Radboud University

CSR activities in the world of children
An exploration of organization's CSR activities influencing children's formation of moral evaluations toward brands

Author: P.J. Veldman
Student ID: S1028891
Supervisor: dr C. Horváth
Second examiner: dr. S.M. Ritter

Nijmegen, June 22, 2020

Front page

Title:	CSR activities in the world of children
Subtitle:	An exploration of organization's CSR activities influencing children's formation of moral evaluations toward brands
Author:	Pim Joris Veldman
Student ID:	S1028891
University:	Radboud University
Education:	Master Business Administration
Specialization:	Marketing
Supervisor:	dr. C. Horváth
Second examiner:	dr. S.M. Ritter
Place and date:	Nijmegen, June 22, 2020

Acknowledgement

This Master thesis is the final requirement for my graduation as a Master of Science in Marketing at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. It presents the findings of an exploratory research toward the influence CSR activities of brands have on children's awareness and moral evaluations of the brand.

One of the first questions my supervisor dr. Csilla Horváth asked: "Why children? What makes you so interested in them?" I believe it is because children can impress and surprise you with their thoughts and ideas. They sometimes know more than adults realize.

If I had kept a diary during this period, it would have been a story about a journey full of surprises and challenges. It was a learning experience for me both personally and professionally. Conducting an exploratory research with children during the COVID-19 pandemic was not always easy. I learned to deal with unexpected outcomes by adopting a flexible attitude. During the process, I really enjoyed diving into the world of children. I was intrigued by their points of view and sometimes unexpected answers.

I would like to thank several people who have supported me during this process. First, I would like to show my appreciation for my supervisor Csilla Horváth, who provided me support, concrete feedback, and encouraging advice. I learned a lot from the moments when we had different ideas. It was interesting having open discussions with you and I appreciated learning from your knowledge and experiences. Partly because of this, I have raised this research to a higher level. Furthermore, I would like to thank all children and parents who participated in this study. Most of the respondents did not know me personally. That is why I appreciate all the more that they were willing to cooperate. Also, a special thanks to Ellen Kuijn who supported me in finding respondents for this research. Lastly, I would like to thank my parents for supporting me in difficult moments and giving advice.

Although a lot of future research is needed, children are interesting and full of surprises. They are not yet fully developed, but this is also what makes it fascinating to do research on them. I hope you will enjoy reading this Master thesis.

Pim Joris Veldman
Nijmegen, June 22, 2020

Abstract

Previous consumer-oriented Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) research has mainly focused on adult's responses and perceptions, while child-consumers have largely been ignored. To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first empirical research which addresses the influence of CSR activities of brands in relation to children (age 8-12) as consumers. The present research explores *how aware children (age 8-12) are regarding the CSR activities of brands, and if they are, how these CSR activities influence the way in which children form moral evaluations toward brands.*

A total of 25 in-depth interviews were conducted among 8- and 12-year-old boys and girls in the Netherlands. Subsequently, the parent of each child was interviewed as well to get a better understanding of the child's thoughts and feelings.

The findings show that children can be aware of the (irresponsible) CSR activities of brands. Children who are aware vary between the age of 9 to 12, while nearly all 8-year-olds are unaware of the CSR activities of brands. Most CSR activities children mentioned are related to environmental issues (e.g. use of plastic) and social-ethical issues (e.g. child labor). Furthermore, most children obtained a deeper CSR awareness toward a particular industry.

The (irresponsible) CSR activities of brands influence children's moral evaluations to judge them as 'good' or 'bad'. CSR activities can even be perceived as favorable and/or unique by children which can benefit positive brand judgment. Furthermore, the CSR activities of one brand can influence children's moral evaluation of other brands in the related category as well.

More interesting, the present research provides indications that (irresponsible) CSR activities could, in some cases, influence children's behavior toward the brands based on their associations and attitudes. This may suggest that increasing children's CSR awareness could support them in translating their desire to be sustainable into their consumption behavior.

This study identifies three possible factors that could indicate the differences found in awareness and attitudes among children regarding the (irresponsible) CSR activities of brands, which potentially could result in changed behavior: (1) *Motivation*: perceiving CSR as personally relevant, having concerns regarding CSR, and having persistent beliefs about what is good or bad. (2) *Ability*: cognitive abilities due to the child's age and the influence of their social environment in which the parents play a more prominent role. (3) *Opportunity*: the direct experiences the child has with the brand and the complexity of the CSR activity (e.g. observable/non-observable).

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

2019 could be characterized as the year of climate strikes. In March 2019, more than 1.6 million people around the world participated in the #FridaysForFuture climate protests (Wahlström, Kocyba, Vydt, & Moor, 2019). These protests were remarkable because teenage school students over-represented them. Through school strikes, a new historical turn in climate activism arouse in which huge numbers of teenage school students went on strike against climate change. The protests got a level of global attention no previous youth movements has ever received. The movement's icon, Greta Thunberg, was even allowed to speak on international meetings (Wahlström et al., 2019). The climate marches kept continuing during 2019. According to the Guardian (2019), 6 million people around the world (including 35,000 in the Netherlands; AD, 2019), from trade unionists to schoolchildren, joined the climate protests to demand action on the escalating ecological emergency on September 2019.

Several #FridaysForFuture climate protests took place in the Netherlands as well, in which teenage school students skipped classes to demand actions against climate change. Thousands of young people demonstrated in February, March (NOS, 2019[a], 2019[b]) and September (AD, 2019) in several cities in the Netherlands in 2019. During the climate strike in the Netherlands in March 2019, approximately 90% of the school students felt at least to some degree angry, worried, and frustrated in relation to climate change issues. Overall, the climate protest illustrates that today's youth is a generation who is aware and concerned about climate (Wahlström, et al., 2019).

School students seem to consider sustainability into account already at a young age. Recent research by Hagenauw (2019) illustrates that children between the ages of 7 to 11 appear to develop (positive) associations and attitudes to sustainable products. Additionally, Lopez & Rodrigues (2018) demonstrate that children (age 8-12) are able to make moral evaluations of brand behaviors, understand branding symbolism, external signs and judge brands as good or bad. This is in line with findings of Chaplin & John (2005), which state that the development during this period of childhood (the analytical stage; John, 1999) is identified as key in understanding how children view brands in relationship to their self-images. This is because the number of self-brand connections increases and changes during this period.

Taking this into account, the fact that children pay attention to sustainability could be of great importance for organizations. This is due to what a brand means in the future is based on what consumers remember about their usage of the brand in the past. A person's earliest and defining

symbolic experience has an important influence on their current and future environmental attitudes and perceptions (Braun-LaTour, LaTour & Zinkhan, 2007; Connell, Brucks & Nielsen, 2014; Strife, 2012). According to Schmeltz (2012), young consumers state that the longer companies have been engaging in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), the more credible they are perceived. Thus, organizations could benefit from communication their CSR activities to children. Hence, research on if and/or how children's concerns and feelings affect lifelong environmental concerns and behavior is needed (Strife, 2012).

Within this thesis CSR is defined as: corporate behaviors related to legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities that aim to affect stakeholder positively and that go beyond economic interest (Carroll, 1991; Turker, 2009). Awareness of CSR practices indicates the ability to create abstract impressions of brands based on non-observable cues such as brand symbolism (Achenreiner & John, 2003). However, there remains a need for further research on children's uses of brand symbolism (Nairn, Griffin & Wick, 2008). Also, it is unclear which type of brand criteria (symbolic or functional) is most relevant in the process of brand evaluation for children (Charry & Demoulin, 2014). While children seem to be aware of CSR business practices, CSR practices have been advertised mainly to adults (Lopez & Rodriguez, 2018). Additionally, children who have a positive attitude toward sustainability often fail to translate their desire to be sustainable into their consumption behavior due to their lack of knowledge and direction (Francis & Davis, 2014).

Although the environmental concerns children have would suggests that CSR and brand associations among children is an important marketing topic, research toward children's views regarding sustainability and how they develop sustainable knowledge is limited (Green, 2017). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, research toward CSR activities of brands in relation to children (age 8-12) as consumers is an unexplored field while this could have a great potential for further investigation. Most consumer-oriented CSR research focused on adults' responses and perceptions (e.g. Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Grappi, Romani & Bagozzi, 2013; Hanson, Jian, Ye & Murthy, 2019; Nurunnabi, Alfakhri & Alfakhri, 2018) and only a few looked into young consumers' (age 18-30) CSR perceptions in different countries (Nurunnabi et al., 2018): e.g. China (Wang & Juslin, 2011), Denmark (Schmeltz, 2012), France and Norway (Loussaïef, Cacho-Elizondo, Pettersen & Tobiassen, 2013) and Finland (Luukkanen & Uusitalo, 2014). Other CSR related research focused, according to Schemltz (2012), on investors, business partners and other stakeholders.

There is reason to believe that children take the CSR activities of organizations into account when evaluating a brand. However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, research is lacking regarding this topic. Evans et al. (2007, p. 657) states: "How children come to frame environmental issues for themselves and then translate these beliefs into actions have critical implications for the future of our planet." Therefore, more research is needed to explore the CSR perceptions of young consumers (or children) (Loussaïef et al., 2013; Nurunnabi, et al., 2018).

In order to solve this gap, the aim of this research is twofold: to explore how aware children (age 8-12) are regarding the CSR activities of brands, and if they are, how do these CSR activities influence the way in which children (age 8-12) form moral evaluations toward brands.

Therefore, this the following research question for this master thesis is proposed: *how aware are children (age 8-12) regarding the CSR activities of brands and how do these activities influence the way in which children form moral evaluations (good or bad) toward brands?*

This explorative thesis contributes to academic literature in several ways. Firstly, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study which focuses on the CSR perceptions and responses of children (age 8-12) whereas, as mentioned before, previous research focused on mainly adults and to some extent young consumers.

Secondly, through a richer understanding of children's perceived awareness of a brand's CSR communication, this explorative thesis gains insight into the extent to which children take brand's CSR activities into account within their moral evaluation of brands. Thirdly, the research findings can be used in future research in other countries to improve generalization opportunities. Therefore, this study is theoretically relevant and is expected to significantly contribute to academic literature.

This research provides organizations insights into how they need to take children into account regarding their CSR communication. "Young consumers across the world are predicted to be the most complex and influential group of consumers within the next couple of years" (Schmeltz, 2012, p. 31). Therefore, it is important that marketers put more emphasis on the sustainability credentials regarding their children product offerings (Francis & Davis, 2014). A better understanding of children's evaluation of a brand's CSR activities provides important insights to mangers, which can help them to decide whether they can leverage their brand through their CSR practices for this new generation of consumers. At the same time, as stated before, they can use these insights to

support children by providing knowledge and insights, who currently fail to translate their desire to be sustainable into their consumption behavior (Francis & Davis, 2014).

This research proceeds as follows: The theoretical framework is discussed in chapter two. This chapter describes several aspects of children's cognitive development, brand development, CSR, and other relevant topics. The next chapter describes how the research is executed and what methods are used to answer the research question. To answer the research question, a mainly inductive qualitative approach is used. In-depth interviews are conducted with children (age 8-12) and with one of their parents. This section contains the research method, data collection, data analysis, the research ethics and the validity and reliability of this research. The research results are included in chapter four. Finally, chapter five provides the conclusion and discussion in which the research question is answered followed with managerial implications, limitations, and possible directions for further research.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Children's cognitive development

It is important to have insight into children's cognitive abilities to get an understanding of children's knowledge of products, brands, and advertising. John (1999) developed a conceptual framework of the three consumer socialization stages children go through. Each stage is characterized by important shifts in children's cognitive development and reasoning skills.

The perceptual stage (age 3-7): in this stage children start to show familiarity with brands and retail stores (e.g. Lego and Bart Smit) but often not beyond a surface level. Children's consumer knowledge is based on readily observable (often) unidimensional perceptual features. This is also the case for their decision-making skills, which can be described as simple, expedient, and egocentric (John, 1999). Children have an emerging capacity to understand brand symbols already at 3 to 5 years of age (McAlister & Cornwell, 2010). Brand symbolism is defined by McAlister & Cornwell (2010, p. 204) as: "an understanding of the meaning attributed to a brand name. It includes an appreciation of the ways in which a brand name symbolizes user qualities (e.g., popularity, user image) as well as information about the products or services encompassed by the brand (e.g. perceptions of brand use)."

The analytical stage (age 7-11): as this research focuses on children between the age of 8 to 12, which fits the most with John's (1999) analytical stage, a more elaborate discussion of this stage is given. In the analytical stage, children define a brand based on: *branding components* (e.g. brand logo or character) *brand signs* (e.g. knowing if the quality of the brand is good or bad) and *brand promotional activities* (e.g. TV commercials) (Lopez & Rodriguez, 2018). Children shift from functional/perceptual thoughts (e.g. size) toward symbolic thoughts, increase their processing abilities, and have therefore an increased understanding of advertising and brands. They can analyze, and discriminate brands based on more than one dimension or attribute (John, 1999). For this reason, children can form abstract impressions of brands and product owners. This is based on non-observable cues such as brand symbolism and brand images (e.g. coolness or trendiness; John & Sujan, 1990) associated with the product or brand (Achenreiner & John, 2003; Charry & Demoulin, 2014; John, 1999; Nairn et al., 2008). Children's thoughtfulness in decisions increases (John, 1999). Children around the age of 8 (middle childhood) are able to think symbolically and recognize consumption symbols. When children reach the age of around 12 (early adolescence), they have the ability to decode brand symbolism on a more complex level. (Achenreiner & John,

2003). Theory of mind can be used to examine brand symbolism. Theory of mind is the ability of a child to, besides thinking about their own mental state, think about the intentions, beliefs, and desires of others. (McAlister & Cornwell, 2010). For instance: 'others may think of me as a bad person for buying this fur coat' or 'maybe I will get compliments by others for using sustainable brands'. Thus, during the period of 8 to 12 years old, children consider what others may think of them while they start to understand the deeper meaning of a brand.

The reflective stage (age 11-16): social and cognitive dimensions have developed further and become more complex due to more sophisticated information processing and social skills. They have a more reflective way of reasoning and focus more on social meanings. When making decisions, they pay more attention to social consumer aspects because they consider it more together with their need to shape their own identity and to confirm to group standards.

2.2 Brand awareness, associations, attitudes, and relationships

It is important to know how children become aware of the brand and eventually develop a brand relationship in order to understand how they form moral evaluations toward brands. The following four topics will be discussed which are related to the stages of brand development (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020): brand awareness, brand associations, brand attitudes and brand relationships.

Brand awareness

Brand awareness is "the extent and ease with which customers recall and recognize the brand and can identify the product and services with which it is associated" (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020, p. 129). In the context of this research, the *depth* of brand awareness is related to how easily a CSR element comes up. The *breadth* of awareness is related to situations in which the CSR-element comes to the mind when using or encountering the brand. It is to a large extent related to the brand knowledge someone has. Brand awareness helps in understanding the product/service category in which the brand competes and which of the needs the brand is designed to satisfy (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020). Therefore, brand awareness is key to develop brand associations, attitudes, and relationships.

Brand associations

When children understand brand symbolism, the number of brand associations increases. Keller & Swaminathan (2020) define brand associations as: "the strength, favorability and uniqueness of

perceived attributes and benefits for the brand. Brand associations often represent key sources of brand value" (p. 129).

The *strength of brand associations* is related to personal relevance and the consistency with which is present over time. Direct experience with the brand creates the strongest brand attribute and benefit associations while brand-generated content such as advertising are often likely to create the weakest associations. Brand associations become stronger when consumers elaborate on brand-related information and relate it to existing knowledge (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020).

With the *favorability of brand associations*, the consumer is convinced that the brand possesses relevant attributes and benefits that satisfy their needs and wants which will result in positive brand judgements. This can be related to tangible or intangible aspects (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020).

The *uniqueness of brand associations* is related to the sustainable competitive advantage or unique sell proposition a brand possesses that gives consumers a compelling reason why they should buy it. In contrast, it is also possible a certain attribute or benefit is perceived as prototypical to all brands in the category (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020).

Thus, brand associations relate to how well the product meets the functional- (e.g. quality) and symbolic (e.g. social intangible) needs. Having strong, favorable, and unique brand associations lead to brand meaning which will produce a brand response (what do I think or feel about the brand) (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020).

Brand attitudes

To know whether a brand is evaluated as good or bad by children, it is important to have insight in how they form attitudes toward the brand. Hoyer, MacInnis & Pieters (2018, p. 128) describe attitude as: "an overall evaluation that expresses how much we like or dislike an object, issue, person or action." Attitudes are based on several characteristics. A child will have a stronger attitude toward a brand if it is easily accessible, confidently held, persistent, resistant to change, and have favorable/unfavorable associations. This will be the case when someone has high motivation, ability, and opportunity (MAO) to process the information and has also influence on behavior (Hoyer et al., 2018). Motivation is related to internal activation that provides energy to achieve goals. Ability is associated with the required resources (e.g. cognitive- and social resources) someone needs to make an outcome happen. Besides motivation and ability, a child also

needs to have the opportunity process the information. This is related to complexity and repetition of information, while having enough time and limited distraction to process it (Hoyer et al., 2018).

Therefore, it could be possible that a child can form strong attitudes toward the CSR activities if their MAO to process information is high. In turn, when MAO is low, their attitudes can be superficial and involves limited effort (Hoyer et al., 2018).

Attitudes are based on how someone *thinks* and *feels* about a brand and affects their behavior (Hoyer et al., 2018). Both can influence consumer behavior in a favorable way, but only when the brand is perceived as positive on both aspects (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020). Brand thoughts or judgements are based on the different brand associations consumers use to create a personal opinion about and evaluation of the brand (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020). Attitudes based on high effort thoughts are among other things related to: (1) direct/imagined experience elaboration, (2) reasoning by analogy or category, and (3) values-driven attitudes. In turn, attitudes based on low effort thoughts are related to simple beliefs, unconscious influences, and the environment (Hoyer et al.,). Therefore, if a child has strong environmental values, it is likely that related environmental CSR activities of a brand could be processed with high effort thoughts by the child.

Furthermore, it is important to know children's emotional responses and reactions to the brand, which is described by Keller & Swaminathan (2020) as brand feelings. If a child has strong emotional reactions to a brand aspect, they have high involvement. These feelings are more likely to influence the attitude when they are viewed as relevant to the brand. Therefore, if a child has strong feelings regarding the (irresponsible) CSR activities of a brand, and perceives them as relevant, it is more likely it could influence their attitude. In low effort situations, the attitude can be based on emotional reactions such as familiarity of the brand leads to consumer liking it or the attitude toward the ad. Their feelings are less strong (Hoyer et al., 2018). Knowing these thoughts and the feelings that children have to a particular brand gives insight in how they evaluate certain brand activities such as CSR.

Brand relationship

Based on brand judgement and feelings, the brand response will lead to brand relationship. A child-brand relationship is defined by Ji (2008, p. 605) as: "voluntary or imposed bond between a child and a brand characterized by a unique history of interactions and is intended to serve developmental and social-emotional goals in the child's life." The nature of the brand relationship

and the extent to which a child feels that it is in sync with the brand is defined by Keller & Swaminathan (2020) as brand resonance. It can be described based on behavioral loyalty (repeat purchases), attitudinal attachment (e.g. favorite brand), sense of community and active engagement (e.g. willingness to invest time or energy) (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020).

Creating a child-brand relationship could be of great value for organizations. During childhood, the earliest and defining gained symbolic experience has an important influence on someone's future brand preferences (Braun-LaTour et al., 2007). Therefore, the brand exposure during childhood affects brand recognition when being an adult (Connell & Schau, 2012). It leads to childhood friendship. Fournier (1998) describes childhood friendship as childhood preference expanding further and that could go on when becoming adult. In other words, the brand relationship developed during childhood could last the rest of someone's life. This counts for child related brands (e.g. Pokémon) as for non-child related brands (e.g. makeup brand the child's mother uses).

The best period to create a brand relationship that lasts during adolescence is, according to Connell & Schau (2012), from the age of 7 to adolescence. This is because children's skeptical view is less developed compared to adults and memories obtained before the age of 7 are largely forgotten by the time someone reaches adolescence. (Connell & Schau, 2012).

The fact that children's skeptical view is less developed does not mean that organizations could misuse it. According to Ji (2002), child-brand relationships are influenced by the social environment, such as parents, relatives, friends, and mass media. Grappi et al. (2013) illustrate that adults react to irresponsible corporate actions (social and ethical harm) with negative moral emotional responses. This includes anger, disgust, and contempt (Grappi et al., 2013). Moreover, till the age of 12, parents play a more important role in influencing the child's brand-brand relationship compared to other social influences (Ji, 2008). For this reason, irresponsible behaviors by brands (e.g. manipulative ads) will probably be rejected by the child's environment which also affects their own evaluation. Furthermore, a negative attitude can be formed based on irresponsible actions that, according to Brunk (2010), flatter brand image and reputation and therefore negatively affect the relationship. This may also be the case for children who have a negative attitude based on the CSR activities of a brand.

2.3 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainability

To be a socially responsible organization, it is important to invest in sustainability. Therefore, many companies use sustainability interchangeably with CSR (Carroll, 2016). CSR is defined in many different ways in the literature (e.g. Carroll, 1991; Davis, 1960; McWilliams & Siegel, 2001; Mohr & Harris, 2001; Turker, 2009). CSR does not always mean the same to everyone and therefore, it difficult to provide one commonly accepted definition of CSR (Turker, 2009). Mohr & Harris (2001) give a broad definition of Corporate Social Responsibility: "a company's commitment to minimizing or eliminating any harmful effects and maximizing its long-rung beneficial impact on society" (p. 47). This definition is in line with Carroll's pyramid of CSR (1991) which includes four components that covers the entire range of business responsibilities (Carroll, 2016): economic responsibilities, legal responsibilities, ethical responsibilities & philanthropy responsibilities (A more elaborate description of these concepts and the conceptualization of CSR can be found in appendix A).

Within this thesis CSR is defined as corporate behaviors related to legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities that aim to affect stakeholder positively and that go beyond economic interest (Carroll, 1991 & Turker, 2009). This definition is based on three of the four components of Carroll's pyramid of CSR (1991) and Turker's (2009) CSR definition which excludes the economic responsibility component of CSR. The component is excluded within this research because it mainly affects shareholders and employees (Carroll, 2016), while this thesis focuses on children's CSR perspectives. McWilliams & Siegel's CSR definition (which excludes legal responsibilities) is too narrow since research by Planken, Nickerson & Sahu (2013) illustrate that ethical and legal CSR components are seen as significantly more important than the philanthropic (and economic) CSR components by Dutch adults. Since this research takes place in the Netherlands, it is important to take the legal CSR component into account.

Sustainability is defined as the "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 37). Sustainability can be related to environmental, social-cultural, and economical aspects (Kahriman-öztürk, Olgan & Güler, 2012). When being sustainable, one tries to match their consumption of resources to the earth's capacity to regenerate it (Bansal & DesJardine, 2015). Therefore, sustainability is not necessarily related to organizations only. In contrast, CSR is related to organizations and focuses more on balancing current

stakeholders' interest. It is different compared to sustainability since CSR activities are either responsible or sustainable. For example, charity donations to relieve a social problem is responsible, but not sustainable if it does not resolve the underlying issue (Bansal & DesJardine, 2015).

2.4 Organization's CSR activities awareness and children's moral brand evaluation

There is reason to believe that the organization's CSR activities could play an important role in the formation of brand evaluation by children. First of all, children show awareness of sustainability aspects already at the age of 7. According to Hagenauw (2019), they are concerned regarding the following topics: plastic, pollution, nature, energy, transport, recycling, climate change and their future. From these topics, beliefs about plastic, pollution and recycling are most often translated into actions. (Hagenauw, 2019).

Secondly, children seem to have the desire to be sustainable but fail to translate these actions into their daily consumption acts. This is often caused due to children's lack of knowledge and direction since a lot of marketers do not clearly communicate about their CSR activities for brands/products children use (Francis & Davis, 2014).

Thirdly, children are able to make moral evaluations of brands as good or bad. They do this based on several drivers as displayed in table 1. Some of these brand behaviors relate to (irresponsible) CSR, e.g. help least fortunate and sell harmful products. This suggests that children may pay attention to organizations' CSR activities as well which influences their brand perception (Lopez & Rodriguez, 2018).

Good brand behaviors	Bad brand behaviors
Make you look better	Put a lot of advertising everywhere
Help you identify high quality products	Sell harmful products
Help the least fortunate	Make us buy things we do not really need
Sell products that help us in our lives	

Table 1: Children's brand morality factors (Lopez & Rodriguez, 2018).

Furthermore, the way how child-consumers perceive a brand as good or bad seems to be different compared to young consumers. According to Schemltz (2012) young consumers give priority to high product/service quality, treating employees well and high customer service in their judgement of being good or bad. Taking care of the environment and social responsibility were of less relevance (Schmeltz, 2012). These two latter aspects, however, seem to be represented by

serval children's brand morality factors, as illustrated in table 1, such as: 'help the least fortunate' and 'make us buy things we do not really need'. So, it could be possible that children perceive an organization's CSR activities differently compared to adults.

The CSR activities of organizations can be related to peripheral to the company's core activities (e.g. a bank donating money to charity) or central to the company's core activities (e.g. Coca-Cola trying to reduce the litter of their products in the environment) (Van Rekom, Berens & Van Halderen, 2013). Recent research by Kim & Lee (2019) among students illustrates that when an organization's CSR activities are related to their core activities, it positively effects consumers' brand attitude and CSR's authenticity. It results in an organization's CSR activities being perceived as more genuine by consumers. This is in line with research by Planken et al. (2013) among Dutch adults, which states that philanthropic CSR components (sponsoring and donating to causes), often related to non-core activities, are perceived as less importance compared to legal and ethical CSR components. However, it is unknown whether children behave in the same way. According to Jahdi & Acikdlly (2009), it appears that children tend to pay more attention to ethical and environmental issues compared to adults. Therefore, it could be possible that children experience a different order of importance of CSR components as adults do.

Although there is a vast body on literature on the topic of adults'/young consumers' brand perceptions and associations regarding organizations' CSR activities, there has been limited research regarding children. To the best of the researcher knowledge, this is the first exploratory research conducted with children addressing children's experiences and attitudes toward organization's CSR activities. It is important to study the influence of these aspects because, as stated before, early experiences in childhood may play a role in shaping one's lifelong environmental attitudes (Braun-LatTour et al., 2007; Strife, 2012). It will provide marketeers a more complete understanding of child-consumer's view on their CSR activities which helps them to build a strong brand. The purpose of this study is understanding whether children are aware of the CSR activities of organizations and how these activities may influence children's brand evaluation. Specifically, the researcher attempts to explore if children (age 8-12) pay attention to organizations' CSR activities, how they perceive these CSR activities and whether certain activities are perceived differently within their moral evaluation of brands.

3. Method

3.1 Research method

Because literature regarding the research's topic is limited, grounded theory is used as research method within this thesis. "Grounded theory is a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived theory from data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990 in Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p. 98). The purpose of grounded theory research is to develop new concepts and theories based on qualitative data (Meyers, 2013). Since there is some related literature available, this research cannot be perceived as an absolute grounded theory. For this reason, a combination of an inductive and deductive approach is used.

The aim of this explorative research is twofold: to explore how aware children (age 8-12) are regarding the CSR activities of brands, and if they are, how do these CSR activities influence the way in which children (age 8-12) form moral evaluations toward brands. This research has a qualitative orientation since it explores and elaborates on new theoretical objects rather than testing them (Snow & Thomas, 1994).

To address the two research aims, semi-structured in-depth interviews are conducted. The use of in-depth interviews with children and their parents provides detailed information about children's thoughts and behaviors regarding their associations toward brands based on their CSR activities (Boyce & Neale, 2006). By interviewing children individually, the researcher tries to prevent that children are influenced by other children's opinions and to ensure that those who are uncomfortable with talking openly in a group are heard as well. Both children and their parents are interviewed to obtain a complete insight.

3.2 Sample

This research focuses on children between the age of 8 to 12, which fits the most with John's (1999) analytical stage. The researcher chooses to deviate from the original age range. This is because the period from middle childhood (age 7-8) to early adolescence (age 12-13) is an important period in which children start to view brands in relationship to their self-images (Chaplin & John, 2005).

A convenience sample of 25 children was drawn from the population of children living in the Netherlands with 5 children per age category (appendix B). 50% of the participants were boys and the other 50% were girls. The average age of the participants is 10. From every individual child,

one of their parents was interviewed as well to further elaborate on certain topics and provide additional insights about their child.

The children were selected based on how readily available the group of participants is (Salkind, 2010). Therefore, the researcher's network is used to get access to children between 8 to 12. Friends and family members were asked, and a Facebook post was used. A disadvantage of convenience sampling is that the sample is not generalizable (Salkind, 2010). However, as with most explorative research, it is not the aim to come up with generalizable results but to set a foundation for further research into this topic.

3.3 Data collection

The semi-structured in-depth interviews with the child and the parent took place via a video call because of the outbreak of the Corona virus. This gave the researcher the opportunity to still estimate whether the child understands the questions based on their non-verbal communication as an alternative to a face-to-face interview. The interviews with the children lasted around 35 minutes. The parent could stay during the interview if the child felt more comfortable. In that case, the parent was asked not to interfere when interviewing the child. During the interviews, an interview guide was used (see appendix C). All interviews were anonymous, recorded and conducted in Dutch and transcribed in English.

During the interviews, the free association technique is used to get more insight into children's brand associations. Keller & Swaminathan (2020) state that this technique is the simplest and often most powerful way to profile brand associations in qualitative research. Because CSR is an abstract and difficult to understand concept for children, the researcher chose to first let the child retrieve as much brand knowledge as possible. Without using any cues or introducing the concept of CSR, children were asked whether they knew any brands of which they think behaves in a good or a bad way. Next, they were exposed to a PowerPoint including 36 brand logos (appendix E) and the same question was asked. Furthermore, to retrieve their knowledge about possible brand activities they were asked to what kind of aspects they would pay attention to if they would be in charge of their own imaginable company. Only thereafter the concept of CSR was introduced.

The child was asked about what comes to its mind when (s)he thinks about a brand that does good/bad for the earth, people, and/or animals (Hagenauw, 2019), without any more specific cues. It identifies the range of possible brand associations in the child's mind and provide some rough

indication of the relative strength, favorability, and uniqueness of brand associations (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020).

Lastly, to obtain more insights into whether children's preference to the three CSR-components (legal, ethical and philanthropical), children were asked to express their preference if they would give advice to another company. Afterwards, the parent of the child was interviewed as well to get more in-depth insights into the child's thoughts and feelings. These interviews lasted around 10 minutes. The parent interview guide is displayed in appendix D.

3.4 Data analysis

Exploratory research often relies on qualitative approaches such as interviews to gather data (Sekeran & Bougie, 2016). The first step in qualitative data analysis is data reduction through coding and categorization. Coding helps in drawing meaningful conclusions about the data. Codes are given to units of text which are then categorized (Sekeran & Bougie, 2016). The coding process took place in Microsoft Excel (see example appendix F). The first phase of coding is open coding in which labels are given which describe particular sentences or sections (Bleijenbergh, 2016). Within this research, the open codes are developed deductively (based on theoretical context) and inductively (generated by the researcher based on the data). Deductive since the interviews were based on main categories covered in the theoretical context. Deductive coding is used to create main categories based on the theoretical context. Inductive coding is used for interesting findings not covered in the theoretical context. Hereafter, an inductive approach follows to discover patterns and make sub-categories based on the researcher's interpretations. The next phase is axial coding in which the researcher compares the different answers, interprets the data, and looks for connections and relationships (Meyers, 2013). The last phase is selective coding in which the axial codes are compared to discover patterns and to develop structure in the coding. Main concepts are used to mark the final categories. These categories are compared with the literature to draw conclusions (Bleijenbergh, 2016).

3.5 Research ethics

As stated before, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus which started in December 2019, having face-to-face interviews at the child's home is not a viable option given the current situation. Instead, the researcher chose to conduct the interviews via a video call with the child and parent to

prevent the interview from being detrimental or harmful to the respondents. Time was spent with the children before the interview started to make them feel more comfortable. The researcher told the child that it was okay if (s)he did not know the answer. Children (or their parents) had the opportunity to pause or stop the interview if desired. All the names of the participants are replaced with a code to protect their privacy. This code is based on respondent number, gender, and age (e.g. r. 1, m, 8). The code of the parent will be the same as the child, but with the only distinction that the respondent number is marked with a P (e.g. r. P1, m, 8). After the interviews, the child's parents were asked for permission for using the interview results within this research. If desired, transcripts of the interviews were sent to the parents of the child as well as a copy of the present study.

3.6 Validity & reliability

To ensure the children understood the interview questions, the questions were first proposed to a remedial educationalist who is used to do test and have conversations/conversations with children. Additionally, based on the remedial educationalist's feedback, two pretests took place with an 8-year-old and a 11-year-old child to test whether the child was able to understand the questions before conducting the in-depth interviews to improve the reliability. The interview questions were first constructed in English and translated into Dutch by the researcher. Next, someone else was asked to translate these interview questions back into English to ensure the meaning was still the same. All interviews were recorded to improve the reliability further and to ensure that they are correctly transcribed. During the interviews, the researcher asked the child serval times to elaborate to gain a deeper understanding of what the child truly meant. To improve internal validity, interview questions related to brand awareness, associations, attitudes are inspired on questions related to brand building blocks mentioned by Keller & Swaminathan (2020). The other questions are based on this research's theoretical framework. Due to the explorative nature of this research, the researcher does not seek external validity, nor a representative sample of child-consumers based on the population.

4. Results

Based on 25 interviews with children between the age of 8 to 12, 18 out of 25 children show at least to some degree awareness regarding the CSR activities of brands. It seems like children can be divided into four groups regarding their level of awareness of the CSR activities of brands: *unaware* (7 out of 25), *slightly aware* (6 out of 25), *moderately aware* (7 out of 25), and *aware* (5 out of 25).

The results did not show any difference regarding the degree of CSR awareness of boys or girls. Although girls put a bit more emphasis on clothing brands and boys on cars, both mentioned similar CSR-related activities of brands.

Children who are unaware were not able to link CSR activities to a specific brand and have a more generalized view (e.g. all cars are bad). In contrast, children who are aware have a higher depth and breadth awareness regarding the CSR activities of brands. They form distinct associations which are easily retrieved, and they can elaborate on it in a more sophisticated and abstract way.

Children between slightly aware and aware (18 out of 25) mentioned different CSR activities. Most CSR activities they mentioned are related to the following four topics: (1) *pollution/emission* (18 out of 18) such as CO_2 emission by Shell. (2) *Electric cars* (11 out of 18) such as the electric engines of Tesla or BMW. (3) W*orking conditions* (10 out of 18) like child labor used by Primark. (4) *Plastic* (7 out of 18) for example, Albert Heijn reducing plastic packaging.

Furthermore, the CSR activities of a brand can influence the child's attitude toward that particular brand or category-related brands. For a small number of children, the CSR activities of a brand could be a reason for brand favorability or changing their own behavior.

The differences between the four levels of awareness are explained first. This is followed by an elaboration on brand evaluation and attitude formation. Lastly, factors that may indicate the differences in CSR awareness and moral brand evaluation discussed.

4.1 Different levels in awareness and associations of CSR activities

As stated before, children have different degrees of awareness regarding the CSR activities of brands. An overview of these difference is displayed in table 2 followed with an elaboration.

	Unaware (7)	Slightly aware (6)	Moderately aware (7)	Aware (5)
View of CSR	Generalized view CSR	Start linking CSR to brands	Link CSR to brands, low elaboration	Link CSR to brands, high elaboration
Attribute focus	Prototypical	Notice signs	Focus on functional elements	Focus on symbolical elements
CSR understanding	Starting	Understand	More sophisticated	More sophisticated and abstract
Depth awareness	–	Difficult to recall	Easily recall	Easily recall
Breadth awareness	–	Limited	Do not think about CSR when encounter brand	Consciously know about CSR

Table 2: Overview of the distinctions between the different degrees of CSR awareness among children (age 8-12)

Unaware

7 out of 25 children are unaware about the CSR activities of brands. Children who are unaware of CSR activities focused mainly on a single functional attribute or benefit of a brand. E.g. Albert Heijn behaves in a good way "because the provide food" (Unaware, r. 5, m, 8)[1]. This group starts to pay attention to the activities of organizations and may know what the consequences of certain activities are:

> "They sell tanks and oil and that, umm... goes into the cars and the cars drive them and then... Yeah, then co2 comes out. That goes into the air and the air gets dirty" (Unaware, r. 6, m, 9).

However, it is difficult for them to link a certain CSR activity to a brand. Children within this group are characterized as having a more generalized view. When asked if they knew good or bad CSR brands, they mainly mentioned general things such as a zoo, a forest ranger, cars, gas stations and paper companies instead of specific brands. For example: "They [paper companies] remove a lot of trees. That is not very good because the trees give you oxygen" (Unaware, r, 7, f, 9)[2]. Other children make generalizations about industries: "Umm... I'm a bit in the middle. Cars are bad for

---

[1] r. 5 = Respondent number, m = male, 8 = age
[2] f = female

the environment" (Unaware, r. 5, m, 8). So, it seems like children within this group consider attributes prototypical to all brands in the related industry (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020).

Although their perception of CSR is mainly a general view, children within this group start to understand what a possible CSR activity of a company could be by giving an example for their own imaginary company. One would give away toys with his game store "because other people have nothing. Otherwise it's pathetic" (Unaware, r. 5, m, 8). Or with their own clothing store: "hanging up signs all over the world or actually in the Netherlands. Umm... away with the pollution (Unaware, r. 7, f, 9).

Additionally, the parents confirm that their children are not aware of CSR activities or only at a general level which is not brand related. The children's parents state that they do talk about sustainability aspects with their children but not focused toward brands. Furthermore, 3 out of 7 parents indicated that if their child was more aware, they would perceive it as very important that companies pay attention to CSR activities.

> "Well, I believe that she knows things about child labor and that certain things are bad for the environment. The regular stuff. But I am doubting if she could really mention that certain companies are doing something which is nice for umm... people, like Tony Chocolonely" (Unaware, r. P7, f, 9)[3].

> "We talk about sustainability and related things but more like don't throw your litter on the street and use less plastic. More like the standard things you say" (Unaware, r. P10, f, 9).

Slightly aware

6 out of 25 children are slightly aware of the CSR activities of brands. Instead of having a generalized view toward brands (e.g. all gas stations are bad), they start to link CSR activities to a specific brand as well. While unaware children use mainly a single attribute or benefit to tell whether a brand behaves in a good or a bad way, slightly aware children use more than one. All children within this group are able to mention at least one good or bad CSR activity of a brand.

> "Oh yes at Shell I once had to make something of a design to make Shell more sustainable, yes." [...] "I thought that was a nice assignment and also good of them wanting to become more sustainable" (Slightly aware, r. 17, m, 11).

---

[3] r. P7= Parent of respondent number 7, f= gender of child, 9 = age of child

"They [Tesla] only have electric cars and the models are beautiful" (Slightly aware, r. 9, m, 9).

Not all attributes are perceived as prototypical to all brands in the related industry. Children who are slightly aware start to notice signs which they associate with good or bad CSR. Within this group they are able to mention CSR activities of a brand based on own experiences, like noticing that Starbucks uses cardboard instead of plastic, but also based on non-observable cues. For example, low prices can be a sign of poor working conditions and the use of an electric car engine as a sign of taking better care of the environment. However, it remains challenging for them to understand the exact meaning of it.

"Those [Primark & H&M] clothes are very cheap and the people who make those clothes make almost no money from them" (Slightly aware, r.11, f, 10).

"I think it is good of them [Tesla] that they make electric cars." […] "Umm... because you almost have none Co2 emission" (Slightly aware, r. 12, m, 10).

Besides noticing sings related to CSR, all children within this group understand what a possible CSR activity of a company could be by giving an example for their own imaginary company. Some children even mention CSR related activities before the concept of CSR is introduced. When asked where they would place their factory, some children said:

"Not in an Asian country or something similar." […] "Because they sometimes use children there" (Slightly aware, r. 17, m, 11).

"Then those people work in those factories and don't have to travel that far. Wanting to give us that stuff. Because if they're gonna travel, it's gonna cost money for gasoline and everything" […] "That's bad for the environment" (Slightly aware, r. 11, f, 10).

Their depth and breadth of awareness regarding the CSR activities of brands is overall still limited. When asked if they knew good or bad CSR brands, they are able to name a specific brand, but it takes them lot of effort to mention it. In addition, most children who mentioned a good CSR brand were often not able to mention a bad CSR brand or the other way around. Furthermore, nearly all their parents stated their child's awareness regarding the CSR activities of brands is low. They used words such as: 'a bit', 'a little too young for that', 'if it's very clear", or 'he doesn't judge'.

Lastly, 2 out of 6 parents indicated that if their child was more aware, they would perceive it as very important that companies pay attention to CSR activities.

> "He only mentioned good companies. He can't mention any bad companies. That's not part of his system. That's funny to see. The who norms and values are not part of his system yet" (Slightly aware, r. P9, m, 9).

> "Um... I thought something of the Starbucks, coffee and then they give out cardboard boxes." […] "Umm, yeah at supermarkets you can also.... get different coffees and then it stays in the same package, still in cardboard" (Slightly aware, r. 1, m, 8).

Moderately aware

7 out of 25 children are moderately aware. Their parents describe their child's awareness as: 'Not aware while buying', 'doesn't think about it immediately', 'she'll notice if she knows', or 'very brief'. Like slightly aware children, when asked on what aspects they should pay attention to if they were in charge of their own imaginary company, some children mentioned CSR aspects before the concept of CSR was introduced. All children were able to mention a specific CSR activity after the concept of CSR was introduced.

However, the results suggest that the awareness depth of moderately aware children is higher compared to slightly aware children regarding the CSR activities of brands. The results seem to provide indications that that moderately aware children recall the CSR activities more easily and can mention it for multiple brands. Without using any cues, or introducing the concept of CSR, nearly all children within this group almost immediately mentioned good or bad CSR activities of a brand. In contrast, slightly aware children needed more time and were mainly able to mention the CSR activities of only one brand before introducing the concept of CSR.

Furthermore, the results seem to indicate that children within this group have a higher breadth of awareness regarding the CSR activities of a brand compared to slightly aware children. They start to look in a more sophisticated way toward it. These children seem to understand that there could be another reason of why certain brands do CSR activities and it may not always be completely genuine.

> "Yes in general I think it's a good car [Tesla] but my parents don't like the battery and actually at first I thought it was really great and really good but because of that battery it has become a bit less" (Moderately aware, r. 25, m, 12).

"Umm... maybe because they hope people will talk about them and say Tesla is doing great, like I'm doing now. Like they hope people will talk say Tesla takes care of the environment" (Moderately aware, r. 24, f, 12).

"Umm Yeah I think they do it mainly that people think oh, yeah they support that [Ronald McDonald] so McDonald's is good so we can get something there" (Moderately aware, r. 20, m, 11).

Moreover, the results seem to suggest that children who are moderately aware of CSR activities to start paying more attention to the social/symbolical elements of brands. They could avoid brands because of their bad CSR activities, but it remains a tradeoff. However, it seems like they elaborate the brand-related CSR information on a more general level. While they know about the CSR activities, they can forget about it when they encounter the brand at a later moment. CSR activities are often not perceived as a unique and/or favorable attribute or benefit. It may indicate that they appreciate the functional elements of a brand more compared to the symbolical elements.

"Umm... I don't think she is really aware of it. I believe, she doesn't think about it immediately. If we talk about it with her, she understands what certain companies do. I don't think she will mention those things by herself, but she has an unconscious knowledge about it. Because if you'd go more in-depth, she will be able to mention examples" (Moderately aware, r. P24, f, 12).

"She often watches the news together with us. These things are often topics. We talk about it, but I don't think whether she'd be able to mention a company right now. She's aware that we have to take some actions to help the environment but not in a more detailed way" (Moderately aware, r. P16, f, 11).

"It's just bad and it shouldn't be. On the other hand, you don't pay as much attention as you think you do. If you need something and it happens to be child labor, you don't necessarily pay attention" (Moderately aware, r.22, f, 12).

Aware

5 out of 25 children are aware of the CSR activities of brands. Children within this group are, compared to the moderately aware group, able to elaborate on a brand's CSR activities on a deeper level. Their breadth of awareness regarding CSR activities seems to be higher. Not only do

they understand the immediate reason of a CSR activity (e.g. reducing plastic because it benefits the environment), they also show abilities to look beyond CSR activities in a more critical or abstract way. Furthermore, besides of having brand-oriented CSR discussions with their parents, they look up information by themselves as well.

"Tesla, for example. They have a lot of electric cars, which is better for the environment. I also thought that they put a Tesla car into space, and I think that's a bit useless. […] Yeah, and that rockets got a lot of CO_2 coming out of it. I think that's another negative point. But they do make electric cars, so I think that's a good thing about it" (Aware, r. 15 m, 10).

"We're the first source of information, but they look up a lot themselves these days. They also watch YouTube and news items and they also search Tesla on the internet" (r. P1, 15 & 21, m, 8, 10, & 12).

Like the moderately aware group, children within this group are able to mention good or bad CSR activities of brands, without using any cues or introducing the concept of CSR. Furthermore, when asked on what aspects they should pay attention to if they were in charge of their own imaginary company, nearly all children mentioned CSR aspects before the concept of CSR was introduced. They mentioned things as fair salary and use of plastic. This shows that they are concerned with the topic.

Moreover, unlike most moderately aware group, children within this group seem to associate CSR activities as favorable and/or unique brand attributes or benefits. The symbolical elements of a brand are important to them and they seem to appreciate it more compared to children who are moderately aware. Furthermore, these children pay attention to specific attributes such as 'use of plastic', 'child labor', or 'electric car engines' and form moral associations toward brands. Additionally, the depth of awareness regarding the CSR activities of brands seems to be high with children who are aware. They think about the CSR activities of brands by themselves and do not need to be reminded by someone else. Not only do they understand why a brand does CSR certain activities, they can also see the bigger picture. This may suggest that children who are aware, have strong associations regarding CSR activities.

"The Lidl, I believe the Albert Heijn is doing it better compared to the Lidl, but I feel like they are doing well too. […] Albert Heijn pays more attention to plastic while the Lidl doesn't" (Aware, r. 8, f, 9).

"I haven't really been there yet, but I think they [Tesla] make good cars. I think it's a good company because yes, they also think about the environment and I think that's very good and neat. A big fat 10" (Aware, r. 21, m, 12).

"Umm... actually all the shops in between, all supermarkets, the Coop, some stores gave people plastic bags away for free and now you have to pay for it. But I think they should just get rid of them altogether. That they just have to deliver boxes or bags of cotton or something" (Aware, r. 14, m, 10).

"Umm there must be a change in the evolution of the car. So, I think they have not tried anything that is better for the environment and easy" (Aware, r. 21, m, 12).

4.2 Brand evaluation and attitude formation based on CSR activities

Brand evaluation

When asked how they evaluated a brand of which they think does good CSR activities, all children (from slightly aware to aware) used similar words as '*doing well*, '*good company*', '*fun*', and '*fairest brand*'. The CSR activities of brands are mainly perceived as genuine by children (e.g. helping other or the environment).

Slightly aware	Moderately aware	aware
Not right	Bad but tastes nice	Can't do this
Bad for the earth	Not always good	Sad
Bad for the people	Unfair	Annoying

Table 3: negative associations based on a brand's irresponsible CSR activities

In contrast, when asked how they evaluated bad or irresponsible CSR activities a of brand, they showed different feelings. As displayed in table 3, children who are aware show stronger negative feelings compared those who are slightly aware. Moderately aware children seem to show negative feelings on a more moderate level. Some children seem to understand why a brand engages in irresponsible CSR (e.g. safe money) while others could not imagine why a brand would do this.

In addition, children were asked to choose between two out of three CSR aspects (legal, ethical philanthropical) on which am imaginary company should focus on according to them. Most children choose legal and ethical (12 out of 25) or ethical and philanthropical (9 out of 25), as displayed below in table 4. Because of the small sample size and small differences, it cannot be stated children prefer one CSR aspect over the other. However, the ethical aspect seems to be important to them.

"I believe charities [philanthropical] are important, children and people may need something. 2 [ethical] because I want the environment to become better. In that case I don't really care about the Dutch rules" (Moderately aware, r. 13, f, 10).

"Mainly two [ethical], but 1 [legal] as well." […] "If you do things that are wrong, but which is nice for the environment, like having a tiger at home […] but that's against the Dutch rules and that's not allowed. So, pay attention to what's allowed and not allowed" (Aware, r. 8, f, 9).

		Awareness Level of awareness				
		1 Unaware	2 Slightly aware	3 Moderately aware	4 Aware	Total
CSR_pref CSR Preference	1 Ethical and philanthropical	2	3	3	1	9
	2 Legal and philanthropical	2	0	0	0	2
	3 Legal and ethical	1	3	4	4	12
	4 Ethical	2	0	0	0	2
Total		7	6	7	5	25

Table 4: Children's CSR aspect preferences and level of awareness

Attitude formation

The results show that the CSR activities can influences the attitude of the child toward the brand. It can be perceived as more positive or negative. This attitude is not always fixed and if a brand, for example, improves its CSR activities, the attitude the child has can change as well. Furthermore, it could also result in a child starting to look differently at category-related brands as well. The latter is mainly the case with children who are moderately aware and aware. They have gained more knowledge about the CSR activities of a brand and therefore become sometimes suspicious of the activities of other brands. However, the fact that a child knows about certain good or bad CSR activities of a brand does not automatically mean it influences their evaluation or their behavior.

"Yes, BMW that was first something with software in the car. […] But if it's a BMW, so why it is a good brand? They've changed it and I think it's better now. Not that it's so good for the environment but..." (Moderately aware, r.25, m, 12).

"I didn't really look at chocolate brands, or I mean I didn't look differently at chocolate brands. Now I know what Tony [Chocolonely, chocolate brand] does, I look differently at them but also, for example, Milka may be good as well but I don't know. So maybe I look

at those brands in a different way now than they actually are" (Moderately aware, r. 18, m, 11).

"Well I buy something because it's cheap and I don't have a lot of pocket money. Things which are animal or ecofriendly are often expensive you know. So, I cannot pay for it" (Moderately aware, r. 16, f, 11).

More interesting, based on a brand's CSR activities, the results seem to indicate children form attitudes and act upon this, based on the CSR activities of brands. This is mainly shown by children who are aware of CSR activities. They seem to have strong attitudes toward a particular brand, and therefore adjust their behavior. One child even stated that Tesla is his favorite brand due to their CSR activities.

"When she pays attention to it, it's related to clothes. She always says she doesn't want to go to Primark. Not only because it's an annoying store but also because she has heard about why the clothes are so cheap. That's because people have bad work conditions. She knows about that" (Aware, r. P23, f, 12).

"Well, they're my favorite cars. Well, if I had the money, I'd want one later. I like it because, umm... they do, like, yeah... it's not very polluting and yeah. And I like that about Tesla" (Aware, r. 21, m, 12).

4.3 Factors influencing children's CSR awareness and moral brand evaluation

The awareness about a brand's CSR activities and the influence it has on the attitudes the child forms differ among the respondents. The results suggest there may be a pattern with the *age-, social resources-, direct experiences-, and personal characteristics* of the child which could explain the differences among them. However, these patterns should be looked at with caution and cannot be generalized. They are based on only a small number of respondents and should be tested in a larger sample.

Age

The results seem to suggest a pattern between age and the level of awareness of CSR activities. While almost all 8- and 9-year-olds appear to be unaware or slightly aware of a brand's CSR activities, all 12-yar-olds are moderately aware to aware. 10- and 11-year-olds vary between slightly aware and aware of a brand's CSR activities.

Most 8- and 9-year-olds experience difficulties with understanding what a brand's CSR activity could be. Because CSR is a difficult concept for children to understand, CSR activities were explained to children as 'doing something in a way which is nice for the earth, people and/or animals'. When asked to give an example of a CSR activity for their own imaginary company, it was challenging to give any example or a realistic example for most 8- and 9-year-olds. Most older children were better able to provide a realistic example. To illustrate, two examples of what kind of CSR activity an 8- and a 12-year-old would do with their imaginary clothing store:

> "Making clothes [for animals] and then they can sell it. […] By making them beautiful with glitter" (Unaware, r. 4, f, 8).

> "Maybe items for clothing can be recycled. […] Yeah, like old stuff or something. And then you can use it again for that" (Moderately aware, r. 22, f, 12).

Most children can tell that a particular brand or industry does, for example, irresponsible CSR because they know how others may think about it or may empathize with people who must work in bad working conditions. It seems like when children become older, they are better able to understand the deeper meaning of a brand. Their thoughts about a brand's CSR activities become more complex.

> "Yes, the cars, with the guhguhguh. […] Because smoke comes out of the car and then guhguhguh" (Unaware, r. 5, m, 8).

> "My mother won't let me buy clothes there [Primark] because they're not worth that much. […] I think it's pretty bad. It's very cheap clothes over there, so I don't like it either. I don't think it's better to buy clothes there either. […] For the people who make clothes, they make money, little money" (Slightly aware, r. 11, f, 10).

> "Yes, I started to look at it differently, because just like the advertising, I don't know, it may be the same with other companies as well, but with Nutella, I know better now. In their

advertising everything is very nice and there is nothing on the packaging or something. And yet there is child labor behind it" (Aware, r. 22, f, 12).

While the 8-year-old states that all cars are bad because it emits gasses and does not link these activities to a specific brand, the 10-year-old is able to understand the reason behind low priced products of a brand based on particular signs and knowledge obtained from the parent. The 12-year-old shows more complex associations and notices that the brand's communication is not in line with its activities. This indicates that when children become older, they start to understand the CSR activities of brands better and create more complex associations.

Social resources

In addition to age, the social resources also seem to play a role regarding the awareness and evaluations a child has regarding the CSR activities of brands. However, this should be considered with caution because of the small sample size. The interviews suggest that most children learn about a brand's CSR activities from their parents, school, and/or media.

"Sometimes my parents and I watch those programs. Like people put more sugar into products so it tastes better and people want more. It tastes great but..." (Slightly aware, r. 19, f, 11).

"Well my parents tell me a bit about it [Primark], and something about it, yes I don't know when that was but at school the teacher had told me something about it once" (Moderately aware, r. 25, m, 12).

"Umm... I watched Tv and I just saw the commercial. I thought like oh this [BMW] is good, more electric cars. Before, I just thought like oh nice cars (Moderately aware, r. 24, f, 12).

The results indicate that parents may play an important role. There seems to be a pattern, which should be considered with caution, regarding the child's awareness of CSR activities and the way how parents have conversations with their child. The results suggest that having brand-oriented conversations with children may result in children better able to link CSR activities to a brand. This becomes clear based on the interview with r. 23, a 12-year-old girl and her mother. The parent mainly focuses the CSR conversations on clothing brands. While the child is aware about the CSR activities of clothing brands, her CSR awareness of brands in other industries is low.

"They have nice stores in Arnhem, and when we're walking down the street my mom says that we should go to this store because it's fun and good for the environment" (Aware, r.23, f, 12).

"I heard you say something about chocolate and I've never explained her the difference between a regular chocolate bar and a Tony Chocolonely bar. So, what's exactly the difference. Treating farmers fairly or unfairly. I've never talked about it with her" (Aware, r. P23, f, 12).

Nearly all parents state they talk about sustainability aspects with their children and almost two-thirds of the parents have at least to some degree brand-oriented CSR conversations with them. Children, whose parents do not have brand-oriented CSR conversations with them, seem to have a lower awareness. To illustrate, 8 out of 10 children, whose parents do not have any brand-oriented CSR conversations with them, are unaware or slightly aware of the CSR activities of brands. In turn, if a parent has brand oriented CSR conversations with their child, it does not automatically result it an increased awareness.

"I went to the Aldi last week. She asked why do we never go there? I said to her: I don't like this store. And you noticed during the interview, she said the same as I did. […] So, they remember what you say to them as a parent. Sometimes I mention Tony Chocolonely, but I was surprised she didn't mention anything of it" (Unaware, r. P4, f, 8).

Direct experiences

Besides these social resources, it is important that children also learn about CSR activities based on their own direct experience with the brand. Children start to notice this already at the age of 8. They look at a certain activity and form an opinion about it themselves.

"Umm… what yeah from McDonald's they use yeah more cardboard a little bit" […] "Yes, that it is a little better for nature and that there are more wastebaskets" (Slightly aware, r. 1, m, 8).

"I find the Albert Heijn especially in this Corona time that have adapted enormously as one of the first in my opinion. I think that's very good of them" (Aware, r. 15, m, 10).

The strength of these associations seems to depend on whether the child has encountered the brand ever before and how visible the activity is. The more experience and the more visible the CSR activity, the stronger the associations seem to be. For example, during the interviews, some children stated that they do not think about Primark's bad CSR activities when they visit the store because you cannot tell or feel it based on the clothes. It is less visible.

> "It must be a little close. You can touch a Tesla car, you can touch stray plastic then it becomes interesting. If it's really purely theoretical, that's a bit of a longer story" (r. P1, 15 & 21, m, 8, 10, & 12).

> "The same goes on for Primark. I sometimes talk about it in a negative way, but she didn't mention it. This may be since we don't have a Primark over here and we never go there" (Unaware, r. P4, f, 8).

Personal characteristics

The fact that children become older and their parents have brand-oriented CSR conversations with them does not necessarily lead to a greater awareness or of a child. For example, among the respondents, two brothers were interviewed of which the youngest child (10-year-old) showed awareness of the CSR activities of brands while his 11-year-old brother was only slightly aware.

> "[11-year-old son (r. 17)] is a little bit scared, I think. He's busy with all the world problems but not very much with what they [brands] are saying. A little bit" […] "I think he's [10-year-old son (r.14)] more into it" […] "[r.14] really looks at the products and the texts and what it says and where it comes from and [r. 17] who looks a little more of as big a haha as possible" (r. P14 & 17, m, 10 & 11).

It seems like children who are less concerned with CSR activities appreciate the functional elements of a brand more while children who are more concerned with it are more focused on the brand's symbolical elements.

> "I don't think it's a bad company because the clothes they make are just good and I don't necessarily feel that they tell the people who make them that if they are in bad circumstances, yeah... you don't think about that very quickly" (Moderately aware, r. 20, m, 11).

"Well, in a good way, umm... I feel like Zara is bad because they use children who are poor. That's also the case with H&M I believe. They make those clothes. It's bad for the environment if you go to these stores." […] "From the Leger des Heils. That's second hand and therefore good. I wanted to go there to look for clothes because it's good for the environment" (Aware, r. 23, f, 12).

This may suggest that a child who is not very concerned with CSR could know about a brand's activities but forgets it at a later moment. So, this could indicate that the association is weaker. In turn, if a child is aware and concerned with CSR activities of brands, it may indicate the child has more persistent associations toward the CSR activities which last longer (Hoyer et al., 2018). This is also reflected in the way how they elaborate on brand-related information. They notice activities by themselves, start conversations about it with their parents, start to look differently at related brands or may adjust their behavior. For example, the mother of r. 14, m, 10 states that her son pays attention to CSR activities of brands and talks about it. he has an opinion about what cars they should buy or not and does not eat products of certain brands.

5. Conclusion & Discussion

Previous consumer-oriented research focused mainly on adults (e.g. Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Grappi et al., 2013). For this reason, it was unknown whether children are aware of the CSR activities of brands, and how these activities influenced children's perception of brands. The aim of this thesis is to answer the following research question: *how aware are children (age 8-12) regarding the CSR activities of brand, and if they are, how do these activities influence their moral evaluation of brands?* In this section the results of the study are interpreted. The main findings of the research are presented and compared with the theoretical context, followed with answering the research question.

In short, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first research that shows that children can be aware of the (irresponsible) CSR activities of brands. Children who are aware vary between the age of 9 to 12, while nearly all 8-year-olds are unaware of the CSR activities of brands. Children are able to retrieve their CSR knowledge without using any cues or introducing the concept of CSR. Not only do children show awareness, the results indicate that children can form strong associations and attitudes based on a brand's CSR activities and evaluate it as 'good' or 'bad'. This will play an important role on their future brand preference because the earliest and defining symbolic experiences in childhood are of important influence in one's future attitudes and perceptions (Braun-LatTour et al., 2007; Strife, 2012). To put differently, attitudes and perceptions toward a brand formed in someone's youth are more challenging to change compared to those which are formed when being an adult.

More interestingly, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first research that provides indications that some children change their behavior due to the CSR activities of brands (e.g. brand avoidance or choosing one brand over the other). This could have important consequences for the brand. Therefore, if the child forms a positive or negative attitude during childhood, it could last during the rest of someone's life. It is therefore key for brands to prevent children to form a negative attitude toward them based on irresponsible CSR activities. In turn, brands that engage in CSR activities could use it to improve the child-brand relationship. For this reason, increasing children's CSR awareness could support children in better translating their desire to be sustainable into their consumption behavior (Francis & Davis, 2014).

These findings provide a first glimpse of what the CSR activities mean to children between the age of 8 to 12. The results shed light to their CSR awareness, how it influences their associations

and attitudes they form, and provide indications for factors that explain the differences in children's CSR awareness and moral brand evaluation. These topics are discussed first, followed with the implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

5.1 CSR Awareness

The results show that children are aware of the (irresponsible) CSR activities of brands. They have different degrees of CSR awareness ('unaware', 'slightly aware', 'moderately aware', or 'aware'). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study that provides insights into the differences in degrees of CSR awareness among children (age 8-12). These insights are important because a higher awareness has more influence on the associations and attitudes someone has (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020).

In short, the results indicate that children who are unaware or slightly aware of CSR often have difficulties with understanding the essence of CSR and the role brands have regarding this topic. Children who are moderately aware or aware of CSR have a better understanding of this. The distinction between moderately aware and aware children is that the latter focuses more on the symbolical brand elements. For this reason, they elaborate at a deeper level on the CSR activities and consciously know about it when they encounter the brand. The results indicate that children's degree in CSR awareness is influenced by several factors which are discussed in more detail in section 5.3.

Besides the differences in the degree of CSR awareness, the results also showed similarities between the children who were able to mention a CSR activity of a brand. Thus, children who are slightly aware, moderately aware, and aware. These children mainly mentioned CSR activities central to the core activities of the brand (e.g. the electric engine of Tesla). In line with Kim & Lee (2019), nearly all of them perceived these activities as genuine. Moreover, these children barely mentioned CSR activities peripheral to the core activities of a brand (e.g. donating to charity). This may indicate that children do not pay attention to these aspects or are unaware of it. Therefore, it remains unknown whether they perceive peripheral CSR activities as less genuine like adults do (Kim & Lee, 2019).

Regarding the order of importance of CSR components (legal, ethical, philanthropical), the results indicate that children are mainly focused on ethical components. This is mainly related to environmental issues (e.g. emission/pollution, electric cars, and plastic) and social-ethical issues

such as bad working conditions. The latter is in contrast to the sustainability topics children pay attention to, which are mainly related to environmental aspects (Hagenauw, 2019). A possible explanation may be that children regarding sustainability are more focused on their own mental state (e.g. how can I be sustainable) while regarding CSR they also think about the intentions, beliefs, and desires of others. (McAlister & Cornwell, 2010). Therefore, it could be more likely that they pay attention to social-ethical issues as well.

Furthermore, another interesting finding of this research is that most children obtained a deeper awareness toward a particular industry (e.g. clothing or cars). This suggest that children develop a relatively specified awareness regarding the CSR activities of brands. The results indicate that this is due to the child's own personal interest. A possible explanation is that the associations the child has of the brands in an industry are congruent with their self-image (Chaplin & John, 2005). Consequently, a child who is very interested into car brands has more motivation to process brand-related information on a higher level (Hoyer et al., 2018).

5.2 CSR influencing brand associations and attitudes

Children are not only aware of CSR; it also influences the association and attitudes children have toward brands. Consistent with previous literature regarding adult consumers (Grappi et al., 2013) and child-consumers (Lopez & Rodriguez, 2018), this research found that children are able to evaluate a brand as good or bad. This research is different, because it is the first study that has found indications that children are able to form moral evaluations toward brands (or category-related brands) based on CSR activities and thus pay attention to CSR. A brand's CSR activities could be perceived as unique and/or favorable by children. Therefore, CSR can benefit in a positive brand judgment (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020). Moreover, the results indicate that CSR can be a reason for a child to perceive the brand as his/her favorite. This is related to attitudinal attachment, an aspect of brand resonance and the ultimate step in brand relationship (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020).

More interestingly, this research also shows indications that a brand's (irresponsible) CSR activities could in some cases lead to children adjusting their behavior. CSR activities could result in choosing one brand over the other. Furthermore, irresponsible CSR activities could in some cases lead to in children avoiding the brand based on their negative attitude. Like adults (Brunk, 2010), irresponsible CSR activities can negatively affect the child-brand relationship.

For this reason, it is key to realize that the fact that children pay attention to these CSR aspects could play an important role in their future brand preferences. This is because, as stated before, the earliest and defining symbolic experiences in childhood are of important influence in one's future attitudes and perceptions (Braun-LatTour et al., 2007; Strife, 2012).

5.3 Factors explaining differences in children's CSR awareness and moral brand evaluation

The findings indicate that children who are more aware of CSR have stronger associations and attitudes toward a brand and sometimes adjust their behavior. This finding is in line with the consumer-brand literature which states that the degree of awareness influences the associations and attitudes people form (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020). Furthermore, brand attitudes influence someone's behavioral intention and behavior (Hoyer et al., 2018). However, every child is different. What makes one child having a higher awareness and stronger associations and attitudes toward the CSR activities of a brand over the other? The differences in degree of awareness and the associations and attitudes children have regarding the CSR activities of brands, which could potentially influence behavior, seem to be moderated by several factors: (1) *motivation*, (2) *ability*, and (3) *opportunity*. These factors are related to the MAO-theory (Hoyer et al., 2018). However, these estimated explanations should be taken with care due to the small sample size of this research.

Motivation

Children have different personal characteristics and therefore look differently toward brands. When two children hear about the same CSR activities of a brand, one child may become aware of it and forms strong associations and attitudes while the other does not. The child's motivation to process brand-related CSR information seems to play a role.

The results provide indications that children, who are concerned regarding a CSR related topic, and have persistent beliefs about what is good or bad, are more motivated to process brand-related CSR information (Hoyer et al., 2018). They think about brands in a specific way and pay more attention to the brand's symbolical elements. More precisely, children who perceive that the CSR activities of a brand also has implications for their own life, sometimes seem to adjust their behavior according to it.

It seems like these children perceive CSR as personally relevant, and therefore devote a lot of thoughts about the consequences of their acts, which influences their attitude and eventually their

behavior (Hoyer et al., 2018). This results in deeper brand connections with the child's self-image (Chaplin & John, 2005). This also corresponds to the interviews. Some children changed their behavior because, for example, they wanted to take better care of the environment. Instead of an irresponsible CSR brand, they chose a different brand that they thought behaved better.

In turn, children who are not concerned regarding CSR and/or do not perceive it as personally relevant, seem to have a lower motivation to process brand-related CSR information. Therefore, it is more likely that they do not think about the brand's CSR activities when they encounter the it the next time.

Ability

Besides motivation, children need to have the ability to become aware of a brand's CSR activities and form associations and attitudes toward it. The results indicate that children's cognitive- and social resources play an important role.

Age is related to ability because older children have better cognitive resources (Hoyer et al., 2018). Already at the age of 8 some children seem to be at least to some degree aware of the CSR activities of brands. However, in contrast to sustainability awareness (Hagenauw, 2019), this research demonstrates that most 8-year-olds are unaware of the CSR activities of brands. Older children are better capable to understand CSR since it is a very abstract and latent construct which is difficult to comprehend. Their awareness depth and breadth regarding CSR activities becomes more sophisticated and they are aware about more CSR activities than younger children. The underlying reason can be their cognitive level. According to John (1999), children's cognitive abilities develop as they become older. Older children seem to be more familiar with a reflective way of reasoning and focusing on social meanings (John, 1999) and therefore better able to decode CSR activities on a more complex level (Achenreiner & John, 2003; John, 1999).

Thus, because older children's cognitive abilities are further developed, it is more likely that they, in contrast to younger children, have a higher degree of awareness regarding the CSR activities of a brand and develop stronger associations and attitudes. This is particularly clear when comparing the results of the 8- and 12-year-olds.

Besides cognitive resources, the child's social resources play a role as well. Similar to child-brand relationships (Ji, 2002), social resources seem also to influence children's degree of awareness and attitudes regarding the CSR activities of brands. The main resources of children are

parents, school and/or media. All three provide the child ability to gain more knowledge about the CSR activities of brands. However, in line with Ji (2008), the results indicate that parents play more prominent role. If parents have a certain positive/negative attitude toward a brand's CSR activities, and have conversations about it with their child, it is more likely the child will become more aware and form attitudes about it as well. This enables them to gain more knowledge and elaborate on it because their parents have conversations about the CSR activities of brands. In turn, children whose parents have little or no CSR-oriented conversations with them therefore seem to be less aware of CSR activities.

Opportunity

Besides motivation and ability, children need to have the opportunity to process CSR related information. This is related to the complexity and repetition of information while having enough time and limited distractions to process (Hoyer et al., 2018). Both the complexity- and repetition of information seem to influence children in having strong associations regarding the CSR activities of a brand, and therefore affect the opportunity to engage in a behavior.

The complexity of information seems to relate on how visible the CSR activity is. Something which is observable (e.g. use of plastic) is easier for children to understand compared to something non-observable (e.g. emission control software in cars) (Achenreiner & John, 2003). Furthermore, repetition is related the direct own experiences the child has with the brand (e.g. visiting the store or using products). It is more likely that children will forget about the CSR activities of a brand if they only have limited experience with it.

Processing CSR-related brand information

Awareness of a brand's CSR activities
- Understands the essence of CSR
- Understands the role brands play regarding CSR
- Pays attention to symbolical brand-elements

Associations and attitude toward the brand's CSR activities
- Persistent associations toward CSR activities
- Perceives CSR as favorable and/or unique
- Strong positive or negative emotions
- Looks differently at category-related brands
- Possible attitudinal attachment

Behavioral intention
- Deciding whether or not to change behavior based on (irresponsible) CSR activities

Behavior
- Behavioral change

Motivation
- Perceives CSR as personally relevant
- Concerned regarding CSR activities of brands
- Persistent beliefs about what is good or bad

Ability
- Cognitive ability to decode CSR activities
- Parents having brand-oriented CSR conversations with child
- Obtaining knowledge from school and/or media

Opportunity
- Having direct experiences with the brand
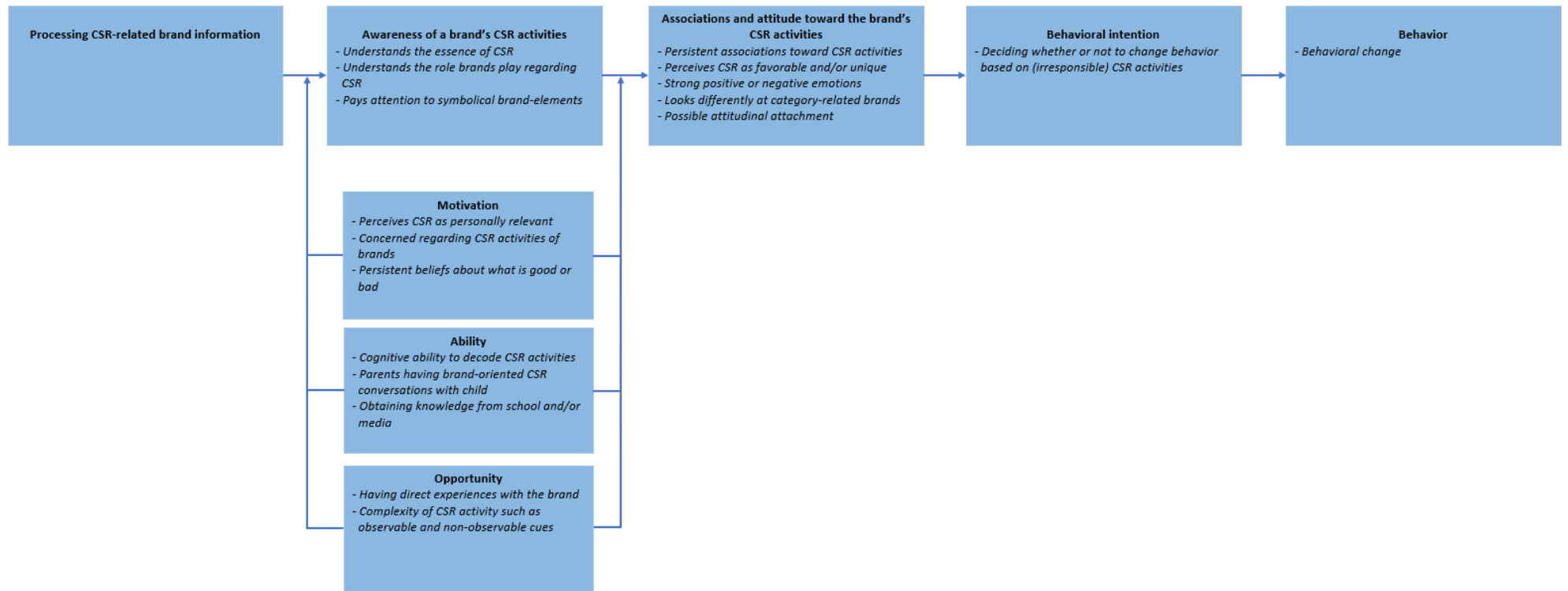- Complexity of CSR activity such as observable and non-observable cues

Figure 1: Model of influence of CSR on children

Figure 1 shows how the three moderators (motivation, ability, and opportunity) influence the differences in awareness, associations and attitudes children have regarding the CSR activities of brands. These three factors suggest that children are more aware if they have a higher motivation to process CSR-related information because of their personal characteristics. Besides motivation, they need to have the ability to process it which is based on cognitive- (age) and social resources. Lastly, they need to have the opportunity to encounter the brand and learning about the CSR activities. If all three are high, it can result higher awareness and strong associations and attitudes regarding the CSR activities of brands and can potentially influence the child's behavior.

5.4 Implications
Theoretical contribution

The present study has addressed an important gap in the literature. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first empirical study that has investigated the influence of CSR activities of brands in relation to children (age 8-12) as consumers. Previous consumer-oriented CSR literature focused on the perceptions and responses of adults (e.g. Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Grappi et al., 2013). Previous child-oriented research has established that children are able to understand brand symbolism (Achenreiner & John, 2003; McAlister & Cornwell, 2010) and form moral evaluations of a brand (Lopez & Rodriguez, 2018). The findings of this research advance these lines of investigation.

This research adds to the literature by providing some relevant theoretical contributions. First, it shows that children (age 8-12) can be aware of CSR activities and have different degrees of awareness. It therefore confirms the suggestion of Lopez & Rodriguez (2018) that children can be aware of CSR activities of brands. Secondly, the study provides insight in the associations and attitudes that children form toward brands based on CSR activities. Thirdly, this study identifies three possible factors that could indicate the differences found in awareness and the associations and attitudes among children regarding the CSR activities of brands, which potentially could result in changed behavior. Lastly, this research provides indications that children could adjust their behavior based on their awareness and attitudes they have regarding the CSR activities of brands.

Managerial implications

The fact that children appear to be aware about the CSR activities of brands and influences their moral evaluations can be of great value for companies. The findings of this research provide marketeers a more complete understanding of child-consumer's view on their CSR activities as it gives developmental cues about children's brand awareness and associations. Brand preferences obtained during childhood are the foundation for someone's future life (Braun-LaTour et al., 2007; Strife, 2012). For this reason, the results are not only relevant for child-oriented brands but also for non-child-oriented brands since children form moral evaluations about their CSR activities as well.

The results of this research can be an extra motivator for brands to engage in CSR activities and to communicate about it to children. Some children can perceive CSR as favorable and/or unique and there are indications that it could lead to the brand perceived as favorite by the child. So, CSR could be a way to differentiate the brand from competitors.

Children who are not aware often fail to translate their desire to be sustainable into their consumption behavior (Francis & Davis, 2014). Furthermore, parents whose children are unaware or slightly aware stated that, if their child would be more aware of CSR, their child would think it is important that brands engage in CSR activities. Since CSR practices have been advertised mainly to adults (Lopez & Rodriguez, 2018), marketeers could leverage their brand by putting more emphasis on the communication of their CSR activities toward children.

By informing children about the brand's CSR activities, it could result in better or more positive associations. It could support in creating childhood friendship in which childhood preferences extent when they become older, and go on when being an adult (Fournier, 1998). Therefore, marketeers should take the ability, and opportunity of children into account when communicating about their CSR activities.

Regarding ability it is important that their communication is clear and easily understandable since children's cognitive abilities are not fully developed (John 1999). Therefore, marketeers could consider explaining the meaning of a product's CSR certifications (e.g. UTZ) more clearly within their communication or prevent using difficult to understand concepts for children (e.g. CSR and sustainability).

Another way may be is providing materials which children can use to give a presentation about the brand at school. This could be a way to inform children about their CSR activities so they can have conversations about it afterwards with people in their social environment like their parents.

They can increase the opportunity by emphasizing their CSR activities on product packaging or in advertising when the child encounters the brand. Due to these direct experiences, the child will create stronger brand associations (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020).

In turn, if the brand does not put emphasis on their CSR activities while competitors do, children could become suspicious regarding the brand. Marketeers should take into account that children are able to look critically and to notice discrepancies between the CSR activities and other activities of a brand (e.g. Tesla putting a car into space). Furthermore, marketeers should be aware that irresponsible CSR activities could have negative consequences. Children can form strong attitudes toward these brands and the results indicate it could even lead to brand avoidance. Therefore, brands should monitor children's evaluation of a brand's behavior (Huber, Vollhardt, Matthes & Vogel, 2010).

Societal implications

By showing that children can be aware of CSR and that it influences their associations and attitudes, has several implications for society. This thesis provides insights into children's mind regarding CSR activities. Since children know about the CSR activities of brands it can be an extra motivator to have conversations about it with them and to increase their knowledge further.

Furthermore, external sources of information such as parents, school or media could be used to increase children's knowledge about the CSR activities of brands. If their parents are engaged in the CSR activities of brands, and they talk about it with their children, children will be more aware about it and pay more attention to it. As stated earlier, it will support children to better translate their desire to be sustainable into their consumption behavior (Francis & Davis, 2014). In this way it could potentially lead to an increase in sustainable consumption. Since children can form attitudes toward brands based on their CSR activities, it can give extra pressure to companies, which are known for their irresponsible CSR practices (e.g. child labor), to change. This will stimulate other companies to give more priority on CSR activities and abandoning irresponsible CSR activities which will make the world a better place.

5.5 Limitations and suggestions for future research

This research has the natural limitations inherent in qualitative and exploratory approach. To clarify, because of the small sample size (25), the results cannot be generalized to the entire population. Although the results suggest certain patterns, they should be taken with care. Another limitation is the self-selection bias. This is because the parents of the respondents could decide whether they wanted to participate in this research or not by responding on a social media post. Parents and/or children who are interested in CSR or sustainability, may be more inclined to participate in this research than parents and/or children who are not interested. Therefore, the results may be biased.

Another limitation of this study is the use of brand logos during the interviews. In first instance it was unknown whether children would be able to mention any CSR related activity of a brand. In order to extract as much information from the child as possible, a PowerPoint showing logos of different brands was used followed with the question whether the child thought the brand behaved in a good or a bad way. Although children were able to mention CSR activities of brands before exposing them to the brand logos, the results would have been stronger without using these cues.

Besides these limitations, this research forms a valuable foundation for further research regarding children and CSR activities of brands. It is important to better understand the awareness and evaluations children form toward the CSR activities of brands. The results suggest that the degree of awareness and the association and attitude the child forms based on the CSR activities of brands are moderated by motivation, ability, and opportunity. It seems like the awareness and the associations and attitudes children have regarding the CSR activities of brands are lower/higher when they: (1) have a lower/higher motivation to process CSR related information because of their personal characteristics, (2) are younger/older and have fewer/more input of their social resources with a prominent role of the parent and, (3) have fewer/more opportunities of having direct experience with the brand. However, due to the exploratory nature of this research and the small sample size, the results cannot be generalized. Future research should empirically validate, by means of a quantitative research, the proposed model as well as the impact of the moderators. It should result in better understanding the influence CSR activities of brands have on children. The results could be used to motivate companies to pay more attention to their CSR activities.

Furthermore, the results indicate that children's degree of CSR awareness and the associations and attitudes the form toward the brand can, in some cases, influence their behavior. This was only

shown by children who are aware of the CSR activities of brands. Since children often fail to translate their desire to be sustainable into purchase behavior (Francis & Davis, 2014), increasing their awareness regarding the CSR activities of brands may support them in this. However, a bigger dataset is required to assess this suggestion. Therefore, future research should assess whether increasing children's (age 8-12) awareness regarding CSR supports them in translating their desire to be sustainable into purchase behavior.

Additionally, the results showed that nearly all 8-year-olds were unaware of the CSR activities of brands. The results indicate that these children have a generalized view regarding CSR activities. They seem to make no distinctions between the CSR activities of brands in related industries. For example, they seem to make no distraction between car brands which are engaged in CSR activities and those which are not. Also, some children do not understand that a company could be behind good or bad CSR activities and believe ordinary people do this. It would be interesting to investigate the phenomenon of CSR with younger children in the perceptual stage (3-7).

Moreover, it would be interesting to investigate the phenomenon of CSR among children in the reflective stage (age 11-16). These children have a more reflective way of reasoning and focus more on social meanings (John, 1999). Hence, the CSR activities of brands may influence these children more because they are better able to reflect and elaborate on it. Therefore, it would be interesting for future research to explore how the CSR activities of brands influence the behavior of children in the reflective stage (age 11-16).

Lastly, since the context of this research took place in the Netherlands, results may be different for children in other countries as in the case of adults (Planken et al., 2013). Therefore, comparative studies can be conducted in other countries to investigate whether cultural or social-economical differences influence children's awareness and associations of the CSR activities of brands.

References

Achenreiner, G. B., & John, D. R. (2003). The Meaning of Brand Names to Children: A Developmental Investigation. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 13(3), 205-219.

AD. (2019, September 29). Meer dan 35.000 mensen bij klimaatmars Den Haag', eindpunt verplaatst door drukte. Retrieved at January 26, 2020, from https://www.ad.nl/nieuws/meer-dan-35-000-mensen-bij-klimaatmars-den-haag-eindpunt-verplaatst-door-drukte~a80d8c37/?referrer=https://www.google.com/

Bansal, T., & DesJardine, M. (2015). *Don't confuse sustainability with CSR.* Retrieved on February 8, 2020, from https://iveybusinessjournal.com/dont-confuse-sustainability-with-csr/

Bhattacharya, C.B., & Sen, S. (2004). Doing better at doing good: When why and how consumers respond to Corporate Social Responsibility. *Management Review, 47(1), 9-24.*

Bleijenbergh, I. (2016). *Kwalitatief onderzoek in organisaties* (2nd ed.). Amsterdam: Boom Uitgevers.

Braun-LaTour K.A., LaTour, M.S., & Zinkhan G.M. (2007). Using Childhood Memories to Gain Insight into Brand Meaning. *Journal of Marketing*, 71(2), 45-60.

Brand Finance. (2019). Toys 25 2019: The annual report on the world's most valuable and strongest toy brands. Retrieved at April 8, 2020, from https://brandirectory.com/download-report/brand-finance-toys-25-2019-preview.pdf

Brunk, K.H. (2010). Exploring origins of ethical company/brand perceptions - A consumer perspective of corporate ethics. *Journal of Business Research*, 63(3), 255-262.

Carroll, A.B. (1991). The pyramid of corporate social responsibility: toward the moral management of organizational stakeholders. *Business Horizons,* 34, 39–48.

Chaplin, L.N., & John, D.R. (2005). The development of self-brand connections in children and adolescents. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(1), 119-129.

Charry, K., & Demoulin, N.T.M. (2014). Children's response to co-branded products: the facilitating role of fit. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management,* 43(11/12), 1032-1052.

Connell, P.M., & Schau, H.J. (2012). Examining childhood consumption relationships. In *Consumer-Brand Relationships: Theory and Practice* (p. 97-114). Taylor and Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203128794

Connell, P.M., Brucks, M., & Nielsen, J.H. (2014). How childhood advertising exposure can create biased product evaluations that persist into adulthood. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41(1), 119-134.

Davis, K. (1960). Can Business Afford to Ignore Social Responsibilities? *California Management Review*, 2(3), 70-77.

Evans, G., W., Brauchle, G., Haq, A., Stecker, R., Wong, K., & Shapiro, E. (2007). Young Children's Environmental Attitudes and Behaviors. Environment and Behavior, 39(5), 635-659.

Fournier, S. (1998) "Consumers and their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research", *Journal of Consumer Research,* 24(4), 343-373.

Francis, J., E., & Davis, T. (2014). Exploring socialization to three dimensions of sustainability. *Young consumers*, 15(2), 125-137.

Grappi, S., Romani, S., & Bagozzi, R.P. (2013). Consumer response to corporate irresponsible behavior: moral emotions and virtues. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(10), 1814-1821.

Green, M. (2017). 'If there's no sustainability our future will get wrecked': Exploring children's perspectives of sustainability. Childhood, 24(2), 151-167.

Hagenauw, S. (2019). *Children's sustainability stories: nightmares or fairy tales? An in-depth study into children's awareness and concerns regarding sustainability and its influence on their behavior and consumption* (Unpublished Master's thesis). Radboud University, Nijmegen.

Hanson, S., Jian, L., Ye, J., & Murthy, N. (2019). Society or the environment? Understanding how consumers evaluate brand messages about corporate social responsibility activities. *Journal of Brand Management,* 26, 21-34.

Hoyer, D., MacInnis, D.J., & Pieters, R. (2018). *Consumer behavior* (7th ed.). Boston, USA: Cengage Learning.

Huber, F., Vollhardt, K., Matthes, I., & Vogel, J. (2010). Brand misconduct: Consequences on consumer-brand relationships. *Journal of Business Research*, 63, 1113-1120.

Ji, M.F. (2008). Child-brand relations: a conceptual framework. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 24(5/6), 603-619.

Ji, M.F. (2002). Children's relationships with brands: 'true love' or 'one-night' stand? *Psychology & Marketing*, 19(4), 369-387.

Jahdi, K.S., & Acikdilly, G. (2009). Marketing communication and corporate social responsibility (CSR): Marriage of convenience or shotgun wedding? *Journal of Business Ethics,* 88, 103-133.

John, D.R. (1999). Consumer socialization of children: a retrospective look at twenty-five years of research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 26(3), 183-213.

John, D.R., and Sujan, M. (1990). Children's use of perceptual cues in product categorization. *Psychology & Marketing*, 7(4), 277-294**.**

Kahriman-öztürk, D., Olgan, R., & Güler, D. (2012) Preschool Children's Ideas on Sustainable Development: How Preschool Children Perceive Three Pillars of Sustainability with the Regard to 7R*. *Educational Sciences, Theory & Practice*, 2987-2995.

Keller, K.L., & Swaminathan, V. (2020). *Strategic brand management: building, measuring and managing brand equity* (5th ed.). London, England: Pearson Education.

Kim, S., & Lee, H. (2019). The Effect of CSR Fit and CSR Authenticity on the Brand Attitude. *Sustainability*. 12. 275.

Lopez, A., & Rodriguez, R. (2018). Children and their brands: how young consumers relate to brands. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 35(2), 130-142.

Loussaïef, L., Cacho-Elizondo, S., Pettersen, I. B., & Tobiassen, A. E. (2013). Do CSR actions in retailing really matter for young consumers? A study in France and Norway. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 21(1), 9–17.

Luukkanen, L., & Uusitalo, O. (2014). Young people's perceptions of the responsibilities of organizations promoting financial capability. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 38(2), 192–199.

McAlister, A. R., & Cornwell, T. B. (2010). Children's brand symbolism understanding: Links to theory of mind and executive functioning. Psychology & Marketing, 27(3), 203-228.

McWilliams, A. and Siegel, D. (2001). Corporate Social Responsibility: A Theory of the Firm Perspective, *Academy of Management Review*, 26(1), 117-127.

Mohr, L.A., Webb, D.J. and Harris, K.E. (2001) Do consumers expect companies to be socially responsible? The impact of corporate social responsibility Corporate social responsibility on buying behavior. *Journal of Consumer Affairs* 35(1), 45–72.

Myers, M.D. (2013). *Qualitative Research in Business & Management (2nd ed.).* London, England: Sage Publications Ltd.

Nairn, A., Griffin, C., & Wick, P.G. (2008). Children's use of brand symbolism: A consumer culture theory approach. *European Journal of Marketing,* 42(6), 627-640.

NOS. (2019[a], March 14). Scholieren lopen tweede mars voor het klimaat in Amsterdam. Retrieved at December 28, 2019, from https://nos.nl/artikel/2275923-scholieren-lopen-tweede-mars-voor-het-klimaat-in-amsterdam.html

NOS. (2019[b], March 15). Klimaatspijbelaars wereldwijd de straat op. Retrieved at December 28, 2019, from https://nos.nl/artikel/2276104-klimaatspijbelaars-wereldwijd-de-straat-op.html

Nurunnabi, M., Alfakhri, Y. & Alfakhri, D.H. (2018). Consumer perceptions and corporate social responsibility: what we know so far. *International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing,* 15, 164-187.

Planken, B., Nickerson, C., Sahu, (2013). CSR across the globe: Dutch and Indian consumers' response to CSR. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis,* 13(3), 357-372.

Salkind, N. (2010). Convenience sampling. In N. J. Salkind (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of research design* (p. 254-255). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Schmeltz, L. (2012). Consumer-oriented CSR communication: Focusing on ability or morality? *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 17(1), 29–49.

Sekeran, U., & Bougie, R. (2016). *Research methods for business: a skill-building approach* (7th ed.). Chichester, United Kingdom: John Wiley & sons Ltd.

Snow, C.C., Thomas, J.B. (1994). Filed research methods in strategic management: contributions to theory building and testing. *Journal of Management Studies,* 31, 457-479.

Strife, S.J., (2012). Children's Environmental Concerns: Expressing Ecophobia. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 43(1), 37-54.

Sustainable Brand Index. (2019). Officiële Ranking 2019. Retrieved at April 7, 2020, from https://www.sb-index.nl/2019

The Guardian. (2019, September 27). Climate crisis: 6 million people join latest wave of global protests. Retrieved at December 28, 2019, from https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/sep/27/climate-crisis-6-million-people-join-latest-wave-of-worldwide-protests

Turker, D. (2009). Measuring corporate social responsibility: A scale development study. *Journal of Business Ethics,* 85(4), 411–427.

Van Rekom, J., Berens, G., & Van Halderen, M. (2013). Corporate social responsibility: Playing to win, or playing not to lose? Doing good by increasing the social benefits of a company's core activities. *Journal of Brand Management,* 20(9), 800-814.

Wahlström, M., Kocyba, P., Vydt, De, M., & Moor, de, J. (Eds.) (2019). Protest for a future: Composition, mobilization and motives of the participants in Fridays For Future climate protests on 15 March 2019 in 13 European cities. Retrieved at December 28, 2019, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333995891_Protest_for_a_future_Composition_mobili

zation_and_motives_of_the_participants_in_Fridays_for_Future_climate_protests_on_15_March_2019_in_13_European_cities

Wang, L., & Juslin, H. (2011). The effects of value on the perception of corporate social responsibility implementation: A study of Chinese youth. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 18(4), 246–262.

Appendixes

Appendix A – Conceptualization of Corporate Social Responsibility

To be a socially responsible organization, it is important to invest in sustainability. Therefore, many companies use sustainability interchangeably with CSR (Carroll, 2016). CSR is defined in many different ways in the literature (e.g. Carroll, 1991; Davis, 1960; McWilliams & Siegel, 2001; Mohr & Harris, 2001; Turker, 2009). CSR does not always mean the same to everyone and therefore, it difficult to provide one commonly accepted definition of CSR (Turker, 2009). Mohr & Harris (2001) gives a broad definition of Corporate Social Responsibility: "a company's commitment to minimizing or eliminating any harmful effects and maximizing its long-rung beneficial impact on society" (p. 47). This definition is in line with Carroll's pyramid of CSR (1991) which includes four components that covers the entire range of business responsibilities (Carroll, 2016):

- *Economic responsibilities*: required by society. Organizations need to be able to sustain themselves and otherwise go out of business. If a firm encounters financial difficulties, both employees and shareholders will be significantly affected.

- *Legal responsibilities*: required by society. Minimal ground rules under which an organization is expected to operate and function.

- *Ethical responsibilities*: expected by society. Embracing those activities, standards, policies, etc. that are expected by society even though they are not codified into law.

- *Philanthropy responsibilities*: desired by society. Includes all forms of business giving and guided by business's desire to engage in social activities that are not required by law, nor generally expected of the organization in an ethical sense.

"CSR driven firms should strive to make a profit, obey the law, engage in ethical practices and be a good corporate citizen" (Carroll, 2016, p. 6). Organizations are expected to fulfill all responsibilities simultaneously rather than sequentially (Carroll, 2016). It is a combination of the four components together.

Other authors use a narrower definition of CSR. For example, Turker (2009) disagrees with the inclusion of this economic component in CSR and defines CSR as: "corporate behaviors that aims to affect stakeholders positively and that go beyond its economic interest" (p. 413) because the economic component is reason for the business' existence, rather than a responsibility of society. McWilliams & Siegel's (2001) definition is even more narrow and define CSR as: "actions that

appear to further some social good, beyond the interest of the firm and that which is required by law" (p. 117).

Within this thesis CSR is defined as: corporate behaviors related to legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities that aim to affect stakeholder positively and that go beyond economic interest. This definition is based on three of the four components of Carroll's pyramid of CSR (1991) and Turker's (2009) CSR definition which excludes the economic responsibility component of CSR. The component is excluded within this research because it mainly affects shareholders and employees (Carroll, 2016) while this thesis focuses on children's CSR perspectives. McWilliams & Siegel's CSR definition is too narrow because research by Planken, Nickerson & Sahu (2013) illustrate that ethical and legal CSR components are seen as significantly more important than the philanthropic (and economic) CSR components by Dutch adults. Since this research takes place in the Netherlands, it is important to take the legal CSR component into account. However, it is unknown whether children experience the same order of importance of CSR components as adults.

Appendix B – Overview child- and parent respondents

Respondent number child	Gender	Age	Respondent number parent	Brother/sister of	Residence[4]
1	M	8	P1, 15 & 21	15 & 21	Brummen, GD
2	M	8	P2	-	Duiven, GD
3	F	8	P3	-	Duiven, GD
4	F	8	P4	-	Gaanderen, GD
5	M	8	P5	-	Den Haag, ZH
6	M	9	P6	-	Groessen, GD
7	F	9	P7	-	Brummen, GD
8	F	9	P8 & 13	13	Utrecht, UT
9	M	9	P9	-	Zaltbommel, NB
10	F	9	P10	-	Utrecht, UT
11	F	10	P11	-	Brummen, GD
12	M	10	P12 & 18	18	Klimmen, LB
13	F	10	P8 &13	8	Utrecht, Ut
14	M	10	P14 & 17	17	Gaanderen, GD
15	M	10	P1, 15 & 21	1 & 21	Brummen, GD
16	F	11	P16	-	Wageningen, UT
17	M	11	P14 &17	14	Gaanderen, GL
18	M	11	P12 &18	12	Klimmen, LB
19	F	11	P19	-	Duiven, GL
20	M	11	P21	-	Brummen, GL
21	M	12	P1, 15 & 21	1 & 15	Brummen, GD
22	F	12	P22	-	Oss, NB
23	F	12	P23	-	Huissen, GD
24	F	12	P24	-	Bennekom, GD
25	M	12	P25	-	Leuvenheim, GD

Table 5: Overview child- and parent respondents

---

[4] GD = Gelderland, ZH = Zuid-Holland, UT = Utrecht, NB = Noord-Brabant, LB = Limburg

Introduction

- Introduce myself

- Spent time with the child to make him/her feel more comfortable.

- Explain briefly in simple words the reason behind the interview: understand what the child thinks about brands/organizations that do certain things. During the interview I will explain that I am interested to know what the child thinks and feels about brands that do things in a way which is nice for the earth, people, and/or animals.

- Ask the child whether he/she wants the parent to stay during the interview and ask the parent as well.

- Explain to the child that there are no wrong answers and that the researcher is really curious about what he/she knows but that it is also okay when the child does not know the answer.

Awareness of organization's CSR activities

1. How old are you?

So, we will start with the first question. This question is about companies. You see all kind of different companies on the internet, TV or when you go outside. You can think about supermarkets, sports brands, gas stations, people who sell cars, a company can also manufacture products like food, drinks, mobile phones, toys, makeup, everything.

2. Do you know any companies of which you think they behave good or bad?
    a. Why or why not?
    b. Do you know any other brands?

'Shows PowerPoint with logos from different brands based on brand sustainable index'

3. You see logos from different companies in front of you, which companies do you know?
4. Which of these companies do you think are behaving in a good or a bad way?
    a. Why do you think these companies are behaving in a good or a bad way?
5. Imagine, you will become boss of a company that sells something, what kind of company would that be?
    a. What would you sell?
    b. What are you paying attention to?

    c.   Where will you make it?

    d.   Where do the stuff come from you need for your company?

    e.   Are there other important things you want to pay attention to?

6. What if your company wants to do something that is nice for the earth, people and/or animals? What would that mean?

    a.   How do you feel about it?

    b.   What kind of things do you think your company should do?

        i.   What kind of ideas do you have?

    c.   What would your company do furthermore?

Influence of CSR activities on children's brand associations

In the beginning, I asked you to think about companies you know. I would like you think about this again because that is important for the next questions.

7. Which companies do you know that do something in a way that is nice for the earth, people and/or animals? (in case the child does not know any companies provide support by giving examples of what companies could do such as taking care of the environment; taking care for the people who work for that company or give money to charity)

    a.   What can you tell me about it?

    b.   When you think about this company, what comes up into your mind?

    c.   How did you hear about it?

    d.   How do you feel about this company?

    e.   Do you talk with others about this company?

    f.   What are according to you the reasons why this company does these things?

    g.   What would you do if you were the boss of this company?

    h.   How would you look at this company when you did not know that they try to do something in a way that is nice for the earth, people and/or animals?

    i.   Would you recommend this company to others?

        i.   Why?

8. Which companies do you know that something in a way that is not nice for the earth, people and/or animals?

    a.   What can you tell me about it?

b. When you think about this company, what comes up into your mind?

c. How did you hear about it?

d. How do you feel about this company?

e. Do you talk with others about this company?

f. What are according to you the reasons why this company does these things?

g. What would you do if you were the boss of this company?

h. Would you recommend this company to others?

    i. Why?

9. Imagine, company X would like to do something which is nice for the earth, people and/or animals but this company does not know what to choose from. They ask you for help. What should the company do according to you? You may choose 1 or at most 2:

    i. They follow the rules in the Netherlands.

    ii. They take good care of the environment. You can think for example about cleaning up the mess or pollution they make and being nice to people.

    iii. They give money to charities.

b. Why do you choose this?

c. How would you look at the company if they do the things you did not choose?

    i. Can you explain that?

<u>Final remarks</u>

Ask for remarks/opinions about interesting things the child mentioned during the interview

10. Is there anything you would like to say?

11. Do you have any questions?

Thank you for attending this interview.

Interview guide child – Dutch version

Introduction

- Zeggen wie ik ben
- Breng tijd door met het kind door om hem op zijn gemak te voelen. Vraag dingen zoals hoe ze heten, hoe het gaat op school, wat ze leuk vinden om te doen wanneer ze niet met school bezig zijn. Of ze sporten, of ze spelen met vriendjes en vriendinnetjes zodat ze zich op hun gemak voelen.
- Leg kort uit wat de reden is van dit interview: Ik wil weten hoe kinderen kijken naar merken/bedrijven die bepaalde dingen doen. Gedurende het interview leg ik uit dat ik geïnteresseerd ben om te weten te komen hoe de kinderen kijken en wat ze voelen over bedrijven die dingen doen op een manier dat fijn is voor de aarde, mensen en/of dieren.
- Vraag het kind of hij/zij wil of zijn ouders bij het interview aanwezig blijven, vraag dit vervolgens ook aan de ouder.
    - Vertel tegen het kind dat er geen foute antwoorden zijn end at ik heel nieuwsgierig ben wat je allemaal weet maar dat het ook goed is als het kind dit antwoord niet weet.

Awareness of organization's CSR activities

1. Hoe oud ben je?

Buiten kom je allemaal winkels of spullen van bedrijven tegen zoals speelgoedwinkels, supermarkten, kledingwinkels, plekken waar je kan eten tankstations, autoverkopers. Een bedrijf kan ook dingen maken zoals eten, drinken, speelgoed, kleren, telefoons, etc.

2. Ken jij bepaalde bedrijven die zich volgens jou je goed of slecht gedragen?
    a. Waarom vind je dat?

Laat PowerPoint zien met logo's van verschillende merken:

3. Voor je zie je plaatjes van verschillende bedrijven. Welke ken je?
4. Welke bedrijven vind je zich goed gedragen?
    a. Waarom vind je dat deze bedrijven zich goed gedragen?
5. Van bedrijven vind je dat ze zich slecht gedragen?
    a. Waarom vind je dat deze zich bedrijven slecht gedragen?
6. Als jij nou baas zou zijn van een bedrijf dat wat verkoopt, wat voor bedrijf zou dat zijn?

a. Wat zou je verkopen?

b. Waar let je op?

c. Waar wordt het gemaakt?

d. Waar komen de spullen vandaan die je nodig hebt voor je bedrijf?

e. Zijn er nog dingen die belangrijk zijn waar je op wil letten?

7. Wat nou als jouw bedrijf iets wil doen wat fijn is voor de aarde, mensen en/of dieren? Wat zou dat betekenen?

a. Wat vind je daarvan?

b. Wat voor dingen zou het bedrijf volgens jou moeten doen?

i. Wat voor ideeën heb je?

c. Wat zou je bedrijf nog verder doen?

Influence of CSR activities on children's brand associations

In het begin heb je allemaal bedrijven genoemd die je kent. Ik zou het leuk vinden dat je daar nog eens goed aan denkt want dat is belangrijk voor de volgende vragen.

8. Welke bedrijven ken jij die dingen doen op een manier die fijn zijn voor de aarde, mensen en/of dieren? (Indien kind het niet meteen weet help hem door voorbeelden te geven als zorgen voor het milieu; goed zorgen voor de mensen die er werken of geld geven aan goeie doelen).

a. Wat kan jij me hierover vertellen?

b. Als je denkt aan dit bedrijf, wat komt er in je op?

c. Hoe heb je hierover gehoord?

d. Wat vind je van het bedrijf?

e. Praat je hier wel eens over met anderen?

f. Wat denk je dat de redenen zijn dat het bedrijf deze dingen doet?

g. Hoe zou je naar het bedrijf kijken als je niks zou weten over de dingen die zij doen die fijn zijn voor de aarde, mensen en/of dieren?

h. Wat zou jij doen als je baas zou zijn van dit bedrijf?

i. Zou je het bedrijf aanbevelen aan anderen?

i. Waarom?

9. Welke bedrijven ken jij die dingen doen op een manier die niet zo fijn zijn voor de aarde mensen en/of dieren?

    a. Wat kan jij mij hierover vertellen?

    b. Als je denkt aan dit bedrijf, wat komt er in je op?

    c. Hoe heb je hierover gehoord?

    d. Wat vind je van het bedrijf?

    e. Praat je hier wel eens over met andere mensen?

    f. Wat denk je dat de redenen zijn dat het bedrijf deze dingen doet?

    g. Wat zou jij doen als je baas zou zijn van dit bedrijf?

    h. Zou je het bedrijf aanbevelen aan anderen?

        i. Waarom?

10. Stel bedrijf X wil iets doen wat goed is voor de aarde mensen en/of dieren maar dat dit bedrijf niet weet waaruit ze moeten kiezen. Ze vragen jou om hulp. Wat moet het bedrijf volgens jou doen? Je mag er minimaal 1 of maximaal 2 kiezen:

        i. Dat ze zich houden aan de regels van Nederland.

        ii. Dat ze goed zorgen voor de omgeving. Denk hierbij aan dat ze de rommel of vervuiling die ze maken opruimen en aardig zijn voor mensen.

        iii. Dat ze geld geven aan goede doelen. (vraag of kind dit kent)

    b. Waarom kies je hiervoor?

    c. Hoe zou je naar het bedrijf kijken als ze juist de dingen doen die je niet hebt gekozen?

        i. Kan je dat uitleggen?

Final remarks

11. Wil je nog wat zeggen?

12. Heb je nog vragen?

Introduction

- Introduce myself

- Thank the parent for attending this interview

- Explain to the parent the reason behind this interview: explain that the aim is to explore whether children (age 8-12) are aware of an organization's CSR activities and if so, how these CSR activities influence the way in which children (age 8-12) form distinct associations toward brands. Also explain the concept of CSR.

- Ask the parent for permission to record the interview.

- Explain that the interviews will be anonymous. If desired, it is possible to receive the interview's transcript and/or the final thesis. The parents have the opportunity to withdraw at any moment.

- Explain to the that there are no wrong answers and that the researcher is really curious about what the parent knows but that it is also okay when the parent does not know the answer.

Awareness of organization's CSR activities

1. Do you think you child is pay attention/aware of companies CSR Activities? So, trying to do things in a way that is nice for the earth, people and / or animals?

    a. What does your child say about this?

    b. How does your child feel about this?

    c. How did your child hear about this?

2. To what extent is your child aware that there are companies that do not conduct corporate social responsibility. So, doing things in a way that is not nice for the earth, people and / or animals?

    a. What does your child say about this?

    b. What does your child think about this?

    c. How did your child hear about this?

Influence of CSR activities on children's brand associations

3. To what extent does your child take into account whether companies / brands are sustainable in his/her daily life? (If the parent does not know the answer directly, give help

by giving examples such as environmental friendliness, good working conditions and other ethical aspects).

    a. Can you give an example of this?

    b. What does your child think about this?

        i. Why?

    c. How important do you think your child thinks that companies/brands pay attention to CSR aspects? Likert scale from 1 (Not important) to 5 (Very important)

        i. Can you explain that?

    d. To what extent does your child value this?

    e. Are there certain products that your child pays more attention to?

4. To what extent does your child take into account whether companies / brands are not sustainable in his/her daily life? (If the parent does not know the answer directly, give help by giving examples such as environmental friendliness, good working conditions and other ethical aspects).

    a. What examples can you give?

    b. What does your child think about this?

        i. Why?

    c. To what extent does your child value this?

    d. Are there certain products that your child pays more attention to?

5. To what extent are these matters a topic of conversation within the family?

    a. Where are those conversations about?

Final remarks

Ask for remarks/opinions about interesting things the parent mentioned during the interview

1. Is there anything you would like to say?

2. Do you have any questions?

Thank you for attending this interview.

Interview guide parent – Dutch version

Introduction

- Stel mezelf voor
- Bedankt voor het meedoen met dit interview
- Leg de reden van dit interview uit: het doel is om te verkennen of kinderen (age 8-12) bewust zijn van de MVO-activiteiten van bedrijven en, indien dit het geval is, hoe deze MVO activiteiten invloed hebben hoe het kind kijkt naar het bedrijf en wat hij erbij voelt en vindt. Dus of ze dan ook anders kijken naar bedrijven die dit wel of juist niet doen. MVO uitleggen.
- Vraag de ouder of hij/zij het goed vindt dat het interview wordt opgenomen.
- Leg uit dat de interviews volledig anoniem zijn. Indien gewenst, is het mogelijk om na afloop van de interviews een transcript te ontvangen. Het is altijd mogelijk om je terug te trekken uit het interview.
- Er zijn geen foute antwoorden en ik ben erg nieuwsgierig wat een ouder weet maar dat het geen probleem is als ze het antwoord op de vraag niet weten.

1. Denkt u dat uw kind let op of bewust is van de MVO activiteiten van bedrijven? Dus dingen proberen te doen op een manier die fijn zijn voor de aarde, mensen en/of dieren?
    a. Wat vertelt uw kind hierover?
    b. Hoe voelt uw kind zich hierbij?
    c. Hoe heeft uw kind hierover gehoord?
2. In welke mate is uw kind ervan bewust dat er bedrijven zijn die niet maatschappelijk verantwoord ondernemen. Dus dingen doen die niet fijn zijn voor de aarde, mensen en/of dieren?
    a. Wat vertelt uw kind hierover?
    b. Wat vindt uw kind hiervan?
    c. Hoe heeft uw kind hierover gehoord?

Influence of CSR activities on children's brand associations

3. In welke mate houdt uw kind zich in zijn/haar dagelijks leven met de vraag bezig of bedrijven/merken <u>duurzaam</u> zijn? (Indien ouder het antwoord niet direct weet, geef hulp

door voorbeelden te geven zoals milieuvriendelijkheid, goede arbeidsomstandigheden en andere ethische aspecten).

    a. Wat voor voorbeeld kunt u daarvan geven?

    b. Wat vindt uw kind hiervan?

        i. Waarom?

    c. Hoe belangrijk denkt u dat uw kind het vindt dat bedrijven/merken aandacht hebben voor MVO aspecten? Likert schaal van 1 (Niet belangrijk) tot 5 (Heel belangrijk)

        i. Kunt u dat uitleggen?

    d. In welke mate hecht uw kind hier waarde aan?

    e. Zijn er bepaalde producten waarbij uw kind hier meer op let?

4. In welke mate houdt uw kind zich in zijn/haar dagelijks leven bezig met de vraag of bedrijven/merken niet duurzaam zijn? (Indien ouder het antwoord niet direct weet, geef hulp door voorbeelden te geven zoals milieuvriendelijkheid, goede arbeidsomstandigheden en andere ethische aspecten).

    a. Kunt u hier een voorbeeld van geven?

    b. Wat vindt uw kind hiervan?

        i. Waarom?

    c. In welke mate hecht uw kind hier waarde aan?

    d. Zijn er bepaalde producten waarbij uw kind hier meer op let?

5. In hoeverre zijn dit soort zaken gespreksonderwerpen binnen het gezin?

    a. Waar gaan deze gesprekken over?

<u>Final remarks</u>

3. Is er nog iets wat u graag wilt zeggen of toevoegen?

4. Heeft u nog vragen?

Bedankt voor uw deelname aan dit interview!

During the interview, children were exposed to a PowerPoint including 36 brand logos (figure 2) and asked whether one of these brands behaved in a good or a bad way. Brands are chosen based on the Sustainable Brand Index (2019). The researcher chose brands based on the following industries: food & beverage, automotive, supermarkets, restaurant, fashion, and energy. Within each industry, top rated, average rated, and low rated brands are chosen (e.g. automotive: Tesla #4, Toyota #44, Volkswagen #87, BMW #116, and Renault #140). To increase the number of child-oriented brands, 5 out of 10 most valuable toy brands are included as well (Brand Finance, 2019).

Figure 2: Brand logos used in PowerPoint

Appendix F – Examples Coding

Person	Age	Gender	Q5 Bad CSR	Open	Axial	Selective	Company
22	12	Female	B: Umm… no, I don't think so, yeah, uh…				
22	12	Female	P: It doesn't matter. I think Nutella is very interesting, especially because you heard something about it the other day and now you have something that is not such a good company after all. Because that's what you said.				
22	12	Female	B: nods yes				
22	12	Female	P: What comes to mind when you think about Nutella? What are the first things you think about? B: Yeah, at school I always have it on my bread and at home. But I guess now that I know, I'm actually in a bad place, but yeah…	Bread	Not CSR	Bad associations	Nutella
22	12	Female	P: What comes to mind when you think about Nutella? What are the first things you think about? B: Yeah, at school I always have it on my bread and at home. But I guess now that I know, I'm actually in a bad place, but yeah…	Bad place	People	Bad associations	Nutella
22	12	Female	P: What comes to mind when you think about Nutella? What are the first things you think about? B: Yeah, at school I always have it on my bread and at home. But I guess now that I know, I'm actually in a bad place, but yeah…	Bad place	People	Changed perspective	Nutella
22	12	Female	P: Yeah, I understand what you're saying. And how did you hear about this?				
22	12	Female	P: You heard that at the store, and what did you think?				
22	12	Female	B: Oh really? Cause I've been eating that for a really long time, and I really wasn't. P: How did you look at that company then, what did you feel then or what did you think? B: Yes, I started to look at it differently, because just like the advertising, I don't know, it may be the same with other companies as well, but with Nutella, I know better now. In their advertising everything is very nice and there is nothing on the packaging or something. And yet there is child labor behind it.	Skeptical	Advertising	Changed perspective	Nutella
22	12	Female	B: Oh really? Cause I've been eating that for a really long time, and I really wasn't. P: How did you look at that company then, what did you feel then or what did you think? B: Yes, I started to look at it differently, because just like the advertising, I don't know, it may be the same with other companies as well, but with Nutella, I know better now. In their advertising everything is very nice and there is nothing on the packaging or something. And yet there is child labor behind it.	Child labor	Advertising	Bad associations	Nutella
22	12	Female	P: This question may be trickier, but do you still get a certain feeling for it? Maybe that question is too difficult. Did you still have a certain feeling when you heard that? B: At Nutella I started to pay a little attention to advertising and stuff. I don't know if it's lying per se but just like in advertising they do a lot of fun at home with people and then yes, you don't really know anything about it. Nothing with the packaging, nothing with hints or something. And yet behind it is child labor and then yes. I think I'd sooner put it on	Misleading	Advertising	Changed perspective	Nutella
22	12	Female					
22	12	Female	P: So, what do you think is the reason the company does these things?				
22	12	Female	B: That they do child labor or that they don't put it there?				
22	12	Female	P: Yeah, maybe both, just, maybe why do you do child labor and why don't they put it on?				
22	12	Female	B: I think if people don't sell it that easily and they do child labor I really wouldn't know.	Revenue	Commercial	Reason bad behavior	Nutella
22	12	Female	P: You're doing really well, B. And if you were the boss of Nutella, what would you do?				
22	12	Female	B: I'd either quit child labor or I'd let people know	Stop child labor	People	Boss changes	Nutella
22	12	Female	B: I'd either quit child labor or I'd let people know	Inform packaging	People	Boss changes	Nutella
22	12	Female	P: That people do know				
22	12	Female	B: That they don't eat it and only then know afterwards that they have been eating things that involved child labor all this time.				
22	12	Female	P: Very good. What do you think of Nutella now?				
22	12	Female	B: I think it's bad that it's not known but… …yeah, but… I just like it, so I'll eat it.	Bad but taste nice	Feeling	Bad CSR	Nutella
22	12	Female	P: So, you think the product itself is good and tasty, but what they actually do is bad?				
22	12	Female	B: Yes				
22	12	Female	P: And would you recommend Nutella to your girlfriends?				
22	12	Female	B: On the one hand not because I know there is child labor and maybe they don't know but I eat it myself for example. Then it would be a bit stupid if I do eat myself and then say to them oh, I wouldn't eat it or something to other people.	Depends	Mixed	Recommend bad CSR	Nutella

Table 6: Example coding interview with r. 22, f, 12