du *et al*. 2010; Ind & Riondino 2001; Schneider 2002). This is echoed by Kesavan *et al.* (2013) who established that SNSs were regarded by stakeholders (i.e. media audiences) as trustworthy and credible platforms to disseminate CSR communication.

As illustration of the advantages of SNSs as communication platforms the discussion now turns to a succinct summary of main theorists' arguments. Lim and Greenwood (2017: 769) are of the opinion that the focus of corporate communication has shifted from merely "informing" stakeholders about CSR initiatives to "engaging" them through various media channels. It can be deduced that SNSs facilitate engagement strategies such as the "co-constructing" of CSR messages, "proactive dialogue with stakeholders" and incorporating the "voice" or opinions of stakeholders (Lim & Greenwood 2017: 773). Notably SNSs are based on the principle of community. For example, users of Facebook,

Instagram, Twitter, Google+ and YouTube are part of what Clark (2001: 264) terms a "community of interest". There are also visible responses by the audience as comments and posts are directly shared and visible to all users of the particular SNS. In addition, the messages disseminated on SNSs follow open debate patterns and there is direct, visible input or responses from users regarding topics discussed on the SNS. The functional aspects of SNSs such as the quantification of responses (i.e. the number of likes, comments, shares or retweets), the visibility of messages on newsfeeds or timelines, and real-time feedback offer organisations insight into stakeholder sentiment and enable the monitoring of online conversations (Qualman 2013: 213). This culture of connection, in particular, offers SNS users the ability to construct online identities and generate reciprocal relationships (Steinfield *et al.* 2008: 436).

Kent and Taylor (2016: 63), however, warn that information on SNSs should not always be equated to the creation of conversation, dialogue or engagement. This is due to the fact that merely communicating information on SNSs does not result in meaningful, purposeful dialogue, which is characterised by carefully listening to stakeholders, showing empathy and acknowledging the worth of individuals when engaging with stakeholders (*ibid*.). Equally important is the type of communication content disseminated by organisations. Abitbol and Lee (2017: 802) posit that topical CSR messages and messages that include "dialogic message strategies" were shown to improve stakeholders' engagement with organisations on SNSs. For example, multimedia message content (links to other sites, infographics and/or photographs and videos) garners more stakeholder responses and feedback, whether it be in the form of comments, likes or shares when compared to so-called traditional messages with no visual content (Abitbol & Lee 2017: 803). Uzunoğlu *et al.* (2017) argue along similar lines. They stress that message formulation aimed at "creating sincere, credible bonds" creates engaging relationships and that "openness" to actively converse with stakeholders could result in "positive" organisation-stakeholder interactions (Uzunoğlu *et al.* 2017: 995- 996).

Based on this discussion, SNSs have been theorised as appropriate media for CSR message dissemination. The argument now turns to storytelling as a reputation management strategy. The authors agree with Kent (2015) that storytelling is a key mechanism used in corporate communication and that it enables stakeholder engagement. Despite a growing number of studies that focus on certain narrative aspects of CSR communication (Benecke & Oksiutycz 2015; Hamann & Kapelus 2004; Hirsch 2016; Schrempf-Stirling *et al*. 2016) , the authors propose that theoretical constructs such as archetypal plots, social visibility, spectacles and spectatorship inherent to stories and storytelling have not been comprehensively explored within the context of CSR communication. The next section provides a brief overview of these constructs – a theoretical basis for the analysis of CSR messages – deemed as additional engagement mechanisms that communication professionals could utilise when formulating CSR communication.

Storytelling and archetypal plots

Two decades ago Vendelø (1998: 128) postulated building corporate reputation is based on the creation of narratives; that narratives are used to influence the perceptions

of stakeholders; and that corporate narratives are in flux. That is, when stakeholders interpret narratives, they either receive it positively, reject it, or participate in furthering the narrative (Vendelø 1998: 129). This, in essence, hints at the "co-creation" of meaning and message content when narratives or stories are communicated to stakeholders (Arnoldi-Van der Walt 2000: 121). The maxim that stories encapsulate the human condition and move "audiences to action" still holds true today (Woodside 2010: 531). To this extent, the onus rests on story creators to formulate compelling and engaging narratives that are deemed believable (Vendelø 1998: 131). In relation to the perceived believability of CSR messages, Hung-Baesecke *et al.* (2016: 593) note that stakeholders prefer CSR beneficiaries as communicators of CSR messages instead of corporate spokespeople, CEOs of organisations or media liaison officers. It is proposed that stakeholders deem messages that include beneficiary narratives authentic and plausible as "rich CSR information" increases stakeholders' "trust perception toward the organisation" (Saat & Selamat in Hung-Baesecke *et al.* 2016: 593).

Comparably, Qualman (2013) and Vaynerchuk (2013) explain that utilising SNSs to communicate corporate narratives to stakeholders enable both social agents to stay connected by means of effective relationship management characterised by causal observation, interactions and dialogue. It is noted that the authentic building of relationships starts with "one conversation, one engagement at a time" (Vaynerchuk 2013: 9). This is usually associated with communicating in a "humanised voice" that enables organisations to signify an organisation's inherent values and characteristics (Cho & Huh 2010: 33). Again, dialogic interactions underscore this principle. Instead of simply informing stakeholders of an organisation's moral and/ or ethical position related to socioeconomic challenges, organisations are compelled to create interactive "symmetrical communication" through genuine "interpersonal" communication practices (Cho & Huh 2010: 45).

Storytelling is regarded as an effective method to establish a humanised voice, create familiarity with stakeholders, and bring about two-way communication. It has been proposed that "straightforward and true stories resonate well with consumers" (Qualman 2013: 82). Organisations and communication professionals should think in creative as well as strategic terms when it comes to the dialogue and narratives communicated to stakeholders on SNSs. North and Enslin (2004: 160) agree with this proposition and argue that organisations should engage in "controlled creativity". They state that controlled creativity is the ability to "deliver creative ideas that not only draw attention, but also communicate effectively with target audiences" (*ibid*.). Authentic stories or brand narratives, "stunts, innovation and unusual treatments of traditional media types" are not only well-received by audiences, these techniques also solidify the organisation's reputation, lead to greater visibility in the marketplace, and portray the organisation as sociable (North & Enslin 2004: 161).

Woodside (2010) is a fundamental source often cited when the notion of storytelling is discussed. The five principles of storytelling as outlined by Woodside (2010: 533) are: memory is based on stories; stories have the ability to invoke experiences within the memories of audiences; storytelling creates "proper pleasure" through "retrieving, reliving or repeat watching of stories"; stories enable audiences to enact archetypes;

and sense-making of events takes place when stories are told. It is posited by Woodside (*ibid*.) that stories cause audiences to experience "one or more archetypal myths". Archetypes belong to the collective unconscious that "has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals" (Jung 1959: 4). For Jung (1959: 5), archetypes are deeply embedded in the universal, collective unconscious, but there are instances when archetypes come to the fore or into the consciousness of individuals. For instance, archetypes are expressed in myths, fairy tales and other forms of storytelling (*ibid.*). This is commonly expressed in so-called master narratives or archetypal plots. Kent (2015: 485-486) explores 20 master narratives that form the basis of storytelling and are used in corporate communication. These include stories that, for example, focus on "great" adventures, heroes that overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges, quests for intangible or tangible objects that could change individuals' lives, the transformation of protagonists, and the underdog who emerges victoriously after conquering a greater force. Delgado-Ballester and Fernández-Sabiote (2016: 120) contend that the inclusion of archetypal plots in storytelling makes organisations' corporate communication more convincing, it appeals to stakeholders' emotions, and leads to the formation of "meaningful affective bonds".

Archetypal plots include the utilisation and invocation of archetypal characters. These include the Hero, the Antihero, the Creator, the Mother/Caregiver, the Child/Innocent, the Sage, the Siren and the Enigma (Delgado-Ballester & Fernández-Sabiote 2016: 119; McPeek 2008: 53-55; Pera *et al.* 2016: 46). Within the context of CSR messages that are communicated to stakeholders, the authors propose that three of Jung's archetypes are invoked. Following the Pearson-Marr Archetype Indicator, the first archetype that is noticeable in CSR messages is the Child or the Innocent who has a childlike belief or "trust in others", hopes that other people will come to his/her aid, and has deeply-seated values (McPeek 2008: 53). Moreover, this archetype illustrates that "evil" or troublesome circumstances can be overcome by benevolent actions. It is argued that organisations that employ this archetype in CSR messages would emphasise their corporate values, their belief in the goodness of humankind, and their own reputation for being a good corporate citizen. It should be noted that the Innocent is a more passive archetype and communication and/or stories in which the Innocent is used, would simply tell the story of the organisation as a moral agent (*ibid.*).

In contrast, the second archetype is regarded as more active. The Caregiver assumes that one should strive to help other individuals and exhibits qualities of kindness and compassion (McPeek 2008: 54). In addition, the Caregiver models "altruism" and aims to "make the world a safer and gentler place for everyone [through the creation of] nurturing environments where people can heal or grow" (Pearson & Marr in McPeek 2008: 54). Organisations that use this archetype would focus their CSR communication on current CSR initiatives and would portray the organisation as actively bettering the lives of its stakeholders.

The third archetype, the Hero, shows his/her "worth" by proactively improving the world (Delgado-Ballester & Fernández-Sabiote 2016: 119). It is noted that the Hero is "compelled to act" (Kent 2015: 486). He/she cannot react to challenges docilely, but has to decide intentionally how he/she can conquer obstacles. The Hero archetype is

usually employed in quest or adventure plots and through the exposition of the story shows his/her virtue, strength, resilience, courage and worthiness (Delgado-Ballester & Fernández-Sabiote 2016: 130; Kent 2015: 486). In the context of CSR messages disseminated to stakeholders on SNSs the quest, adventure and transformation narratives are regarded as suitable story types (Kent 2015: 485). Organisations that present themselves or the beneficiaries of CSR initiatives as heroes often emphasise traits such as the "rescuer" of individuals and the power of "human strength" or willpower; and signal that they should be regarded as "an inspiration" (Pera *et al*. 2016: 46).

It is argued that CSR messages would typically show a before-and-after tale centred on the transformation of individuals or places, such as poverty-stricken communities, schools or healthcare clinics, after a successful CSR activity had taken place. The positive outcome(s) of the CSR project are then framed as inspirational and the narrative would not only exemplify the resolve of the organisation but also the tenacity of the CSR beneficiaries who, with the help of the organisation, were able to overcome obstacles. An example of this narrative is found in Ruttenberg's (2018) online story about Kingsley Holgate and Land Rover's quest to alleviate malaria, contaminated drinking water and poor access to healthcare facilities, which coincided with Land Rover's 70th birthday. From the title "Celebrating altruistic adventure with Kingsley Holgate" one is immediately made aware of Holgate's "noble" or philanthropic mission. The article outlines the Land Rover ambassador's "humanitarian efforts", "love for […] people", and the "fact" that "over one million people have been impacted over the years through the distribution of life-saving mosquito nets, water purification Life Straws and Rite to Sight spectacles" [sic] (Ruttenberg 2018). Moreover, the article includes visuals that depict the "gathering" of Land Rover enthusiasts, employees and volunteers at Stonehaven Castle in Shongweni where glasses were given to community members, while at another location Life Straws (a device that purifies water) were distributed (Ruttenberg 2018). The textual narrative hints at the inclusion of the Hero archetype and the quest narrative; for example, "the community cheered on with deep admiration and pride for this legendary man", and "once she [one of the CSR beneficiaries] was given the correct spectacles, her face transformed from shock to joy as she was able to read" (*ibid*.).

As shown in the discussion on archetypes and archetypal plots, the inherent features of both constructs are predominantly positive. When employed in corporate communication, these features result in the positive self-presentation of organisations. According to Van Dijk (2006: 81), positive self-presentation forms part of "impression management" and deals with emphasising the "positive characteristics" of oneself. In the context of this research, one can argue that when archetypes and archetypal plots are used in CSR communication, organisations are consciously executing a deliberate reputation management strategy that aims to enhance their reputation, improve stakeholder relationships, and facilitate stakeholder engagement through the creation of compelling storylines. The authors argue that when these archetypal plots are utilised in CSR communication, which is disseminated on SNSs and other online platforms, CSR initiatives are framed predominantly as spectacles. The following

section provides a brief definition of spectacles and associated constructs, such as social visibility and spectatorship.

Spectacles, social visibility and spectatorship

Spectacles, in the context of film theory, are conceptualised as visuals or visual sequences that exhibit "spectacular excess" and grandiosity, while aestheticising a narrative, and immersing viewers or spectators in a storyline or that which is being watched (Bould 2014: 259; 266; 267). Furthermore, spectacles are in essence dramatic, observable visual schemata on "display" that can be gazed upon (looked at) and evaluated by spectators (Griffin 2006: 92). At times, spectacles might include elements of "fantasy and illusion" (Kennedy 2007: 63). Due to its compelling visual nature, spectacles create a sense of astonishment and "awe" in spectators (MacAloon 1984: 246). Related to this is spectatorship, which is associated with viewers' "affective state" when watching, viewing or reading (i.e. interpreting) communicative messages (Bould 2014: 258). Kennedy (2007: 62) notes that spectatorship is an "experience" that entails watching performers whether they are entertainers (film or television stars, famous singers, etc.), ordinary citizens who take part in reality television shows, or organisations that communicate corporate messages. In addition, media platforms (SNSs or traditional media) offer creators of communication "arena[s] for appearing" (Meyerhoff 1984: 156). That is, media platforms are utilised by content creators to "appear" when they wish to communicate information. These platforms also facilitate the process of social visibility and exhibiting moral agency. This construct is delineated as the process of moving from a state of "invisibility" to "visibility" in front of spectators (Turner 1984: 21).

These constructs can be appropriated for the purpose of studying CSR communication. Aksak *et al.* (2016: 80) note that organisations employ CSR in defining their corporate identities and core values. As such, organisations utilise CSR to signal their moral values to stakeholders. Some of the uses of CSR include "corporate visibility, trust and building strong relationships" (Aksak *et al.* 2016: 81). To this extent, Lee (2016: 435) argues that although CSR is often used to attain a favourable reputation, involvement in CSR is also used to frame the organisation as "ethical and socially responsible" and to enable its stakeholders to "see" their commitment to socioeconomic causes. Congruently, Kaul *et al.* (2015: 476) state that if organisations are "visibly associated with a CSR story" on SNSs, this would have an impact on how stakeholders evaluate the organisation. Within the context of SNSs the notion of visibility can be applied to both organisations and stakeholders. When stakeholders actively share corporate messages related to CSR causes, the shared messages appear on the stakeholders' friends or followers Facebook or Twitter newsfeeds. This not only increases the stakeholders' "visibility" and make them "appear altruistic or conscientious", it also enhances the visibility of the organisation that created the initial CSR message (*ibid*.).

The authors propose that when CSR initiatives are visually or narratively framed as spectacles or events that require spectators' (i.e. stakeholders') attention, the framing of the initiative could ignite active involvement where spectators move from passively "watching" or "seeing" the initiative to actively and/or collectively

participating in the initiative. To substantiate the possibility of kindling a sense of participation in stakeholders when organisations communicate CSR activities, the following examples are cited. Firstly, it has been established that CSR is often used to develop and strengthen relationships with stakeholders (Aksak *et al.* 2016: 79; Du *et al*. 2010: 9). While these relationships might appear passive (i.e. stakeholders see and are aware of organisations' CSR activities), they could stimulate "spectacular agency" (Griffin 2006: 91). This means when spectators gaze at objects or events, they become consciously aware that they can co-construct narratives and become involved in story plots or actual events (*ibid*.).

Secondly, CSR communication results in "affective (e.g. pride, empathy) responses" (Du *et al*. 2010: 17). When stakeholders' "altruistic attributions" are roused by focused CSR communication, it produces "positive feelings, related to interest, affection, sympathy, curiosity and liking" (Del Mar García-De los Salmones & Perez 2018: 204). Organisations should, in theory, take advantage of these attributions and find creative ways to turn piqued interest into active participation.

Thirdly, active participation can be accomplished by depicting CSR activities as collective, participatory events that are fun to take part in. Here "celebrity" figures or social media influencers could be used to attract engagement or participation in events (Wei *et al.* 2014: 117). Moreover, the "viral potential" and interactive features inherent to SNSs could be exploited more effectively by organisations (Qualman 2013: 18). For instance, viral online phenomena such as trending videos, tweets or Instagram posts by social media influencers could be co-opted by organisations to create new organisation-specific shareable content that resonates with SNS users. The advantage of creating shareable content (i.e. messages that include interactive mechanisms such as links, photographs and video clips) is that the messages will be widely disseminated. By association, the sharing of interactive content on SNSs will result in building "relationships via ongoing dialogue" (Lee 2016: 439).

Lastly, the shift from pure spectatorship to collective participation in CSR activities could be initiated by emphasising the role internal and/or other external stakeholders play in the organisation's CSR activities. Bertels and Peloza (2008: 64) note that corporate philanthropy campaigns regularly highlight internal stakeholder involvement through "employee volunteer programmes" and the use of brand ambassadors. This shows that organisations are "becoming much more actively engaged with non-profit partners across a variety of contact points" and not simply through regular charitable giving (Bertels & Peloza 2008: 64).

METHODOLOGY

Although the premise of this article is largely theoretical, the authors use FNB's CSR communication as a case or "snapshot" of the phenomenon under discussion (Clark 2001: 271). As such, a phenomenological paradigm was used to explore the functioning of three identified theoretical constructs, namely narratives (archetypal plots), spectacles and spectatorship in FNB's CSR communication. The authors used theoretical (purposive) sampling to develop categories that were analysed

(Burns 2000: 389). Thematic coding was utilised to identify the main themes in the CSR communication (i.e. proposed stakeholder engagement mechanisms that function as "skeletal constructs" on which CSR narratives hinge) that were linked to the study's theoretical foundation.

In essence, the research employed a qualitative inquiry strategy and FNB's CSR communication was purposely selected for analysis based on the following reasons:

1. FNB positions itself as a good corporate citizen with "help" as one of its core values;

2. FNB frames itself as one of South Africa's foremost corporate "givers" with a reported CSI spend of R115 million in 2013 and R218 million in 2017 (FirstRand 2013: 54; FirstRand 2017: 109);

3. FNB presents itself as an organisation with a historically-based CSR track record noting that since the FirstRand Foundation was established in 1998 it has "granted over R1 billion for social investment projects" (FirstRand 2017: 9); and,

4. FNB has a strong online presence. In August 2014 FNB's Facebook account had approximately 656 700 likes, which increased to 971 939 likes in May 2018.

The data collection period commenced during the height of FNB's "You can help"/"Stories of help" and "Ideas can help" campaigns, spanned from September 2013 to February 2014, and all CSR-related messages were analysed. Data were collected from FNB's Facebook account, the @FNBSA organisational Twitter account, and the @RBJacobs online personal Twitter account. The data comprised of 2642 messages, of which 208 were original CSR messages, along with 2434 stakeholder comments.

As phenomenology is mainly concerned with exploring phenomena as well as the description and interpretation of events, the authors performed a hermeneutical reading of FNB's CSR communication (Groenewald 2004; Glendinning 2008). The interpretation of the communication is, therefore, subjective. However, the authors' interpretations are substantiated by selected verbatim quotations from the surveyed communication along with references to relevant literature related to the theoretical premise of the article.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FNB utilised its SNSs to communicate cause-related marketing campaigns and its CSR activities to stakeholders. This signalled its morality and image of a "helpful" corporate citizen. The "You can help" campaign, in particular, portrayed FNB as a philanthropic financial institution as the welfare stories of humans, animals and other social actors were narrated, instead of FNB's "corporate story". This is regarded as a strategy that not only promotes non-governmental organisations (NGOs), but the positive responses to the messages indicated that positive stakeholder sentiment was transferred from the promoted cause to FNB (Del Mar García-De los Salmones & Perez 2018). The functioning of the three theoretical stakeholder engagement mechanisms is discussed hereafter.

Narratives: The embodiment of archetypes and archetypal plots

The "You can help" campaign featured a variety of sub-themes, such as wildlife conservation, animal shelters, community medical initiatives and cancer research, as well as NGOs that provide education, food and support to impoverished communities. Organisations featured on FNB's blog and in FNB's Facebook messages were portrayed as archetypal Caregivers who actively helped and assisted where social needs had to be met. The animals, children, HIV and cancer patients, abandoned children, battered women and poor communities were depicted as the Innocent archetype. They were the passive recipients of assistance, good deeds and financial support. Throughout the "You can help" campaign, FNB enacted the role of Caregiver and encouraged its stakeholders to embody the Caregiver role by becoming involved in the causes that were promoted (Pera *et al*. 2016).

Both the "You can help" and "Ideas can help" campaigns that aimed to promote social causes and innovations centred on the transformation narrative (Kent 2015). The content of the "Ideas can help" campaign focused on the notion that innovations could change the world, as well as the lives of "predominantly impoverished masses worldwide" (FNB Facebook). It also proposed that inventions could have a positive impact on "South African lives", "change the circumstances of South African families with limited resources", and assist "poor communities" (*ibid.*).

FNB also successfully created a sports narrative in communicating its Varsity Football and Varsity Cup rugby sponsorships. The messages contained words and phrases such as "battle", "support", "back your boys" and "back your *boytjies*". One Facebook message read:

> Don't miss NMMU and UP Tuks battle it out on the pitch in the Varsity Football final at the UP TUKS Stadium […] PLUS get yourself to tonight's game and you'll be snapped by the FNB Varsity Football Fan Cam to later find you and your friends in action supporting your team! *Wozo Bona* [Come watch]. Varsity Football! [sic].

It is argued that feelings of competitiveness, united support of sporting codes, honour, pride and the gratification derived from winning contributed to the creation of narratives related to the archetypal plots of adventure and the quest. Here the CSR beneficiaries were portrayed as the archetypal Hero who conquered other sports teams, while FNB again fulfilled the Caregiver role by financially sponsoring the events.

Sponsorships as spectacles

FNB's Varsity Football matches were communicated to stakeholders as spectacles that should be attended. Stakeholders were invited to participate in the events as spectators and FNB assured fans that the matches would be "spectacular" events filled with drama and intrigue (FNB Facebook). By showcasing young talent on television and by depicting sponsored matches as epic battles, FNB not only created an effective sports narrative but also valourised winning teams.

Additionally, FNB gave stakeholders and users of its SNSs the opportunity to obtain a heightened state of social visibility by attending sponsored events. The following Facebook excerpt serves as substantiation:

> FNBJoburgArtFair 2013 Giant Camera @ Melrose Arch […] Join in the fun with the FNBJoburgArtFair Giant Camera! […] If you were there, make sure to tag yourself!

Throughout the surveyed communication FNB invited stakeholders to attend sponsored events where their photographs would either be taken by FNB's "fan cam" or "giant camera". When the photographs were uploaded to FNB's Facebook profile, stakeholders could tag themselves. FNB used Facebook as an "arena for appearing" – a platform where stakeholders could appear (Meyerhoff 1984: 156). By tagging themselves in FNB's Johannesburg Art Fair and Varsity Football photographs on this platform, stakeholders communicated and signalled their social links to FNB to their Facebook friends. Therefore, the mechanism of employing social visibility not only benefitted FNB's stakeholders, as they would have appeared "connected" with a reputable organisation, but FNB's name, brand values and identity were disseminated to a wide network of SNS users and the financial institution itself gained enhanced visibility on these platforms (North & Enslin 2004).

Moving from spectatorship to collaborative participation

FNB depicted its sponsorships as events where stakeholders could experience collective, participatory fun. This is corroborated by phrases such as "calling all Varsity Football fans!" and "join in the fun", along with the following Facebook message:

> We NekNominate you to go out. We believe that helpfulness and kindness are contagious. You have been NekNominated.

In the various NekNomination messages on FNB's SNSs the emphasis shifted from instructing stakeholders to just "see" or "view" FNB's SNSs to instructing stakeholders to perform other actions that are not passive, but rather agency-giving. It furthermore aimed to persuade stakeholders to engage with FNB's sponsored CSR activity. It is argued that through the repeated use of words such as "all", "join" and "fun" in the CSR messages, the gregarious component of FNB's sponsorships were emphasised. By nominating all viewers of its NekNomination challenge on YouTube, FNB also aimed to involve its stakeholders in participating in deeds that are kind and helpful. Although the NekNomination challenge did not explicitly mention that giving back to society or NGOs is fun, it did contain a call to action directed at the viewer (stakeholder) to actively participate in charitable causes. The YouTube video depicted FNB workers (internal stakeholders) who donated goods to the Dlala Nje Community Centre in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. This relates to the call made that organisations should pay attention to viral trends on SNSs and, if possible, appropriate it as a means of creative CSR engagement (Qualman 2013).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article set out to theorise stakeholder engagement strategies that were regarded as "under researched" in the field of corporate communication. To achieve this purpose a literature review on the relationship between CSR and corporate reputation, reputation management strategies, SNSs as platforms for engagement, as well as theorised methods of stakeholder engagement was presented. After delineating constructs such as spectacles, spectatorship and archetypal plots, the discussion turned to investigate whether these strategies for engagement could be "practically" applied to or identified in the CSR communication of one South African financial institution.

The authors illustrated that the three theoretical categories (i.e. engagement strategies) were observable in FNB's CSR communication by means of incorporating selected verbatim statements in the discussion. Despite the limited number of examples, the presence of the engagement strategies served as evidence that FNB did incorporate narrative strategies (archetypes and archetypal plots) in its CSR communication; it portrayed some of its CSR activities as spectacular events; and it appropriated a viral trend and engaging language in an attempt to foster greater stakeholder participation in its CSR initiatives.

The authors acknowledge that the research has various limitations: only one financial institution's CSR communication was surveyed; it did not quantify the impact of the stakeholder engagement strategies; the sample size was relatively small; and the authors did not conduct interviews with stakeholders to ascertain whether the engagement strategies resulted in tangible action or greater involvement in FNB's CSR activities. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised across the entire South African financial services sector. It is, however, proposed that future studies could investigate the quantifiable effects of the identified stakeholder engagement strategies. Future work could also explore the effectiveness of engagement strategies similar to the ones employed by FNB.

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