Coporate branding and corporate social responsibility: Toward a multi-stakeholder interpretive perspective

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ABSTRACT

Research on corporate branding has evolved into a network-based perspective in which brands are understood as fluid corporate assets socially co-created by the firm and its stakeholders. In this context, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has emerged as central to the development of attractive corporate brands. Yet research on multi-stakeholder processes that explain how CSR contributes to corporate branding efforts remains scarce and fragmented. Through a multidisciplinary review of the literature on CSR sensemaking and sensegiving, this article articulates current knowledge in an integrative conceptual framework to explain the multi-stakeholder interpretative and interactional processes shaping the corporate brand and develops a research agenda at the crossroads of CSR and corporate branding. Overall, this conceptual endeavor contributes to illuminating the importance of CSR for contemporary corporate marketing and brand development efforts from a socially constructed perspective by theorizing the CSR sensemaking perspective of corporate branding.

1. Introduction

Corporate marketing is a relationship-based philosophy that explicitly takes into account the stakeholder, societal, and ethical orientation of the firm (Balmer, 2011). It focuses on developing meaningful, positive, profitable, ongoing, and long-term relationships with key stakeholder groups, including, but not limited to, customers (Balmer, 1998, 2009; Balmer & Greyser, 2002, 2006; He & Balmer, 2007; Wilkinson & Balmer, 1996). It integrates various notions about organization-wide marketing and strategy, "synthesiz[ing] practical and theoretical insights from corporate image and reputation, corporate identity, corporate communications and corporate branding, among other corporate-level constructs" (Balmer, 2009, p. 544).

At the heart of the paradigmatic shift toward corporate marketing that has occurred in recent decades stands the overall move from the product brand to the corporate brand. In contrast with product brands, which primarily appeal to customers, corporate brands speak to multiple and diverse audiences. From a management-centric perspective, corporate branding is considered an ongoing strategic process that reflects managers' efforts to capture the organization's identity and convey it in a consistent, attractive way to encourage stakeholders'

support (Balmer, 2011; De Roeck, Maon, & Lejeune, 2013). Corporate branding is a process requiring flexibility and consideration of the potential evolution of the defining organizational attributes (i.e., norms and values) and overall character of the organization (De Roeck et al., 2013). In this view, the ongoing corporate branding process involves conscious decisions by senior management to communicate the organization's character attributes to diverse audiences (Balmer, 2001; Hatch & Schultz, 2003). To that end, managers need to understand how internal and external stakeholders perceive the organization's character through stakeholder dialogue and relationship-building activities, before promoting the organization to them through the corporate brand.

More recently, corporate branding has further evolved toward a social constructionist and network-based view whereby corporate brands are characterized as "vehicles of meaning that emerge from social interaction between the company and its environment" (Melewar, Gotsi, & Andriopoulos, 2012, p. 601). In this perspective, the conception of the corporate brand moves from the idea of a corporately controlled managerial product to the consideration of a more fluid and emergent corporate asset co-created through multi-stakeholder interpretive processes (Biraghi & Gambetti, 2015; Cornelissen, Christensen, & Kinuthia, 2012). Concomitant with this evolution, corporate marketing and

corporate branding research and practice have given growing importance to corporate social responsibility (CSR), or the "context-specific organizational actions and policies that take into account stakeholders' expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance" (Aguinis, 2011, p. 855). Indeed, considering the identity-defining nature of a company's CSR engagement, scholars concur that corporate marketing should rely on an explicit CSR dimension (Balmer, 2001; Balmer, Fukukawa, & Gray, 2007; Balmer, Powell, & Greyser, 2011; Golob & Podnar, 2019; Podnar & Golob, 2007; Powell, 2011). According to Hildebrand, Sen, and Bhattacharya (2011, p. 1360), CSR can even constitute "a quasi-perfect strategic lever for corporate marketing as it can help align a company's different identities". In this context, CSR has progressively become a central part of corporate branding efforts (Hur, Kim, & Woo, 2014; Lindgreen, Xu, Maon, & Wilcock, 2012; Vallaster, Lindgreen, & Maon, 2012). However, research aiming to understand the multi-stakeholder interactional processes that explain how CSR can contribute to corporate branding efforts remains scarce and particularly fragmented (Golob & Podnar, 2019; Vallaster et al., 2012). Such knowledge appears particularly important for better comprehending how CSR-related exchanges contribute to the way in which corporate brands get collectively shaped and become meaningful to key stakeholder groups, and how they create value for the company and its network.

Accordingly, in this article we adopt a social constructionist perspective on corporate branding, and we provide an integrative framework that conceptualizes the multi-stakeholder co-construction of the CSR character of a corporate brand (hereafter, CSR corporate brand). Specifically, building on the CSR sensemaking and sensegiving literature (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019; Basu & Palazzo, 2008; Hahn, Preuss, Pinkse, & Figge, 2014), our framework delineates how interacting cycles of CSR identity and reputation co-creation shape CSR corporate brands in the stakeholder network through the ongoing inward and outward sensemaking and sensegiving efforts of various stakeholders.

Our research contributes to the literature in three major ways. First, through our integrative multi-stakeholder framework, we explicitly conceptualize and substantiate a networked and more balanced perspective on the corporate brand-building process whereby various stakeholder groups appear as equally central in the development of the CSR corporate brand character. In so doing, we also re-affirm how CSR has now turned into a pivotal instrument of corporate marketing (see also Balmer, Powell, & Elving, 2009; Golob & Podnar, 2019). Second, adopting a social constructionist perspective, we build on the multidisciplinary CSR sensemaking and sensegiving literature to delineate stakeholders' interpretative processes underlying cycles of CSR identity and reputation creation and the emergence of CSR corporate brands. In so doing, we contribute to the extant literature by theorizing the sensemaking perspective of CSR in corporate branding. Third, our conceptualization of CSR corporate branding processes helps to further move the field away from an outdated dichotomic vision split between the company and its environment. Specifically, it underlines that the corporate branding phenomenon must be approached through a perspective where organizational boundaries are essentially fluid and not easily identifiable, and where stakeholder categories must be considered increasingly permeable.

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. We first summarize the key elements in the sensemaking and sensegiving literature that serve as the core basis of our conceptual framework. We then discuss the literature on corporate branding and how CSR is leveraged in this context, before presenting our conceptualization of the interacting cycles of CSR identity and reputation co-creation that shape CSR corporate brands. Finally, based on the literature review and our framework, we offer a structured agenda for future research at the crossroads of corporate branding and CSR, calling for further, more emergent, inclusive and interactive approaches to the corporate branding phenomenon.

2. Sensemaking and sensegiving in and around companies

Sensemaking is an interpretive process by which people place equivocal and ambiguous environmental stimuli into defined cognitive schemas to create meanings and "make sense" of stimuli (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Weick, 1995). A sensemaking approach emphasizes the temporary and circumstantial nature of these meanings, in contrast to the static and objective meanings people might hold.

Sensemaking is central in organizational life because it fundamentally informs an organization's identity and actions (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Organizational members and external stakeholders try to make sense of the environmental stimuli a company faces by seeking others' interpretations to construct new accounts that help them comprehend their environment (Cornelissen, 2012; Maitlis, 2005). In organizational and inter-organizational contexts, sensemaking thus helps social actors develop shared meanings about key features of an organization, such as its raison d'être, the critical issues it needs to face, and how best to resolve these issues (Weick, 1995).

At the upper management level, sensemaking processes involve environmental scanning and issue interpretation to make decisions about the projected organizational image and change in strategy (e.g., Bartunek, Krim, Necochea, & Humphries, 1999; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Within the organization, sensemaking allows tensions between social action and the strategic realities of organizational life to be addressed. Sensemaking processes help organizational members integrate, cope with, and implement new decisions and policies (Balogun & Johnson, 2004; Rouleau, 2005). Outside the organization, sensemaking allows external stakeholders to interpret and comprehend organizational messages, narratives, and actions (Calton & Payne, 2003).

Sensemaking in organizational and inter-organizational settings inherently involves ongoing collective and interactional processes (Maitlis, 2005; Rouleau, 2005) between actors and groups within and outside organizational boundaries. In these inter-subjective processes of meaning creation, sensemaking pertains to the development of a mental model designed to create meaning out of the ambiguous environment, while sensegiving corresponds to the articulation of a vision to others in an attempt to influence their sensemaking processes (Gioia, Thomas, Clark, & Chittipeddi, 1994). Sensegiving involves efforts to communicate about organizational features and increase support for a perspective through suggestive or persuasive language, as well as through symbolic or emphatic actions (Bartunek et al., 1999; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). Theoretically, sensemaking and sensegiving are sequential processes in which sensemaking informs sensegiving attempts to influence others' sensemaking efforts. However, in practice, sensemaking and sensegiving overlap considerably (Gioia et al., 1994), as the processes are mutually dependent (Rouleau, 2005).

3. The rise of a socially constructed CSR corporate brand

3.1. Corporate branding as a dynamic and relational phenomenon

Research on corporate branding has evolved from a product-based perspective (phase 1), to an organization-wide perspective (phase 2), to a network-based perspective of branding (phase 3) (Biraghi & Gambetti, 2015). From phase 1 to phase 2, corporate branding moved from a marketing perspective to a corporate governance model that informed corporate strategy (see Balmer, 2001, 2008; Balmer & Greyser, 2003). Corporate branding became an umbrella concept (Kitchen & Schultz, 2009), entailing constructs such as corporate identity, reputation, and personality intended to ensure the consistency of the brand-related offerings of the organization. From phase 2 to phase 3, corporate branding evolved into a multi-actor conceptualization, in which the organization is no longer the sole creator of the corporate brand. In this network-based perspective (Cornelissen et al., 2012; Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Koporcic & Halinen, 2018; Koporcic & Tornroos, 2019), the corporate brand is interactively co-created through ongoing dialogues among

stakeholders regarding their needs and expectations in light of the company's brand promise. Corporate brands became a contextual and evolving socio-cultural asset developed through ongoing interpretive, dialogical, and exchange processes among the company's stakeholders (Biraghi & Gambetti, 2015).

Effective corporate branding requires finding a balance between the organizational identity and corporate reputation (De Roeck et al., 2013). Organizational identity represents members' understanding of who they are as an organization—or the "mental associations about the organization held by organizational members" (Brown, Dacin, Pratt, & Whetten, 2006, p. 101). Corporate reputation refers to what external stakeholders actually think about the organization (Brown et al., 2006); it is a latent (unobservable) construct that reflects the aggregation of individual stakeholders' perceptions of "how well organizational responses are meeting the demands and expectations of many organizational stakeholders" (Wartick, 1992, p. 34; see also Podnar & Golob, 2017). Organizational identity and corporate reputation mutually influence each other and manifest themselves interactively through dialogues within and between stakeholders in and around the organization (de Chernatony & Harris, 2000; Koporcic & Tornroos, 2019). The ongoing and interacting cycles of identity and reputation represent important processes of meaning creation through which corporate brands emerge (Melewar et al., 2012). Yet, from this social constructionist perspective, the interactive sensemaking and sensegiving processes underlying the co-construction of corporate brands remain limitedly addressed in corporate branding research (Törmäläa & Gyrd-Jones, 2017), despite the acknowledgment of their relevance (Biraghi & Gambetti, 2015; Hatch & Schultz, 2003).

3.2. Leveraging CSR in corporate branding

CSR issues and ideas can significantly affect perceptions of identity, reputation, and brand, and they sit at the core of the corporate marketing perspective (Balmer, 2011; Balmer et al., 2011; Hildebrand et al., 2011). The centrality of CSR to corporate marketing clearly serves to differentiate the corporate marketing perspective within the marketing discipline (Leitch, 2017). CSR has, therefore, gradually become important in the development of a powerful and attractive corporate brand (Hildebrand et al., 2011; Lindgreen et al., 2012; Vallaster et al., 2012).

Through their CSR strategy, companies try to nurture good relations not only with primary stakeholders—their central guideposts as they develop their intangible assets—but also with their secondary stakeholders, who can also have an important impact on their reputation and strategy (Golob & Podnar, 2019; Podnar & Golob, 2007). CSR development involves companies consistently approaching CSR-related stakeholder expectations as central to the development of their strategy, identity, and reputation-building efforts (Carlini, Grace, France, & Lo Iacono, 2019; Von Wallpach, Voyer, Kastanakis, & Mühlbacher, 2017). Leveraging CSR engagement in corporate branding thus requires reconsidering the company's relationship with its stakeholders, as well as comprehending and balancing their expectations, in order to "[provide] motivating forces internally, and [make] the brand appealing externally" (Hatch & Mirvis, 2010, p. 40).

In this context, the company must acknowledge diverse CSR issues associated with its activities and its stakeholder network, which leads to ambiguity and uncertainty due to the essentially contested nature of CSR (Guthey & Morsing, 2014). Indeed, depending on the organizational context, culture, and values, CSR does not mean the same thing to every company and industry (Cramer, van der Heijden, & Jonker, 2006a; Golob, Johansen, Nielsen, & Podnar, 2014; Maon, Swaen, & Lindgreen, 2017). Moreover, different stakeholder groups may have different and sometimes inconsistent conceptions of what makes a responsible firm, and their expectations evolve over time. As Rasche, Morsing, and Moon (2017, p. 12) have commented, "[t]here is no generalizable agenda of CSR issues that is valid independent of time-context dynamics." CSR must be approached dynamically, as a moving outcome of continuously

and communicatively negotiated meanings, shaped through the interplay of a multitude of stakeholders (Golob et al., 2013; Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010).

In this perspective, CSR corporate branding efforts lead a company's stakeholders to engage in constant efforts to make sense of, and give sense to, emerging societal issues and corporate actions. Scholars of management, business and society, and corporate communication have thus begun to address the sensemaking and sensegiving processes that characterize how companies and their key stakeholders approach CSR-related issues and opportunities (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019; Golob et al., 2014). However, the extant literature has largely neglected the networked-based approach of the CSR sensemaking and sensegiving processes (for an exception, see Reinecke & Ansari, 2015). In the next section, we address this research gap by adopting a multi-stakeholder, network-based perspective and by delineating how CSR sensemaking and sensegiving processes nurture the interacting cycles of organizational identity and reputation creation that shape the CSR corporate brand.

4. A network-based conceptualization of the interactive CSR corporate branding process

A stakeholder network is "an interactive field of discourse occupied by those [stakeholders] who share messy (complex, interdependent, emergent) problems and who want/need to talk about them" (Calton & Payne, 2003, p. 7). A stakeholder network is thus problem-centered, rather than firm-centered, and involves multiple ties that cannot be broken down to individual stakeholder relationships (Calton & Payne, 2003; Neville & Menguc, 2006).

We recognize these features of a stakeholder network, but, for the sake of parsimony, the network-based framework of CSR corporate branding processes we develop and its visual representation presented in Fig. 1 consist of four main stakeholder populations: managers, employees, customers, and other external stakeholders.[1] Managers and employees are primarily (yet not exclusively) involved in the CSR identity creation cycle, while customers and other external stakeholders are principally involved in the CSR reputation creation cycle. CSR identity and reputation creation cycles entail three broad types of interdependent interpretive and interactive processes within and across stakeholder categories: (1) sensemaking, (2) inward sensegiving, and (3) outward sensegiving. The ongoing deployment of these interpretive and interactive sensemaking and sensegiving processes conditions CSR identity and reputation creation cycles and their interplay, which ultimately shapes the CSR corporate brand.

In particular, four CSR loops (managerial, employee, customer, and other external stakeholder CSR loops) highlight the interconnection between the *sensemaking* and *inward sensegiving* processes through which each stakeholder population progressively assigns meanings to CSR issues and initiatives by influencing one another inside the same stakeholder population through inward sensegiving efforts. These loops are further interconnected with each other through *outward sensegiving* processes that reflect a stakeholder population's attempts to influence the CSR meaning construction of other actors outside the group of reference.

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[1] This latter category includes stakeholders, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), activists, communities, and the media, which can be particularly influential in reputation creation, as well as investors, business partners, and regulatory stakeholders (Henriques & Sadorsky, 1999). We have adopted a reductive dimension of this stakeholder population to support the development of a clear conceptual framework. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that any stakeholder population in a network itself comprises heterogeneous groups and sub-groups that often overlap but whose interests and reactions may vary considerably from those of others (Murillo-Luna, Garcés-Ayerbe, & Rivera-Torres, 2008).
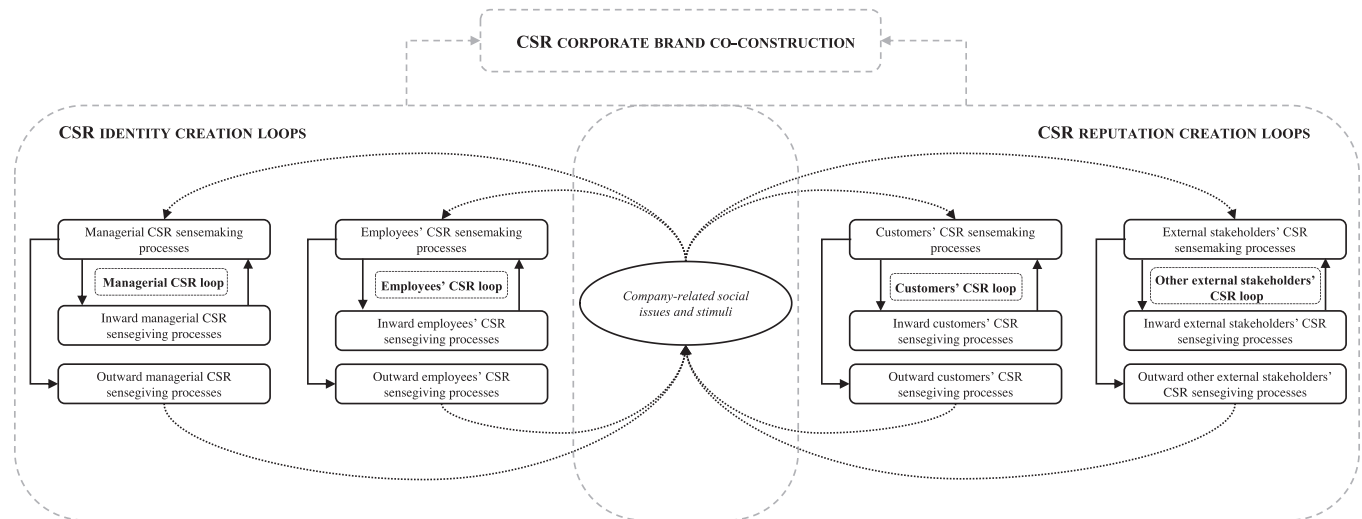
Fig. 1. A network-based conceptualization of the interactive CSR corporate branding process.

Table 1 list the main articles we review on the CSR sensemaking process used by the four stakeholder populations (managers, employees, customers, and other external stakeholders). Table 2 lists the articles that discuss inward and outward sensegiving processes within and between these different stakeholder populations. In these tables, we distinguish between works explicitly relying on a sensemaking–sensegiving framework or terminology and those relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' meaning creation processes and actors' attempts to influence meaning creation of others.

4.1. CSR identity creation cycle

The CSR identity creation cycle primarily consists of two interacting loops: the managerial and employee CSR loops. CSR identity is thus progressively developed through formal identity orientation initiatives and informal exchanges between members (of different hierarchical levels) within the organization (Dutton & Penner, 1993) and then projected outside organizational boundaries.

4.1.1. Managerial CSR loop and sensegiving efforts

Any CSR issue or initiative (e.g., working conditions in the supply chain, environmental impacts or efforts) requires interpretation to generate meaning and shared understanding. Managerial CSR sensemaking processes focus on creating a context-bound understanding that helps managers comprehend implications and challenges associated with CSR (e.g., Cramer et al., 2006a; Schouten & Remmé, 2006). As sense givers, managers further promote their understanding of CSR-related issues and opportunities to other managers (i.e., inward) and employees (i.e., outward) in an effort to build a shared CSR identity. In practice, CSR sensegiving often becomes an issue-selling process through which some managers' conceptions become part of the organization's collective awareness (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998; Pater & Van Lierop, 2006).

The well-developed literature examining managerial sensemaking suggests that managers' sensemaking and sensegiving efforts are determined by individual factors, such as educational, functional, and cultural backgrounds (Fassin, Van Rossem, & Buelens, 2011; Quazi, 2003; Waldman, Sully de Luque, Washburn, & House, 2006), personal values and ideology (Crilly, Schneider, & Zollo, 2008; Hafenbrädl & Waeger, 2017), and their personal beliefs about whether their efforts will benefit their personal positions (Ashford et al., 1998). Research has also highlighted different organizational factors bearing on managerial sensemaking and sensegiving efforts, including the organization's culture, norms, and dominant worldview (Ashford et al., 1998; Byrch,

Milne, Morgan, & Kearins, 2015), the company's need for legitimacy (Basu & Palazzo, 2008; Richter & Arndt, 2018), and the perceived motives to address social and environmental considerations (Hahn et al., 2014; Sharma, 2000).

In the managerial CSR loop, intertwined managerial CSR sensemaking and inward sensegiving processes result in the emergence of CSR managerial accounts whose level of convergence may vary (Hahn & Aragón-Correa, 2015; Maitlis, 2005). However, company-related factors impinging on managers' efforts to influence other organizational members often provide sources of collectively constructed preconceptions (Byrch et al., 2015; Cornelissen, 2012). Moreover, organizational dynamics, such as strong leadership and precise and tailored ways of communicating, encourage the development of communal viewpoints regarding CSR-related understandings, goals, and performance expectations among managerial teams and, more generally, within organizational boundaries (Cramer et al., 2006a; van der Heijden, Driessen, & Cramer, 2012). Although tensions between managerial accounts across the organization are inevitable, "organizations can [still] create conditions that enhance organizational members' interpretations" of consistent CSR-related accounts (Hahn & Aragón-Correa, 2015, p. 256). In this view, CSR would be progressively more embedded in the organization's identity not so much through a planned stepwise approach but through emergent, adaptive efforts by managers who skillfully navigate social interactions (van der Heijden & Cramer, 2017; Wickert & de Bakker, 2018).

4.1.2. Employee CSR loop and sensegiving efforts

Although the burgeoning employee-centered micro-CSR literature contributes to enlightening employees' CSR-related sensemaking efforts (see Gond & Moser, 2021), research that explicitly addresses employees' CSR-related sensemaking processes is less developed than that focused on managers' processes. Existing studies suggest that employees' sensemaking and sensegiving processes around CSR issues echo those of managers to some extent (Angus-Leppan, Benn, & Young, 2010a). However, "both managers and employees can have competing interests and thus may construct their own versions of reality regarding CSR issues" (Štumberger & Golob, 2016, p. 531). Although managers play a major role in shaping employees' CSR-related conceptions, employees are not just passive recipients of managers' CSR messages; rather, they are agentic actors who actively interpret and shape the world around them and who may develop their own CSR conceptions (Opoku-Dakwa & Rupp, 2019; Vlachos, Panagopoulos, Bachrach, & Morgeson, 2017). In this context, employees' exposure to CSR initiatives and messages does not necessarily translate directly into favorable CSR-related attitudes

Table 1
List of articles investigating different stakeholders' sensemaking processes.

MANAGERIAL CSR SENSEMAKING	Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:
	Livesey (2001); Calton & Payne (2003); Cramer, van der Heijden, & Jonker (2006a, 2006b); Pater & van Lierop (2006); Schouten & Remmé (2006); Basu & Palazzo (2008); Hine & Preuss (2008); Hanke & Stark (2009); Angus-Leppan, Benn, & Young (2010a); Angus-Leppan, Metcalf, & Benn (2010b); Selsky & Parker (2010); van der Heijden, Driessen, & Cramer (2010); Schultz & Wehmeier (2010); Fassin, Van Rossem, & Buelens (2011); Joutsenvirta (2011); Sharma & Kearings (2011); Sharma & Good (2013); Cornelissen (2012); Thiel, Bagdasarov, Harkrider, Johnson, & Mumford (2012); van der Heijden, Driessen, & Cramer (2012); Guthey & Morsing (2014); Golob, Johansen, Nielsen, & Podnar (2014); Hahn, Preuss, Pinkse, & Figge (2014); Iivonen & Moisander (2015); Reinecke & Ansari (2015); van der Heijden & Cramer (2017); Khan (2018); Kimmit & Munoz (2018); Richter, & Arndt (2018); Stigliani & Elsbach (2018); Osorio-Vega (2019); Egan (2019); Yang, Wang, Zhou, & Jiang (2019); Schoeneborn, Morsing, & Crane (2020); Bien & Sassen (2020); Sorour, Boadu, & Soobaroyen (in press)
	Examples of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' meaning creation processes:
	Quazi (2003); Delmas & Toffel (2004); Hemingway & Maclagan (2004); Pedersen (2006); Maon, Lindgreen, & Swaen (2008); Hoffman, Bynum, Piccolo, & Sutton (2011); Bundy, Shropshire, & Buchholtz (2013); Costas & Kärreman (2013); Sonenshein, DeCelles, & Dutton (2014)
EMPLOYEE CSR SENSEMAKING	Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:
	Roberson & Stevens (2006); Grant, Dutton, & Rosso (2008); Hine & Preuss (2008); Humphreys & Brown (2008); Angus-Leppan et al. (2010a); Vlachos, Panagopoulos, & Rapp (2013); Reinecke & Ansari (2015); Štumberger & Golob (2016); Onkila, Mäkelä, & Jarvenpaa (2017); Onkila & Siltaoja (2017); Vlachos, Panagopoulos, Bachrach, & Morgeson (2017); Aguinis & Glavas (2019); Fairfield (2019); Babu, De Roeck, & Raineri (2020); Miller & Fyke (2020)
	Example of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' meaning creation processes:
	Pedersen (2006); Collier & Esteban (2007); Vlachos, Theotokis, & Panagopoulos (2010); Sonenshein, DeCelles, & Dutton (2014); Vlachos, Panagopoulos, & Rapp (2014); Panagopoulos, Rapp, & Vlachos (2016); Girschik (2018); Schaefer, Terlutter, & Diehl (2019)
CUSTOMER CSR SENSEMAKING	Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:
	Angus-Leppan et al. (2010a); Schultz, Chaney, & Debenedetti (2016); Edinger-Shons, Lengler-Graiff, Scheidler, & Wieseke (2019); Edinger-Schons, Lengler-Graiff, Scheidler, Mende, & Wieseke (2020)
	Example of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' meaning creation processes:
	Ehirch & Irwin (2005); Ellen, Webb, & Mohr (2006); Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen (2007); Lange & Washburn (2012); Öberseder, Schlegelmilch, & Murphy (2013); Skarmeas & Leonidou (2013); Ailawadi, Neslin, Luan, & Taylor (2014); Haws, Winterich, & Naylor (2014); Bolton & Mattila (2015); Xie, Bagozzi, & Grønhaug (2015, 2019); Chernev & Blair (2015); Kollat & Farache (2017); Campbell & Winterich (2018); Karaosmanoglu, Altinigne, & Isiksal (2016); Perera & Hewege 2016; Lee, Yoon, & O'Donnell (2018); Lim, Sung, & Lee (2018); Wei, Kim, Miao, Behnke, & Almanza (2018); Baskentli, Sen, Du, & Bhattacharya (2019); Ferrell, Harrison, Ferrell, & Hair (2019);

Table 1 (*continued*)

	Gollnhofer, Weijo, & Schouten (2019); Joo, Miller, & Fink (2019); Scheidler & Edinger-Schons (2020); Glozer & Morsing (2020)
OTHER EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER CSR SENSEMAKING	**Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:**
	Livesey (2001); Calton & Payne (2003); Pater & van Lierop (2006); Schouten & Remmé (2006); Angus-Leppan et al. (2010a); Joutsenvirta (2011); Muller & Kräussl (2011); Reinecke & Ansari (2015); Skilton & Purdy (2017); Sorour, Boadu, & Soobaroyen (in press)
	Example of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' meaning creation processes:
	Lange & Washburn (2012); Herzig & Moon (2013); Ioannou & Serafeim (2015); Crilly, Hansen, & Zollo (2016); Crilly, Ni, & Jiang (2016); Viveros (2016); Hawn, Chatterji, & Mitchell (2018); Laskin (2018); Barkemeyer, Faugère, Gergaud, & Preuss (2020); Skouloudis, Evangelinos, & Malesios (2015); Glozer & Morsing (2020)

and behaviors (Maon, Vanhamme, De Roeck, Lindgreen, & Swaen, 2019).

Employees endeavor to make sense of CSR issues as a way to better understand not only their organization's environment and commitments, but also how they relate to their organization (Schouten & Remmé, 2006). For example, Aguinis and Glavas (2019) have suggested that employees' efforts to make sense of and give sense to CSR initiatives and messages contribute to satisfying their psychological need for meaningfulness. Accordingly, it can be considered that employees' intra-organizational sensegiving efforts (inwardly to peers and outwardly to managers) partly consist in efforts to develop a pro-social dimension to their organizational identity that can satisfy their need for meaningfulness through work. Overall, employees' sensemaking and intra-organizational sensegiving efforts are thus associated with two core identity-related processes: one oriented toward the self and one oriented toward the organization (Grant, Dutton, & Rosso, 2008; Fairfield, 2019).

The extant literature suggests that employees' sensemaking and sensegiving processes are influenced by individual characteristics and drivers (e.g., values, culture, work orientation, moral identity) as well as by organizational factors (e.g., "bottom-up" vs. "top-down" CSR development; individualist, relational, and collectivist identity orientation of the organization) (Aguinis & Glavas, 2019; Basu & Palazzo, 2008; Onkila, Mäkelä, & Jarvenpaa, 2017). As with managers, individual factors can trigger differences in employees' sensemaking and sensegiving outcomes, while company-related factors often provide sources of collectively constructed preconceptions that can foster the development of shared conceptions of CSR issues and organizational engagement.

4.1.3. Projecting organizational identity: Managers' and employees' sensegiving efforts

Through various sensegiving efforts (e.g., public relations, communication campaigns, reporting activities, stakeholder dialogue processes) that target customers (Iivonen & Moisander, 2015) and other external stakeholders in the network (Joutsenvirta, 2011), managers and employees rhetorically portray and substantially justify positive accounts of the way the company addresses CSR issues. To do so, large sums of money and energy are mobilized to "produce" organizational identity projections that will transcend organizational boundaries and speak to the stakeholders in the network. Companies' and their members' outward sensegiving efforts can reflect the genuine or aspirational projection of the CSR identity of the company, or they can be deliberately misleading attempts to influence stakeholders (Christensen, Morsing, & Thyssen, 2013; Crilly, Zollo, & Hansen, 2012; Sauerwald & Su, 2019).

Table 2
List of articles investigating different stakeholders' inward and outward sensegiving processes.

	TO MANAGERS	TO EMPLOYEES	TO CUSTOMERS	TO OTHER EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS
MANAGERIAL CSR SENSEGIVING	**Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:** Cramer, van der Heijden, & Jonker (2006a, 2006b); Sonenshein (2006); Humphreys & Brown (2008); Selsky & Parker (2010); van der Heijden, Driessen, & Cramer (2012); Sharma & Good (2013); Golob, Johansen, Nielsen, & Podnar (2014); Sonenshein (2016); Stigliani & Elsbach (2018); Yang, Wang, Zhou, & Jiang (2019); Bien & Sassen (2020) **Examples of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' attempts to influence meaning creation of others:** Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton (1998); Bansal (2003); Dutton, Ashford, Lawrence, & Miner-Rubino (2002); Howard-Grenville (2006, 2007); Kemp, Keenan, & Gronow (2010); Alt & Craig (2016); Acquier, Carbone, & Moati (2018); Wickert & de Bakker (2018); Opoku-Dakwa & Rupp (2019)	**Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:** Calton & Payne (2003); Humphreys & Brown (2008); Hanke & Stark (2009); Iivonen & Moisander (2015); van der Heijden, Driessen, & Cramer (2010); van der Heijden et al. (2012); Sharma & Good (2013); Vlachos, Panagopoulos, & Rapp (2014); Scandelius & Cohen (2016); Stigliani & Elsbach (2018); Yang et al. (2019); Schoeneborn, Morsing, & Crane (2020) **Examples of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' attempts to influence meaning creation of others:** Cook & Seith (1992); Bansal (2003); Howard-Grenville (2006); Kemp et al. (2010); Costas & Kärreman (2013); Korschun & Du (2013); Acquier et al. (2018); Opoku-Dakwa & Rupp (2019)	**Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:** Morsing & Schultz (2006); Hanke & Stark (2009); Iivonen & Moisander (2015); Scandelius & Cohen (2016); Schultz, Chaney, & Debenedetti (2016); Edinger-Shons, Lengler-Graiff, Scheidler, & Wieseke (2019); Schoeneborn et al.(2020) **Examples of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' attempts to influence meaning creation of others:** Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen (2007); Korschun & Du (2013); Lee (2016); Kollat & Farache (2017); Lim, Sung, & Lee (2018); Robinson & Eilert (2018); Jones (2019); Christensen, Morsing, & Thyssen (2020); Glozer & Morsing (2020); Okazaki, Plangger, West, & Menéndez (2020)	**Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:** Livesey (2001); Calton & Payne (2003); Morsing & Schultz (2006); Pater & van Lierop (2006); Hanke & Stark (2009); Schultz & Wehmeier (2010); Joutsenvirta (2011); Cornelissen (2012); Sharma & Good (2013); Guthey & Morsing (2014); Golob et al. (2014); Iivonen & Moisander (2015); Reinecke & Ansari (2015); Moosmayer & Davis (2016); Scandelius & Cohen (2016); van der Heijden & Cramer (2017); Skilton & Purdy (2017); Yang et al. (2019); Schoeneborn et al. (2020); Sorour, Boadu, & Soobaroyen (in press) **Examples of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' attempts to influence meaning creation of others:** Korschun & Du (2013); Crilly, Zollo & Hansen (2012); Lee (2016); Christensen et al. (2020); Glozer & Morsing (2020)
EMPLOYEE CSR SENSEGIVING	**Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:** Sonenshein, DeCelles, & Dutton (2014); Sonenshein (2016); Babu, De Roeck, & Raineri (2020) **Examples of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' attempts to influence meaning creation of others:** Andersson & Bateman (2000); Scully & Segal (2002); Bansal (2003); Neville & Menguc (2006); Howard-Grenville (2006); Kemp et al. (2010); Johansen & Nielsen (2011); Creed, Scully, & Austin (2012); Korschun & Du (2013); Briscoe, Chin, & Hambrick (2014); Alt & Craig (2016); Girshik (2018); Opoku-Dakwa & Rupp (2019); Sendlhofer (2020)	**Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:** Sonenshein (2006); Sonenshein et al. (2014); Sonenshein (2016); Onkila & Siltaoja (2017); Babu et al. (2020) **Examples of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' attempts to influence meaning creation of others:** Andersson & Bateman (2000); Scully & Segal (2002); Bansal (2003); Howard-Grenville (2006); Collier & Esteban (2007); Kemp et al. (2010); Creed et al. (2002)	**Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:** Babu et al. (2020) **Examples of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' attempts to influence meaning creation of others:** Vlachos, Theotokis, & Panagopoulos (2010); Vlachos, Panagopoulos, Bachrach, & Morgeson (2017); Edinger-Schons et al. (2019); Lee & Tao (2020); Plewa, Conduit, Quester, & Johnson (2015)	**Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:** Babu et al. (2020) **Examples of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' attempts to influence meaning creation of others:** Vlachos et al. (2017); Vock, van Dolen, & Kolk (2014); Winkler, Brown, & Finegold (2019)
CUSTOMER CSR SENSEGIVING	**Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:** Scheidler & Edinger-Schons (2020) **Examples of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' attempts to influence meaning creation of others:** Delmas & Toffel (2004); Johansen & Nielsen (2011); Grappi, Romani, & Bagozzi (2013); Korschun & Du (2013); Sweetin, Knowles, Summey, & McQueen (2013); Boyd, McGarry, & Clarke (2016); Karaosmanoglu, Altinigne, & Isiksal (2016); Neville & Menguc (2006); Russel, Russel, & Honea (2016); Gollnhofer, Weijo, & Schouten (2019); Lee, Zhang, & Abitbol (2019); Lim & Shim (2019); Chu, Chen, & Gan (2020); Okazaki et al. (2020)	**Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:** / **Examples of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' attempts to influence meaning creation of others:** Johansen & Nielsen (2011); Grappi et al. (2013); Korschun & Du (2013); Opoku-Dakwa & Rupp (2019)	**Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:** / **Examples of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' attempts to influence meaning creation of others:** Korschun & Du (2013); Grappi et al. (2013); Skarmeas & Leonidou (2013); Walsh & Bartikowski (2013); Lacey, Kennett-Hensel, & Manolis (2015); Xie, Bagozzi, & Grønhaug (2015); Boyd et al. (2016); Karaosmanoglu et al. (2016); Kollat & Farache (2017); Dunn & Harness (2018, 2019); Choi et al. (2019); Edinger-Schons et al. (2019); Gollnhofer et al. (2019); Lim & Shim (2019); Xie, Bagozzi, & Grønhaug (2019); Chu et al. (2020); Okazaki et al. (2020)	**Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:** / **Examples of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' attempts to influence meaning creation of others:** Korschun & Du (2013); Grappi et al. (2013); Kollat & Farache (2017); Lim & Shim (2019)
OTHER EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER	**Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:** Calton & Payne (2003); Pater & van	**Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:** /	**Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:** Barnett, Henriques, & Husted (2020)	**Works relying on an explicit sensemaking–sensegiving framework and/or terminology:** Calton & Payne (2003); Guthey &

Table 2 (*continued*)

	TO MANAGERS	TO EMPLOYEES	TO CUSTOMERS	TO OTHER EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS
CSR SENSEGIVING	Lierop (2006); Muller & Kräussl (2011); Reinecke & Ansari (2015) **Examples of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' attempts to influence meaning creation of others:** Delmas & Toffel (2004); Frooman & Murrell (2005); Neville & Menguc (2006); Howard-Grenville (2006); den Hond & de Bakker (2007); King & Soule (2007); Weber, Rao, & Thomas (2009); Johansen & Nielsen (2011); Waldron, Navis, & Fisher (2013); Coombs & Holladay (2015); McDonnell, King, & Soule (2015); Eesley et al. (2016); Lim (2019); Waldron et al. (2019); Hadani, Doh, & Schneider (2019); Morsing & Spence (2019)	**Examples of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' attempts to influence meaning creation of others:** Korschun & Du (2013); Bartley & Child (2014); Vasi, Walker, Johnson, & Tan (2015); Opoku-Dakwa & Rupp (2019)	**Examples of works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' attempts to influence meaning creation of others:** Zietsma & Winn (2007); Korschun & Du (2013); Bartley & Child (2014); Coombs & Holladay (2015); Vasi et al. (2015); Hein & Chaudhri (2019); Colli (2020)	Morsing (2014); Moosmayer & Davis (2016); Barnett et al. (2020) **works relying on other conceptual frameworks to approach actors' attempts to influence meaning creation of others:** Frooman (1999); Frooman & Murrell (2005); Scherer & Palazzo (2007); Zietsma & Winn (2007); Weber et al. (2009); Vasi & King (2012); Castello et al. (2013); Korschun & Du (2013); Herzig & Moon (2013); Bartley & Child (2014); Coombs & Holladay (2015); Vasi et al. (2015); Eesley et al. (2016); Lim (2019); Hein & Chaudhri (2019)

The deployment of these outward sensegiving efforts follows (at least partly) the CSR managerial accounts formed through the managerial loop (Hahn et al., 2014; Schoeneborn, Morsing, & Crane, 2020). In addition to the strategic efforts of specific CSR-involved managers, other organizational members, whether consciously or not, further disseminate CSR messages in the organizational environment (Mirvis, 2012), acting as CSR ambassadors to consumers and other external stakeholders (Collier & Esteban, 2007; Edinger-Schons, Lengler-Graiff, Scheidler, & Wieseke, 2019).

The nature, intensity, and consistency of the outward sensegiving efforts are influenced by the mode of justification used by the firm (Basu & Palazzo, 2008), the definition of the desired future image of the company (Gioia & Thomas, 1996), and the CSR-related marketing objectives (Vallaster et al., 2012) in order to tailor messages to different stakeholders' expectations. Research highlights, however, that managers should be cautious when designing decoupled sensegiving efforts in a context in which stakeholder audiences overlap (Olins, 2000).

4.2. CSR reputation creation cycle

CSR corporate reputation creation derives from information exchanges, interactions, and social influences between customers and other external stakeholders (Rindova, Williamson, Petkova, & Sever, 2005) who react to CSR identity outward projections and environmental CSR stimuli. External stakeholder interactions rely on word of mouth, recommendations, criticisms, and associations among stakeholder representatives (Lee, 2016) that are facilitated by digital and social media (Boyd, McGarry, & Clarke, 2016). Customers' and other external stakeholders' sensemaking and sensegiving processes can result in the creation of a fluid and intelligible overall CSR reputation or in multiple and fragmented CSR reputational accounts (Walker, 2010).

4.2.1. Customer CSR loop and sensegiving efforts

The literature on the CSR sensemaking and sensegiving processes of customers is underdeveloped, despite a growing body of research on customers' perceptions of and reactions to CSR (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2007; Peloza & Shang, 2011). Nevertheless, existing studies help inform these processes, without explicitly referring to the sensemaking framework. This literature treats CSR as a tool for enhancing company reputations (Chernev & Blair, 2015) and establishing affective bonds that increase customers' support for the company (Bolton & Mattila, 2015; Brown & Dacin, 1997; Sen, Du, & Bhattacharya, 2016).

However, CSR activities and communication do not always generate positive consumer responses (Maon et al., 2019), and not all consumers make sense of them in the same way (Jones, 2019). Various individual

and organizational factors influence customers' meaning creation and propensity to react more or less positively to organizational CSR sensegiving efforts. At the individual level, research notably highlights factors such as customers' values (Haws, Winterich, & Naylor, 2014), moral foundations (Baskentli, Sen, Du, & Bhattacharya, 2019; Xie, Bagozzi, & Grønhaug, 2015), exposure to CSR media coverage (Perera & Hewege, 2016), and awareness of companies' CSR activities (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Jones, 2019). Organizational-related factors include the type of CSR framing by the company and the perceived company motives underlying its CSR commitment (Bolton & Mattila, 2015). A pre-existing CSR reputation can also color stakeholders' interpretation of the CSR communication (Zagenczyk, 2004).

Moreover, novel communication channels (e.g., social media platforms) render CSR accounts less static and foster ongoing negotiation of meaning among customers and other stakeholders (Castello, Morsing, & Schultz, 2013). In particular, customers contribute to debates about environmental and social issues, they praise or criticize CSR practices (Colleoni, 2013), and they contribute to boycotts and petitions addressed to authorities and regulatory bodies (Lim & Shim, 2019). Also, customers who are willing to know more about a company and lack direct experience with this company typically rely on others' outward sensegiving stimuli (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004), notably from activists' who strongly contribute to mitigating information asymmetries between customers and firms (Waldron, Navis, & Markman, 2019).

4.2.2. Other external stakeholders' CSR loop and sensegiving efforts

The ambiguity and complexity of CSR issues and the language companies often use to give sense to them trigger external stakeholders' engagement in interpretation processes and sensegiving efforts to ensure their expectations are heard (Neville & Menguc, 2006). The way in which other external stakeholders make sense of CSR issues and initiatives may differ substantially from the sense that managers make and endeavor to give (Schouten & Remmé, 2006). These stakeholders' interpretations also vary from one group to another. Specifically, factors such as political ideology, core values, and collective beliefs of the stakeholder group affect the type of issues they notice and choose to address, as well as how they do so (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007). Heterogeneity may, however, also emerge in a particular stakeholder population (Rowley & Moldoveanu, 2003; Wolfe & Putler, 2002) and affect the way different stakeholder representatives make sense of CSR issues. For example, not all environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs) prioritize the same ecological problems or interpret them in the same way. Because the sense construction of stakeholder populations tends to diverge, the reality of a firm's CSR-related activities and reputation can thus appear multiple and fragmented on the external

stakeholders' side.

Nonetheless, external stakeholders can develop fairly convergent accounts about particular CSR issues. This is exemplified by the well-known Brent Spar crisis for Royal Dutch Shell, for which NGOs, the media, and public authorities gradually formed fairly similar accounts of the issues at stake as a result of stakeholders' forceful engagement in sensegiving processes (Livesey, 2001). In other words, stakeholders' sensemaking is subject to expectations and influences of others, materialized through sensegiving efforts both within and across stakeholder groups (Maitlis, 2005; Pater & Van Lierop, 2006). When multiple stakeholders demonstrate a high consensus about the importance of some CSR issues, their sensegiving efforts might have a stronger impact on managerial CSR sensemaking (Opoku-Dakwa & Rupp, 2019) by representing institutionalized beliefs about what represent legitimate corporate practices (Bitektine & Haack, 2015).

Stakeholders' propensity to engage in sensegiving efforts that target other external stakeholders is influenced by factors such as the nature of the stakeholder group's core mission, its interests, the type of relationship linking it to the focal company, and its associated power over that company (Frooman & Murrell, 2005; Helmig, Spraul, & Ingenhoff, 2016; Opoku-Dakwa & Rupp, 2019). While secondary stakeholders are more prone to engage in sensegiving processes directed to other primary stakeholders (e.g., consumers) to increase the salience of their social claims (e.g., via protests or calls for boycotts), more powerful stakeholders are more likely to address the firm directly (Frooman, 1999). Furthermore, inferential factors, such as the perceived centrality of the stakeholder in the network or the identified opportunity to reinforce a status in a stakeholder network, can prompt a stakeholder group to engage in more intense sensegiving efforts toward other external stakeholders (de Bakker & den Hond, 2008; Rowley, 2017) in order to uphold a certain conception of the CSR reputation of a company.

4.2.3. Projecting reputation: Customers' and other external stakeholders' sensegiving efforts

Customers and other external stakeholders project their corporate reputational accounts through sensegiving efforts that target the company and its members. In this context, managers thus potentially receive multiple, varied, tangible, and symbolic messages intended to alter their interpretations and conceptions of CSR issues and the way they address them.

The type and intensity of stakeholders' influencing endeavors depend on the group of stakeholders, their core mission and political ideology, the nature of their stakes, the type of relationship they have with the company (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; Eesley, Decelles, & Lenox, 2016; Frooman & Murrell, 2005; Rowley & Moldoveanu, 2003), and their anticipation of the impact of their influencing efforts on the firm (King, 2008; Rehbein, Waddock, & Graves, 2004). In particular, powerful external stakeholders, such as shareholders or the mainstream media, might directly engage in sensegiving attempts toward the company, as they have a greater likelihood of affecting managers' sensemaking and of influencing which CSR accounts should be internalized, for example, through training programs, performance management schemes, or normative initiatives (Delmas & Toffel, 2004; Opoku-Dakwa & Rupp, 2019). However, less powerful stakeholders might still choose to undertake company-oriented sensegiving efforts (e.g., local condemnation campaigns, boycotts) even if failure or limited impact is anticipated, as a means of expressing their identity and standing up for their values (Lim & Shim, 2019; Rowley & Moldoveanu, 2003).

Activists, whose CSR-oriented influencing attempts have in recent years attracted an increasing amount of scholarly attention (Coombs & Holladay, 2015; Waldron et al., 2019), tend to focus on the most prominent companies in focal industries to influence their conceptions of socially legitimate business practices. They engage in designing rhetoric that appeals to the cognitive structures used by managers and organizational members to make sense of their environments (Howard-Grenville, 2006). Through organizational identity contestation (Jones,

2019), activists attempt to convince managers that some company practices instrumental in signaling their organization's identity-defining qualities (e.g., the practice of testing products on laboratory animals) are inappropriate ways for the company to act and thus threaten its corporate reputation.

Overall, our critical, multidisciplinary review of the literature on CSR sensemaking and sensegiving in a corporate branding context and the integrative conceptual framework we have developed enable us to explain and delineate the multi-stakeholder interpretative and interactional processes that shape the corporate brand.

5. Theoretical and empirical contributions

Our article contributes to (CSR) corporate branding literature in three main ways. First, our conceptual endeavor characterizes corporate branding as an inherently multipartite phenomenon in contrast to a more firm-driven perspective whereby the corporate brand is delivered by the company to different partners and stakeholders. In other words, we depart from the traditional company-focused perspective on corporate branding to adopt a network-based perspective whereby various stakeholder groups appear as equally central in the development of the CSR corporate brand character. This co-construction process reflects not only stakeholders' expectations, needs, and plans (Biraghi & Gambetti, 2015) but also the company's intended brand promise (Balmer & Greyser, 2003). Our conceptual framework thus emphasizes how corporate branding should be understood as "a societal process of reciprocal encounters and commitment that occurs between a company and its stakeholders" (Biraghi, Gambetti, & Schultz, 2017, p. 209). In short, our conceptual endeavor contributes to the literature that positions CSR as a pivotal instrument of corporate marketing (Balmer et al., 2009; Podnar & Golob, 2007) and more particularly adds to the nascent literature on CSR corporate branding (Golob & Podnar, 2019; Vallaster et al., 2012).

Second, relying on the multidisciplinary CSR sensemaking literature, we conceptualize the roles of various stakeholders in the CSR corporate brand development process and how they interactively and concomitantly interpret CSR-related signals, issues, and opportunities. In other words, we further explain from a social constructionist viewpoint how CSR corporate brands are created through interactional processes of meaning negotiation and renegotiation. Our conceptualization of CSR corporate branding considers the continuously evolving nature of the CSR corporate brand and how it is co-constructed through ongoing and recursive sensemaking and sensegiving processes. This conceptualization shows how sensemaking and sensegiving act on each other to iteratively form CSR-related accounts that evolve over time and progressively shape the corporate brand, and it helps to delineate cyclical exchange relationships between and among diverse stakeholder groups (Schoeneborn & Trittin, 2013; Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010).

Finally, our conceptualization highlights that these networked meaning creation processes occur within, beyond, and across fluid and blurred organizational boundaries. CSR corporate branding processes indeed involve individuals and groups whose identities can be complex and who can simultaneously relate to different stakeholder categories. Further research should consider that corporate branding increasingly occurs in a context where organizational frontiers and stakeholder categories are highly permeable.

Overall, our conceptual paper responds to calls for stakeholder-inclusive, CSR-oriented branding frameworks that explain the interactional dynamics and social construction processes at play in the development of CSR branding (Golob & Podnar, 2019; Hildebrand et al., 2011; Podnar & Golob, 2007; Von Wallpach et al., 2017). In addition, by theorizing the sensemaking perspective of CSR in corporate branding, we provide a prime conceptualization of the multi-stakeholder interactions that influence and condition the constantly evolving meanings of corporate brands.

From a more practice-oriented perspective, our conceptualization of

CSR corporate branding could be used by managers as a guardrail both to limit the risk of corporate marketing myopia pertaining to organizations that fail to nurture and maintain a corporate marketing culture and to appreciate the value of an institutional, stakeholder, and societal orientation (Balmer, 2011). In particular, it highlights the need for a well-defined and managed corporate communication strategy around the CSR corporate brand to avoid the emergence of diffuse, confusing, and/or contradictory corporate CSR identity and reputation cues (Balmer, 2009). CSR corporate communication is indeed not solely a mechanism through which corporate objectives are expressed and achieved, for it is also a means by which CSR meanings are negotiated (Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010). In this respect, our integrative framework highlights the necessity for managers to grasp the importance of establishing formal and informal space for CSR-related exchanges between representatives of the firm and the social actors in its stakeholder network (see Vallaster, Maon, Lindgreen & Vanhamme, in press). Those spaces should facilitate discussion about managers' and other stakeholders' worldviews and expectations regarding CSR issues. This should in turn lead to the development of more convergent conceptions of the company's social responsibilities and actions.

In particular, our research suggests that managers should work to approach the respective CSR accounts in the stakeholder network of the company in a more systematic and interconnected fashion in order to develop and promote CSR messages and initiatives that can be translated into durable, valuable brand propositions. Acknowledging the limitations of managerial control over the development of CSR corporate brands and engaging in a co-creation approach over the long term offer multiple advantages to the company. For example, such an approach can increase stakeholders' perceptions of CSR authenticity and thus reduce their criticisms and accusations of CSR-washing. It can also limit the risk of decoupling (i.e., a perceived inconsistency between a company's internal practices and its external image; see Crilly, Hansen, & Zollo, 2016) and thus contribute to a better alignment and consistency between organizational identity and reputation (De Roeck et al., 2013; Schouten & Remmé, 2006). Finally, our conceptual work reaffirms the need for managers to explicitly recognize the continuous nature of the interpretive processes underlying the shaping of CSR corporate brands and the importance of adopting a long-term perspective on stakeholders' relationships (Golob et al., 2014; Hur et al., 2014; Vallaster et al., 2012). This must allow emotional connections with stakeholders to be established and sustained, and it should soften potential tensions arising from the differing interpretive processes and CSR-related perceptions across the stakeholder network.

6. Agenda for further research

Our literature review (see Tables 1 and 2) highlights that current knowledge of CSR sensemaking and sensegiving in a corporate branding perspective is fragmented and incomplete. The literature has only begun to unpack the individual and collective CSR interpretative processes (Gond, El Akremi, Swaen, & Babu, 2017) that condition the development of CSR corporate brands. To advance understanding in this area, further research needs to provide integrative analyses of the dynamic connections among CSR issues, CSR evaluations, and stakeholders' reactions to CSR and how these connections bear upon cycles of identity and reputation creation at the heart of the corporate brand phenomenon. Specifically, we identify three main research avenues to improve and refine current conceptions of CSR corporate branding processes.

6.1. Developing a better understanding of the polyphonic co-creation of the CSR corporate brand

Today, many managerial teams still often consider themselves as the main designers of CSR identity and reputation. However, our conceptual framework highlights the necessity of adopting a network-based perspective and a co-creation approach to CSR meanings

development, involving managers and the different stakeholders. Our literature review also reveals the need to stop considering stakeholders in silos and to adopt a more organic and dynamic perspective about the CSR corporate branding phenomenon.

In particular, if managers mostly limit themselves to interacting with other managers, they risk alienating their firm from the rest of society, which may lead the firm to experience "reduced reputation, [and] erosion of its license to operate" (Hill, 2001, p. 32). According to Hildebrand et al. (2011, p. 1359), "a key thrust of corporate marketing, then, needs to be the thoughtful and meaningful formulation, implementation and assessment of CSR strategies that are not as much imposed on the various stakeholder groups but are, instead, co-created [with them]." In this sense, relevant CSR branding processes at the corporate level should necessarily be polyphonic, even if this does not preclude managers' attempts to express and broadcast a main brand-related story. Further research should, therefore, empirically investigate the ways in which companies and multiple stakeholders can implement strategies for stimulating the co-creation processes at the heart of the CSR corporate branding phenomenon. Moreover, the analysis of the dynamic relationships between CSR drivers, CSR evaluations, and multi-stakeholder interpretations and reactions to CSR initiatives and messages require the use of longitudinal research designs to shed light on when and how inflection points occur in different stakeholders' perceptions of CSR activities and messages over time. Doing so would also help clarify how social actors' reactions to CSR can feed back into managerial and stakeholder CSR sensemaking, as well as how individuals (whether managers or other stakeholders) learn or unlearn, both individually and collectively, about CSR issues and initiatives. In addition, to refine our multi-stakeholder conceptualization, further research should grant attention to the content of CSR sensemaking and sensegiving efforts by social actors, and it should analyze how the type and valence of CSR information (Basu & Palazzo, 2008) provided by managers, employees, customers, and other stakeholders in their sensegiving efforts affect the construction of CSR accounts.

6.2. Theorizing non-managerial stakeholders' sensemaking processes and identity and reputation-related outcomes

Most research on CSR sensemaking has focused on managerial sensemaking processes. Current knowledge of how employees, customers, and other external stakeholders gather and organize information related to CSR initiatives to develop judgments about an organization's social engagement remains highly limited. For example, studies in the employee and customer realm essentially focus on how employees and customers react to CSR while ignoring how they form perceptions and create meaning around CSR issues and initiatives (Jones, 2019). Moreover, studies investigating how stakeholders make sense of CSR usually rely on different theoretical frameworks (e.g., signal theory, social processing theory), which further fragments knowledge of CSR sensemaking into different disciplinary silos. The literature on CSR sensemaking also tends to treat stakeholder groups as unified units, thus failing to acknowledge the existence of differences between and within stakeholder populations (Angus-Leppan et al., 2010a). In this context, the actual interpretive processes underlying the identity and reputation creation cycles that are central to shaping the corporate brand remain only partially understood and difficult to act upon for organizational and external stakeholders.

Further research could thus investigate the sources of information and the type of stimuli (e.g., mass media, corporate communications, certification labels, word of mouth, corporate events) that diverse stakeholders use to make sense of CSR issues and CSR initiatives. While managers and employees have access to inside knowledge and more sources of CSR information than are available to customers, other external stakeholders are mainly informed by brief point-of-sale messages, company-shaped information, and communication about specific CSR events or initiatives. Further research should investigate which

individual factors, sub-group-related factors, and population-related factors explain the emergence of different CSR accounts within specific stakeholder groups and across different stakeholder groups, as well as how these different CSR accounts influence identity- and reputation-related outcomes. For example, some stakeholders, such as job seekers who are typically willing to appreciate the potential congruence between the organization's identity and their own identity, may have stronger motivations than other stakeholders to understand and make sense of CSR practices. By contrast, customers may lack the necessary motivation to make sense of CSR for all companies they buy from, unless it concerns specific social issues that are important to them.

6.3. Delving into an explicit approach of stakeholder CSR sensegiving efforts and their corporate branding impacts

In recent years, scholars have increasingly focused on the types of arguments that social actors use to influence each other, contrasting logical arguments based on facts and numbers and emotional arguments based on imagery, metaphors, and analogies (Green, 2004; Green & Li, 2011). However, explicit sensemaking and sensegiving frameworks are still relatively rarely mobilized in research efforts around stakeholders' CSR influencing strategies, despite the recognition of their relevance to understanding identity and reputation construction in and around organizations (Aula & Mantere, 2013; Morsing & Schultz, 2006). In particular, studies on the nature, intensity and channels of employees' and customers' inward and outward sensegiving efforts need more attention. Recent studies on electronic word of mouth (Boyd et al., 2016; Choi et al., 2019) and boycotts (Lim & Shim, 2019; Scheidler & Edinger-Schons, 2020) suggest that such stakeholders can individually and collectively engage in powerful sensegiving-related efforts that have the potential to strongly impact identity and reputation construction and the shaping of corporate brands. Yet the direct and indirect targets of these efforts often remain ill-defined or vaguely circumscribed. In addition, the mechanisms by which different social actors across the stakeholder network interactively interpret and react to "name and shame" campaigns (Lim, 2019) are rarely considered.

Future studies should focus on further investigating the different types of strategies that different stakeholders (such as employees and customers) use to influence the CSR meaning construction of others, the actual aims and relative effectiveness of these strategies, and their identity-related and reputational impacts.

7. Conclusion

Our conceptualization of CSR corporate branding expands the understanding of the networked CSR interpretive efforts that underlie the emergence of meaning at the core of corporate branding. Specifically, it highlights the dynamic, interconnected sensemaking and sensegiving processes involved in the identity and reputation creation cycles that characterize how managers and stakeholder groups continuously interpret, explain, and react to CSR issues to co-construct the CSR corporate brand. We hope that our work will catalyze further research efforts to develop more relevant, inclusive, and interactive understandings of the corporate branding phenomenon and of the role and importance of CSR in this context.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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