RADBOUD UNIVERSITY NIJMEGEN

The digital age:

How SMEs use social media as a CSR communication tool to manage their legitimacy

Master Thesis

Business Administration

Organizational Design and Development

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PREFACE

Dear reader,

In front of you lies my master thesis: The digital age: How SMEs use social media as a CSR communication tool to manage their legitimacy. This thesis is the final part of my master specialization Organizational Design and Development at the Radboud University.

For me, conducting a master thesis was a period with ups and downs. Especially under the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 virus. Therefore, I would like to express my gratitude to the people that supported and helped me in the accomplishment of my master thesis.

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Finally, I would like to thank my family, boyfriend and friends who have supported and motivated me when I was writing my master thesis. Especially, I would like to thank my uncle H. Brussaard for his contribution regarding the final part of my master thesis.

I hope you enjoy reading my master thesis.

Yolanda Lugtig
Nijmegen, July 2020

ABSTRACT

This research explored how and why Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) use social media to communicate about their socially responsible activities in order to manage organizational legitimacy. This research was a qualitative multiple case study in which seven SMEs operating the food-industry were studied. Little was known about how SMEs communicate through social media about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Especially, in terms of how SMEs manage organizational legitimacy through social media. Other studies argued that Multinational Corporations (MNCs) use social media to communicate about their organizational efforts regarding sustainability, and thereby, secure their legitimacy. This research applied template analysis to analyse the seven interviews and documents. This abductive study reveals that SMEs do not see the need to communicate about their CSR activities on social media in order to manage their legitimacy. SMEs rather use social media to communicate about their daily practices and their knowledge regarding their products and industry. However, the daily practices of the SMEs participating in this research are intertwined with CSR related activities. Therefore, this research argues that these social media posts of SMEs are indirectly related to CSR. As a result, SMEs unconsciously use social media as a CSR communication tool to manage their legitimacy. This research thus contributes to the literature of legitimacy by stating that the CSR communication through social media within SMEs depends on their core activities. Furthermore, SMEs do not intend to manage their legitimacy by using social media as a CSR communication tool.

Keywords: SMEs, CSR communication, social media, organizational legitimacy, food-industry

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1 INTRODUCTION

How organizations relate to society has changed in recent years, which made organizational legitimacy an urgent topic of research (Colleoni, 2013; Ozdora-Aksak & Atakan-Duman, 2016; Schembera & Scherer, 2017; Scherer, Palazzo, & Seidl, 2013). Stakeholders have increased expectations that organizations justify their social and environmental efforts, next to the justification of their economical efforts (Colleoni, 2013). Therefore, organizations nowadays have to pay extra attention to ensure that they are seen as functioning within the bond and norms of the society in which they operate (Deegan, 2009) Scholars stated that globalization is responsible for the change of the institutional environment, which influences the way how organizations secure their legitimacy (Castelló, Etter, & Årup Nielsen, 2016; Scherer et al., 2013). In addition, scholars argue that legitimacy is crucial for the organizational survival (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2009; Dawkins, 2005; Matten & Crane, 2005; Palazzo & Scherer, 2006; Richards & Schembera, 2019). However, the changing perceptions of stakeholders increasingly challenges the organizational legitimacy (Castelló et al., 2016; Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). Organizations tend to adopt several strategies in order to maintain their legitimacy (Scherer et al., 2013). This helps organizations to meet the expectations of society, which is important to secure and manage organizational legitimacy (Richards & Schembera, 2019; Scherer et al., 2013). However, it remains a challenge for organizations to deal with the conflicting expectations of stakeholders (Cho, Furey, & Mohr, 2017). Communication is essential in this regard to deal with these challenges in order to maintain organizational legitimacy (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). Organizations often use Information Communication Technology (ICT) to communicate and interact with stakeholders (Conole & Dyke, 2004). The use of ICT by organizations results in more online communication between organizations and stakeholders (Conole & Dyke, 2004). Colleoni (2013) argues that online communication contributes to the awareness among stakeholders regarding the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities of an organization. Therefore, social media are increasingly used as an online communication tool by organizations to communicate about their CSR activities (Etter, 2014; Wang & Huang, 2018). Social media provide the possibility for organizations to listen to their stakeholders and their sustainable issues (Floreddu, Cabiddu, & Evaristo, 2014). In this regard, organizations engage with their stakeholders by the use of participative dialogues through social media (Castelló et al., 2016). A lot of research has been done regarding the communication practices of MNCs (Baumann-Pauly, Wickert, Spence, & Scherer, 2013; Castelló et al., 2016; Jamali, Zanhour, & Keshishian, 2009; Spence, 2007). Scholars discovered that MNCs are very strong engaged in their communication practices about their CSR activities (Baumann-Pauly et

al., 2013). MNCs are convinced that the reporting function of an organizations is essential to secure organizational survival (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013). Furthermore, in order to avoid corporate scandals and/or environmental damages (Schembera & Scherer, 2019), MNCs incorporate policies and codes of conduct to address CSR-related issues perceived by the organization and their stakeholders (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013). However, how small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are using social media as an CSR communication tool to maintain their legitimacy remains unexplored. SMEs execute a major role regarding their contribution to the economy and employment (Luetkenhorst, 2004). In addition, the government emphasizes that SMEs should also incorporate aspects such as an ethical code of conduct and a CSR-policy (Nielsen & Thomsen, 2009). However, research has discovered that SMEs face far different legitimacy challenges compared to MNCs (Schembera & Scherer, 2019). Moreover, Schembera and Scherer (2019) stated that SMEs also respond in a different way to legitimacy challenges compared to MCNs. Business practices of SMEs are often not known with the wider public (Schembera & Scherer, 2019). In this regard, these authors stated that the lack of knowledge among stakeholders leads to less criticism towards the organizational activities. As a result, the organizational legitimacy of SMEs is often seen as taken-for-granted by the wider public (Schembera & Scherer, 2019). So, some scholars addressed the topic of legitimacy within SMEs (Elsbach, 1994; Ivanova & Castellano, 2012; Schembera & Scherer, 2019), but the role of social media has not been discussed. The current findings on communication strategies of using social media in order to manage organizational legitimacy seem not to be applicable to SMEs, as there are many differences in terms of their legitimacy management. In this regard, Castelló et al. (2016) argued that more research is needed to create knowledge on how organizations gain and secure legitimacy through the use of social media. Furthermore, Cho et al. (2017) stated that future analyses of CSR communications should expand to various business and settings to create more knowledge of CSR communication strategies. Therefore, in order to generate more knowledge in these fields of research, this research focusses on how SMEs make use of social media as an CSR communication to manage their legitimacy. In addition, this research focusses on SMEs that operate in the food industry. The rising expectations of stakeholders due to globalization regarding pollution, climate change, price and food quality, lead to risks and public criticism regarding the CSR activities of organizations in the food industry (Boehlje, 1993; Maloni & Brown, 2006; Scherer et al., 2013). The globalization of food production and food safety scandals made consumers aware of the impact the industry has on their health (Chen, Wen, & Luo, 2016; Deblonde, De Graaff, & Brom, 2007; Trienekens & Zuurbier, 2008). Organizations within this industry cannot ignore these changes

and need to overcome the differences between the food production and the stakeholders' perception in order to stay viable (Deblonde et al., 2007). Therefore, it is relevant to gain more insights in how SMEs in the food industry can use social media as a CSR communication tool to manage their legitimacy.

The goal of this research is to explore how small and medium-sized organizations in the food-industry make use of social media as an CSR communication tool to manage their legitimacy. This study aims to understand the way SMEs incorporated social media as a way to communicate with their stakeholders about their CSR activities. The understanding of how and why SMEs use social media contributes to the explanation of how SMEs use social media to manage their legitimacy by communicating their CSR activities. The following question needs to be answered in order to achieve the goal of this research: *How do small and medium enterprises in the food-industry use social media as an CSR communication tool to manage their legitimacy?*

A qualitative research is conducted in order to answer the research question. This qualitative approach used an abductive way of reasoning and had a multiple case study design. Seven SMEs operating in the food-industry participated in this research, in order to develop an understanding of how SMEs use social media to manage their legitimacy. The qualitative approach enables this research to describe and explain the perceptions of the SMEs regarding their social media usage.

The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows. The next chapter discusses the theoretical background in order to understand the theoretical concepts that are used in this research. Subsequently, Chapter 3 discusses the methodological choices of this research. The research strategy, research context and data collection methods are explained. Next, the operationalization, the data analysis technique, the research criteria and the research ethics are elaborated upon. The results of the data collection are described in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the main findings and provides an answer on the research question. Moreover, it discusses the theoretical and practical implications and it provides limitations of this research and directions for further research. At last, the role of the research during the conduct of this research is described.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter outlines the theoretical concepts of this study. First, the changes of institutional environment and its influence on organizations are discussed. Subsequently, insights are provided on why organizations need to manage legitimacy. In addition, the theory reflects on the way CSR communication is used to manage legitimacy. Next, strategies to manage organizational legitimacy are introduced. The following paragraph outlines how legitimacy is managed in SMEs. Additionally, the sixth paragraph elaborates on social media and the way it can be used to manage organizational legitimacy. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the literature including a visual overview of the theoretical concepts.

2.1 Globalized institutional environment increases the need to manage legitimacy

Organizations are seen as social systems of interlocking interactions realizing their societal contribution (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2019). Organizations are able to set and reset goals that are directly related to their societal contribution by means of interactions (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2019). Achterbergh and Vriens (2019) argue that organizations are able to secure their organizational survival by means of their positive societal contribution. The contribution to society is influenced by the increased pressure that to justify their CSR efforts and prove their engagements in CSR activities (Colleoni, 2013; Jenkins, 2004; Lee, Herold, & Yu, 2016). Organizations have to react to the external pressures of the institutional environment (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). Organizations perceive an increased external pressure resulting from the institutional environment due to globalization (Scherer et al., 2013). Globalization lead to an increased awareness of problems such as global warming and pollution, which are perceived by stakeholders as a result of the production processes of organizations (Scherer et al., 2013). Therefore, stakeholders increasingly value the sustainable activities of organizations (Colleoni, 2013; Deegan, 2009). Freeman (2010, p. 46) defined stakeholders as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives". The awareness of stakeholders challenges the legitimacy of organizations as a result of globalization (Castelló et al., 2016; Palazzo & Scherer, 2006; Scherer et al., 2013). In this regard, Suchman (1995, p. 574) defined legitimacy as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, rules and definitions". Therefore, organizations are perceived as legitimate if they behave in a desirable, justified and appropriate way given the relevant rules of their organizational field, which means that the organizational actions should meet or exceed the

expectations of the environment and society (Scherer et al., 2013; Scott, 2013; Suchman, 1995). The organizational field means "those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute recognized area of institutional life, for example key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies and other organizations that produce similar services or products" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 148). In this regard, organizations incorporated their behaviour, and by doing so, organizations incorporate themselves into society (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2009). Furthermore, it is essential that society perceives the behaviour of the organization as legitimate, since "legitimacy is vital to corporations as it is a precondition for the continuous flow of resources and for securing the sustained support of the organization's constituencies" (Scherer et al., 2013, p. 262). Therefore, the incorporation of the organization into society and obtaining legitimacy is crucial for the continued existence of the organization (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2009; Palazzo & Scherer, 2006; Richards & Schembera, 2019; Scherer et al., 2013). The organizational legitimacy can be divided into three forms, which are called pragmatic, moral and cognitive legitimacy (Suchman, 1995). Pragmatic legitimacy "rest on the self-interest calculations of an organization's most immediate audience" (Suchman, 1995, p. 578), which means that the most important constituents based on self-interest want to benefit from the organization (Schembera & Scherer, 2017). Furthermore, moral legitimacy refers to a normative approval (Richards & Schembera, 2019; Suchman, 1995). In this regard, stakeholders identify the organization and its business practices based on a normative evaluation (Richards & Schembera, 2019; Suchman, 1995). On the other hand, Schembera and Scherer (2017) argue that cognitive legitimacy is not related to an evaluation, but it appears when organizations are embedded in taken-for-granted assumptions (Colleoni, 2013; Suchman, 1995). In this regard, Scherer et al. (2013, p. 262) described that cognitive legitimacy is about the "subconscious acceptance of the organization, its structures and processes", which was also acknowledged by Suchman (1995). Palazzo and Scherer (2006) argued that globalization has led to the social acceptance of organizations being increasingly based on moral legitimacy. These authors argued that these changes of the institutional environment were of the expense of pragmatic and cognitive legitimacy (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006).

2.2   CSR communication and strategies to manage legitimacy

Organizations aim to meet the expectations of their stakeholders in order to deal with external pressures and to be socially accepted (Colleoni, 2013; Dawkins, 2005). Since stakeholders increasingly value the social and environmental activities of organizations (Colleoni, 2013;

Morsing & Schultz, 2006), it is important that organizations communicate about their efforts to meet those expectations (Dawkins, 2005; Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). Organizations need to incorporate CSR communication in order to deal with the institutional pressures and manage their organizational legitimacy (Jenkins, 2004). The CSR activities that are carried out by organizations refers to their positive societal contribution (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2019) . These activities relate to the way organizations (1) deliver valuable products or services to the society, (2) provide positive side effects and (3) attenuate negative side effects as much as possible (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2019, p. 1). In this regard, CSR can be defined as the organizational activities that go beyond compliance, which means that organizations engage themselves in activities which goes beyond the interest of the organization and beyond the requirements of the law (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2009; McWilliams, Siegel, & Wright, 2006). In addition, the activities serve for the debate about the relationship and interactions between business and society and "any concept concerning how managers should handle policy, social issues" (Windsor, 2006, p. 93), and environmental issues (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013). A distinction has been made between internal and external CSR (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013). In this regard, internal CSR is about the implementation of CSR structures and procedures within the business practices of the organization (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013). On the other hand, external CSR refers to the external image and reputation of the organization (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013; Brammer, Millington, & Rayton, 2007). Dawkins (2005) argued that communication regarding external CSR is essential for organizations to meet the stakeholder's expectations. In this regard, Morsing and Schultz (2006) identified three CSR communication strategies, which are stakeholder information strategy, stakeholder response strategy and stakeholder involvement strategy. The stakeholder information strategy is about a one-way communication path from the organization to its stakeholders (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). The aim of this strategy is literally to inform the stakeholders about their business activities. An organization uses this strategy is they are convinced that stakeholders are having a great influence on organizations either in a supporting or demonstrating way (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). The CSR focus lies within the top management of an organization. The second strategy, stakeholder response strategy, is a two way a-symmetric communication approach (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). In this case, the information flows from and to the public. The organizations want to engage with their stakeholders in order to make decisions and implement CSR activities. Stakeholders have to be reassured that the organization is socially responsible and act from the perspective that is morally right. The CSR activities are established by the top management, but the organizations also take the stakeholders opinion into account through polls, dialogues and networks (Morsing

& Schultz, 2006). Using this approach helps organizations to identify their relevant stakeholders and how their stakeholders that they are actively incorporate their CSR issues (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Finally, the stakeholder involvement strategy is about a two symmetric communication. The difference with the previous approach is that this one expects more an interactive dialogue with their stakeholder (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Morsing and Schultz (2006) argue that the CSR communication strategies enables organizations to have interactive dialogues about CSR issues and activities with their stakeholders. In this regard, organizations have to be aware that the incorporation of too much CSR communication could also lead to a more sceptical attitude among stakeholders, which threaten the organizational legitimacy (Cho et al., 2017; Colleoni, 2013; Coombs & Holladay, 2011; Etter, 2013).

So, organizations aim to comply with the stakeholders' expectations in order to secure their legitimacy in this globalized and complex world (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006; Richards & Schembera, 2019; Scherer et al., 2013). Institutionalized structures, procedures and personnel are of influence on the legitimacy experienced by stakeholders (Elsbach, 1994). Organizations deal with the expectations of stakeholders by the incorporation of legitimacy strategies (Cho et al., 2017). Three main strategies are identified, which are the so-called strategic manipulation, isomorphic adaptation and moral reasoning (Schembera & Scherer, 2017; Scherer et al., 2013). Firstly, strategic manipulation refers to ability of organizations to actively influence the expectations the social perceptions by manipulations tools such as advertising and lobbying (Oliver, 1991; Scherer et al., 2013). Strategic manipulation involves a public relation tool that organizations use to manipulate the perceptions of stakeholders (Oliver, 1991; Schembera & Scherer, 2017; Scherer et al., 2013). In this regard, Schembera and Scherer (2017) identified two approaches of strategic manipulation, namely decoupling and substantial influence. Decoupling means that the organizational practices are not or minimal changed in order to manipulate its environment (Schembera & Scherer, 2017). In contrast to substantial influence, in this case the organizational practices do change (Schembera & Scherer, 2017). Secondly, isomorphic adaptation, refers to similarities in behaviour of organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; O'Connell, Stephens, Betz, Shepard, & Hendry, 2005). This approach enables organizations to change and adapt their business practices in order to comply with the societal expectations (Deephouse, 1996; Scherer et al., 2013). Thirdly, moral reasoning enables organizations to have an open discourse with their stakeholders (Schembera & Scherer, 2017; Scherer et al., 2013). Their organizational aim is to find a common solution which benefits the well-being of society (Scherer et al., 2013). Moral legitimacy became increasingly important in the context of globalization (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006). Moral legitimacy derives from the

approach of moral reasoning through deliberative interactions with stakeholders to reach common solutions (Castelló et al., 2016; Scherer et al., 2013). In this regard, globalization resulted in limitations of the approaches as strategic manipulation and isomorphic adaptation (Castelló et al., 2016; Child & Rodrigues, 2011; Jones & Fleming, 2003; Scherer & Palazzo, 2011; Scherer et al., 2013). The availability of information all over the world might block the approach of manipulation, because people are able to discover the truth themselves (Scherer et al., 2013). Moreover, Scherer et al. (2013) argue that globalization leads to a heterogenous business environment, this makes it hard for organizations to adapt their behaviour to other organizations. Therefore, isomorphic adaptation became a weak approach to maintain legitimacy. In addition to these three main strategies of legitimacy management, a relatively new strategy to manage legitimacy is called the networked legitimacy strategy by (Castelló et al., 2016). This strategy is applicable for organizations who manage their legitimacy by using social media. The networked strategy has its foundation in a multinational pharmaceutical corporation. Castelló et al. (2016) argued that a decentralized approach is needed to gain legitimacy by the use of social media. In this regard, Castelló et al. (2016, p. 422) argued that "it requires a transition in the emphasis in moral reasoning strategies from those built on ideal speech situations and conditions of induced democratic deliberations to those founded on open access, mutual recognition, and dialogue". According to (Castelló et al., 2016), the strategies of strategic manipulation, isomorphic adaptation and moral reasoning are insufficient, if an organization used social media as a tool to gain legitimacy.

2.3 Organizational legitimacy within SMEs

In the context of globalization, SMEs have to deal with different challenges in a different way compared to MNCs. (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013; Cho et al., 2017; Schembera & Scherer, 2019). Schembera and Scherer (2019) acknowledged that the activities of SMEs are often not known by the wider public. Therefore, their activities are often not questioned or challenged by stakeholders (Schembera & Scherer, 2019). As a result, Schembera and Scherer (2019) argued that the legitimacy of SMEs perceived as taken-for-granted by their stakeholders. The study of Richards and Schembera (2019) concluded that SMEs have a culture that may not have a positive influence on the communication and problem solving aspects within the organization, due to a lack of institutional pressures, overconfidence and a lack of public attention. In comparison to MNCs, it also appears that SMEs respond differently to those different challenges (Schembera & Scherer, 2019). Schembera and Scherer (2019) stated that SMEs

mainly use states-quo rationalizations and the influence of institutional forces to help them to normalize corruption. Other typical characteristics of SMEs became clear as a result of the study of Baumann-Pauly et al. (2013). Their research studied the differences and similarities between MNCs and SMEs in the Swiss textile industry regarding their CSR strategies and activities. Their study indicated that SMEs have an informal approach in contrast to MNCs, which are known for their formal approach (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013; Russo & Tencati, 2009). Moreover, Baumann-Pauly et al. (2013) discovered that SMEs do have a very strong sense of identity. The organizational identity tend to be stronger in SMES due to the internal relations (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013). Their identity is strengthened, because SMEs are often known for a low hierarchical organizational structure, which allows personal interactions between management and employees (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013). The identity of SMEs in combination with their informal communication style positively affect the perception of stakeholders (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013). Moreover, the study of Russo and Tencati (2009) concluded that SMEs rarely describe their activities regarding to CSR. In addition, it appears that SMEs rather aim "to strengthen the relationships with their most important stakeholders and thereby focus their CSR communication on selected parties such as industry networks, rather than the general public" (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013, p. 701). This explains how it is possible that the activities of SMEs are not known with the wider public (Schembera & Scherer, 2019), which result in the taken-for-grandness of their organizational legitimacy (Schembera & Scherer, 2019).

2.4   The incorporation of social media in organizational activities

ICT is an increasingly used tool among large organizations to communicate about their CSR efforts of organizations (Etter, 2014). This online communication tool provides organizations to listen to their stakeholders and their sustainable issues (Floreddu et al., 2014). This influences the way the organizational field perceive organizations as legitimate (Cho et al., 2017; Colleoni, 2013; Coombs & Holladay, 2011; Etter, 2013). The affordances of the ICT are identified by Conole and Dyke (2004): First, the accessibility to gather a large amount of information. Second, the information on the internet is rapidly changing, which means that the information is very updated. Third, diversity of the ICT lead to a lot of different experiences, which have an informative effect on users. Next, communication and collaboration lead to engagement with other users, which lead to new forms of online communities. Moreover, ICT provides the possibility for reflection. By means of reflection the ICT can be improved. The ICT requires a multimodal and non-linear usage, which leads to individual learning routes for the ICT user.

Due to the speed of change, people have rising expectations with regard to immediacy. Finally, the affordance of immediacy is that the response time has been shortened as a consequence of introduction of the ICTs (Conole & Dyke, 2004). ICT enables organizations to communicate with their stakeholders by using social media (Aral, Dellarocas, & Godes, 2013). Dutot (2013, p. 55) defined social media as "the production, consumption and exchange of information across platforms for social interaction". Social media include platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest (Aral et al., 2013; Colleoni, 2013). These platforms of social media enable organizations to have an interaction with their stakeholders about sustainable challenges (Castelló et al., 2016). Organizations incorporate these interaction relationships with their stakeholders in order to be perceived as legitimate (Besiou, Hunter, & Van Wassenhove, 2013; Castelló et al., 2016; Etter, 2013; Floreddu et al., 2014). However, organizations need to be aware of the ability of social media to influence power relations and shifts in the complexity of arguments (Bennett, 2003; Castelló et al., 2016; Castells, 2007).

Aral et al. (2013) developed a framework, which is useful to guide research into social media. Aral et al. (2013) make a distinction between an intersection of activities and a level of analysis at which these activities can be studied. The intersection of activities describes four categories, namely design and features, strategy and tactics, management and organization, measurement and value (Aral et al., 2013). Firstly, design and features describe how organizations use specific features on the platforms of social media, and how these features enables organizations to achieve organizational goals (Aral et al., 2013). Second, strategy and tactics describe how organizations develop social media strategies in order to contribute to their goals (Aral et al., 2013). Management and organization refer to the way organizations manage their resources in order to interact via social media to meet their organizational goals. Finally, measurement and value describe how organizations create, measure and allocate value, which is generated by using social media (Aral et al., 2013). The level of analysis refers to the organizational perspective that analyses the social media usage (Aral et al., 2013).

2.5 Theoretical framework: managing legitimacy at SMEs through social media

This research explores how SMEs communicate about their CSR activities through social media in order to manage their legitimacy. The theoretical chapter described that the way stakeholders perceive the organizational activities are of influence on the legitimacy of SMEs. Stakeholders in the organizational field have certain expectations of SMEs. Thereby, stakeholders and their expectations find themselves in the globalized context of the institutional environment. As a

result, SMEs aim to comply with these expectations of stakeholder in order to manage and secure their legitimacy. Therefore, SMEs incorporated three strategies to manage their legitimacy. The legitimacy strategy influences how SMEs incorporated social media in their organizational activities. On the other hand, the way social media are incorporated in the organization might be of influence on the legitimacy strategy of the SME. The interaction between those two elements will influence the way how organizations communicate about their CSR activities. In this regard, CSR communication is of influence on the maintenance of the legitimacy of SMEs. The way legitimacy is managed by SMEs through their CSR communication on social media is represented in the following theoretical framework:
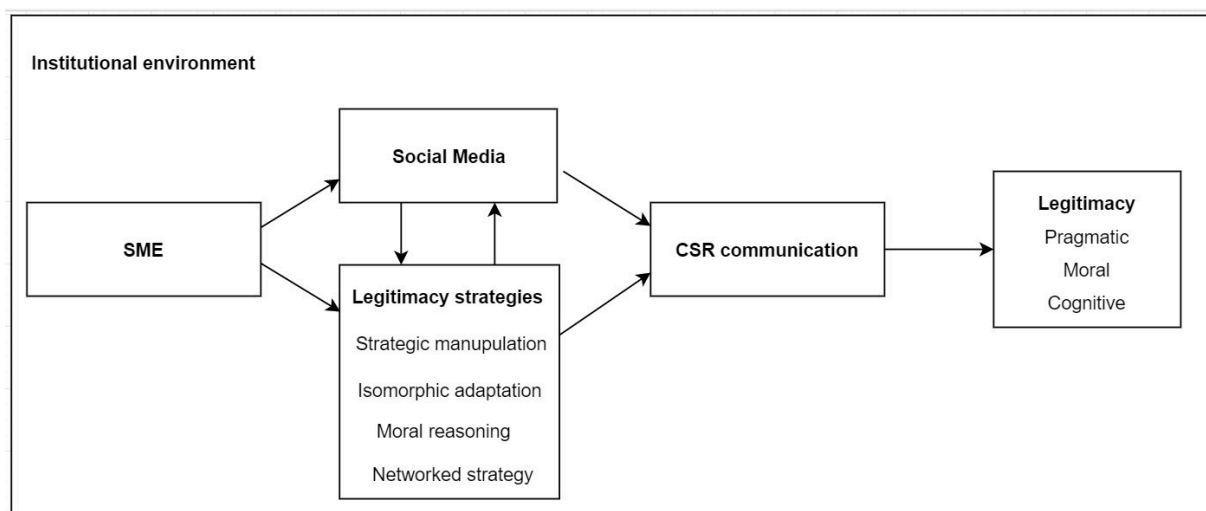

Figure 1 Theoretical framework

3   METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an elaboration of the methodological choices of this study. First of all, the research strategy will be described. Subsequently, the research context will be discussed. Thereafter, the process of data collection and data analysis will be discussed. Next, the operationalization of the theoretical concepts will be described. Finally, this chapter ends with an elaboration on the research ethics.

3.1   Research strategy

This research studied how SMEs in the food-producing industry communicate about their CSR activities through social media in order to manage their legitimacy. SMEs have their own perspective on how social media can be used. Based on different motivators, decisions are made by organizations regarding their social media strategy. In order to explore how and why SMEs use social media in order to communicate about their CSR activities, this study conducted a qualitative research. The qualitative approach enabled this research to understand and describe the perception of SMEs on how they use social media as a CSR communication tool. The understanding of different perspectives regarding CSR, social media and legitimacy is important in order to explain the social media usage of SMEs. In this regard, Suchman (1995) argued that the concept of legitimacy is socially constructed, which means that there is not one objective truth. Therefore, in order to explore these different perspectives, this research focused on multiple SMEs operating in the food-industry. According to Symon and Cassell (2012), qualitative research seems an appropriate research method for this research, because this method enabled this research to explain these changing societal perceptions of people and organizations (Myers, 2019; Symon & Cassell, 2012; Yin, 2014).

This qualitative study applied an abductive approach on how SMEs use social media in relation to their CSR communication and, thereby, manage their organizational legitimacy. This research conducted a multiple case study in combination with an abductive approach to develop explanations of the social media usage of SMEs, which derived from the collected data. These explanations were based on the confirmation of the theoretical background of this research and the development of new theories regarding CSR communication via social media in order to manage legitimacy (Bleijenbergh, 2015; van Hoek, Aronsson, Kovács, & Spens, 2005). According to Richardson and Kramer (2006), this approach fits this qualitative research based on the aim to develop useful explanations and new theoretical ideas (Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Locke, Golden-Biddle, & Feldman, 2008; Richardson & Kramer, 2006).

3.2   Research context

As stated before, this research focused on SMEs operating in the food-industry. According to the European Commission (2003), SMEs are defined as enterprises with a staff headcount of < 250, and a turnover of ≤ € 50 million or a balance sheet total of ≤ € 43 million. This research aimed to explore how CSR communication as part of the social media strategy of SMEs in the food-industry contributed to the organizational legitimacy. In order to increase the likelihood that SMEs incorporated CSR communication into their social media strategy, SMEs were approached that have sustainable and/or local activities incorporated in their core business.

This research has been conducted in the context of the food-industry, because this industry has to deal with changing expectations of stakeholders that might be of influence on the decision-making processes of SMEs. These rising expectations in the food-industry are focused on aspects regarding pollution, climate change, price and food quality (Boehlje, 1993; Elsbach, 1994; Maloni & Brown, 2006). Consumers are increasingly aware of the impact of the food-industry on the human-health (Chen et al., 2016; Trienekens & Zuurbier, 2008). This research focused on how these SMEs relate to these societal expectations, and the way they communicate about their CSR efforts in order to maintain their legitimacy and to stay viable (Scherer et al., 2013). According to Deblonde et al. (2007), the food-industry is a relevant research context as they are going through a revolution based on the changing perception of their stakeholders.

The following table provides an overview of the SMEs that were studied during this research. Due to privacy preferences, the names of the SMEs are anonymized.

Organization	Founded	Size	Description
Organization T	2019	1 employee	Consulting the food and retail industry based on sustainable and vegan aspects
Organization U	2013	10 – 20 employees	Growing and selling vegetables such as strawberries and asparagus
Organization V	2019	8 employees	A start-up enterprise focused on e-commerce. The start-up is part of an MNC that processes food products
Organization W	1938	75 employees	Processing vegetables and cultivation specialist

Organization X	2017	3 fulltime employees supported by several interns	Producing cellulose from miscanthus for several industries
Organization Y	2015	65 employees	Breeding insects to contribute to several purposes such as sports nutrition, bakery, meat alternatives
Organization Z	1980	150 employees at the Dutch headquarter	Sources organic food ingredients for the international food industry, carrying more than 150 products from over 60 origins

Table 1. Overview organizations

3.3 Data collection

This research used a triangulation of diverse methods, which means that several methods of data collection were combined in order to develop explanations on how SMEs use social media as a means of their CSR communication in order to maintain their organizational legitimacy. Therefore, this study combined the methods of document analyses and semi-structured interviews.

Documents

This research collected several documents of the participating organizations, if published, regarding their sustainability and annual reports. These documents provided insights into their organizational goals, the role of their stakeholders and vision towards their business practices and the future. Symon and Cassell (2012, p. 389) emphasized the importance of documents, because "documents are manifold and they are playing an important role in organizational life, providing details of policies, procedures plans such as investment appraisals and records of events such as minutes of meetings". Next to the documents of the organizations, this research collected and analysed external documents, such as newspaper articles, governmental letters, blog entries, social media messages, pictures and videos. This research collected these documents by using LexisNexis, which is an online database. The references that can be traced back to the respondents and/or the organizations, are not included in the reference list. The Radboud University received a separated document including the URL's of the social media messages and internal reports of the participating organizations. According to Bleijenbergh (2015), the use of documents have benefited this research, since it is a major source of

knowledge. In addition to the external documents, this research also used the sustainability reports of the MNC's operating in the food-industry and which were originally founded in the Netherlands. These MNC's were affiliated with the UN Global Compact, which is "an initiative to safeguard sustainable growth within the context of globalization by promoting a core set of universal values which are fundamental to meeting the socio-economic needs of the world's people" (Luetkenhorst, 2004, pp. 162-163). The analysis of the annual and sustainability reports of the MNCs led to new insights into the comparison between MNCs and SMEs within the food-industry. This research analysed 54 documents in total. The overview of these documents is provided to the supervisor.

Semi-structured interviews
The research conducted a total of seven semi-structured interviews, which means that there was one respondent from each organization (see table 2). The semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to have pre-formulated questions in order to understand how the organization manage legitimacy through social media. All interviews were based on the same interview format with pre-formulated questions, which can be found in Appendix II. However, it also provided the possibility to ask new or more questions based on the information derived from the interviews (Myers, 2019). This interactive part of this research, as a qualitative multiple case study, contributes to the understanding of how respondents think about CSR communication via social media (Dubois & Gadde, 2002; Halecker, 2015). According to Symon and Cassell (2012), conducting semi-structured interviews would support the development of new insights, which enables these research to explain the different perceptions of the respondents. In this regard, the researcher gathers information about how SMEs manage their legitimacy by using social media, while the interviewee is able to add relevant information. The spreading of the COVID-19 virus had a direct influence on the data collection of this research. Based on governmental measures, employees had to work from home and organizations had to adjust their daily business activities. As a consequence of the COVID-19 virus, organizations were not able to provide this research with multiple respondents, since they had to deal with the COVID-19 measurements. Therefore, this research spoke to one respondent of each of the seven organizations, which means that a total of seven interviews were conducted. Due to the measures of the COVID-19 virus, it was not possible to conduct the interviews in a physical way. Therefore, the interviews were conducted through phone calls, videocalls and two interviews filled out the interview guide in written form. As a result, the facial expressions and gestures of the respondents were hard to determine, which made it hard to determine if new

or more questions were needed regarding the answers of the respondents. Moreover, the interviews conducted by phone or videocall, were having a slow delay. According to the study of Iacono, Symonds, and Brown (2016), they described these experiences as the consequences of conducting interviews by using videocall systems such as Skype or Microsoft (MS) Teams. In addition, Iacono et al. (2016) argued that videocall interviews are not a contribution to the process of building trust between the respondent and interviewer. Both do not share the same room, which might lead to a loss of social contact (Iacono et al., 2016). During the interviews, the aspects mentioned by Iacono et al. (2016) were taken into account. Furthermore, the interviews conducted by phone or videocall were recorded in agreement with the respondents. Afterwards, the interviews were transcribed in order to code the gathered data. Each respondent received a copy of the transcript to check whether the transcripts were complete or whether any adjustments were needed. This so-called member checking contributed to the credibility of the research, as described by Symon and Cassell (2012).

Respondent	Function	Organization	Method
Respondent 1	Consultant and owner	Organization T	Videocall: Skype
Respondent 2	Owner	Organization U	Videocall: Skype
Respondent 3	E-commerce sourcing manager	Organization V	Videocall: Skype
Respondent 4	Operations manager	Organization W	Written form
Respondent 5	Chief Technical Officer	Organization X	Telephone
Respondent 6	Marketing coordinator	Organization Y	Written form
Respondent 7	Sourcing Development Manager	Organization Z	Videocall: MS Teams

Table 2. Overview respondents

3.4   Operationalization

The operationalization of the theoretical concepts of this research contributed to the measurement of these concepts, CSR communication, social media and legitimacy. The operationalization of the theoretical concepts formed the foundation for the interview format (Appendix II). The concepts were subdivided into several dimensions. Each dimension was operationalized into multiple indicators. These indicators led to several items, which were used in formulating the interview questions. The operationalization of the legitimacy concept is explained in order to illustrate the process this theoretical concept to its single items. Based on the theoretical chapter, the researcher interpreted several aspects which were of influence on or associated with the legitimacy of organizations. Based on this concept, the researcher

operationalized three dimensions, which are the institutional environment, forms of legitimacy and strategies to manage legitimacy. The first dimension, institutional environment, is of influence on the organizational legitimacy, as organizations operate in the context of an institutional environment. This dimension led to two indicators, external pressure and globalization. As a result of the institutional environment, organizations are confronted with possible external pressures. Also, the institutional environment as changed due to globalization. The consequences of globalization play a particular role in how organizations incorporated strategies to manage and secure the organizational legitimacy. These indicators resulted in two items, which were used in formulating the pre-formulating questions of the semi-structured interviews. Based on these items, the researcher was able how the institutional environment of influence was on the organizational legitimacy of SMEs. The following figure illustrates the operationalization of legitimacy in which the previous explanation is marked with a red line.
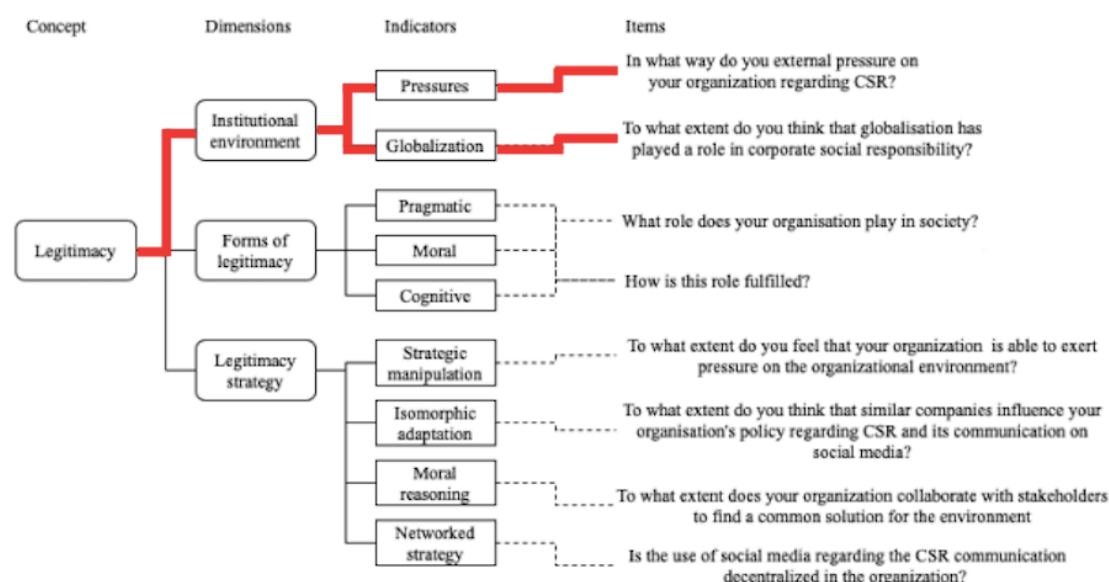

Figure 2. Exemplary operationalization scheme of the legitimacy concept

Figure 2 illustrates the three dimensions and their associated indicators resulting in several items. As for the other two concepts, CSR communication and social media, the same process happened, which are represented in Appendix I. Based on the theoretical background, the researcher was able to define the concept in terms of dimensions and indicators in a deductive way. In other words, the operationalization enabled the researcher to test the theoretical concepts deductively during the data collection in order to confirm or deny theoretical statements. The deductive approach of formulating the interview questions formed the basis for the further generation of inductive knowledge during the data analysis, which led to the development of new theories regarding CSR communication via social media to manage legitimacy.

3.5 Data Analysis

The abductive reasoning approach of this research supported the use of template analysis to analyse the collected data. The flexible character of template analysis in combination with context mapping enabled the researcher to develop inductive knowledge (Stappers, 2012; Symon & Cassell, 2012). The researcher applied context mapping to define priori-themes based on the collected data (Stappers, 2012). In this process, the researcher analysed the gathered data on relevant quotations. These quotations were formulated on a statement card (Appendix III). Each statement card contains one quotation and an explanation of the quotation in the researcher's own words, also known as paraphrasing (Stappers, 2012). Based on the interpretation of these cards, the researcher was able to discover a certain structure. This structure was explained to an independent person who had no prior knowledge of this research. Based on the received feedback, the researcher was able to define the following priori-themes: the market, other organizations, communication channels, social media, own organization, MNCs, CSR, external pressures. The linkages between these priori-themes were drawn on a flipchart to provide the researcher a visual overview as shown in Appendix III. According to Stappers (2012) the use of context mapping fits this research, because it provides an deeper understanding of the interpretation of the collected data. Based on the priori-themes, an initial templated was developed, which was the starting point for the researcher to code the gathered data. The researcher continuously evaluated the priori-themes and relevant codes by using the software system, Atlas-TI. The software program enabled the researcher to conduct an iterative process in which codes merged, recoded and deleted. The following explanation illustrates the iterative process of this research. An initial code which was defined as 'monitoring the customers reaction' merged with the code 'reputation management'. The researcher merged these codes, because the researcher interpreted that organizations monitor the customers reaction in order to maintain and secure their reputation and to not be involved with public scandals. Also, the analysis indicated that respondents experience a different amount of external pressure. The initial code 'limited external pressure' seemed inappropriate, because it suggests that the external pressure experienced by the respondents is limited. In contrast, data has shown that some respondents experienced an increased external pressure. Therefore, the initial code was recoded into 'the feeling of external pressure', which enabled the researcher to interpret the extent of experienced external pressure by SMEs. The final codes relate to several sub-themes which together resulted in four main categories, organizational characteristics, organizational field, CSR practices and social media as a communication tool. An overview of these sub-themes and categories is represented in the final template, which can be found in

Appendix IV. The final codes and related exemplary quotes from the interviews and documents are shown in the codebook, which can be found in Appendix V. The codebook showed no structure of strict hierarchical coding. This corresponds with the arguments of Symon and Cassell (2012) in which they stated that template analysis does not have a strict level of hierarchal codes. The flexibility of template analysis enabled the researcher to understand the socially constructed realities of the respondents regarding CSR communication via social media platforms to manage organizational legitimacy

3.6 Research criteria

Guba and Lincoln (1989) formulated criteria to assess the quality of qualitative research, which are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. This research incorporated the concept of member checking. In this regard, respondents receive the transcription of the interviews to check whether the interpretations of the researcher correspond with the perspective of the respondent (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The processes of member checking contributed to the credibility of this research, because it relates the constructed reality of the respondents to the interpretations of this research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Symon & Cassell, 2012). This research described the perception of the respondents in order to explain organizational behaviour of SMEs. This enabled the researcher to explain how SMEs use social media as a CSR communication tool, and thereby, manage the organizational legitimacy. In this regard, one might judge that the information provided by this research is applicable to a situation experienced by its own. According to (Symon & Cassell, 2012), this detailed description contributes to the transferability. The methodological explanations provided insights in how meaning within this research is constructed. This part is also explained by the operationalization of the theoretical concepts. Moreover, the spreading of the COVID-19 influenced the way interviews were conducted. The consequences of COVID-19 are described in the methodological section. This contributes to the dependability of this research, which aims to understand changes and shifts in constructions (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Finally, the quality of this research can be assessed by the criteria of confirmability. The process of how the collected data of this research has been narrowly described in the appendices. The codebook is the foundation of how this research interpreted the perspectives of the respondents. As a result, the codebook provides insights and evidence of how the findings of this research are constructed (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The codebook and additional documents of how the data were analysed, contributed to the understanding where the data came from, which is essential for meeting the criteria of confirmability (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

3.7   Research ethics

This research used several virtues in order to conduct this study as ethical as possible. Prior to the interviews, respondents were informed about the goal of this research and the way interviews would be conducted. This is an important aspect of this research, because respondents had to decide for themselves whether they were willing to participate on the basis of the provided information. In this regard, the respondents were informed that they have the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any time. Furthermore, the respondents received the transcription of the interviews, and were allowed at all times to adjust or eliminate their data. The privacy preferences of the respondents and organizations were respected, and therefore, respondents and organizations participating in this research are completely anonymous. The findings mentioned several social media messages of the participating organization. The limitations of providing information to the supervisor were discussed with the respondents and/or organizations. In addition, due to the privacy preferences, the URL's of the social media messages of the organizations were also only provided to the supervisor and the second examiner of the Radboud University. In order to secure data storage of this research, the collected data such as interview transcripts, internal and external documents and statement cards of the context mapping session, were safely storage in a personal cloud to which only researcher has access. The additional appendices with confidential references were only provided to the supervisor and second examiner. In addition, the role of the researcher can also be biased which might have influenced the interpretations and findings of this research. In order to comply with the ethical values, this research concludes with an elaborated reflexivity on to explain the role of the researcher. The form of 'research integrity' has been signed by the researcher to ensure integrity as valued by the Radboud University.

4   RESULTS

This chapter represents the findings of this research in order to explore how SMEs use social media to communicate about their CSR activities in order to manage the organizational legitimacy. In order to explain how SMEs manage their legitimacy through social media, quotations of the respondents are used. The quotations marked with * are translated into English. The results describe the characteristics of SMEs in the food industry in terms of structure and culture. Subsequently, the role of the organizational field of the particular organizations is discussed. The following paragraph relates to the CSR practices of the SMEs. Finally, this chapter discusses how SMEs use social media as an online communication tool.

4.1   Characteristics of the SMEs

During the collection of data, it became clear that the respondents of different SMEs shared similarities regarding organizational characteristics. Specifically, regarding their organizational structure and organizational culture. The deeper insight of these elements might help to create an understanding on how organizations came to certain decisions.

Structure

Paragraph 2.5 described that SMEs are known for a low hierarchical structure with an informal approach (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013; Russo & Tencati, 2009). All respondents confirmed this low hierarchical aspect within the organization. In this regard, a respondent stated: *"The communication is mainly informal, and employees have the freedom and space to develop themselves"* (Respondent 6)*. This quote indicates that employees within the organization are allowed to invest time and effort in their own development. The description of informality also refers to a cultural aspect and it shows a certain trust between the organization and their employees. This trust is also mentioned in the quote of another respondent: "*I think, within the start-up, there is an informal interaction with each other* [colleagues]. *Our project manager wants to give us more responsibility, and the lines are much shorter. As I am now trained by my project manager, he taught me to try a lot more and take a lot more risks in my work"* (Respondent 3)*. This quote shows that employees receive responsibility in their activities. Moreover, the short lines indicate that the amount of hierarchical levels is not so high, which characterizes the organizational structure. Since all respondents mentioned this low hierarchical level, this might be an indication that they attach value to such a structure within their organization. The awareness combined with the ambition for organizational growth and the

possible consequences for the organizational structure was also acknowledged by a respondent: *"And, of course, in that case* [the organization grows/expands] *you need a slightly different structure, but we want the free character of the organization, the development, the ability of thinking along and everyone to have his own added value, to remain largely secured"* (Respondent 5)*. This statement implies that organizational growth needs an adaption of the organizational structure. However, it also indicates the current values within the organization as freedom, development, participation and that every organizational member has its own value. Therefore, it seems that those values are of importance for the organizational identity.

Culture

The ambition of organizational growth and values derived from a certain vision of organizational members. This vision might be about how the organization look at their environment, other organizations and the future of their organization. A respondent stated: *"With regard to staff relations and crop protection, organic farming, Planet Proof cultivation, we are of course working on this. Such as opening up the company and operating a biogas installation to process residual flows from our customers"* (Respondent 4)*. Such a statement indicates the way that the organization not only thinks about its own business practices, but the organization seems also aware of its role within society. The description of the activities of the organization implies that its vision towards its environment is integrated in its business practices. The previous quotes related to structure indicated a feeling of how people in an organization cope with each other. A respondent had the following statement: *"We* [the organization] *just want to bring the farmer and the consumer closer together"* (Respondent 2)*. This quote implies the group-feeling within the organization. The fact that the respondent talks about 'we', implies that the organization as a whole has a strong feeling of being one team. The team works together on the same goal, which is related to close the gap between business and society. All respondents shared descriptions about their organization and what is seen as the 'normal' status-quo within the organization. A respondent stated in relation to the uniqueness of the organizational identity the following: *"It* [the organizational identity] *has to do with where your company came from and how it was founded"* (Respondent 1)*. This statement contributes to the realization that each and every organization differs. Moreover, it suggests that multiple factors are involved by the creation and development of the organizational identity. In addition, it also implies that the organization is dependent on its location, which might be of influence how stakeholders perceive the organization and thus its legitimacy.

4.2 Organizational field

The theoretical chapter described that organizations operate in the so-called organizational field. Several aspects of this field were mentioned regularly during the interviews. This paragraph provides insights in the perspectives that the respondents have related to the organizational field.

Institutional pressures

The previous quotes imply that organizations take their environment, other organizations and their future into account in order to reach a common goal. Organizations experience different challenges in the process of achieving their goal. A respondent stated: *"Some things* [organizational activities] *need to be verified independently. If that is the case, a certification will soon come around the corner. But yes, it is not the same as your own vision and mission about it* [organizational activities]*"* (Respondent 7)*. This statement indicates that the organization has to deal with formalizations such as certifications in order to stay legitimate, regardless what the organizational mission and vision might be. In addition, the presence of the government might both challenge and support the business practices of an organization. A governmental letter published on the website of Rijksoverheid (2016) described the following: *"Over the past year, we* [society] *have strengthened cooperation and dialogue with social parties. It is good to see that many parties and sectors are already working on the transition of the food system. One has been doing this for years, the other has taken more recent initiatives. Some focus on more transparency in the chain and a more direct link between producer and consumer, others on healthier food or more sustainable food"* (Document 21)*. This implies that the government values the transition of the food system which requires more transparency, smaller gap between producer and consumer, and more sustainable food from food producing organizations. The quote shows support of the government towards organizations that are adapting their business practices to benefit the transition. The quote also indicates an institutional pressure that organizations need to move towards a transition of the food system. This might result in similarities of organizational actions. The organizational field might create more challenges for organizations. The respondents were asked if they experienced external pressures on the business practices of their organization. A respondent indicated the following: *"Uh, not really a pressure"* (Respondent 5)*. This indicates that the organization is not facing the feeling of external pressures. In contrast, another respondent answered to the same question as follows: *"Mainly from customers"* (Respondent 7)*. This implies that customers do have the ability to exert a certain amount of pressure on the business practice. These statements show a

variance in the degree of perceived external pressure. The previous quotation indicated that organizations might experience the feeling of external pressure caused by their customers. The theoretical chapter mentioned a change of the stakeholder perspective. Organizations need to take these changes into account. A respondent stated the following about these perceptions: *"I think people are now becoming more aware of what they actually consume, what companies are doing and what kind of burden that has on the earth. And that this pressure will only increase in the coming years"* (Respondent 1)*. This quote implies that stakeholders attach more value to sustainability. Moreover, it suggests that stakeholders are increasingly aware of the effects that production processes have on the environment, which might result in an external pressure towards organizations to act in a sustainable way. The sector of the organization might have a strong influence on the perception of stakeholders. In this regard, a respondent stated the following: *"We* [the organization] *also see, we* [the organization] *are a specific sector, organic farming, and that customers expect more information from us* [the organization] *about sustainability than they* [the customers] *would expect from any non-organic company"* (Respondent 7)*. This indicates that customers might have certain expectations depending on the sector in which the organization operates. The quote implies that the perception of stakeholders and their expectations are influenced by the sector of the organization. In addition, the awareness implies that SMEs understand that, depending on their sector, they have to actively deal with the expectations of stakeholders in order to manage their legitimacy.

Adapting to the expectations of the organizational field

As stated, SMEs need to be aware of the expectations of the organizational field in order to adapt to these expectations. A respondent stated that: *"We* [the organization] *have a product which is a natural product, so, people already think that is fantastic"* (Respondent 2)*. This statement implies that stakeholders attach value to core products of organizations which were derived from nature. In addition, it suggests that the organization is trying to meet the expectations by offering a product that is valued by its stakeholders. In this regard, one stated: *"We* [the organization] *see a tendency for organic food, in particular, to go up. We have been going crazy the last few weeks too. We have a lot of demand for our raw materials. (…) That is also a consciousness aspect, I think, that people buy more organic food"* (Respondent 7)*. This quote implies that the organization is aware of the customers' needs. The awareness of the organization towards the expectations of customers suggests that the organization is able to anticipate on the customers' demand. These quotations imply that SMEs manage their legitimacy by complying with their stakeholders' expectations. Organizations also adapt to the

expectations of the organizational field by looking at the best practices of other organizations. A respondent stated: *"You* [the organization] *always keep your eyes open what others do. You are trying to learn something. We* [the organization] *do have a few companies that we follow very closely, and we also copy what is good. What is not good, what we do not stand for, we do not copy that... Yeah... that is the way it is"* (Respondent 2)*. This implies that the actions of other organizations might influence the activities of a particular organization. Nevertheless, the statement indicates that the adaption has to fit with the organizational identity. Furthermore, this quote implies that SMEs have similarities in their behaviour.

Influencing the expectations of the organizational field

The previous quotations provided insights in how SMEs relate to other organizations. Organizations influence others by their actions. A respondent has the following perspective: *"We* [the organization] *do have the strong impression that we have the most influence as a company on CO2 and living wages"* (Respondent 7)*. This quotation does not explicitly imply that the organization is aware that they do influence other organizations by their activities. This quote rather gives the impression that the organization is aware that they are able to influence sustainable activities such as reduction on CO2 and improve fair wages of their workers. In this regard, SMEs are more focused on their own core activities instead of influencing the expectations of stakeholders. The role of the size of a firm was mentioned by a respondent: *"As a small party, we* [the organization] *can go our way reasonably well, without being watched very closely* [by stakeholders]*, but when we are more established, you will of course get another sight on you"* (Respondent 5)*. This quotation implies that the legitimacy of SMEs is taken-for-granted and that this status changes as the organization expands. This statement shows that the activities executed as a small organization are not strictly monitored by the stakeholders of the organizational field. In addition, implies that organizational growth also entails an increased awareness among stakeholders regarding the organizational activities.

The role of deliberation within SMEs

Organizations make use of an informal network in order to meet stakeholder's expectations and achieve the organizational goals. A respondent described the following about informal channels: *"Mostly from my network. I* [the organization] *attend many events, networking events, fairs, gatherings, get-togethers and lunches where you meet people. I get a lot of information from my network"* (Respondent 1)*. This statement indicates the presence of an informal network. Furthermore, it seems to require a lot of physical time which might result in

collaboration requests with other organizations. This could positively affect the activities of an organization. The role of deliberation came up regularly in terms of meetings within organizations. Another respondent mentioned: *"Until now, we* [the organization] *have not felt any pressure from external organizations, but we do have regular meetings about what can and cannot be done in relation to CSR"* (Respondent 4)*. This quote implies that the organization has regular discussions about what to incorporate and what to not to incorporate. In addition, it suggests that contact with other direct parties is of importance for the organization to make decisions.

4.3 CSR practices

The previous paragraphs include quotes which slightly mentioned some parts of CSR. The quotes mentioned aspects such as sustainable food, CO2 and the awareness among stakeholders regarding the environment. This paragraph focusses on the organizational perspective towards CSR. Furthermore, it discusses the internal awareness about CSR within organizations and in what kind of way CSR has been incorporated in the SME.

Awareness

Organizations are able to create a positive contribution towards their product chain. Therefore, organizations should be aware of the life cycle of their product. By understanding the life cycle of their product, a respondent explained how his organization looked at its own product and the corresponding cycle: *"I really see that we* [the organization] *have understood our product from the beginning. It has to be business as usual, and not just be an add-in or a replacement. And what the effects* [of the product] *are on the life cycle, preferably a positive effect on the cycle. And... all right, that is also a point of survival, I think. A piece of existence"* (Respondent 5)*. This implies that it is important to understand the complete process of the product in order to survive as an organization by making a positive contribution to the product cycle. The internal awareness regarding CSR might be strengthened by the organizational members. A respondent stated: *"Since we have hired a QHSE employee, it has had more of our attention"* (Respondent 4)*. This quote implies that the presence of an employee with a particular function might create awareness among other employees regarding specific CSR issues. The internal organization contributes to the creating awareness for CSR-related issues. Another respondent indicated the following: *"I have the idea that CSR internally* [within the organization] *does have value"* (Respondent 3)*. This is similar to the we-feeling mentioned in paragraph 4.1. Moreover, the

quotation indicates that the internal organization values CSR. Therefore, the we-feeling within the organization might result in an increased value of CSR.

Incorporation

SMEs believe that doing the right thing is part of the reason why the organization exist. In this regard, a respondent stated the following: "*But you also have organizations that are saying (…). They* [other organizations] *say: "Our CEO is mother nature. No matter who our CEO is, we all live with Mother Earth, so we all have to do the right thing. Mother Earth determines if it is not good enough. If it damages the earth for example, then we will not introduce it". Well, in that case, you always act CSR-friendly. That's not like we're going to reduce our CO2. Then you may have made a 50% profit, but you still have a huge burden on the earth*" (Respondent 1)*. This quote implies that there is a distinction between 'being CSR', which are SMEs that believe that everyone has to do the right thing for the environment, and they integrated this mindset into their core activities. On the other hand, it implies that you have 'doing CSR', which refers to organizations that think of CSR as a side-activity, because their main goal is to make profit. This example of 'being CSR' has been described by another respondent: *"I believe that a number of CSR objectives are inherent to our* [organizational] *activities. Regarding developing processes, we try of course to do this as sustainable as possible. We also want to make our products as sustainable as possible and we develop products with the greatest sustainable impact. But that is not so much the result of our CSR policy"* (Respondent 5)*. This statement indicates that the organization acts in a sustainable and socially responsible way due to their own values and organizational vision. Their way of sustainable thinking seems not be influenced by the CSR policy. The vision of the organization regarding to CSR seems not be depending on other organizations. Another respondent stated: "*What we do regarding to these charities is purely self-initiative, it is just not copied. I think it mainly comes from who we are and what our perspective is about life*" (Respondent 2)*. This implies how the organizational identity influences the actions of the organization. As mentioned earlier, during the interviews, it seems that there are differences between 'being CSR' and 'doing CSR'. 'Doing CSR' implies that SMEs execute CSR activities, but they do not execute the activities which go beyond the interest of the organization: "*The main characteristic of traditional parties is making money. I'm absolutely not against making money, that's very important for companies in order to exist. But money shouldn't come at all costs. There is also a level that is about earning money and doing good. I think that the balance is often lost when you talk about companies that are 'doing CSR'. They* [other organizations] *do not necessarily think that CSR is the most important*

activity. (Respondent 1)*. This implies that some organizations do not understand the balance between making profit and the incorporation of CSR. Somehow, this statement indicates that those organizations do not understand the added value of CSR activities. However, it does not mean that organizations either 'are CSR' or 'do CSR'. Some organizations did not make a translation of CSR into their business practices. A respondent stated: *"We* [the organization] *are not very active with CSR, because CSR is a catch-all term and it is difficult for us to include this in the activities that we carry out"* (Respondent 4)*. This statement might create the feeling that there is a lack of understanding regarding the meaning of CSR. In this regard, it is hard to define to what extent SMEs implemented a CSR policy or to what extent they carry out CSR-activities. Respondents were asked to what extent they felt that their organization actively cope with CSR. A respondent made the following statement: *"Well, actually, we* [the organization] *are not so active or conscious about CSR at all"* (Respondent 5)*. This indicates that the organization does not explicitly incorporate CSR practices. However, CSR practices of an organization might be incorporated as a consequence of their core-activities, and not because it is the goal of the organization to 'do CSR'. The same respondent described his organization as follows: *"Yeah, an organic CSR organization maybe"* (Respondent 5)*. This quotation implies that the SME does execute CSR activities. Last two quotations from the same respondent may seem different from each other. However, they are an example of how the SME is not aware to what extent they are involved with the incorporation of CSR practices. Furthermore, it might indicate that 'being CSR' for an SME means that they have acquired CSR practices in their core-values. As a result, the respondent might not experience the feeling of an active CSR policy. The lack of an active CSR policy was mentioned by multiple respondents. One of the respondents stated the following in this regard: *"We* [the organization] *really do things that are beyond what the market would expect of us"* (Respondent 7)*. This again is similar to the quotation before. This quote implies that the organization unconsciously incorporated CSR and did not explicitly made a policy on their activities of CSR. Moreover, the extent of the incorporation of CSR practices within organizations is dependent on several factors. SMEs are not able to control all aspects that influences sustainable possibilities. A respondent indicated: *"You are bound to shareholders who look only at money"* (Respondent 1)*. This implies that if an organization wants to implement particular CSR practices that the organization is dependent on their shareholders who might have other priorities. There is also some kind of financial dependence. SMEs need to make profit in order to survive. A respondent mentioned the following about sustainable products: *"It* [CSR activities] *always must be paid. We* [the organization] *have to invest in the system regarding the measurement and the communication.*

*And certainly, if we have to adjust certain things in practice in order to match our objectives.
Then there are costs involved. And, after all, it is always a question whether customers are
willing to pay for it"* (Respondent 7)*. This explanation implies that the willingness of
customers is important to measure for organizations. In addition, it might contribute to the
decision of SMEs to consider and/or incorporate sustainable practices. SMEs are also dependent
of availability. In this regard, a respondent explained the following: *"You* [as an organization]
*may be able to find a more sustainable option, but this option must also be available for your
products"* (Respondent 1)*. This implies that even if the SME wants to move to a more
sustainable possibility, it might not be possible if the possibility is not available for the products.

4.4   Social media as a communication tool

This paragraph shares the findings of this research on why organizations use social media and
how they use social media as a means to communicate about their CSR activities.

Growing importance

Social media integrating in the business environment has enormous consequences regarding the
organizational field. Not only the perspective of stakeholders has been changed, the role of
stakeholders changed as well. CBW Mitex Magazine (2010) published the following about this
change: *"According to Bakas* [trendwatcher interviewed by CBW Mitex Magazine] *the first
signs of the unstoppable advance of social media are already visible: customers compare
products, want to negotiate and increasingly make purchases via the internet. With the help of
social media, customers can organise themselves, take joint action and make purchases. So,
the consumer gets more power" (*Document 23)*. This published statement implies that the
customers gained more power by using social media. Moreover, it implies that organizations
have to listen to the customer demands. This statement may give the impression that the
increased power of stakeholders, who are using social media, might not be beneficial for
organizations. In this regard, all the respondents of the interviews indicated an increased use of
social media within their organization. A respondent stated the following about their social
media usage: *"We* [the organization] *have always been quite active* [on social media]*, but this
year we use it* [social media] *more than the past years. Also, on multiple platforms of social
media. Now we are on LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram... so more platforms"* (Respondent
2)*. This quote implies that the organization is still growing on social media even though the
organization has been active on social media for the past years. Since all respondents gave the

answer of actively using multiple platforms of social media, this might be an indication that social media is an important and frequently used tool for SMEs. A respondent stated: "*Well, I guess it* [social media] *is has become an indispensable advertising tool. You* [as an organization] *have no choice other than to make use of it* [social media]*"* (Respondent 5)*. The perspective of the respondent implies that the developments in social media encourage SMEs to make use of them. Moreover, it implies that organizations are increasingly expected to use social media, which might be of influence on why SMEs incorporated social media in their organizational activities. Moreover, it gives the impression that social media are an important tool for SMEs to reach their customers.

Network

The previous quote gave the impression that social media is used by organizations to reach their customers. This part of the paragraph elaborates on the reasons derived from the statements of the respondents to make use of social media within their organization. Social media can be used by organizations because they want to build or join a certain network or community. A strong community contributes to the perception of the organizational field to determine the behaviour of the organization as legitimate. A respondent stated: *"In the end, people* [consumers] *have built quite a connection with our company, and I think that is mainly because of our online presence. Because they* [consumers] *have a certain image of us* [the organization]. *That image is especially strengthened when they* [consumers] *physically visit us* [the organization]. *But it* [the image of the organization] *is also strengthened by our communication via Facebook. I think these elements reinforce each other. That is our reason for using social media, improving our identity and expanding our customer base"* (Respondent 2)*. This quotation implies that the organization builds some kind of network with its customers through social media. This network influences the awareness of the organizational identity. This statement indicates that social media are important for SMEs to build and strengthen their organizational identity. In addition, by managing the organizational identity, the SME exert influence on the preservation of their legitimacy. The respondents indicated that social media is used *to launch applications* (Respondent 4)*, *to share the activities that they do as an organization* (Respondent 4; Respondent 5)*, *to inform* (Respondent 5), to *enthuse people* (Respondent 5) and *to increase exposure* (Respondent 5). This implies that social media can be used in very different ways and to different purposes within organizations. Moreover, each reason given by the SMEs support and maintain their legitimacy, because it suggests that those actions on social media contributes to the image of the SME. In addition, social media are used by SMEs to communicate about

their business practices. One of the participating SMEs shared the following message on social media:

Update White Asparagus

The preparations for the asparagus harvest have also started again. For the coming weeks, a lot of work must be done in the greenhouse. Yesterday we started pouring a small layer of strawberry compost into the bins. Then water and cover the trays with black foil.

After this, we have to wait and see when the first ones [asparagus] rises above the ground again. From the end of March, we [organization] expect to harvest delicious North Holland white asparagus again!

 #asparagus #northholland #firstasparagus #sale #localforlocal*

Social media post 1. Organization U (Document 54)

This message on social media published by organization U indicates that the SME involves their social media users with their organizational activities. By sharing the activities carried out by the SME, they create awareness among their stakeholders, which influences their legitimacy. A respondent stated that they are able to reach a large audience by using social media: *"Also cheap* [social media usage]*, and it* [social media] *is much easier to reach a large audience. We* [organization] *now have almost 15,000 followers on LinkedIn"* (Respondent 7)*. This seems to correspond with scholars who stated that social media are an easy tool to reach a lot of people as mentioned by paragraph 2.4 The wide reach of social media expands the network of the SME. In addition, the network has an effect on the activities of an organization. A respondent stated the following: *"I get a lot of requests from LinkedIn. Actually, I don't do acquisition myself. I act a lot from LinkedIn. So, I know people, I see something, or people see me, so that certainly comes from posting and being active on LinkedIn"* (Respondent 1)*. This quote implies that actively using social media positively effects the acquisition of organizations, which contributes to why SMEs use social media. Organizations involve their stakeholders to be present on events in order to expand their community. Another SME of this research shared the following message on social media

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Looking forward to next week's event where entrepreneurs, investors and corporations from all over the world will come together to talk about our future of food. Three days full of inspiration, information and tastings. Exciting to be part of it by hosting a vegan food tour in Amsterdam.

 #vegan #plantbased #alternativeprotein #alternativedairy #amsterdam

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Social media post 2. Organization T (Document 46)

This message on social media implies that Organization T improve the awareness of stakeholders by involve them in food-related events. This illustrates how ocial media are used by organizations to expand their network and connect with their stakeholders.

Reputation management

The previous part implied that the organizational identity receives awareness through the use of social media. How can this be seen from an organizational perspective? Organizations use social media in order to manage their image in the organizational field. A respondent stated: *"Our marketing strategy is still under development. We* [the organization] *occasionally post news about our products or the insect business in general. But we have the intention to be present on social media on a daily basis. This will be deployed in a very short term as the visibility of our company is enormously important"* (Respondent 6)*. This quote implies that the organization interpret social media as an important tool to create visibility of their business practices among their stakeholders. This is related to legitimacy management, since the visibility of an organization influences the way stakeholders perceive the organizational behaviour. The network that the organization has built through social media influences the visibility of the organization. Another respondent stated: *"On social media, there is a lot of appreciation for online messages and those messages are shared by others, which gives you* [the organization] *more visibility and that is good for your company"* (Respondent 1)*. This quote implies that messages through social media benefits the organization, because it influences the visibility of the organization. As mentioned before, the position of customer has changed due to the rising presence of social media. Organizations have to cope with the increased power of customers. Paragraph 2.4 mentioned that social media is an interactive tool, which can be used in a two-way. The power of customers allows them to compare products and negotiate. However, organizations in turn monitor the reaction of customers in order to maintain and further improve the reputation of the organization. This influences their legitimacy. In this regard, a respondent stated: "*The reactions of people are being monitored. So, suppose people start talking about something that would affect the product in a negative way. Then I am sure the organization acts on it* [the reactions of social media users] *right away"* (Respondent 3)*. This implies that the organization knows the opinions of its customers regarding their products and immediately respond to negative reactions of customers to ensure that the organizational image is not damaged. SMEs that actively monitor their customer reaction, aim to secure its reputation. This suggests that SMEs use social media to maintain their legitimacy.

CSR communication

Respondents mentioned that they share the activities of the organization on social media. Moreover, organizations do not only share their own activities, but might also share their knowledge about trends and events of their industry. In this regard, a respondent indicated the following: *"You do this* [sharing social media messages] *on the one hand by sharing your knowledge and on the other hand by indicating what your organization is doing in this regard. And on the other hand, show what is going on in the market. As an organization, we know what is happening"* (Respondent 1). This quotation indicates that the organization shares knowledge about its organization and the industry. Moreover, it implies that the organization aims to expand its network by making social media users aware of the knowledge that the organization have about its business practices and industry. The knowledge of SMEs suggests that their actions are desirable according to the norms and values of society. Therefore, sharing their knowledge contributes to the secure and maintain the legitimacy of SMEs. A social media message by organization Y mentioned the following:

#Developments in the food industry in the times of #COVID19: the importance of investing in Agri-foodtech #innovations. Read more in the #article

#foodindustry #newtechnologies #insects #robotics #futurefood #partnerships #startups

Social media post 3. Organization Y (Document 40)

This message implies that the organization is up to date on the latest development in the industry, which motivates stakeholders to stay connected with the organization. However, it might not be clear yet to what extent SMEs also share its activities regarding CSR. In this regard, all respondents indicated that they do not communicate about their CSR activities on social media. A respondent stated the following as reaction on the question to what extent the organizations communicates about their CSR policy or activities through social media: *"Very minimal, the activities regarding CSR are carried out by our organization, but these activities are not specifically mentioned as CSR activities"* (Respondent 4). This implies that SMEs deal with CSR-related issues, and that CSR-related activities are integrated as a part of their business practices. Since all respondents indicated that they do not communicate about their CSR activities on social media, this indicates that the respondents do not see any added value in CSR communication. However, the social media platforms of the participating SMEs give the impression that the organizations value sustainability. The following social media messages stated:

> A significant step to increase sustainability in the food industry and help regulate the employment of insects as food and feed was made today: The Farm to Fork strategy, important part of the European Green deal, has been released!

Social media post 4. Organization Y (Document 44)

This message implies that the SME does value sustainability, and they share their vision on sustainability within their industry with their stakeholders. In addition, another SME also post its CSR efforts. A statement on social media described the following:

> It is a company policy NOT to provide our employees with a company car to commute in The Netherlands. By using the train as a main method of commute to work. In 2019 we saved 27 tons CO2.
>
> #Sustainability is at the heart of our business. #Organic

Social media post 5. Organization Z (Document 49)

This statement on social media of organization Z implies that the organization is aware of how their business practices can affect the environment. This quote indicates that the SME acts in a sustainable way. This statement implies that the SME communicates about its CSR efforts on social media. However, the respondent indicated that it is not the intention of the SME to have this mentioned as CSR communication. The respondents were asked to what extent they consider communication about CSR to be important or the perception of stakeholders. A respondent stated the following: *"Very important, as sustainability is a central issue in our society. Our organization has a fantastic proposition namely, to feed the world without consuming the earth and it is important that stakeholders know what we* [the organization] *stand for"* (Respondent 6)*. This indicates that the organization understands the added value of CSR and its effect on the perception of stakeholders. Besides understanding the value of CSR, one might also be aware of the consequences of social media regarding CSR related issues. A respondent stated: *"For example, child labour is a cacao thing. In order to stay ahead of that whole discussion, we* [the organization] *set up a Child Protection Program within our cocoa project, and we had a major study carried out into whether it* [child labour] *is present in this specified area. And if so, what the causes are and what can be done against it. In fact, even before a discussion derives or before we get a question from a customer about it, we have already made sure that we have addressed that point"* (Respondent 7)*. This quote implies that the organization is aware that social media can be a source of discussions and scandals. Therefore, the organization covered the whole story before any scandal arose. In addition, it indicates the SME influences the perception of its stakeholders as a strategy to manage and secure its legitimacy.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This final chapter starts with a short summary of the main findings during research. Followed by the discussion, which reflects on the research question by providing insights into theoretical and practical implications. Subsequently, the limitations of this research are discussed. This paragraph is followed by recommendations for further research. Finally, the chapter concludes with a reflexivity about the role of the researcher.

5.1 Main findings

This research aims to explore how and why small- and medium sized enterprises operating in the food-industry use social media to communicate about their CSR activities in order to manage the organizational legitimacy. Therefore, the following research question has been formulated: *How do small and medium enterprises in the food-industry use social media as an CSR communication tool to manage their legitimacy?*

This research shows that the participating SMEs that are active in the food-industry, do not intentionally communicate their CSR activities through social media. The CSR efforts of SMEs are not integrated as part of their social media communication strategy. In addition, using social media as a CSR communication tool is not related to an integrated CSR policy of SMEs. Therefore, SMEs operating in the food-industry are not consciously using social media as a CSR communication tool to manage their legitimacy. The organizational structure influences the decision of SMEs not to include CSR communication in their social media strategy. Their structures are perceived as informal, decentralized and SMEs have incorporated a low hierarchical approach. These characteristics of the organizational structure enable SMEs to discuss their CSR efforts with relevant stakeholders by meetings and informal conversations. Since CSR issues have already been discussed with their most relevant stakeholders, SMEs see no need to communicate their CSR efforts through social media.

Therefore, SMEs do not explicitly integrated CSR communication as part of their social media strategy. The CSR communication of SMEs has been intertwined with the communication on social media about their core activities and vision. The participating SMEs of this research all had a particular vision, which focusses on doing the right thing for society. The activities carried out by SMEs are based on values such as sustainability, environment and awareness of the consequences for future generations, which were derived from the organizational vision. As a result, the communication on social media about the organizational activities of SMEs include

values that are related to CSR. However, SMEs face rising pressures regarding their social media usage in general. They have the feeling that they have to use social media, because social media usage is in line with the norms and values of society. This explains the increased incorporation of social media in the organizational activities of SMEs. Social media are used by SMEs to strengthen their organizational identity, visibility, online community and expand the customer base. In order to strengthen their visibility, SMEs share their knowledge about their product and information about the activities that they carried out. Their knowledge and information are shared through online messages on multiple social media platforms to reach a large range of stakeholders. By reaching a large range of stakeholders, SMEs create awareness among stakeholders about their organizational activities. Therefore, by using social media, SMEs are able to manage their organizational legitimacy. However, the visibility increases the risk of being exposed to scandals. Therefore, SMEs need to manage their legitimacy consciously in order to not be negatively affected by their social media usage. SMEs consciously manage their legitimacy by monitoring the reactions of their stakeholders on social media. This gives SMEs an impression of how stakeholders feel about their organization and its activities. In addition, social media also enable SMEs to interact with their stakeholder in order to secure the organizational reputation. SMEs communicate through social media to manage expectations regarding their identity and reputation. As a result, SMEs maintain their legitimacy by communicating adequately about these aspects. However, the external pressures are not experienced as a threat by SMEs, because SMEs are able to realize their own vision without being watched very closely by stakeholders. SMEs often gained goodwill by its stakeholders and are able to have direct contact with parties in order to discuss issues. Therefore, SMEs might not see the urge to manage their legitimacy consciously through social media. To conclude, the online communication of SMEs give the impression that SMEs act as sustainable organization. In this way, the unintended CSR communication influenced the organizational legitimacy of the SMEs. Therefore, SMEs unconsciously use social media as a CSR communication tool to manage their legitimacy. However, the use of social media as a CSR communication tool seems to be dependent of the core activities of SMEs.

5.2   Theoretical implications

This research contributes to institutional theory by providing insight into the role of SMEs and how they manage organizational legitimacy (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013; Schembera & Scherer, 2019; Wickert, 2016). In this regard, this research explains the increased external pressure perceived by SMEs operating in the food-industry (Jenkins, 2004; Lee et al., 2016),

and how these SMEs comply with expectations of the organizational field (Colleoni, 2013; Dawkins, 2005). External pressures increased the awareness of SMEs of the influence that their production processes have on the environment. SMEs adapt to these external pressures by monitoring their business practices, as described also by the findings of Campbell (2006). Another factor that influences the business practices are the expectations of the organizational field. SMEs adapt their business practices to the expectations of the organizational field by producing sustainable products in a sustainable way. These findings show the awareness among SMEs to act in a socially and responsible way. Moreover, SMEs are aware of the best practices of similar organizations, which enables SMEs to examine these activities in order to decide if these activities should also be incorporated in their organization. These findings relate to isomorphic adaptation as strategy to manage legitimacy, which is described as the adaptation of organizational practices to societal expectations (Deephouse, 1996; Scherer et al., 2013).

This research explains how social media are incorporated into the business practices of SMEs, which allows SMEs to communicate about their CSR activities in order to secure their legitimacy. SMEs incorporated social media to communicate about organizational activities. However, SMEs do not intend to use social media as CSR communication tool. These findings contribute to theories based on how social media is used by organizations to manage their legitimacy (Castelló et al., 2016; Cho et al., 2017; Colleoni, 2013).

Moreover, the research corresponds with the results of the study of Baumann-Pauly et al. (2013), since the findings conclude that the organizational structure of SMEs are perceived as informal and decentralized. These organizational characteristics enables SMEs to deliberate with relevant stakeholders about CSR issues. This corresponds with Palazzo and Scherer (2006), who stated that moral reasoning as a legitimacy strategy is increasingly used as a result of globalization. Therefore, SMEs do not see the need to communicate their CSR activities with the wider public, which is in line with the study of Russo and Tencati (2009). This research also confirmed the findings of Schembera and Scherer (2019), who acknowledged that activities of SMEs are often not known by the wider public.

Since SMEs do not intend to communicate about their CSR activities via social media, this study is not able to contribute to the theory of the networked legitimacy strategy of Castelló et al. (2016). However, the decentralized structure of SMEs implies that the networked strategy would fit the way SMEs use social media for other business purposes than CSR communication.

5.3   Practical implications

This research provided insights how SMEs, which are operating in the food-industry, use social media as a CSR communication tool. These findings contributed to the understanding how SMEs manage organizational legitimacy by social media. This resulted in practical considerations for managing legitimacy through the use of social media at SMEs.

This research argues that the potential of social media is not fully used by SMEs. Especially, CSR communication could receive more attention. This would influence the perception of stakeholders in the organizational field of the SMEs. SMEs aim to maintain their decentralized and informal character. However, it is important that the CSR issues are not only discussed with relevant stakeholders through meetings or informal conversation. The integration of CSR communication as part of the social media strategies will result in SMEs incorporating the stakeholder response strategy of Morsing and Schultz (2006). The stakeholder response strategy on social media platforms supports SMEs to listen to their stakeholders (Floreddu et al., 2014; Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Therefore, this strategy enables SMEs to develop their CSR policy, and at the same time SMEs can take the information that is received from stakeholders into account. Moreover, the incorporation of this strategy will help SMEs to monitor the perception and opinion of their stakeholders on CSR issues using their social media platforms. This provides SMEs the opportunity to gain insights in the expectations of stakeholders, and to actively adapt to those expectations. The findings show that SMEs incorporated isomorphic adaptation to manage their legitimacy by using social media. However, the stakeholder response strategy also allows SMEs to incorporate gain and maintain organizational legitimacy based on moral reasoning. According to scholars, this will strengthen the engagement between the stakeholders and organizations (Coombs & Holladay, 2011; Floreddu et al., 2014). Furthermore, scholars argued that this contributes to the organizational legitimacy. (Scherer et al., 2013).In addition, this study acknowledged the findings of Schembera and Scherer (2019), that activities of SMEs are often not known by the general public. However, this research identified consumers criticism expressed by social media as an external pressure experienced by SMEs. This might change the perception of stakeholders on the legitimacy of SMEs. This criticism might be caused by the increased visibility of SMEs by using social media. Their visibility creates more awareness of the organizational actions, which might be beneficial for their online community and strengthen the organizational identity. However, visibility also expose the organization to critical reactions of consumers, which leads to an increased external pressure. In this regard, the practical implication considers that SMEs must continuously monitor whether their use of social media fits within the frameworks of society.

5.4 Limitations and directions for further research

This research studied how SMEs use social media as an CSR communication tool in order to manage their legitimacy. In this regard, this study contains several limitations that need to be elaborated. These limitations can be seen as the foundation for directions of further research.

Firstly, this research focusses on how organizations respond to expectations of the organizational field regarding CSR, and how this influenced their legitimacy management. As a result, this research was built around the perspective of organizations. Therefore, the perception of stakeholders, who are using social media, are not included. This is a limitation, because stakeholders might interpret the social media usage of organizations in a different way than the organization intended to communicate. In this regard, further research is advised to focus on the perception of stakeholders of SMEs, who are active users of social media.

The second limitation is also associated with this organizational perspective of this research. All respondents are directly involved in the implementation of social media activities within their organization. This research did not include the perspectives of other employees who are not involved in the social media activities of the organization. As a result, the perspective of the respondents might be biased, since they are all directly involved in the social media activities. Therefore, their intention of the social media usage can be well explained by these respondents. However, how other organizational members perceive the social media activities of the organization remains unclear. Further research to explore how these organizational members perceive CSR communication might be interesting. In addition, further research might indicate how the internal organization perceive the image of the organization that is emitted via social media.

The third limitation has to do with the core business of the participating SME of this research. The SMEs of this research value sustainability, since they produce either sustainable products or produce in a local environment. Therefore, this research has no insights into organizations which are less aware about their influence on the environment as a result of their business practices. Further research is advised to focus on SMEs that are operating in the food-industry, but who have not included sustainability as one of their core pillars. This provides insights how ´not-sustainable' SMEs deal with CSR communication by using social media.

The fourth limitation relates to the focus of this research. This research investigated how SMEs use social media as a means of CSR communication. Therefore, further research might focus on how social media are used by SMEs in general. This might result in a longitudinal study of SMEs' behaviour with regard to the use of social media in SMEs. This can generate other insights into SMEs' perceptions of social media and the interaction with their stakeholders.

Finally, the last limitations refer to the exceptional circumstances of COVID-19 in which this research was conducted. As a result of COVID-19 it was difficult to find respondents who were willing to participate in this research. The research proposal of this study included four organizations with multiple respondents. Two of the four organizations were no longer able to participate because of COVID-19. Each of the two remaining organizations were able to allow only one respondent to participate in the study. The acquisition to new respondents led to a delay in the data collection. Due to COVID-19, employees of organizations had to work at home, which made it harder to get in touch with potential respondents. Moreover, organizations had to face new priorities such as redesigning their daily business activities. Therefore, there was a lack of willingness among organizations to participate in this research. The presence of COVID-19 resulted in fewer respondents than initially indicated, which influenced the transferability of this research.

5.5   Role as researcher

This paragraph provides a reflexivity, which focusses on my role as a researcher. As a researcher I have certain assumptions and experiences that might have influenced the process of this research. The motivation for undertaking this research was that I had little knowledge on how SMEs value the use of social media. As a social media user, I was curious how SMEs involve the subject of sustainability in their communication. Before I started the Master Organizational Design and Development at Radboud University Nijmegen, I worked at two different companies. One of them was a SME and the other one was an MNC. The main difference that I noticed by working at these two different companies was the bureaucratic character of the MNC and the informal approach of the SME. Especially, at the SME I have learned that this informal approach strengthened the solidarity within the organization. I noticed that SMEs are especially powerful because they really love their product, and they have a really strong vision on how their product contributes to next generations. At the MNC, I experienced this feeling far less, because they were more focused on complying to rules and the environment. The research might be influenced by my assumption as a researcher that SMEs would attach less value to social media, because I believe that SMEs live for their product and therefore want to pay full attention to their core activities. Furthermore, as a person, I attach great importance to the environment. Therefore, I value how organizations deal with their impact on the environment and the earth. As a result, my character might have influenced the coding and concluding processes of this research, because I value the elements that focus on

the environment. Also, I struggled to maintain my role as a researcher during the interviews. As a consequence of COVID-19, the interviews were conducted by phone or video call. Not one of the interviews were conducted in a physical form. As a researcher, I had only conducted interviews in physical form. Therefore, I had no experience with interviews by phone or video call. During the conduct of the interviews, I noticed that it was hard to see the physical gestures of respondents. Also, the internet connection was not optimal, which sometimes caused a delay during the video calls. Therefore, it was hard for me as a researcher to indicate if someone finished his argument or that it could be continued by asking further questions. This might have influenced the gathered data during the interviews which also might have affected the findings of this research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Operationalization

CSR communication.

The concept of CSR communication is divided into three elements. These elements were mentioned in the theoretical chapter, and it indicates how organizations are able to incorporate a particular strategy that influences their CSR Communications. These strategies have certain characteristics. These characteristics formed the foundations for the items, which are related to the interview questions.
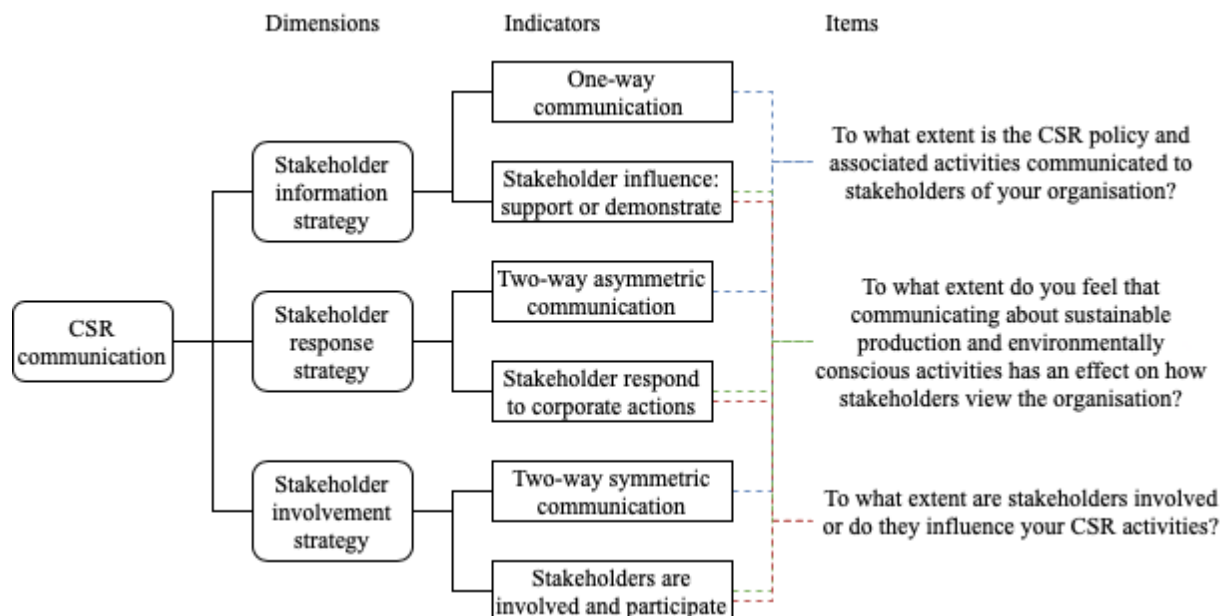

Figure 3. Operationalization scheme of CSR communication

Social media

The concept of social media contains one dimension. The other dimension, level of analysis, is about if you look at social media from an customer, organizational or institutional perspective (Aral et al., 2013). This is not included in the operationalization, since this research only takes the organizational perspective into account. The dimension refers to several indicators which provides insights into the use of social media. The interview questions were based on these indicators.
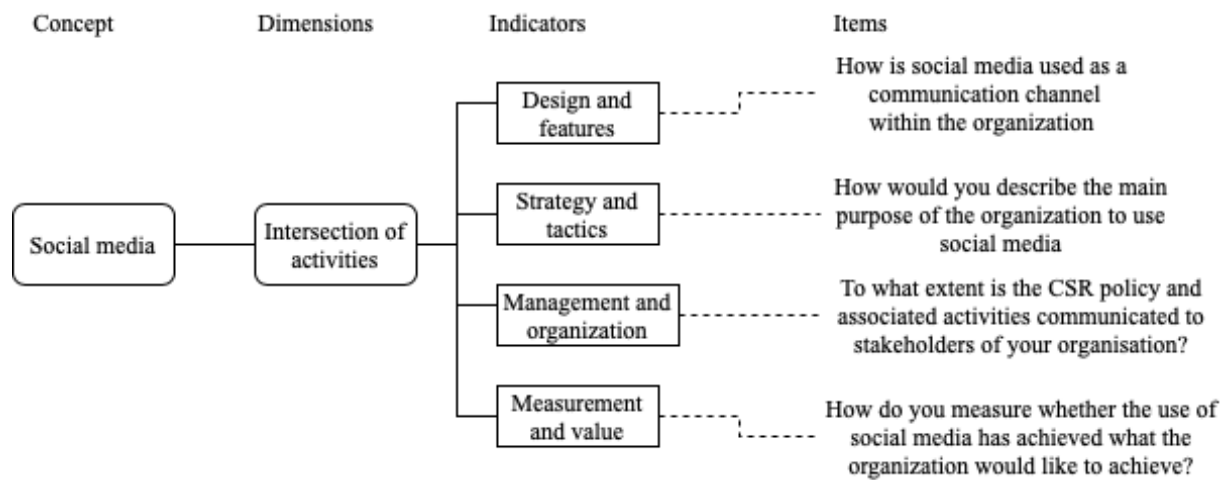
Figure 4. Operationalization scheme of Social media

Legitimacy

The theoretical chapter mentioned different aspects of legitimacy. Therefore, the operationalization included the institutional environment (in which organizations are located), forms of legitimacy, and which strategy is used by organizations. These dimensions resulted in several indicators, which led to concrete questions regarding how organizations manage legitimacy despite its challenges.
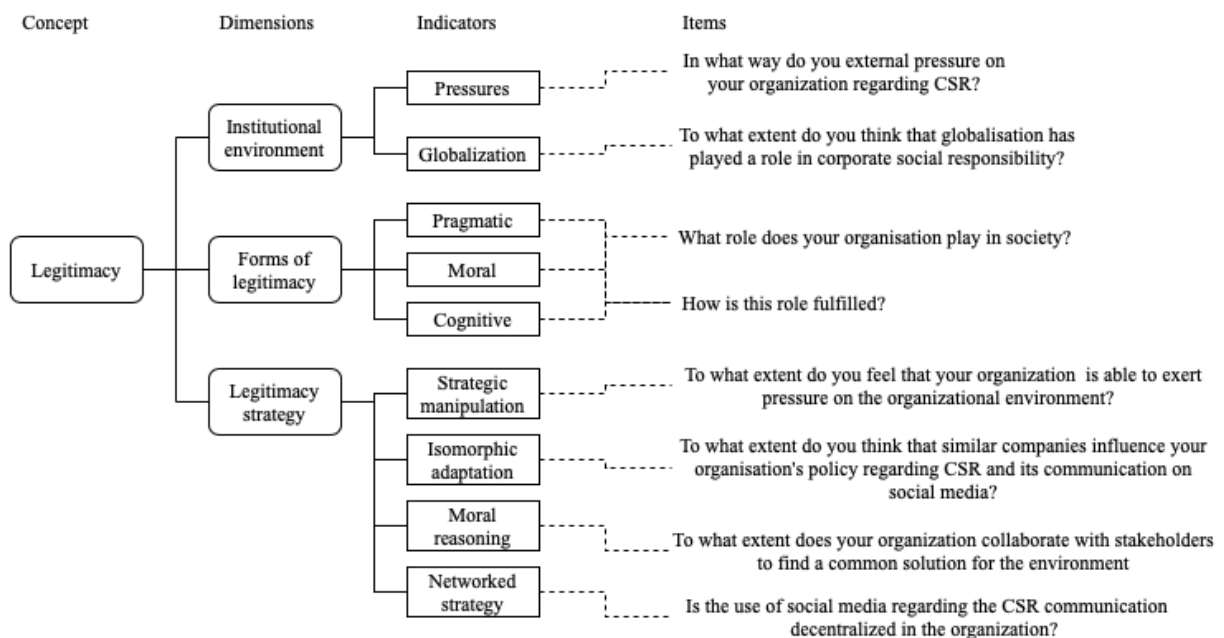

Figure 5. Operationalization scheme of legitimacy

Appendix II: Interview format

Introduction:

First of all, thank you very much for taking the time to participate in my master thesis. This interview consists of twenty questions, which will help me very much in the conduct of this research.

A brief introduction, my name is Yolanda Lugtig, 24 years old and currently I am in the final phase of my Master Organizational Design and Development at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. To finish my Master successfully, I am writing a master thesis about small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the food industry. Within this process, I am investigating how SMEs use social media as a communication tool for their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities. Currently, scientific research about communicating CSR activities to stakeholders is mainly executed at multinational enterprises. Therefore, this research intends to create insights in how SMEs are dealing with communication of CSR-activities and how SMEs try to stay legitimate in their environment. This research defines CSR as: when organizations engage in activities that go beyond the interests of the organization and the requirements of the law.

The answers you can give about this topic will help me enormously. The data is completely anonymized in the report because of the privacy law. In addition, the research report is can also be shared with you.

Personal information

1. Could you introduce yourself? (Name, your position within the organization)
2. How long have you been working within your organization and how long are you in your current position?
3. How many employees does your organization have?

Information about organization

4. What role does your organization play in society?
5. Hoe does your organization fulfill this role?
6. Can you briefly describe the organizational culture?

<u>CSR communication</u>

7. To what extent do you have the feeling that your organization actively cope with corporate social responsibility activities?

8. What is your opinion about the challenges in the conduct of CSR?

<u>Social Media</u>

9. Which social media channels are used within your organization?

10. How is social media used as a communication channel within the organization?

11. How would you describe the main purpose of your organization to use social media?

12. To what extent do you feel that the CSR policy and associated activities communicated to stakeholders of your organization?

13. To what extent do you feel that communicating CSR has an effect on how stakeholders view the organization?

<u>Legitimacy management</u>

14. How do you think that your organization experience changes in their organizational activities as a result of globalization?

15. How does your organization experience external pressure on corporate social responsibility?

16. How does your organization deal with external pressure from the environment on corporate social responsibility?

17. How is social media used as a tool to reduce external pressure on corporate social responsibility?

18. To what extent are stakeholders involved or do they influence your CSR activities?

19. To what extent do you think that other companies have an influence on how your organization's CSR communication policy is organized on social media?

20. Large organizations often use social media. To what extent do you think that social media is important for the survival of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises?

<u>Closing</u>

21. Do you have any further comments or feedback that you would like to give me or that may be important to the research?

Appendix III: Context mapping

Statement card

The session of context mapping started with the statement card. The quotation has been paraphrased by the researcher. This statement card was retrieved from Brightspace of the Radboud University during the course of Advanced Research Methods AN-MOD012, part A.

Figure 6. Statement Card

Context mapping session

The researcher linked and categorized the quotations. By constantly examining the relationship between the quotations, new categories derived. The final categories were market, other organizations, communication channels, social media, own organization, MNCs, CSR, external pressures. The results of this session are shown in figure 8.
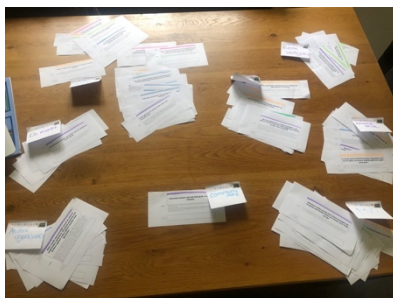

Figure 7. Categories of context mapping session

Based on these categories, the researcher made use of a flipchart to create a visual overview of the several themes. In this process themes changed or were deleted. The final version of the visual overview is shown in figure 9.
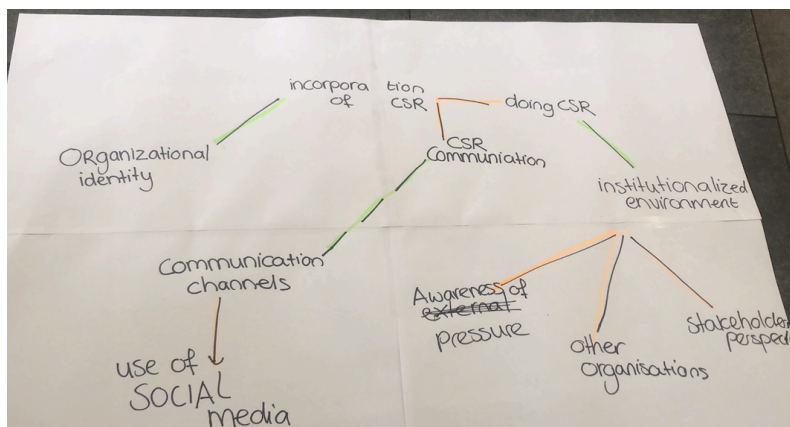

Figure 8. Visual overview context mapping session

Appendix IV: Final template

1. Organizational characteristics
   1.1. Structure
        1.1.1. Decentralization within the organization
        1.1.2. Internal communication
   1.2. Culture
        1.2.1. Organizational identity
        1.2.2. Mission of the organization
        1.2.3. Vision
        1.2.4. Organizational development

2. Organizational field
   2.1. Institutional pressures
        2.1.1. The feeling of external pressure
        2.1.2. Expectations of the organizational field
   2.2. Adapting to the expectations of the organizational field
        2.2.1. Organizational awareness of the stakeholders' expectations
        2.2.2. Other organizations inspire to incorporate activities
   2.3. Influencing the expectations of the organizational field
   2.4. The role of deliberation

3. CSR practices
   3.1. Incorporation
        3.1.1. Being CSR
        3.1.2. Doing CSR
        3.1.3. Dependencies
   3.2. Awareness

4. Social media as a communication tool
   4.1. Growing importance
   4.2. Reasons to use social media
        4.2.1. Network
        4.2.2. Reputation management
   4.3. CSR communication

Appendix V: Codebook
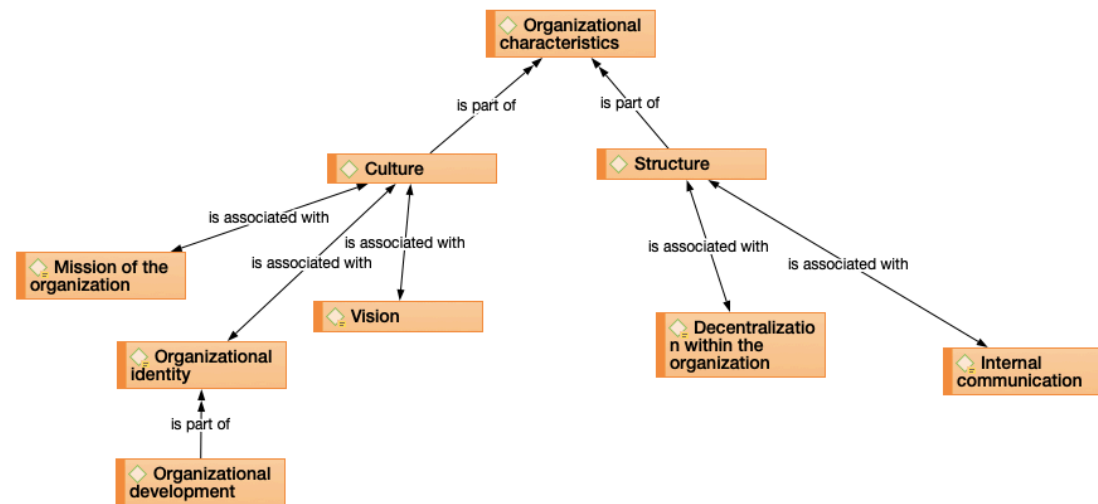
Organizational characteristics

Codes	Definition of codes	Exemplary quotes	Sub-theme	Theme
1.1.1 Decentralization within the organization	The organization has a hierarchy with a bottom-up approach towards decisions and responsibility.	"*I think, within the start-up, there is an informal interaction with each other* [colleagues]. *Our project manager wants to give us more responsibility, and the lines are much shorter. As I am now trained by my project manager, he taught me to try a lot more and take a lot more risks in my work*" (Respondent 3)*, "*And, of course, in that case you need a slightly different structure, but we want the free character of the organization, the development, the ability of thinking along and everyone to have his own added value, to remain largely secured*" (Respondent 5)*. "*The communication is mainly informal, and employees have the freedom and space to develop themselves*" (Respondent 6)*. "*At 'X', we give our employees the opportunity to raise any suggestions, concerns or other issues and we always take them seriously*" (Respondent 6)*.	1.1 Organizational structure	1. Organizational characteristics
1.1.2 Internal communication	The way how the organization internally communicate	"*I think, within the start-up, there is an informal interaction with each other* [colleagues]. *Our project manager wants to give us more responsibility, and the lines are much shorter. As I am now trained by my project manager, he taught me to try a lot more and take a lot more risks in my work*" (Respondent 3)*. "*So that we at least have the same general language*" (Respondent 7)*.		

1.2.1 Organizational identity	The core values where organizations stand for, because of those core values the organizations operate the way it does	*"It [the organizational identity] has to do with where your company came from and how it was founded"* (Respondent 1)*. *"What we do with these charities is purely on our own initiative, it is not copied* [from other organizations]. *It* [vision] *mainly comes from who we are, I think, and how we stand in life"* (Respondent 2)*. "*That is our company DNA. It is part of the company, and that, yes, with a lot of enthusiasm and innovation. We want to keep it that way, as far as possible, of course"* (Respondent 5)*.	1.2 Organizational culture
1.2.2 Mission of the organization	The core goal of the organizations, which is communicated and known by their stakeholders	*"My main goal is to eat healthy, and in my view, that is vegetable food. And to make that more accessible, more attractive, accessible and affordable"* (respondent 1)*. "We [the organization] *just want to bring the farmer and the consumer closer together"* (Respondent 2)*."As an organization, we have a mission and sustainability is part of it"* (Respondent 7)*.	
1.2.3 Vision	It is about how the organization looks at their contribution to society and to the future. The organization believes that what they do is the right thing to do.	*"That is one of our advantages. In addition, we just like to commit ourselves to something, and that we have the possibility to commit ourselves to something. That gives a satisfying feeling that you can be good if you act in such a way"* (Respondent 2)*. *"With regard to staff relations and crop protection, organic farming, Planet Proof cultivation, we are of course working on this. Such as opening up the company and operating a biogas installation to process residual flows from our customers"* (Respondent 4)*. I: *"External pressure is not so much experienced because you are just CSR as a core value from being the organization, and that's how you deal with it?"* R: *"Yes, yes, actually from a certain*	

		conviction to do it the right way" (Respondent 5)*. *"Our vision is to produce high quality ingredients to feed the world in a sustainable way"* (Respondent 6)*. *"We believe that reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is critical to control global warming and climate change. That's why we're so enthusiastic about making insects the meat of the future—compared to poultry, pork, and beef our buffalo beetles produce a tiny fraction of the GHG emissions"* (Document 1)		
1.2.4 Organizational development	The organization believes it is important to learn in order to develop itself	*"For us, they* [external pressures] *are actually more preconditions that we reflect on our development"* (Respondent 5)*. *"Much attention is paid to technology development and R&D"* (Respondent 6)*. *"When I look at competitors, I think we are relatively ahead of them in our sector. We also try to be at the forefront of many technical developments, but in the case of sustainability certainly"* (Respondent 7)*.		

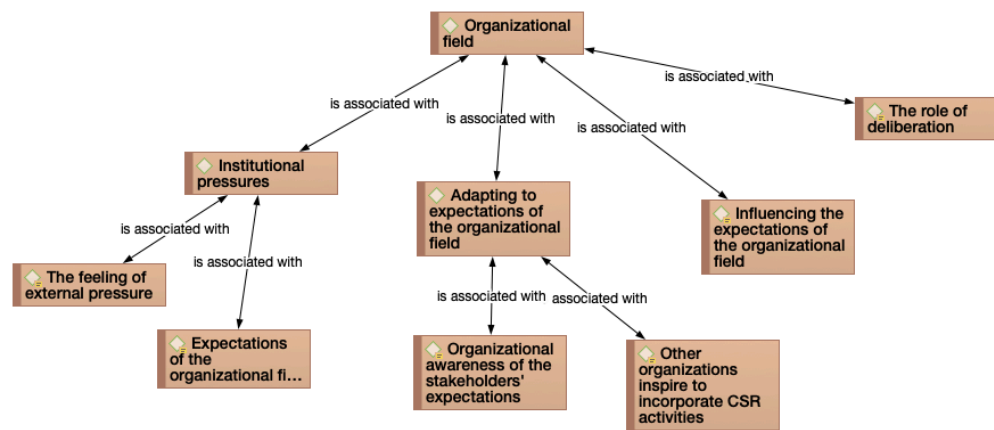*Table 3. Codebook organizational characteristics*
*translated into English

Organizational field

Code	Definition of code	Exemplary quotes	Sub-theme	Theme
2.1.1 Protocols and policies	Formal regulation requiring organizations to conduct certain business according to certain guidelines	*"We are actually not inhibited by all kinds of protocols and policy matters"* (Respondent 5)*. *We collaborate with multinationals that are also active in the field of social media, and we are not allowed to say anything about this because they want to bring it through their own channels"* (Respondent 5)*. *"Some things* [organizational activities] *need to be verified independently. If that is the case, a certification will soon come around the corner. But yes, it is not the same as your own vision and mission about it* [organizational activities]*"* (Respondent 7)*.	2.1 Institutional pressures	2. Organizational field
2.1.2 The feeling of external pressure	Developments in the environment could lead to an external pressure which has its influence on the activities of organizations	*"I think that organizations also experience a lot of pressury by its customers who use social media"* (Respondent 1)*. *"We feel, so far, no pressure from external organizations"* (Respondent 4)*. *"We had a large German customer who keeps a sustainability agenda for all their suppliers. And then we see that all those parties, who deliver to X, are looking for raw materials. They all come to us with the same question, do you have to have that special kind of certificate? And that is pressure, market pressure"* (Respondent 7)*.		
2.1.3 Expectations of the organizational field	The organizational field: e.g. suppliers, consumers, customers expects that the organizations behave in a certain way	*"And sustainability, especially now with corona, that is important in the future. It starts with a vegan lifestyle, of course. People look more to sustainability and local food. You see consumers asking more and more about this. They no longer accept that companies are anti-social"* (Respondent 1)*. *"I think that people are more aware, they increasingly go to a butcher or delicatessen shops also because they cannot go out* [COVID-		

		19], *but it might stay a bit. Because people really do realize that that's better and are nicer products"* (Respondent 3)*. *"Exactly what effect it has I cannot estimate, but for our customers like X, it certainly has an effect. They communicate a lot about sustainability and want to see us as the supplier of vegetables play a part in this"* (Respondent 4)*. *"We* [organization] *also see, we* [organization] *are a specific sector, organic farming, and that customers expect more information from us* [organization] *about sustainability than they* [customers] *would expect from any non-organic company"* (Respondent 7)*.	
2.2.1 Organizational awareness of the stakeholders' expectations	The organization is aware of the expectation of stakeholders	*"We* [the organization] *have a product which is a natural product, so, people already think that is fantastic"* (Respondent 2)*. *"We* [organization] *see a tendency for organic food, in particular, to go up. We have been going crazy the last few weeks too. We have a lot of demand for our raw materials. (...) That is also a consciousness aspect, I think, that people buy more organic food"* (Respondent 7)*.	2.2 Adapting to expectations of the organizational field
2.2.2 Other organizations inspire to incorporate activities	The influence that other organizations have on the business practices of a particular organization	*"We see on LinkedIn messages pass by people who won a CSR award, and who has improved their CSR. When I look at the retail industry, retailers are all trying, they replace plastic aspects with cardboard containers, source locally and that makes it a positive competition"* (Respondent 1)*. *"We always do a raffle every year for the first box of asparagus, we always do that for charity. We introduced it two years ago. We copied the idea from the first keg of eel. The first box of asparagus is auctioned for a different purpose every year"* (Respondent 2)*. *"You* [the organization] *always keep*	

		your eyes open what others do. You are trying to learn something. We [the organization] *do have a few companies that we follow very closely, and we also copy what is good. What is not good, what we do not stand for, we don't copy that... Yeah... that is the way it is"* (Respondent 2)*.	
Influencing the expectations of the organizational field	The influence that a particular organization has on its organizational environment	*"As a small party, we* [organization] *can go our way reasonably well, without being watched very closely* [by stakeholders], *but when we are more established, you will of course get another sight on you"* (Respondent 5)*. *"We* [the organization] *do have the strong impression that we have the most influence as a company on CO2 and living wages"* (Respondent 7).*	2.3 Influencing the expectations of the organizational field
The role of deliberation	How organizations make use of an open discourse to have a conversation with stakeholders	*"I am active in a few network groups from my company and personally, and I work for network groups, so my name comes up everywhere"* (Respondent 1)*. *"Mostly from my network. I* [the organization] *attend many events, networking events, fairs, gatherings, get-togethers and lunches where you meet people. I get a lot of information from my network"* (Respondent 1)*.	2.4 The role of deliberation

*Table 4. Codebook organizational field*
*translated into English

CSR Practices

Code	Definition of code	Exemplary quotes	Sub-theme	Theme
3.1.1 Awareness	The awareness of the internal organization of the CSR practices and of the influence that the product chain has on its environment	*"I have the idea that CSR internally* [within the organization] *does have value"* (Respondent 3)*. "Since we have hired a QHSE employee, it has had more of our attention" (Respondent 4)*. *"Qhat the effects* [of the product] *are on the life cycle, preferably a positive effect on the cycle. And... all right, that is also a point of survival, I think. A piece of existence" (*Respondent 5)*. *"We have an internal policy. We have targets of which two of them are CO2 and living wage. We ensure that as much as possible, we have a total of six stargets and thus two in the field of sustainability"* (Respondent 7)*.	3.1 Awareness	
3.2.1 Being CSR	The incorporation of CSR activities goes beyond rules and regulations because the organizations believes it is the right thing to do	*"But you also have organizations that are saying (...)"Our CEO is mother nature. No matter who our CEO is, we all live with Mother Earth, so we all have to do the right thing. Mother Earth determines if it is not good enough. If it damages the earth for example, then we will not introduce it". Well, in that case, you always act CSR-friendly. That's not like we're going to reduce our CO2. Then you may have made a 50% profit, but you still have a huge burden on the earth"* (Respondent 1)*. *"What we do regarding to these charities is purely self-initiative, it is just not copied. I think it mainly comes from who we are and what our perspective is about life"* (Respondent 2)*. *"I believe that a number of CSR objectives are inherent to our* [organizational] *activities. Regarding developing processes, we try of course to do this as sustainable as possible. We also want to make our products as sustainable as possible and we develop products with the greatest sustainable impact. But that is not so much the result of our CSR policy"* (Respondent 5)*.	3.2 Incoroporation of CSR	3. CSR practices

3.2.2 Doing CSR	The organization execute CSR activites, because it contributes to their contingent goals	*"Some companies say they are CSR, but I know them too well and then I know it is still not always like that"* (Respondent 1)*. *"With some organizations, you can see that they mentioned in thier annual report that they are going to increase so much turnover, make so much profit, introduce so many new products and reduce so much CO2. They aim to use less water, because it is part of everything, then they do CSR instead of being"* (Respondent 1)*. *"We* [the organization] *are not very active with CSR, because CSR is a catch-all term and it is difficult for us to include this in the activities that we carry out"* (Respondent 4)*. *"Well, actually, we* [the organization] *are not so active or conscious about CSR at all"* (Respondent 5)*.		
3.2.3 Dependencies	Organization are dependent on several factors wether to incorporate praticular CSR activities	*"As an organization, you are tied to shareholders who look only at money"* (Respondent 1)*. *"You* [as an organization] *may be able to find a more sustainable option, but this option must also be available for your products"* (Respondent 1*). *"The challenge is that it* [CSR incorporation] *must also be financially interesting for us"* (Respondent 2)*. *"It is always uncertain if the customer wants to pay for it"* (Respondent 7)*.		

Table 5. Codebook CSR practices
*translated into English
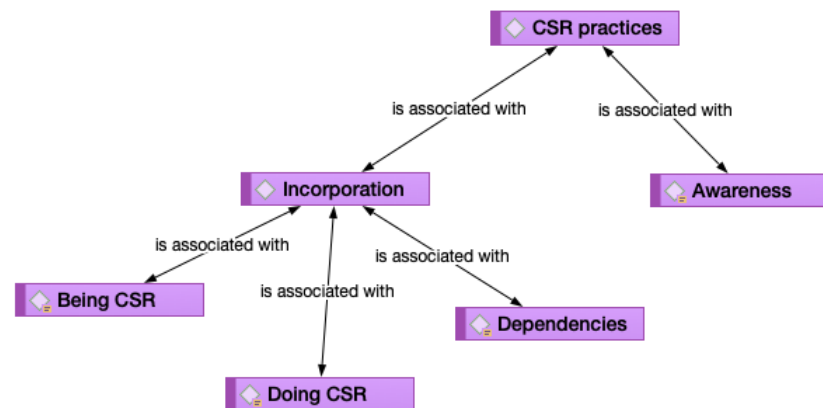
Social media as a communication tool

Code	Definition of code	Exemplary quotes	Sub-theme	Theme
4.1 Growing importance	The importance for organizations to make use of social media as a communication tool	*"We [the organization] have always been quite active* [on social media], *but this year we use it* [social media*] more than the past years. Also, on multiple platforms of social media. Now we are on LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram... so more platforms"* (Respondent 2)*.*"You see that a lot of young organizations are very active on social media"* (Respondent 5)*. "Well, I guess it [*social media] *is has become an indispensable advertising tool. You* [as an organization] *have no choice other than to make use of it* [social media]" (Respondent 5)*. *"I also think that the parties that are most visible through social media can also conquer the largest market"* (Respodent 7)*.	4.1 Growing importance	4. Social media as a communication tool
4.2.1 Network	Organizations want to build or join a certain network or community which affects the business practices of the organization	*"I think these elements reinforce each other. That is our reason for using social media, improving our identity and expanding our customer base"* (Respondent 2). *"To reach a certain target group who wants to work at our organization"* (Respondent 4)*. *"I: Do you also involve external parties or people via social media? R: Yes, very much. Consultants, but also institutes, such as we work a lot with X University* (Respondent 7)*.	4.2 Reasons to use social media	
4.2.2 Reputation management	Organizations use social media to manage the image they have in the organizational field	*"On social media, there is a lot of appreciation for online messages and those messages are shared by others, which gives you* [the organization] *more visibility and that is good for your company"* (Respondent 1)*. "The reactions of people are being monitored. So, suppose people start talking about something that would affect the product in a negative way. Then I am sure the organization acts on it* [the reactions of social media users] *right*		

		away" (Respondent 3)*. *"By communicating about who and what we do (pictures), we try to create a positve image of our organization in our sector"* (Respondent 4)*. *"Image improvement of the insects industry"* (Respondent 6)*.		
4.3 CSR communication	Communication of the organization about their CSR practices	*"Ony on their website, they have a subtitle called sustainability"* (Respondent 3)*. *"I: To what extent is the CSR policy and related activities communicated to stakeholders of your organization? R: Very minimal, the activities are carried out but not specifically mentioned as CSR activitie*s" (Respondent 5)*. . *"For example, child labour is a cacao thing. In order to stay ahead of that whole discussion, we* [the organization] *set up a Child Protection Program within our cocoa project, and we had a major study carried out into whether it* [child labour] *is present in this specified area. And if so, what the causes are and what can be done against it. In fact, even before a discussion derives or before we get a question from a customer about it, we have already made sure that we have addressed that point"* (Respondent 7).	4.3 CSR communication	

Table 6. Codebook Social media as a communication tool
*translated into English