

Företags ansvar Marknadens retorik

*En analys av
företags strategiska
kommunikationsarbete*

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Corporate Responsibility/Marketplace Rhetoric: A Study of Corporate Communications

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyse what rhetoric of responsibility Swedish corporations presents and the structural determinants for such presentations.

Corporate identity is the managerial use of rhetoric and other symbolical means to (re)present the corporation's values, self-understanding and the interpretations made of the world.

A returning element in this rhetoric is the idea of responsibility, as in Corporate Social Responsibility. A number of corporations have chosen to explicitly or implicitly include normative aspects in their rhetoric of responsibility. In this study the analyses rests on theories on reflexive modernity and the structural transformation of social orders driven by the implosion of modernity's dualisms, the increasing threats to organizational operations caused by factual risks or the fear for assumed risks, the medialisation of politics and business, the globalisation of economy, politics and everyday life, the increasing competition and standardisation of products and services and the individualisation of opinions and values often expressed in the realm of sub-politics.

The empirical study includes all corporations listed on the Stockholm Stock Exchange 2004 and content analysis is used to categorise the voluntary sections of the annual reports and the sustainability report if available.

The results show that economy is the predominate area of responsibility included in corporate rhetoric. A smaller group consisting of large, well known corporations diverges from this by giving ethical aspects greater importance. Two structural dimensions are of greater importance to understand the different strategies; visibility and risks. The more visible the corporation is and the more risks the corporation produces the more ethics it includes in its rhetoric. Based on the results the study also raises questions about the validity in corporations' statements on ethical responsibility

Keywords

Rhetoric, Public relations, PR, Corporate identity, Corporate brand, Corporate social responsibility, CSR, Reflexive modernity