

The Ethics of Corporate Social Responsibility Statements in Undercutting Sustainability: A Communication Perspective

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Abstract : The use of Corporate Social Responsibility Statements has become ubiquitous in society. The appeal to consumers by being a well-behaved social entity has become a strategy not just to ensure brand loyalty but also to further larger scale projects of corporate interests. Specifically, the use of CSR to position corporations as good planetary citizens involves not just self-promotion but also a way of transferring responsibility from systems to individuals. By using techniques labeled as “greenwashing” and emphasizing ethical consumption choices as the solution, corporations present themselves as good members of the community and pursuing sustainability. Ultimately, the primary function of Corporate Social Responsibility statements is to maintain the economic status quo of ongoing growth and consumption while presenting an environmentally progressive image to the public, as well as reassuring them corporate behavior is superior to government intervention. By analyzing the communication techniques utilized through content analysis of specific examples, along with an analysis of the frames of meaning constructed in the CSR statements, the practices of Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability will be addressed from an ethical perspective.

Keywords : corporate social responsibility, ethics, greenwashing, sustainability

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