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Communicating Diversity Online

A View from the Best Multinational Workplaces in 2012

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Abstract

Subject to demographic changes and strong internationalization, more and more multinational corporations claim to have diversity management policies and are offering diversity sections within their corporate websites. This thesis critically analyses the online content of 25 multinational corporations considered as the best workplaces in 2012. By analysing their online communication strategy on diversity, the purpose is to understand how they define diversity and in which ways they communicate about it. Findings show that only one corporation actually defines diversity but that several dimensions of diversity are covered within the online content of the multinational corporations. Some companies appear to communicate more or equally on less-visible differences, which seems to show a deeper understanding of diversity, while some others strongly rely on the social justice case. By analysing and comparing those contents on diversity, the study reveals how defining and communicating 'diversity' is complex as the quality and attention given to it varies among the companies. It also shows that mind-set influences the way diversity is approached. Overall, this study extends and builds on existing scholarship in diversity management in general and corporate communication in particular.

Keywords: Business Case; Communication; Corporate Websites; Discourse; Diversity; Equality; Multinational Companies; Online

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1. Introduction

1.1 Diversity Today

While the term “workforce diversity” is commonly used in academic articles and even in mainstream media such as newspapers and magazines, few corporations actually seem to strongly communicate about it. And yet, one cannot but notice that the topic of diversity is inevitable when talking about human resources or business. Understanding what it means is another issue, and it is not trouble-free as the concept is vague and brief, sometimes seen as a mixed bag, or quite the opposite when relating too much to people’s race or origin. Diversity is like an indefinite pronoun: we know it exists but we can barely identify who are the beings behind it.

What makes diversity so complex to define is precisely its diversity of meanings. Inside and over corporations’ and national boundaries, diversity takes so many different shapes. Several comprehend it within the establishment of anti-discrimination policies (Kelly & Dobbin, 2001); others see it toward the existence of multiple dimensions, which are related to more intrinsic aspects (Kandola & Fullerton, 1998; Milliken & Martins, 1996). Diversity also makes reference to other names; one may find it related to social justice and equal opportunities (Goodman, 2001), positive/affirmative action (Kelly & Dobbin, 2001) or inclusion (Barak, 1999), so many other words that do not help make sense of it.

A quick look online would offer a profusion of definitions. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), which pops-up rapidly, tries to provide elements to help comprehend diversity. Indeed, the CIPD illustrates diversity with a list of different aspects such as the background, the personality, the language, the work-style and so on, as most of the definitions available online do. Nevertheless, they strongly emphasize the concept of “protected characteristics”. Those protected characteristics are “race, disability, gender reassignment, sex, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity,

religion and belief, sexual orientation and age” (CIPD, 2012, para.1). Those are characteristics that are covered by anti-discrimination laws (at least in UK) and consequently give citizens protection against an unfair treatment. Thus, this definition is highly inspired by legal authorities.

The topic is not limited to the organizational sphere. It has become political, societal and consequently media-centered. Diversity became an important concern for the society in the 2000s in Europe under the influence of norms created by the European Commission regarding discriminations on the work market. Measures had to be taken because the workforce demographics were and are still undergoing serious changes in several countries such as France or Germany with aging population, more working women, immigrant workers and frequent delocalizing of employees across national borders. For instance, William H. Frey, an analyst for the Brookings Institution think tank, predicted that the median age in Europe will reach 52.3 years old in 2050 (against 37 in 2003) while the median age of Americans will rise to only 35.4 years old.

In addition of an aging population, globalization challenges the management of diversity. According to Eurostat (2013), foreign population features 20.7 million people and foreign-born population 33.0 million people in EU-27 on 1 January 2012. This shows how the European Union is still attracting foreigners, from countries where inequalities between poor and rich countries are growing, due to its economic advantages and its social care systems. As globalization becomes more prevalent, corporations also have to deal with increased cultural diversity within their workforce. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2010) considers that the feminization of the workforce as to be regarded as necessary for replacing it, and that migration is the main factor that will help the European Union to cope with the negative labor market effects that goes with an aging population.

The media and public interest for diversity has made it intricate and approachable at a time. The current debates on immigration, globalization and

economic growth participate in making diversity more popular. Some elements of diversity measures were strongly advertised in some European nations. For instance, the anonymous CV (a particular shape of CV that does not provide the employer with the name and the address of candidates) was one of most-known tool to fight against discrimination and bring more diversity into corporations. Discussion on the representation of diversities on media, and particularly on TV, were also often at the center of the media and society attention. Since 2006, France has established laws regarding diversity on TV with the argument that TV should reflect the society. Topics such as diversity manage to capture attention because it holds an attractive power of appropriation. Everyone can reflect himself in the concept of diversity without comprehending the whys and wherefores of it. This is how I became myself interested in the concept of diversity and decided to question the conceptions that corporations may have or not about it and the way they are communicating those. I became curious to know what was communicated under the heading of diversity but also how this was communicated.

If diversity is a term that is rather hard to dimension and explain in a single manner according to the literature, the purpose of this study is to look at how corporations envision and communicate about it. This could essentially give a clue about the corporate approach toward the meaning of diversity. What purposes does diversity serve in terms of business, human resources or corporate social responsibility for corporations? Are corporations really communicating about the way they envision diversity or do they only provide a general and commonly accepted definition of diversity? In a bigger picture, this thesis provides an answer to the following question: How do they communicate and construct diversity online?

1.2 Research Rationale

A brief look at the current literature about the topic will provide several arguments on the benefit of diversity for corporations. Diversity would be good for the international image of corporations because it attracts international

investors (Heijltjes, Olie & Glunk, 2003). Reflecting the diversity of customers in management would lead to better relationship with customers and suppliers, and therefore to an improved financial performance (Schneider-Ross, 2002). Diversity provides a war for talents with companies trying to capture the attention of prospective employees by promoting their human resources (Rosenzweig, 1998). Procter & Gamble, Coca-Cola Company or Ernst & Young are examples of companies putting a strong emphasis on the development of a diverse workforce with a diverse leadership (DiversityInc, 2012). Last but not least, a frequently cited argument pertains to the competitive advantage that the recognition and valuation of diversity can bring as a resource for the organization (Point & Singh, 2003). This has led the concept of diversity to shift from being an ordinary social ideal to becoming a conventional business practice (Barbosa & Cabral-Cardoso, 2007).

And yet, such statements do not help comprehend what is diversity. As good can be those echoes, they do not give a clue on how is defined diversity and why it is essential for the corporation to communicate about it. The current socio-economics atmosphere makes comprehensible the need of managing diversity because the environment is becoming more and more complex (Cox, 1993) and as Point and Singh (2003) state, “the issue is particularly critical for Europe, given its multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic population and many internal borders” (p.751). In 2013, it could be argued that the same applies to other regions of the world, such as the United States. More and more corporations see diversity as important, but how important do they make it in their communication strategies?

In such context, corporations must communicate their openness regarding the concept of diversity (Point, 2010). Several academics have shown noticeable efforts from corporations on the topic (Hon & Brunner, 2000), notably through the Internet (Point & Singh, 2003). According to Point and Singh (2004), communicating on diversity has a positive effect on employees and employers, being proactive would offer some benefits. However, even though there are

serious reasons to strongly communicate about diversity, it often defaults (Point, 2010).

Multiple pressures have forced companies to communicate on the matter (Holcomb, Upchurch & Okumus, 2007). The international diversification of businesses and the growth of multinational corporations appear to be one of the main arguments in favor of the creation of related communication strategies. Nowadays, there does not seem to be a single company publicly denying the benefits of diversity. Diversity is publicly described as richness and strength for the company (Point, 2010). Most seek to make it a learning lever for their management through the share of experiences (Dass & Parker, 1997; Thomas & Ely, 1996) and build an inclusive world based on it (Gilbert, Stead & Ivancevich, 2000; Pless & Maak, 2004).

It is not by accident that the verb “base” is used in the last paragraph. To base means to build foundations and this is around this aspect that a problem can be identified. Communicating about diversity implies to give a definition to the concept. It may not be universal, it may not be unique but it should help comprehend those communication strategies. The concept appears to be too recent to hold a holistic dimension; it is subject to disputes and agreements on its definition.

To answer this research problem, the focus is made on a ranking of multinational corporations from Europe and United-States, considered to be the best companies to work according to the non-profit organization, Great Place To Work. This choice was motivated by two assumptions. The obvious first is that their global activities make them more likely to deal with diversity. Secondly the fact that those multinational are considered as good companies to work for suppose that they are acting for the good of their employees and therefore may have develop a philosophy around the concept of diversity.

Overall, the approach is qualitative and inductive. With a literature review on the definition and communication of diversity, the aim of this study is to

provide the reader with an overview of the complexity of the topic by reporting and framing all the types of diversity described through the multinational's website. Ideally, this thesis should offer a deconstruction of discourses about diversity from a communication perspective. The insights of this thesis may be significant and valuable for other companies seeking to understand what is done, and for those particularly facing diversity challenges. It may not only help managers of other corporations to dig the concept of diversity and identify a common base but it also may be of interest for any prospective employees that feel concerned by the topic.

2. Literature Review

Diversity is the state of being diverse (Oxford Dictionary, 2013).

Caractère de ce qui est divers, varié, différent (Larousse, 2013).

Abundancia de cosas distintas (El Mundo, 2013).

Diversity comes from the Latin word “diversitas” which means not only the fact of being different but also the divergence in having opinions. Today, the term diversity is often used for bringing into light the differences between individuals. Disparities among simple dictionary definitions can be observed even though they all highlight the notion of difference. While the English Oxford dictionary defines diversity as the state of being diverse, the French Larousse describes it as the characteristic of what is not only diverse but also varied and different; on the other hand, the Spanish definition offered by El Mundo seems to make the concept of abundance a condition of diversity. Those meanings have in common that they do not provide indications to understand what is actually diverse, different or varied; indeed no criterion of differentiation is offered.

2.1 Defining and Dimensionalizing Diversity

2.1.1 The “Protected Characteristics”

Nowadays, the term diversity is frequently used in socio-economics sciences and became a trendy notion for businesses as well as governments and other legal entities. Diversity holds various meanings in the standing scientific literature (Cox, 2001). Most authors have defined their own perception of diversity, which can include or exclude different aspects of it. It seems complex to clearly identify which groups of individuals to include within the term (Holton, 2005). Consequently, providing a unique definition of the concept is problematic. The perception of diversity varies from not only personal interpretations, sense of community but also from national and cultural constructs on the concept itself.

Yet, it is relevant to reflect on the contemporary quality of this concept because it evolves along with the society and its change of mores.

As explained in the introduction, a definition based on the current legislation and the law cases does not offer a complete understanding of what is diversity. Such construct of diversity is built on what is called the social justice case for diversity. There is no doubt on the significance of it, organizationally wise. The social justice for diversity offers the basis of legal requirements related to diversity and it introduces the concept of equal opportunities for everyone. Miller (1999) explains that there are two types of equalities in social justice: equality not only stands for an equal distribution of rights and duties but also means that people within the society treat each other as equals. Goodman (2001) adds that social justice has also the duty to maintain itself (meaning that is not a one-time initiative) and therefore to reinforce equality by creating or adjusting the legislation for equal opportunities. Goodman (2001) particularly underlines the link between diversity and social justice in the workplace, arguing that social justice is an attempt to promote and stand for the exploration of differences as to make people benefit from them.

The addition of areas under the heading of diversity can be supported by anti-discrimination legislations (e.g. protection of pregnant women) but it does not offer a solid soil to comprehend the concept. Even though meanings relying on protected characteristics (race, disability, gender reassignment, sex, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, sexual orientation and age) such as the one stated by the CIPD and other authoritative institutions over Europe are part of the definition of diversity, it does not provide a clear frame to understand what is diversity, it only shows how the scope of workplace diversity is linked to social justice in modern societies.

2.1.2 Dimensions and Levels of Diversity

In the organizational literature, the term diversity is generally used to designate the composition of groups, workforces or targets through all the corporation activities. Thus, a general understanding of diversity affects the

organisation at every level. This is why diversity is often considered to be a characteristic of groups that refers to demographic differences among all the members of a corporation (McGrath, Berdahl, & Arrow, 1995). In the same manner, Larkey (1996) not only emphasizes the notion of demographic differences but also explains diversity as differences in perspectives that results in potential behavioural differences among cultural groups together with identity differences among group members. Cox (1993) had underlined the particular challenge of defining diversity because of its varying cultural significance. Cultures are not only different; they are not static as well. In an attempt to categorize the elements of diversity, classifications in terms of observable and non-observable characteristics were made (Kandola & Fullerton, 1998; Milliken & Martins, 1996).

Nowadays, most definitions follow this way of reasoning. Ely and Thomas (2001) speak of visible and non-visible aspects, by which individuals classify themselves as well as others. Kandola and Fullerton (1998) embrace the conception of visible and non-visible differences while defining diversity. According to them, those differences generally include characteristics such as sex, age, background, disability, personality and work-style but others characteristics are likely to be added depending on the environment. Milliken and Martins (1996) differentiate between observable, readily noticeable characteristics such as race, ethnicity, sex or age and less perceptible, essential characteristics such as personality, education, skills, socio-economic background and cultural values. Reflecting on those levels of differences, their research put into light that people that have more similar attributes like background, life style or cultural values are more likely to interact with each other and therefore identify with each other. It seems that attributes such as race or sex are not the main elements of identification. Increasingly such perception of diversity became used in the scientific literature to refer to multiple level differences.

Other researchers have further developed the broadness of diversity by framing it into dimensions. For instance, Litvin (1997) have characterised diversity as having six primary dimensions (age, ethnicity, gender, physical

attributes/abilities, race and sexual orientation) and eight secondary dimensions (education, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious beliefs and work experience). Inspired by the visible and non-visible differences, the first dimension elements are more visible than the secondary dimension elements. Litvin (1997) insists on the implications of the second level, arguing that the perception of diversity cannot be complete without including the complexity of the second level. Such distinctions in the second level have been further developed in inter-cultural management and human resources literature. For instance, Harrison, Price and Bell (1998) introduced the concept of “Surface-Level Diversity” and “Deep-Level Diversity”. They argue that surface level differences should only be “reflected in physical features”, which only leads to include race, age, sex and ethnicity, because those are characteristics that are easily noticeable and comparable. Therefore it is easier to get a consensus about those characteristics. On the other hand, the deeper level is harder to observe and the only way to comprehend it resides in verbal or non-verbal communication or through the monitoring of personal behaviour.

Following such reasoning, Rollins and Stetson have developed an “Iceberg Model of Differences” which is often used in the managerial sphere. It is perhaps one of the most famous models for human resources managers or in intercultural management. The model does not really hold a strong academic basis and its origin of creation are rather blurry. Similarly to the previous definitions, this model divides seen and unseen attributes into two levels. The first includes noticeable characteristics on which the social justice has set protection while the second level features inner and therefore unseen characteristics. The iceberg comparison shows how diversity is complex and includes multiple dimensions as those can be extended. It particularly helps visually understand that most attributes of diversity cannot be discovered at first sight.

It appears critical for a corporation to focus on unseen differences instead of only integrating the aspects discussed in the social justice case. Deep-level

diversity can contribute to the organization's success through the introduction of different skills, perceptions and qualifications (Harrison, Price & Bell, 1998). Harrison and Humphrey (2010) have further elaborated research on the implications of the development of deep-level diversity in corporations. They suggest organizations can and actually should aim to construct work team with a wide range of deep-level characteristics of diversity, as it would enable the team to perform better and to be more permeable to change. In other words, deep-level diversity would provide arguments in favour of the business case for diversity.

Such initiatives to value the benefits of diversity in corporations bring elements for the business case for diversity. Over the last century, several studies have presented support for the business case for diversity. And yet, arguments against the business case for diversity are still strong.

2.2 The Business Case for Diversity

Nowadays multiples studies tend to support the business case for diversity. Cox (1993) explains that the business case for diversity can be made in a number of ways. As mentioned earlier, the business case for diversity finds roots in the social justice arguments. However, the existence of the business case by itself supposes that it is not only a substitute to the social justice case. Empirical studies reveal that the way that diversity is interpreted and enacted is highly context specific and that the weight given to business case arguments varies across, and within, organizations (Janssens & Zanoni, 2005; Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004). The business case for diversity gathers all the arguments in favour of diversity inside the corporation for its performance. Business case arguments are deployed because it is assumed that 'managers' find it hard to oppose arguments for diversity based on an economic rationale. The alternative to the business case is to argue that equality and social justice are desirable ends in themselves; such arguments having a moral, rather than a utilitarian foundation.

Before the establishment of anti-discrimination laws, in the 1950's, the American economist, Gary Becker, used to say that corporations that would abandon discriminative practices would select the best talents. Such way of thinking shows that arguments in favour of business case diversity were already stated prior to the advances made in the legislation. Robinson and Dechant (1997) consider that building a business case for diversity is much harder than creating a case for other issues because the impact of diversity cannot be measured in an orderly manner nor strongly documented in such a way that retrieval is easy. According to them, there may not be a recipe for diversity but they believe that an attempt to diversify the workforce can provide a competitive advantage. They consider diversity as a prerequisite for innovation and argue that seeking and bringing differences together may enhance the motor for creativity. A diverse workforce would participate in the process, kindling creativity and innovation. Following this way of thinking, diversity becomes a booster for innovation, a crossroad where ideas are attached together and result in new ones.

Along with those arguments, diversity would also lead to create a talent pool. Recently, Google has reinforced its position on the topic for the launch of its new diversity programs. In a recent interview by Katie Jones from *HR Magazine* (2013), Mark Palmer Edgecumbe, head of Google's diversity and inclusion EMEA, indicated that helping talents taking the next step in their careers is more important than whether they will stay at Google or not. He states that Google is "creating a talent pipeline and taking the long view. By building long-term relationships, it is ensuring diverse talent thinks of Google as a great place to work" (Edgecumbe, 2013, para. 2). Such willingness to have a diverse workforce may be explained by the competition between organizations to hire and retain talents in the current context.

Some figures highlight how it became an imperative. Indeed the Hudson Institute, a global leader in employment research, has projected by 2020, people of colour will surpass 30% of the total U.S. workforce. The Institute declares that almost 70% of the new-entrants in the work market are people of colour and

women (Hudson Highland Group, 2004). Such statistics put companies in a situation where talking about diversity is not sufficient anymore. Having engaging diversity programs may be a key in the success of a corporation because this is likely to retain talents from this diversified pool. On the other hand, the risk for an organization that does not manage to attract the different segments of diversity is to see its talent pool reduced little by little to a segment of diversity.

Another argument in favour of the business case is that diversity may already be reflected in one of the companies' stakeholders segment. Robinson and Dechant (1997) particularly highlight the fact that the consumer market is becoming increasingly diverse. As mentioned several times, demographics are not only changing but the buying power is becoming more diverse. This means that in order to grow and maintain their businesses, companies are likely to be interested in new profiles of consumers. They may seek for other national markets (e.g. China, India, South America etc.) or create new niches for specific consumers (e.g. Creation of products or services aimed at a particular segment of the market). Considering this aspect, it appears healthy and rather smart that a company would strengthen its relationship with consumers and show its attachment to include diversity in its workforce and management.

Besides gaining market penetration, Robinson and Dechant (1997) add that benefits can be derived from the good will of diverse consumers who would rather spend their money on items produced by, and support a business that has a diverse workforce. Indeed, more recent researches support this hypothesis: customers take into consideration corporation's CSR activities when making their purchase decisions (Sen, & Bhattacharya, 2001; Servaes & Tamayo, 2012).

Additionally to this advantage, diversity appears to be good at driving better problem solving and better solutions (Page, 2007). Some authors like Richard, Barnett, Chadwick and Dwyer (2003) note that diversity can be a knowledge resource to resolve issues. Gathering different people with different way of thinking may bring friction but also provide a company an opportunity to

enhance its way of communicating and dealing when diversity outside of the company. Robinson and Dechant (1997) hold that even though conflict may arise within diverse groups, they eventually perform better than homogenous groups in establishing problem views and propagating other solutions.

Those arguments let us think that diversity can have an impact on the organizational culture: the culture has to work for all kinds of people within the organization. To attain an organizational culture that speaks to everyone inside the company, it seems imperative that the needs of the workforce are listened and understood thoroughly, and that is what diversity seems to draw. Following this emphasis on social interaction and interpersonal relations, Linnenluecke and Griffiths (2010) consider that such organizations should give greater importance to internal staff development, learning and capacity building in their attempt to achieve corporate sustainability. According to them, this suggests that those organizations should naturally be strong promoter of equal opportunity and workplace diversity.

Research for the business case for diversity does not claim in any way that diversity always has positive effects for organisations. Critics against the case can be very harsh. Noon (2007) denounces the instrumental view of differences that are inherent to the diversity paradigm. In other words, putting emphasis on certain dimensions of diversity shows that it is conceived in a selective way because it is highly influenced by the social justice case but also because of the power that some groups can hold (e.g. strong advocacy groups or famous representative person). In addition, Fischer (2007) and Hansen (2003) argue that scientific evidence supporting the business case is absent. Hansen (2003) quotes that "the diversity industry is built on sand and that the business case rhetoric for diversity is simply naïve and overdone. There are no strong positive or negative effects of gender or racial diversity on business performance" (p. 28) Some nuance such statement by arguing that performance measurement is only at an early stage but that most managers felt that there was a link between diversity and corporate performance (Schneider-Ross, 2002).

On the other hand, other scholars do not hesitate to highlight the benefits from diversity policies in corporation. Cost savings and talent pool attractiveness are regularly cited as strong arguments for diversity (Robinson & Dechant, 1997). Diversity has become a fashionable concept. For instance, the European Commission, which faces challenges in diversity because of its particular demographic situation, has conducted two important studies in 2003 regarding the costs and benefits of diversity and in 2005 by providing a business case for diversity and a guide of good practices in the workplace. The European Commission recommends to businesses to further dig the notion of diversity by concentrating on inner differences as well on the learnt aspects of difference. Such perception is supporting not only the iceberg model of Rolling and Stetson but also the Gardenswartz and Rowe model, which includes organizational features such as the skills, the knowledge, the communication style and son on.

Even though the objectives or the effects may differ from a corporation to another, they all are more and more referring to the term regarding the application of the diversity concept into the corporation. Scholars and managers call it “diversity management”. Diversity management is seen as a way of addressing the necessity to reflect the diversity of customers through having diverse employees who are likely to better understand and communicate with them” (Point & Singh, 2003). Nowadays, diversity management is particularly considered as a strategic part of human resources management (Rosenzweig, 1998). As corporations increasingly adopt diversity management, they are likely to start promoting their philosophy and their strategies regarding diversity in their literature but more and more online through the use of corporate website.

2.3 Communicating Diversity Online

Communication about diversity first leads to interrogations regarding the way it is perceived. Diversity can be assimilated in a broader concept that is corporate social responsibility or to some extent sustainability. Along with this, diversity can also be approached as a matter of human resources management.

There is an interlacement between corporate social responsibility and human resources. Indeed, Backhaus, Stone, and Heiner (2002) have studied the relation between corporate social responsibility and employer attractiveness. They came to consider the treatment of employees and workplace diversity to be particularly significant indicators of corporate social responsibility. It seems that the word “social” that composed the corporate social responsibility finds more echo in initiatives aimed at employees. They argue that it has a more significant and direct effect on the individual employee than other dimensions of CSR such as the environment or the characteristics of a product. There is also more and more a need to differentiate the activity of the corporation from the other corporations. Such impression is reinforced by the findings of Bhattacharya, Sen and Korschun (2012): they suggest that employees identify more with a company when they perceived that it is acting in a socially responsible manner but most importantly when CSR seems to emphasize employee identification and pride inside the corporation. In addition, it appears that the incorporation of marketing activity, such as employer branding in the Human Resource role would have a beneficial effect on the image of the corporations (Farndale, Scullion, & Sparrow; 2010).

And yet, such research does not really provide a key answer regarding the approach for communicating about it. Does it make the concept more familiar and close to people to communicate it as a human resources issue or is it more attractive to frame it in the larger picture of corporate social responsibility? Looking at online website may give a clue on how corporations perceive diversity in general.

Indeed, as Point and Singh (2003) argue, websites can give access to a multitude of information. They can be compared to corporate annual reports and are an important element of a public relations strategy to draw a positive image to the company’s stakeholders (Point and Tyson, 1999). Point and Singh (2003) particularly put emphasis on the mission statements, which are increasingly used by companies, notably regarding CSR activities, global human resources initiatives (e.g. employment expectations for the coming years) and any financial

decisions (e.g. introduction in the stock exchange market). Bart (2001) assumes that there is a relationship between the use of such statements and the firm performance. He highlights the importance of this mean for promoting the corporate value.

If diversity is perceived as an element of CSR, the logic of Capriotti and Moreno (2007) on the relationship between communication and CSR can be as well defended here. Communication should be an imperative element in the practice of diversity management. However, with such specificity, the question remains to know to what extent companies publish diversity statements and it would be legitimate to ask for more information on their motivation.

When taking into account the potential of CSR for reviving a corporate identity, it would also be fair to criticize the fact that communication and action may not be representative of each other. Communication, seen as a tool, could easily compensate or hide negative performance in other fields. However, it is argued that the evolving cultural and societal expectations from corporations to go beyond profitability and demonstrate the effects of their actions underscore the importance of communication (Chaudhri & Wang, 2007). Several authors have recognized the need for public relations and particularly the use of new media (e.g. use of corporate website) to communicate strategically about CSR but as well to the recipients, which are all considered to be stakeholders (Capriotti & Moreno, 2007; Sagar & Singla, 2004).

Point (2010) states that communicating on diversity is similar to communicating on social responsibility. As for corporate social responsibility, it is important to communicate about the efforts made for diversity to the stakeholders but also the engagement of the corporations in doing so (Beckmann, Morsing & Reisch, 2006). In addition, Point (2010) answers the question of what to communicate on diversity in four points. The first aspect to consider when communicating about diversity is to define the concept itself because of the complexity of the concept. Such advises make sense when it is known that only 30% of the companies asked in a report from the Society for

Human Resource Management (SHRM, in Point (2010)) have an official definition of diversity. Secondly, he advises to gather the stakeholders around the concept. He critiques that the concept is narrowly focused on only one stakeholder group, the employees, and recommends to extend it to other stakeholders such as suppliers and shareholders. Then, he puts the emphasis on the location of the diversity content online arguing that the location itself can already give an idea on which stakeholders is the recipient. He highlights that most corporations tend to include pages about diversity in human resources content while few actually place it in the CSR section. Last but not least, he states that similar to social responsibility, it is essential to underline the engagement into diversity, provide information on the efforts made and to measure them.

Those recommendations are actually shared by the Business of a Better World (BBW; 2013), a non-profit organization whose mission is to update businesses on CSR practices and help support stronger performance in such fields for its members. According to the organization, “companies continue to be reluctant to provide rich information and data on diversity that is on par with the level of transparency, consistency, comprehensiveness, and urgency they demonstrate when reporting on other CSR issues, such as supply chain or environmental impacts” (Business of a Better World, 2013, para. 4).

The non-profit organization has developed an action plan of three points: Defining what diversity means for the company, how it drives the business, and how it is inked to the company’s core principles and ethics. As Point (2010), they highly recommend to report what the company is already tracking. But they also recommend staying ahead of public policy while sharing results to better lead the company in diversity. They argue “by improving reporting on corporate diversity, companies show they are serious about the issue and have tangible plans and goals in place to advance their performance” (Business of a Better World, 2013, para. 8).

As this is a study of how companies promote diversity online on their corporate websites, a social construction approach is preferred to examine their

discourse of diversity (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002). The main objective is to examine how companies communicate about the concept of diversity, and secondly to get a sense of their commitment to the concept. Through an analysis of their texts, I seek to identify patterns, themes and underlying philosophies of diversity. I am well aware that the findings cannot be generalized but are constructed by the companies and will be interpreted and reinterpreted with my research. In order to give more structure of the questions my thesis would raise on diversity, the following paragraph provide an overview of the research questions and sub-questions based on the recommendations of Point (2010) and the issues raised by Holton (2005) when communication and reporting on diversity.

In order to answer this main research question, sub-questions can be drawn to help organize the exploration of companies' construction of diversity. Four sub-questions have been developed with the purpose of giving a clear picture while answering the main question.

Main Question:

How do the top 25 Great Places to Work for 2012 construct and communicate about “diversity”?

- Sub-Question 1: In what sections can content about diversity be found?
- Sub-Question 2: How is content about diversity structured?
- Sub-Question 3: How and through which dimensions do organizations define diversity?
- Sub-Question 4: What kinds of formats are provided to illustrate diversity?

The sub-questions 1 and 2 aims to understand in what way those corporations perceive the issue of diversity (e.g. Human Resources, Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Values etc.) while the sub-question 3 help investigate how they clearly express their vision of the matter and if they include elements of the academic and business literature on the topic. Last but not least, the sub-question 4 lead to the analysis of the communication strategy adopted to

talk about diversity (e.g. Illustrative Business Case, Employees testimonials, Data reporting etc.).

3. Methods

In order to achieve the purpose of understanding and drawing conclusions on the diversity communication strategies of the chosen companies, the methodology is vitally important. The objective of this part is to outline the structure and assumptions of the methodology for this thesis, in order to construct the argumentations and direct the readers toward a better understanding. The research methodology holds an inductive viewpoint. This means that elements of reflection will be generated from the data that will be collected and analysed.

It has to be explained that there is no perfect communication strategy online as there is no set of predetermined rules that will ensure that a message is perfectly communicated and understood. The way we communicate and interact is always changing, this shapes and reshapes constantly the tools we use for communicating as well as the way we communicate.

It is agreed that social sciences cannot be studied in the same way as hard sciences. No accurate answers can be given to social questions because they are linked to individual behaviours through choices and decisions. Related to the field of communication, there are no real distinctions of what is “right” or “wrong” as each individual have developed his own style of communication. Only the content can be subject to discussion. The purpose of this thesis is to offer a picture of what is seen and draw conclusion and recommendations from it. This way of doing is similar to the grounded theory.

According to Bowen (2006), the grounded theory is a qualitative research approach that uses inductive analysis as a principal technique by using sensitizing concepts to guide analysis. Such an approach means the patterns, themes, or categories that will be mentioned in the analysis will come from the data. The analysis of the data will help identify blocks or threads that are likely to be framed and named with the goal of answering the research question. This

implicitly means that there is no pattern necessarily imposed, even though some patterns may be already mentioned in the literature review.

Thus, the research methodology is inductive and qualitative. As for the method, a desk-based study about the top 25 of the world's best multinationals workplaces in 2012 was undertaken. Companies were selected because of their inclusion in this specific ranking as they were considered to feature good environment for employees. Coming from such supposition, it looked rightful to tag such assessment with the concept of diversity, as it is an argument often use for the wellness of employees.

Great Place to Work Institute¹ created the top 25 of the Best Multinational Companies to work for. They study and identify great workplaces around the world through different methods: they have built a model that organizations can reach to be considered a great place to work in. According to their 'About' page, this is the achievement of 25 years of research along with surveys of millions of employees. To create the top 25 of the world's best multinationals, Great Place to Work first selected the world's best from nearly 5,700 companies that participated in a competition that they created late 2011 to mid 2012 in the 45 countries in which they operate. According to them, "these companies employ more than 11 million employees, making the annual Great Place to Work study the largest of its kind in the world" (Great Place to Work, 2012, How we Create the List, para. 2).

To be on the list, they assess the results of different studies: the Trust Index, which is an employee survey and what they call the Culture Audit Management Questionnaire. They advance that at least 350 multinational corporations participated globally in their surveys. Of these, 250 appeared on one of their national Best Workplaces lists. Of these 250 best companies, only 38

¹ Great Place to Work Institute is a global human resources consulting, research and training firm specializing in organizational trust. The Institute is known for his annual rankings of corporations for their performance in human resources. The most known ranking produced by the Institute is the Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For. More information is available online at <http://www.greatplacetowork.com/>.

passed their eligibility criteria for the World's Best Multinational Workplaces list. The sample of multinationals included in the top 25 is mainly from the United States but also from UK, Spain, France, and Denmark. They all operate in different countries all over the world.

The top 25

1. SAS Institute – Information Technology
2. Google – Information Technology
3. NetApp – Information Technology/Data Management
4. Kimberley-Clark - Manufacturing & Production
5. Microsoft – Information Technology/Software
6. Marriott – Hospitality
7. FedEx Express – Transportation
8. W.L Gore & Associates – Manufacturing & Production
9. Diageo - Manufacturing & Production/Food Products
10. Autodesk – Information Technology/Software
11. PepsiCo – Manufacturing & Production/ Food products
12. Ernst & Young – Professional services
13. Telefonica – Telecommunications
14. Monsanto – Manufacturing & Production/Chemicals
15. Intel – Information Technology/Hardware
16. National Instruments – Manufacturing & Productions/Electronics
17. General Mills – Retail/Food grocery
18. American Express - Financial Services & Insurance
19. Accor – Hospitality
20. McDonalds – Hospitality/Food and Beverage Service
21. Cisco – Information Technology
22. Novo Nordisk - Biotechnology & Pharmaceuticals
23. Quintiles - Health Care / Services
24. SC Johnson - Manufacturing & Production/Personal and Household goods
25. Mars - Manufacturing & Production/ Food products

Before explaining further the methods, it is worth to note that I went to this project with some preconceptions about the companies regarding their field of operation or their nationality. However as the top 25 is about multinationals operating all over the world, few were actually known by myself prior to the analysis. I have done my utmost to not let my preconceptions about the companies unfairly bias this investigation. In addition, as a Media & Business student, there is another host of biases to deal with, coming from my background. Scepticism is a common pitfall, but I felt that I was aware of my biases during the course of the analysis.

I explored each website to see whether there was any content about diversity and if any statements were made about diversity. I searched using key words (such as diversity, equality, equal opportunities, culture, inclusion) in English but also in the respective language in case national languages (French, Spanish and Danish) pages would pop-up as well. I assumed that the messages communicated through the websites would reveal valuable information about their diversity values and policies. It is important to mention that the goal was not to know if their policies are enacted or not.

According to Point and Singh (2003), website material offers more advantages over questionnaires and interviews because of the sensitive nature of the topic. They argued that “accurate data can be obtained for every company sampled, without bias from respondents” (p.301). Additionally, the fact of finding nothing about diversity on a website was also a finding by itself as it revealed a lack of interest regarding the increasing attention given to the topic. It is relevant to mention that my interpretation of the discourses may not fit those intended by the corporations. They were my understandings conversant with my literature research and my particular background and interest in diversity.

As for the collection of data, I stored the web pages as text files and collected any statements related to diversity in Word files. I decided to exclude annual reports and any other PDF documents even though they are available online because the content is highly influenced by different legal requirements

for reporting policies between countries (Point & Singh, 2003). In addition, I believe that it is a deliberate act for an organization to communicate about diversity through its online pages rather than in a collection of PDF files such as a CSR report. I wanted to examine only voluntary disclosures regarding diversity and not obligation to provide content in reports. I imported all the content in Dedoose for a qualitative analysis. Dedoose helped me manage, analyse and report on the data. Such applications provide a systematic way of approaching the data that help find connections and identify patterns. Similar to Point's (2010) method, I created a coding framework based on the understanding of the research literature and the trends I noticed while collecting the data. It was based on themes such as definition or types of diversity and the dimensions of diversity. I also crosschecked on interpretations and made changes in coding structure as I went through the task notably for coding the approach adopted while explaining diversity and the inclusion of figures. Descriptors are the name of the corporation, the position in the top 25, the nationality, the number of employees, the revenue for 2011, the number of countries they operate in, and the industry they belong too. Several codes have been created as the analysis proceeded to help organize the data. The codes are related to sub-questions and they will be explained in the analysis section for each sub-question.

4. Analysis and findings

In order to answer this main research question: How do the top 25 Great Places to Work For 2012 construct and communicate about “diversity”? ; sub-questions were drawn to help organize the exploration of companies’ construction of diversity. Four sub-questions have been developed with the purpose of giving a clear picture while answering the main question.

- Sub-Question 1: In what sections can content about diversity be found?
- Sub-Question 2: How is content about diversity structured?
- Sub-Question 3: How and through which dimensions do organizations define diversity?
- Sub-Question 4: What kinds of formats are provided to illustrate diversity?

4.1 In what section can content about diversity be found?

All the 25 websites were investigated as to find the content related to diversity. To do so, three different ways were used to access it. The traditional way was to explore the website with the use of the menus as well as the sitemap. In addition to this, the search bar was used to access any content referring to diversity. Last, Google was also of help to access content that seemed not to be easy to access when investigating the website. It happened on several occasions that the content about diversity was under several heads. Google offered an easy and fast way to directly access the content by typing the name of the corporation and the term “diversity” in the search bar. Paradoxically, some of the content was only found through the use of Google and seemed to be hard to get access to through the website. This does not mean that there is no access through the website, but simply that the navigation was not easy enough to lead the user to it.

While exploring the website, notes were taken to record how the content on diversity was accessed. This resulted in coding where the content on diversity was found. Based on the 25 websites, four different codes were created; Company Overview; Corporate Responsibility; Sustainability; Careers. The

content was not limited to one category, as it was often observed that it was repeated or particularly serving a different purpose. The next part focuses on each of those categories and provides an overview of the content related to it.

Some companies also related the content about diversity in this section however the access was not direct because of the presence of sub-sections leading to diversity content. This means that the page referring to diversity was not integrally about diversity but diversity was only a part of it. This is why it explains that the content can actually be double crossed by different categories.

Company Overview

Some of the content related to diversity was actually found in this heading. The name varied depending on the corporations. It was also named “About us” or simply “Company”. Some companies offered a direct access to the content right after entering in this menu. This was the case of the corporate websites of Microsoft ‘About’, Marriot ‘About Marriot’, Intel ‘Company Overview, McDonalds ‘Our company, Kimberly Clark ‘Company’, W.L. Gore & Associates ‘About Gore’, Cisco ‘About Cisco’ and Ernst & Young ‘About us’. Therefore there was in total 8 companies out of 25 that addressed the concept of diversity directly in their corporate information page.

For McDonalds and Cisco the content is called ‘Diversity and Inclusion’, while Marriot and Intel go even simpler with the heading of Diversity. It is worth to note that the order of the words Diversity and Inclusion (Inclusion and Diversity) often vary. Microsoft used the adjective ‘global’ with the term of diversity. By calling the section ‘Global Diversity and Inclusion’, this may suggest that the concept of diversity is applied to all stakeholders of the company. However they also provide a ‘Supplier Diversity’ sub-section in a Corporate Information section on the same level than heading of Global Diversity and Inclusion. Ernst & Young named the section ‘Our people and culture’. Even though the title did not mention diversity, the content was mainly related because of the title that appeared when clicking on it ‘Our people – a diverse 21st

century workforce'. Kimberly-Clark directly specified the stakeholders they are addressing with two different headings 'Employee Diversity' and 'Supplier Diversity'. W.L. Gore & Associates introduced the content about diversity with the title 'A culture of diversity'.

Corporate Responsibility

Corporate responsibility features one of the most seen sections in all the websites. It was sometimes put on the same level than the Company Overview or it was integrated in the Company Overview. In total, 7 corporations gave access to the diversity content through a CSR menu in the main heading. Those were Telefonica (which actually merged CSR and Sustainability in the heading), General Mills (with the title 'Responsibility'), National Instruments (Corporate Responsibility), SAS Institute (Corporate Responsibility), Cisco (About CSR), Ernst & Young (Corporate Responsibility) and Mars with the triple-bottom line (People, Planet and Performance).

The access to the content related to diversity was not always direct as the CSR menu was generally quite broad in terms of topics related to the title. For instance, the content regarding diversity was under the heading of Sustainability in the CSR menu of Telefonica, while for National Instruments the content was part of the heading People and Culture in their CSR menu.

Only General Mills offered a straight access to the content related diversity when getting in the CSR menu with the simple title of Diversity and Inclusion. Mars integrated the diversity aspect in its triple-bottom line section under the heading "Working at Mars". The way it is organized once explains the crossing with other categories. Even though the content is initially found in the CSR section of the website, the following heading may also fit in other categories such as Careers or Sustainability.

It was not rare to observe a Corporate Social Responsibility section in the Company Overview head. This was the case of five websites such as FedEx

Express 'Our People', Diageo 'Corporate Governance', AutoDesk 'Sustainable Design', National Instruments 'Corporate Responsibility/People and Culture' and Mars 'People, Planet, Performance'. The content on diversity was accessed through the Company Overview page but further steps in the navigation were needed to arrive on the dedicated page. Therefore those companies are likely to be found in other categories such as Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainability or Careers as well.

Sustainability

On few occasions, the content about diversity was found in a section related to Sustainability. 5 companies out of 25 had such approach. The only company that directly related the content about diversity to the sustainability section was Autodesk. Indeed, the content was found under the heading 'Sustainability Design' in the about page. It is worth to mention that surprisingly the content was not reachable through the website navigation and the use of Google was needed to arrive to the content. Several attempts to localize this page with the website navigation have been done but the page provided by Google was never found in that way. This may suggest that the structure and content website was in the process of being updated or reorganized.

Telefonica provided content about diversity in a sustainability sub-section called Management Model in the bigger section Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability. Kimberly Clark also provided the content about diversity in a sub-section called People in the heading Sustainability put at the same level of their About section. It has to be noted that this part is a replicate of the 'Employee Diversity' part which belongs to their About section. Accor also provided content related to diversity in a section called 'Sustainable Development' in their home page. The content is related to a sub-heading called the 7 pillar of Planet 21 and one of the pillars is employment, which may explain the presence of diversity in this section. Novo Nordisk also provided the content related to diversity in a section named Sustainability with the two following sub-headings 'Our priorities' and then 'Our people'.

Careers

The section called Careers featured the part of the websites where the content about diversity was likely to be found most of the time with in total 14 companies out of 25 that were communicating about diversity in their careers pages. It is worth to mention that for some corporations the content about diversity was often repeated in the careers section.

The content about diversity was only found in the Careers section under various sub-headings for the following companies: NetApp under the sub-heading 'Life at NetApp', PepsiCo in 'Why work at PepsiCo', Monsanto 'Why work here', American Express 'Life at American Express' and Quintiles 'People and Culture'. It was often observed that some companies provided content about diversity in several sections of their website. This was the case of McDonald's, Intel, Kimberly Clarks and W.L. Gore & Associates which provides related content in the Careers section in addition of the content in their company overview page. There was no content related to diversity found in the careers pages of Microsoft and Cisco. However it is worth to mention that Microsoft provided a link to their Global Diversity and Inclusion page at the bottom of the Career page.

In addition of providing content related to diversity in their Corporate Responsibility section, General Mills, SAS Institute had a diversity sub-heading in its careers section. This was also observed for Accor and Novo Nordisk which respectively provided content about diversity in a section called Recruitment and Careers, and Working at Novo Nordisk in addition of their sustainability section. Ernst & Young also provided content on diversity in their careers section additionally to their company overview and CSR sections.

Miscellaneous

This category was created for three corporations: Google, SC Johnson, Diageo. Because Google located IP addresses the content about diversity was

automatically in French when navigating through the website. Several attempts were made to set the account used on Google to English but it never succeeded. Therefore the only way to access the content was to directly type “Diversity at Google” in the search engine bar. This prevented from tracing the navigation to arrive on the page from the home page of Google.

Even though Diageo provided some content about diversity, it was very limited and was only mentioned in a corporate governance page. It was therefore decided to ignore the content offered by this corporation.

SC Johnson featured an exception due to the name of the heading in which the diversity content belonged. Indeed, the content about diversity was found in the main menu, under the heading “Integrity” which featured different topics such as corporate social responsibility, sustainability and leadership. The discussion part will also focus on this untypical structure as it was only seen for this corporation.

4.2 How is content about diversity structured?

Not all the corporations actually offer sections under the heading of diversity. It was not rare to see the content limited to one page and therefore no subheadings or sections were found. However some of the corporations particularly seemed to have paid attention to the structure and organization of their content about diversity. In total, 8 corporations out of 25 had an elaborated structure to introduce the topic of diversity in their corporate page. Along with the observations made on the website, the structure of the content was framed into different shapes: stakeholders-related structure, funnel-shaped structure and what has been called a 360-degree structure.

Stakeholders-related structure

Some companies organized their content about diversity depending on the stakeholders they address. This was particularly the case of Google that features five different sub-headings in their page related to diversity and inclusion. The

main sub-headings were Home, Workforce, Culture, Users and Communities, and last Students. As expected, the section called 'Home features an overview of what can actually be found on the website. However the sections such as Workforce, Users and Communities, and Students are focusing on Google's stakeholders. Workforce focuses on employees and the page provides an overview of the different employee resources groups that exist inside the corporation. Users and communities is a section addressing business actors such as customers and suppliers. Google not only explains how it has based its success by understanding the needs of millions of Google customers to develop their business but also how their support communities by being attached to diversity with their suppliers. Last but not least, Google included a sub-heading dedicated to Students. In this page, Google shows its implication in providing opportunities to underrepresented students and also advertise its own programs.

Marriott had also a more elaborated structure as the number and profile of stakeholders was more detailed than Google. Not only it relies on the kind of stakeholders but also on the location of the stakeholders. The content is segmented in two major parts: Corporate and Global Regions. The corporate section offers 4 sub-sections that features stakeholders: Guests (customers), Associates (business partners), Owners (shareholders) and Suppliers. Each category provides insights on the accomplishments, programs and services that are related to each kind of stakeholders. For instance in the Guests section, Marriott put emphasis on its engagement to help traveling families during their stay in their resorts by ensuring several services while in the supplier section, they explain how they help minority-owned businesses to develop. The second major section is called Global Regions and it features a geographic segmentation per regions in the world: Americas, Asia, Europe, and Middle East & Africa. Surprisingly only the headings makes it related to diversity, the content by itself is more corporate. Marriott offers to the reader an overview of their activity in each region.

General Mills also broach the topic of diversity with a multi-stakeholder approach that is illustrated in the structure of the content. When arriving on the

Diversity and Inclusion page of the global corporate website, the reader is offered navigation through four different sub-headings: Equal Employment Opportunity, Multicultural Marketing, Supplier Diversity, and Veterans. The part called Equal Employment Opportunity highlights the policy of the company regarding its way of hiring; it is therefore aimed at any potential employees. Most interesting is the second heading called Multicultural Marketing. General Mills gives examples of marketing campaigns that underline their fondness to take into consideration the cultural aspects of any of their customers. As the Supplier diversity heading indicates, this part is aimed at communicating about General Mill's engagement to support businesses owned by minorities. The last sub-heading called Veterans which is described as an important segment of the population by General Mills. Since the organization is mostly operating in the United-States, it is rather clever to give importance to such status however it may not relevant for worldwide employees or potential employees.

In addition of providing general information about its perception of Diversity, McDonalds gives access to three different headings: External Partnerships, Internal Programs and Global Initiatives. It was rather complicated to clearly define in what types of structure the content of McDonalds could be framed. However the title of the sections supposes a structure based on the different stakeholders of the corporation even though the stakeholders seems too broad. It is worth to mention that the content was too limited and actually rather general and this is why McDonalds was not particularly of interest for the structural analysis.

It was often observed that a sub-section or one of titles feature on the diversity page was related to the specific group of stakeholders that are suppliers. In total, 9 other companies have made a clear distinction between supplier and employee diversity (SAS, Kimberly Clark, Microsoft, FedEx Express, PepsiCo, Monsanto, Cisco, SC Johnson and Mars).

Funnel-shaped structure

The most elaborated case was Microsoft that almost offers a marketing plan of how the company deal with diversity. The content is divided into three section: Vision & Strategy, Programs & Initiatives and last, What's happening now? The section called Vision & Strategy is an attempt to give an overview of how is perceived diversity by the top management of the company and how it is part of the corporate strategy for the own sustainability of the corporation. Programs & Initiatives provides to the reader with all the elements that are likely to show the engagement of Microsoft to promote diversity and inclusion. It is in this page that the different networks of the corporation will be found as well as the different programs they support or have created to celebrate diversity. Last but not least, the section "What's happening now?" provides a follow-up of all the activities of Microsoft related to diversity and any new elements that may illustrate the engagement of the corporation for such cause.

Such way of structuring the content is also found in the website of SC Johnson. Six sub-headings compose the diversity page: Committed from the Top, A History of Respect, Recruiting and Developing, Awards & Recognition, Tracking Real Progress and Engaging Diverse Supplier. Even though the last part was aimed at suppliers as the name supposes, the structure was not considered to be stakeholder's shaped as it only represents a little fragment of the content. The two first parts (Committed from the Top and A History of Respect) are designed to give insights on the way diversity is perceived by the corporations and how it is considered to be an asset. The part calls Recruiting and Developing provides to the reader information on what are the actions and initiatives taken to strengthen the inclusion philosophy of the corporation. It is on this page that the employees networks called Councils are also introduced. The next two parts called Awards & Recognition and Tracking Real Progress seems to be designed at providing insights on the accomplishments of the corporation in the field of diversity. It is worth to note that this is what the headings and the introduction paragraphs are likely to make the reader think. In any case, this means that they

actually provide real insights or figures. This part will be analysed in the last sub-question regarding the variety and the richness of the content provided by organizations.

Intel also offered an approach that was similar to the Microsoft one even though the structure was increasingly less developed. The content is features in a unique page. Indeed the content at the top of the page relates the vision and the commitment of Intel for diversity. Throughout the reading of the page, Intel introduces focuses and actions in favour of diversity to finally bring to light programs and initiatives related to the topic.

360-degree structure

This name was given because of the broadness of the structure that was encountered. The structure has no specific shape but gathers different sections under the heading of diversity. This was observed in the corporate website of Cisco with six different sub-headings. The first section is called Education and is dedicated to introduce all the different educational and helpful tools put in place by Cisco as to help employees to get familiar with diversity and emulate the opportunities behind it. The second part introduces all the employees groups at Cisco with the purpose of showing the multiculturalism of the organization. Next part is called Executive Board and offers the reader an overview of the team composing the so-called Inclusion & Diversity Executive Board. The following part is called News and Award, and this is the public relations page related to diversity. In this page, all the latest external and internal information related to the corporation management of diversity are likely to be found. The sub-heading Our People comes next and offer a compilation of testimonies from different employees at different corporate level. Last but not least, the final sub-heading is called the Resource Centre and is actually the most informative section on the website regarding diversity. Indeed it offers not only a blog that is often updated but also different webinars, white papers and presentations to comprehend the impact of diversity organisationally wise.

4.3 How and through which dimensions do organizations define diversity?

Only a single corporation provided a clear phrase to define diversity. In their section called “A History of Respect”, SC Johnson answered two questions about the meaning of diversity. It is the only time where diversity was clearly described in terms of visible (e.g. age, gender and ethnicity) and non-visible differences (e.g. personal habits, educational background, religion and work location).

“How do we define “diversity”?”

It’s the valuable differences between people that give us, collectively, a broader understanding of each other, our consumers and the world around us. These differences range from apparent distinctions such as gender, age and ethnicity, to less apparent ones such as personal habits, educational background, religion and work location.” (SC Johnson)

“How do we define “inclusion”?”

It’s creating a work environment where all opinions are valued and where talent is recognized, cultivated and rewarded.” (SC Johnson)

It was rather expected that corporations would not clearly state how they define diversity. The only way to investigate how they defined it was to search for elements that are intrinsically linked to diversity. Those elements were the dimensions of diversity discussed in the literature review.

To answer this question, several codes were created based on the dimensions of diversity, however the coding was relative to the exploration of the content rather than pre-set. A total of 11 codes was designed after full reviewing of the diversity content from the 25 corporations: disability, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, origin, culture, social background and experience. The position to not extend the list of codes was taken, and it was preferred to rather include variations within the code that fit those most. For instance, a corporation that would mention

nationalities, states or wider regions of the world as a dimension for diversity would be likely to have its content framed with the code named 'origin'.

To organize the findings and facilitate the reading of those, two different categories have been created: the protected characteristics which refers to the dimensions protected by the legislation and the inner characteristics which widely refers to experience and personality. Companies are not restrained to one category and the content can therefore be varied and focused on the two categories.

The Protected Characteristics

The use of the legislation to set the context of diversity was often seen through the content. This was the case of 10 corporations that were at least mentioning three dimensions protected by laws and considerably referring to those. It is worth to mention that all the corporations of the top 25 make reference to the protected characteristics without always mentioning that those are protected by law. Most of the time, the term equal opportunity was mentioned to clearly establish a parallelism with the current legislation. In its diversity page, SAS and National Instruments: SAS state that they “comply with the federal laws and regulations which prohibit discrimination in employment based on race, colour, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, or veteran status” while National Instruments claims to promote equal employment opportunity for all applicants and employees by recruiting, hiring, training, and promoting persons in all job titles on the basis of job-related ability and performance, without regard to race, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, or national origin”.

“The team of Novotel / ibis World Trade Center Dubai managed by Bruno Guilloux, with 420 employees of 28 different nationalities, cultivates their differences around a common culture.” (Accor)

“The SAS Culture – a variety of people from a variety of places but who all speak the same language.” (SAS Institute)

“As our clients become more global and expand into new markets, they expect us to be equally diverse.”(Ernst & Young)

“We strive to be a local company in every country in which we operate, and we understand that our users have different cultures, languages, and traditions. It drives the projects we work on, the people we hire, and the goals we set ourselves.”(Google)

Google also makes use of the equal opportunity argument by stating that they “prohibit unlawful discrimination or harassment of any kind, including discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, colour, religion, veteran status, national origin [...] or any other characteristics protected by law” and also mention its engagement to accommodate and meet their obligation under laws for protecting the rights of the disabled. It is interesting to notice how Google adds more dimensions, supposedly protected, than SAS by adding to the list dimensions such as ancestry, pregnancy status, medical condition and marital status. FedEx Express also comply with the legislation in its so called ‘Diversity Statement Mission’ arguing that they value the contributions and perspectives of all employees regardless of race, gender, culture, religion, age, nationality, disability, or sexual orientation.

Particularly noticeable is the fact of mentioning that the company will also comply on any other characteristics protected by law. Such approach was also found in other corporation content such as Kimberly Clark that not only states all the protected dimensions but also specifies that the company will comply to “any other categories as provided by law. This was also the case of Autodesk that mentions that “any other classification protected against harassment or discrimination by law will not be tolerated” by the company. It is important to note that Autodesk is the only corporation fully relying on the law when explaining its commitment to diversity. The company has included such

dimensions in their code of business conducts, which they consider as the element that reinforce diversity inside the company.

At a lower level of commitment regarding the protected characteristics, Microsoft and Intel seem to give little consideration for those. Microsoft recognizes that its workforce is diverse “in characteristics such as race, ethnicity and/or gender” but never clearly makes reference to the legislation. The same is observed for Intel that “ensures that every employee has opportunities to thrive and make it to the top without cultural, gender, or racial barriers to impede their progress”.

Novo Nordisk also referred to protected characteristics in its diversity content. However, the company particularly emphasizes the source of those characteristic characteristics. They argue to ensure equal opportunities and non-discrimination by using the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Right as a guide. Surprisingly, Novo Nordisk is the only corporation to clearly refer to an identifiable source when bringing the social justice case for diversity in their content. Not all the corporations are likely to be quoted or even cited since not all content provided elements for a clear picture of how they were defining diversity. For instance, Diageo remains quite uncertain and too general in the way they perceive diversity.

Inner characteristics

7 out of 25 corporations put emphasis on inner characteristics in their diversity content. Terms such as experience, personality and opinions were considered to belong to the inner characteristics. Such characteristics feature a challenge, as it is more complicated to really state clear differences in those. All the companies that mentioned such characteristics were rather vague and not extremely developed. This was often limited to a paragraph.

Kimberly-Clark values the unique and varied characteristics, life experiences and perspectives of its people. (Kimberly-Clark)

Outperforming ourselves is a rush. We're strong individualists who thrive on collaboration. To us, it's all about respect for one another's unique traits, backgrounds, perspectives and experiences. (PepsiCo)

American Express owes much of its success to the vastly different experiences and perspectives of our diverse team, so we prize diversity at every level of our company. (American Express)

You will find yourself a part of a team that offers a variety of perspectives and opinions and also encourages you to share your own. (NetApp)

Google argues that if Googlers from all over the world work to do cool things that matter it is because of their background, experience and the perspective they brought to the company. They explain that “every background, unique experience, and perspective brought by Googlers help them create their unique culture and bring fresh approaches to creating and using our products. Googlers come from all over the world and from every background which brings unique experiences and perspectives to their work”. It is an interesting point of view, because contrary to the previous organizations, it does not feel like the culture of the organization is getting enriched because of the consensual diversity (relying on protected characteristics) but rather on the interaction between different experiences and perspectives that is likely to be an important element of the corporation's identity.

Through the words of Thomas J. Falk, CEO of Kimberly-Clark, the corporation uses a term that increases the intrinsic value of an individual. He says,

“Kimberly-Clark values the unique characteristics, life experiences and perspectives of its people”. By focusing on the uniqueness, it is perhaps showing that visible characteristics such as race or gender are not really what defines a person. It does not make an individual unique, and the following terms goes in that direction. Life experiences and perspectives is maybe what differentiate people the most from other people.

Other corporations such as Microsoft and Intel argue that the fact of straightening the value of different experiences and perspectives bring to them has always been part of their core identity. “Microsoft has always been about recognizing the value that different life experiences and viewpoints bring to our business. We seek out people from diverse backgrounds and encourage them to take risks and approach challenges unconventionally”. Intel uses the uniqueness argument as Kimberly-Clark did to emphasize their interest in inner qualities. They describe their workforce as individuals with “a unique set of experiences and abilities that are critical to their success”. They also explain that it is the degree of passion in those individuals that make the company a leader and add that is why “they must therefore respect the viewpoints of all people and honor the values of discipline, quality and risk-taking that our company was built on”. This is rather solemnly said, however no further development is given to such statements. Intel repeats its statement with a sort of motto: “We need your skill. Your experiences. Your unique point of view”. It is worth to notice that they also used the word skill, which could be framed as valuing skills obtained in other contexts and therefore other organizations.

PepsiCo and Monsanto also seem to give attention to personal characteristics. Pepsi defines its people as “strong individualists who thrive on collaboration”. This is a rather blurry statement, however the following sentence may help comprehend what they mean. “To us, it’s all about respect for one another’s unique traits, backgrounds, perspectives and experiences”. It appears that the corporation gives more important to inner traits rather than visible characteristics. Once again, the use of the adjective “unique” is made. Monsanto goes in the same direction by arguing that they are interested in people “with

broad experiences and backgrounds” because this can only bring “new and innovative ideas and viewpoints to the organization”.

American Express and Cisco also make reference to inner characteristics without further developing the rationale behind. They respectively explain how they owe much of their success behind “the vastly different experiences and perspectives”. However Cisco appears to define diversity by the “inclusion of a diverse workforce with unique life experiences, cultures, talents and perspectives” which perhaps features the most clearly expressed definition of diversity of the whole sample with the one offered by WL Gore & Associated that states they “cultivate an inclusive environment by considering all dimensions of diversity – not just the primary areas such as gender, race and sexual orientation – but also cultural aspects including values, preferences, beliefs and communication styles”.

4.4 What kinds of formats are provided to illustrate diversity?

This question aimed at giving a picture of the format to talk about diversity, which is different than the structure. A wide variety of approaches were seen over the 25 corporations. Some preferred a more academic or business approach when bringing the content, while others preferred a more entertaining approach. To answer this question, no coding was used but rather memos for each corporation. This part particularly highlights the quality of the content and not the superiority of a particular kind of format. In addition, companies were likely to make use of several kinds of element such as providing a business case for diversity and at the same time adding promotional videos about diversity to advertise their organizational culture. One does not rule out the other.

The business case for Diversity

The majority of the corporations provide arguments for describing diversity as valuable for their businesses. 14 out of the 25 companies regularly mention the benefits that diversity brings to them. This was often seen in a compilation of terms that describe the advantages that diversity can bring to the company or

what they consider to be valuable in a broader perspective. For instance, WL Gore & Associates states on their diversity page that “knowledge, expertise, talents, creativity, and hard work are what lead to unique, valuable, and profitable products and this is for this reason that they are attracting, growing, energizing, and retaining the best talent”, adding that this is critical for the success of the company. General Mills particularly emphasis that “diversity plus inclusion equals business value” according to the word of Ken Charles, vice president of Diversity and Inclusion. “We see it as more than a catch phrase and more than a trend. For us, it’s a business imperative”. Such statements were often observed, however no real diversity business case was really drawn to explain the reasons and the mechanisms that made them believe so.

Only two corporations provide content that is likely to be considered as a real business case for diversity. Microsoft is the only one corporation of the top 25 to provide a dedicated part of the website (Vision & Strategy) to explain the rationale behind its commitment to diversity. They state that “Global diversity and inclusion is an integral and inherent part of their culture [...] to be more innovative in the products and services they develop, in the way they solve problems, and in the way they serve the needs of an increasingly global and diverse customer and partner base”. Following such statement, Microsoft offers two sections called “Business Rational” and “Key Growth Strategies” where arguments in favor or diversity are provided. Two kinds of arguments could actually be identified. The first one is the on- going demographic change that is illustrated with demographics and highlights the necessity to treat the topic of diversity. Microsoft asks the reader to consider some statistics as to understand its approach toward diversity. Because by the year 2050, the new entrants in the workforce (75%) will be racial, ethnic minorities and women and that the corporation will be strongly operating in developing nations such as China, Brazil and India, the firm is getting prepared right now to serve the needs of this growing and changing consumer marketplace. Within the United States, diverse populations are getting more and more buying power and this is changing the consumer base of this corporation. Because the consumption and buying power

are shifting, being diverse and inclusive enough appears to be the best way for the corporation to recognize the needs of the customers and the workforce.

In the Key Growth Strategy section, supposed objectives from the strategy of having a diverse workforce are given and illustrated with the current actions taken by the company. Microsoft is engaged to build a pipeline of leaders issued from diversity. To do so, the corporation is actively partnering with outreach partners such as advocacy groups for minorities, academic institutions and professional organizations. Along with those, they offer programs, internships and grants to encourage more diverse people in building a career in the company. Obviously here, the talent pool argument is used to foster the tomorrow's leadership. Other arguments such the problem-solving ability would also be exulted by a more diverse work environment according to Microsoft. Indeed, Microsoft offers leadership and develops programs to its employees as to make them more familiar with an inclusive environment. Such programs would give managers and employees the ability to excel in their responsibilities. Inclusive behaviors would encourage new ways of solving issues and diversity of thoughts would be highly rewarded. Last but not least, diversity is considered to be a motor for innovation, particularly regarding suppliers. By working with highly trained minority-owned businesses, Microsoft became one of the most popular organizations regarding the financing of minority-owned business. This featured an important milestone not only for the organization itself but also for the minority-owned advocacy groups, which consider Microsoft as one of the best examples in terms of supplier diversity.

To some extent, Cisco also provides elements that help comprehend their strategy for having a diverse workforce by providing several white papers and presentations in what drives their motivation for diversity and particularly underlines the successes of the corporation. However such content was not part of the analysis because it was not readable online but only available for download. As stated in the methodology, such documents were not of interest because only the information provided in the webpages was analyzed.

Diversity reporting

Numbers and figures were sometimes observed but rarely provided in a detailed way and percentages were highly preferred over absolute values. They mostly concerned gender, disability and racial characteristics.

In total, 8 corporations provided figures or percentages in their diversity pages. This was the case of FedEx Express stating that 40% of their US workforce and 27% of their management team are minorities. In the same way, Telefonica provided only numbers about the female workforce which features 53.9 % of its workforce and on the other hand provided absolute values when treating the topic of disability with informing that 1,600 employees are considered to be disabled. Telefonica is considered to be one of the best company for hiring disabled people (International Labour Office, 2010). Such companies are often referred "social providers". In 2009, Telefonica is said to have reached 165 per cent of its procurement goal regarding the legislation. Telefonica is committed to work with disabled persons' organizations and government to maintain the social acceptance of disabled people in the society. With their hirement policy, they succeed maintaining their commitment and this has highly contribituteds to the success of this disability endeavors.

General Mills also provides some percentages to highlight the evolvment in term of diversity in the corporations. "By 2010, 19.4 percent of our employees were minorities and 16 percent of management level positions were held by minorities. In 2010, 25 percent of promotions went to minorities. Gender is also an important component of diversity. In 2009, women made up 47.6 percent of our U.S. salaried workforce, 36 percent of our management positions, and 52 percent of promotions". What is rather surprising is that the way it is phrased, let the reader think there must has been enhancement in the corporation, however it only concerns the year 2009 and 2010 which is not quite representative of a long-term commitment to promote diversity in the corporation. Mars adopts the same approach by stating that "Women are underrepresented in many workplaces around the world, especially in senior positions and that they are

proud of the progress they have made over the last 11 years, gradually increasing the proportion of women in management roles by one percent each year since 2001 (...) Women made up 38 percent of Mars managers in 2011". Even though the figure is quite enthusiastic, Mars does not provide a clear picture of the evolution of the number of women in the company, how many women were in Mars ten years ago?

Gender appears to be the only dimension of interest for statistics. All the corporations that provided figures were referring to the gender dimension. The only figure given by Accor is that 27% of its hotel managers were women at the end of 2012. McDonalds seems to provide confused numbers. Indeed, the company informs the reader that 45% of its franchisees are "women/minority". What is the part of it representing women? This also raised a question: are women minorities or not according to McDonalds and the other corporations?

Other companies provided a more detailed structure to their numbers. For instance, National instruments offered tables with the total number of employees in the world within categories such as regions of the world in absolute values while a second table is only aimed at showing diversity for board members and officers with two dimensions, gender and minority. Pepsi also provided what they have called "workforce data" with a graph providing percentages of men (68%), women (32%) and what they have named "people of color"(26%) for 2010. A table provides absolute numbers and percentages with those three categories for the board of directors, the senior executives, executives, all managers and all associates. For their section about supplier diversity, a graphic of their involvement in elaborating relationship with minority-owned business is provided. The graphic provides information on the amount of money dedicated to it from 2005 up to 2010. Pepsi is the only company to provide this kind of information about their relationship with suppliers.

In the same manner, Intel provides also more elaborate tables called "Demographics of Veteran" and "Demographics of Workforce". The tables are in

absolute values and provide numbers of veterans or minorities for each single kind of positions within the corporation. No year is provided for the data, even though it is indicated that the data will be out of date in 2014. Most interesting is that Intel is the only corporation that separated woman and minority, and also sub-categorized minorities in their table. Minorities are featured into 5 different categories (excluding the “white” category): Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Asian, American Indian or Alaskan Native and Two or more races.

Paradoxically, SC Johnson did not provide any figures about diversity in its diversity content even though they clearly provide a section that refers to diversity reporting. Indeed, in their diversity and inclusion pages, a section is called “Tracking Real Progress”. No figures were found when reading the page, it only constitutes a reminding of their strategy regarding diversity and a statement on how they commit to real objectives.

Use of corporate executives’ messages

Letters and messages from executives or any officials involved in corporate responsibility were often observed on the corporate websites. Letters or what was also called “words of” were actually introducing the vision of the corporation regarding diversity and were the first elements that were likely to be seen on the diversity pages. In total 9 companies introduced the topic of diversity in such way.

It was the case of SAS, Kimberly-Clark, General Mills, Monsanto, Marriott, Cisco and SC Johnson, which introduced the content about diversity with some words or quotes from their CEO. The length did not exceed few lines and the content was often providing arguments in favor of diversity or an invitation to understand the company’s culture and priorities for its wellness.

For instance, Jenn Mann, Human Resources Vice President at SAS starts by saying that *“SAS’ strength comes from its culture which is rich in diverse people,*

talent and ideas”. *“One of our primary responsibilities as leaders is to build talent. For Kimberly-Clark to grow and prosper, we need to have the right people in the right roles with the right opportunities”* says Thomas J. Falk, CEO of Kimberly-Clark. More in a business case approach, Fisk Johnson, CEO of SC Johnson, states that *“cultivating inclusion and diversity is much more fundamental than driving business results. It is a vital foundation to ensure that SCJ attracts, retains and inspires the best people”*. Quotes or words of are often simple and never brings further explanations for the arguments they brought. David Rodriguez, Senior Diversity Executive at Marriott expresses that diversity is “more than a philosophy—it’s a strategy that works. It is an attractive and catchy quote, but it does not bring any precision on how diversity is actually more than a philosophy for the organization.

Two corporations—Microsoft and Intel--provided more elaborate words from their CEOs or executives managers. Microsoft offered messages from Bill Gates, CEO of the corporation, but also from the Chief Executive Officer and the General Manager for Diversity. In total 3 people at the top of the corporation provided messages about the diversity in a letter format. Compared to the other messages, focus on the history of the corporation and the current demographics are made in the messages to underline the commitment of the corporation for diversity. Bill Gates states that:

As Microsoft bring innovations into more and more markets around the world, and as we strive to bridge the digital divide so that people at all levels of society can benefit from the opportunities of the global knowledge economy, we recognize that it's more important than ever to honor diversity, both inside Microsoft and in the communities where we live and work.

This seems to rely on a more practical approach than the previous messages. This does not really rely on the personality of the corporation, by not using terms such as “value” or “philosophy”. Steven A. Ballmer, Microsoft Chief Executive Officer, adds that “employing the world's top talent from all groups within our communities—from many backgrounds and with varied experiences—helps us to better serve our customers and gives us a competitive

advantage in the global marketplace”. By mentioning the competitive advantage argument, diversity is shown as a business imperative rather than a trend. Such statements may be stronger than those offered by the corporations mentioned before.

Emphasis on employee testimonials, networks and partnerships

Only 3 companies out of the 25 provided testimonials from their employees in the diversity section of their corporate website. Those were Google, American Express and Microsoft. Google provided 26 short testimonials in a section called “Meet the Googlers”. Those were from various employees at different levels and departments of the company. The employees provided insights on the rationale behind their choice for Google and what they were particularly appreciating in the company. American Express also provided the same kind of content in a video format with 8 testimonials. To a lesser extent, Microsoft also provided some testimonials but those were particularly hard to find and related to their “What’s happening now?” section and further navigation in the history of the news was needed to find the testimonials.

Testimonials are particularly interesting to look at because they can be considered as a form of implication of the workforce in the cause defended by the organization. In other words, employees should be the first to talk about diversity as they are the one that experience and lives it most. Yet, few testimonials were offered and their content was limited. According to Morsing, Schultz and Nielson (2008), employees are the key component in building trustworthiness. They introduce the “inside-out approach” which consists at first motivating organizational support inside the organization to ensure the success of the communication. They consider that “companies should base their CSR communication on ensuring employee commitment before they start communicating about their CSR activities to external stakeholders. Second, companies should communicate those CSR activities that relate to employees”. The findings show that the corporations from the sample perhaps lack of connection with their employees regarding the topic of diversity. It appears

rather paradoxical as this topic highly relates to those actors. This seems to corroborate Christensen and Cheney (2001) observations regarding the organizational communication and identity dynamics. According to them, “large corporations and other organizations have become so preoccupied with carefully crafted, elaborate, and univocal expressions of their mission and ‘essence’ that they often overlook penetrating questions about stakeholder involvement”. In the case of the Best Multinationals Workplaces, it appears that the multinational corporations belonging to the top 25 are not providing a clear picture of what their employees feel and have to say about the topic of diversity. This also reinforces that the concept of diversity has become fashionable and from an identity point of view, a desirable characteristic to satisfy a corporate narcissism.

However, an argument could be opposed to this. Interestingly, Guimarães-Costa and Cunha (2006) compares websites as a Roman atrium where CSR activities are disclosed to stakeholders. Based on the work of Albert and Whetten (1995), they explain that given employees’ dual role as members of the organization but also of the community in general, corporations are induced to align their actions with ethical and CSR messages conveyed through the website. They argue that if not, employees’ response would be that mismatch with “corresponding organizational cynicism”. As for now, no scandals or corporate crisis related to diversity has affected the corporations in the sample.

Along with the testimonials, networks were particularly put in the front of the stage. Google, Microsoft and American Express also put a strong emphasis on those, as well as Kimberly-Clark, W.L. Gore & Associates, Monsanto, Intel, National Instruments, General Mills, McDonalds and Cisco. In total, 11 companies out of 25 provided information however the precision given on those networks or employee resource groups were contrasting. Although most of the corporations only stuck with a sentence to inform the reader that the company was offering employees networks and provided a simple listing of the different networks, some corporations such as Cisco, Google and Microsoft provided descriptions and links to further discover the networks. Networks were mainly about locations (e.g. Employees in North America or Employees in India...),

protected characteristics (e.g. Employees over 40 years old, Gay Employees, Disabled Employee, Afro-American network...). Some networks were more original such as the Military network or the young Family network for Kimberly Clark.

Partnerships and programs, in which organizations were involved financially and humanely, were also often part of the diversity content. In total, 15 corporations out of 25 mentioned an initiative for financing or getting humanely involved in a program, or have created their own program to show their involvement in diversity.

Awards and Recognition

10 corporations out of 25 communicated about the prizes or awards they have won over the year in any fields related to human aspects. Those awards were strongly communicated in their diversity content pages. Some (e.g. SAS Institute, FedEx Express, McDonalds, only mentioned them while others created a section dedicated (e.g. Google, Microsoft, PepsiCo, Intel, General Mills, Cisco, SC Johnson). It was particularly interesting to notice that the award from the Great Place to Work Institute was mentioned in their diversity section.

Two other corporations have to be mentioned because they also provided content about awards but those were coming from themselves. Indeed, Kimberly-Clark communicated about awards aimed at congratulating suppliers from diversity while Marriot created an Excellence award with the purpose of congratulating the best teams of the corporations.

Focus on public relations and events

Two corporations were offering extensive content about the events they were attending or creating in relation with diversity. Those were most of the time related to the partnership developed with other organizations. Google and

Microsoft are the corporations that seem to be involved in numerous programs, which would explain why they communicate so much about events.

Use of digital media

Intel, Microsoft, Marriot, Novo Nordisk and American Express offered videos in their content about diversity. Except from American Express and Microsoft, which used the video format to record some testimonials, the rest of the corporation provided some corporate movies about diversity. The content was not informative but more commercial. For instance, the Novo Nordisk film is a compilation of scenes that do not seem to have been recorded with the purpose to be used in diversity related movie.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this thesis was to examine whether and how companies, from the top 25 of the best multinational corporations to work for, communicate and define diversity on their corporate websites, and how they actually construct their content and address 'diversity' first in terms of identifiable differences through dimensions but also in the format they give to their content.

5.1 Location and Structure of the content about Diversity

Perception and levels of diversity

The content related to diversity was found in various locations on corporate websites, with most (14 corporations) on careers, jobs and employment pages. A further 8 corporations had their content about diversity found in their company overview/information pages and profile/business policy/corporate values pages. 7 corporations had statements located within their Corporate Social Responsibility pages and 5 in a sustainability related section. It has to be reminded that some companies had content or statements about diversity in more than one location.

As Point and Singh (2003) noted, it is not surprising to find that some of the content about diversity is available in the CSR page locations. Indeed, over the last years, several guidelines have been drawn up for companies that want to promote corporate social responsibility (Global Reporting Initiative, 2002; Point and Singh, 2003). Those guidelines in the way to perceive and communicate corporate responsibility often include diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities communication as one of the numerous indicators of corporate social performance. Corporate Responsibility is a growing topic in corporations...

The fact that most of the diversity content and statements were found in the career and employment section of the corporate website is in agreement with Point's (2012) conclusions regarding the communication of diversity.

Diversity is more considered as a human resources topic, which includes activities related to it such as employment procedures or codes of conducts in the corporation, than a corporate social responsibility topic. This also suggests that corporations see it as a lever for human resources performance. This is strongly related to the business case for diversity. Diversity is therefore perceived as something strongly positive for the corporation because practicing discrimination could actually be an obstacle for the selection of the most competent individuals. In that perspective, diversity is not the pomp of social responsibility but rather a performance device.

However, it has to be discussed that some of the content about diversity was also found in company overview. With 8 corporations providing information about it on the same level that their history or their corporate values section, this may highlight the “narcissist” potential of diversity. Based on Christensen and Cheney (2001) theories, finding diversity in such context is more about the satisfaction of mirroring an acceptable image of itself than actually caring about the topic itself. Such discourses were particularly observed in this section while content in corporate responsibility sections were more giving keys for reflection on the necessity of diversity for the treatment of employees in the long-term . It rather supports Backhaus, Stone and Heiner (2002) perception regarding workplace diversity as being particularly significant indicators of corporate social responsibility. It is a slight difference that is not always observable but that needs to be highlighted to understand the differences of conception among some of the 25 corporations from the top of the best multinationals to work for in 2012 according the Great Place to Work Institute.

Surprisingly, diversity statements were also found in Sustainability sections put on the same level of the other categories or sometimes found in the Corporate Social Responsibility heading. Even though, the content was poor and not particularly developed, such conception of diversity may indicate a will of considering diversity as an asset for the long-term rather than a trend that requires short-term achievements. Such conception of diversity in the case of the top 25 of the best multinational companies to work can actually be criticized

because the section sustainability is the section that featured the most limited content about diversity.

One corporation included the content about diversity in a section called 'Integrity'. This was the case of SC Johnson. If we consider the definition of integrity as being whole and entire in honesty (The Free Dictionary, 2012), locating diversity in such section is strategically interesting. Indeed by making a relation between integrity and diversity, we could argue that implicitly supposes that diversity appears more as a 'natural' condition rather than a business imperative or a corporate responsibility matter. This 'natural' condition here is perceived as simply adhering to ethical and moral principles and makes diversity appears as an inherent value of the organization rather than a current preoccupation. It features 'diversity' as a universal notion that requires no further explanation because it is part of their integrity. Such perception is expressed in their content, as the corporation does not provide a definition of what is diversity in terms of dimension.

Identifying structural variations in diversity content

Even though most of the corporations simply offered a page dedicated to diversity, some have given a noticeable structure to their content. Three different shapes of structure were identified and named: the stakeholder-based structure, the funnel-shaped structure and last the 360-degree structure.

Marriot is for instance the corporation that entirely shaped its content to fit with its stakeholder's spectrum. It is interesting because the company also shaped the content into global regions sections (e.g. Americas, Europe, Asia, Middle East and Africa) in a second main section. This underlines the interest of the corporation to not only address stakeholders for their role organizationally wise but also to adapt the content from the location they are from. It is an approach that is particularly suitable for the hospitality industry because the origins of the stakeholders are not determined by a single location but a multitude of locations. Globalization has definitely plays an important role in the

hospitality industry which is probably the most affected industry regarding demographic changes and migration streams (e.g. development of worldwide tourism, increase of the frequency of the business travels) compared to other industries (Point, 2010). Those factors seem more apparent and visible than for the information technology industry for instance.

And yet, Google seems to give a fair attention to the diversity matter in addressing several stakeholders in the structure of its content. The organization not only addresses employees and suppliers but appears to focus on its communities and users as well. No other organizations of the top 25 of the best multinational companies to work for have put such emphasis on consumers. This strongly supports Robinson and Dechant's (1997) argument that because the consumer market is already diverse, it should drive employee's diversity. They consider this aspect inherent with promoting diversity and recommend to highly strengthen relationships with consumers. Microsoft also strongly made use of such arguments in its business case. It looks like a fair strategy to put such emphasis on the users. Google argues that the diversity of the users is at the source of its creativity, and consequently to the design of all its products. Using such arguments may actually reinforce the disposition of the company to comprehend diversity; as if it was something the company was used to deal with since its creation. Another section is directly aimed at students. This featured a point to mention in this discussion, as Google was the only corporation to actually give attention to students in its diversity content. In this section, Google especially insists on the environment and therefore the efforts of the corporation in terms of inclusion. By doing so, the corporation adopts a strategic vision of diversity by highlighted the ability of the organization to understand students. Google is known to be a corporation highly valued by students and graduate, and perhaps that promoting the "coolness" of its offices is a part of the explanation of the organization's fame to young people.

Another corporation that focuses on the richness of its consumers is General Mills with the creation of a section called multicultural marketing. In this section, General Mills highlight the importance the organization gives to cultures

by providing information on its campaigns (e.g. Feeding Dreams campaign addressed to Afro-Americans in the United States and Que Rica Vida for the Latin American continent) on different locations. General Mills considers that the diversity of its customers should also be visible in its marketing. It is an argument that has not been seen in other corporation's pages.

Those three companies specifically provided a section that addresses suppliers while 9 other corporations addressed suppliers in a more generally way by including them in their diversity content. After employees, suppliers therefore featured the most seen stakeholders in diversity content. This shows those multinational corporations do not only perceive diversity as a matter of human resources management but perhaps more as part of their business practices and more globally in their ethics. Looking at another stakeholders, shareholders or any people that somehow own a part of the capital are not really addressed in the scope of diversity. This is only seen for Marriot that, as mentioned before, features a part about their owners in their diversity content. Even though diversity appears as a preponderant matter for stakeholders as employees and secondarily suppliers, the shareholder or owner profile would still be worth having some attention. An explanation regarding the lack of consideration for this kind of stakeholder in the frame of diversity may be based on stereotypes regarding income earning and minority people. This is a point that those multinationals should perhaps consider in their communication strategy, particularly if they are in the stock exchange market. It is plausible that looking backward may be prejudicial for a corporation's reputation.

Such variations in the content structure show how the corporations envision strategically diversity. Focus can be on all stakeholders with the creation of sections dedicated to each of them but this was not the only shape identified. The other encountered structure was named funnel-shaped. It was given this name because the business approach toward diversity was particularly visible in the way the content was provided. This was the case of Microsoft and SC Johnson, as well as Intel to a lesser extent. They structured their content as a sort of business or marketing plan. This gave the impression

that diversity was envisioned as something enviable for the wellness of the corporation. The funnel shape structure suggests that they first treat the topic of diversity broadly and integrate in a strategy to then provide more specific actions that factually support their vision. In that case, diversity appears as a business necessity. This is rather supported by the quality of the content; those three corporations provided more arguments linked to the business case for diversity than any other corporations. A point of the discussion will be further developed about the quality of content.

Such structure seems to put emphasis on the vision corporation have of diversity. The fact of providing elements that are likely to build a strong business case may be interpreted as demonstration of long-term commitment to diversity and as a proof of interest for the topic. This somehow supports the theories of Bhattacharya and Korschun (2012) regarding the use of CSR to attract prospects and employees attention. By providing content that looks detailed and provided in an almost academic rigor, corporations are likely to communicated that they have particularly worked on the concept and that they comprehend what is needed for the well of their employees or other stakeholders.

Last but not least, a single corporation organized its content in a rather broad, gathering different sections. Cisco had an original way to structure its content, dealing with diversity from educational perspectives and employees networks emphasis to board presentations and access to resources. The way the content is structured gives the impression that diversity is an internal preoccupation for the company. Not only information about the board that deals with diversity is given and rather well detailed, but also the company provides several documents to download in a section called Resource Centre. By doing so, it almost feels like the organization makes diversity a matter that affects every level of the organization, from the top management to the bottom of the hierarchy. This is also strongly emphasized by their section dedicated to "People". This section offered testimonials from various employees of the organization who are at different positions.

5.2 Diversity: a house of cards

Expressing Diversity

As the literature review of the thesis indicated earlier, 'diversity' is a rather complex term, and it can embrace various definitions which are likely to be interpreted and given a different meaning depending on whose is interacting with the concept. The sample of the 25 best multinational companies to work for in 2012 provided several elements of contrasts in the way of defining and expressing diversity.

Most companies of the top 25 (except Diageo and to some extent Net App) referred to their diversity management approaches and practices in terms of human resources however none of them actually provided a clear working definition of diversity along with their activities and management initiatives. Therefore before looking at the dimensions, it was decided to first clarify whether companies in the top 25 of the best multinational companies to work for used the word 'diversity,' and if so, whether this was only in relation to human resource management issues, which intrinsically makes employees as the main subject.

So prior to analysing the dimensions, all the statements containing the word 'diversity' were read. As expected after looking at the structure of the content, it was found that the word of 'diversity' is most of the time connected to employees and secondly to suppliers. On rare occasions, the term 'diversity' was connected to all the stakeholders of the corporation, and this was the case of Marriott.

As mentioned in the findings, SC Johnson was the only corporation providing a definition of diversity in terms of visible (e.g. age, gender and ethnicity) and non-visible differences (e.g. personal habits, educational background, religion and work location). What is particularly interesting is that the company not only highlighted the differences as being valuable but also as

being the key of the understanding of the world. This somehow gives a sort of universalism to the definition, and is rather coherent with the location of the content on the website which was Integrity. Last, they brought a response to the word inclusion, and this is exceptionally reinforcing the non-visible characteristics of diversity, as if the visible characteristics had no relation with the real income of diversity. Diversity is valued not because it is a legal imperative or a consensual manner to represent the world, but rather thanks to the variety of opinions it can bring. Strangely, this way of talking about diversity is quite close from the Latin meaning of diversity, which is defined as the variety of opinions. We can doubt that the organization itself is aware of this but it shows how diversity can be a way of reinforcing the democratic aspects of the life in community. After all, an organization is only a macro society and to some extent, a picture of our society.

Because the other organizations were not particularly providing elements of answers to clearly define diversity, it was necessary to identify fragments of definition in their content. Those fragments were actually dimensions of diversity.

Dimensionalizing diversity

Even though the meaning of the word is not explicitly defined, the context offered elements of response. Dimensions of diversity were multiple and framed into eleven categories: disability, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, origin, culture, social background and experience. Protected characteristics were dominating over intrinsic characteristics, however some companies fairly balanced the dimensions and were sometimes highly emphasizing the intrinsic aspects of diversity.

For ten corporations, diversity was mostly relating to people's culture or origins. This was expressed through dimensions such as races, origins and cultures as well as languages. In those cases, diversity was emphasized by the variety of nationalities that the organization was dealing with. This is not so

surprising for multinational corporations and as Point and Singh (2003) noted it rather makes “the concept of diversity become a central concept of the discourse of multiculturalism rather than fairness and gender equality”. Such ways of perceiving diversity reinforce the common sense and agreed meaning of diversity. It is seen as a “shorthand for a multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic workforce” (Thomas & Ely, 1996). This also corroborates the argument of Goodman (2001) regarding the social justice case and the workplace. By communicating the dimensions that are explicitly protected by the legislations, corporations participate in the reinforcement of equal opportunities and tolerance among the society. However this somehow only gives the impression that corporations only do what is expected from them to do rather than daring adding their own dimensions. In addition, Goodman (2001) argues that social justice is an attempt to promote and stand for the exploration of differences as to make people benefit from them particularly in the workplace. The study tends to show that what makes people benefit from each other is rather more their diversity of opinions, communication styles and experiences than the visible characteristics.

With this assemblage of dimensions such as culture, ethnicity/race, community, nationality, language and any other dimensions that could be likely to be considered as part of a multiculturalism perspective, the discourse about diversity almost become diplomatic. As if diversity was an established rule to create the perfect conditions for people from different cultures and locations to coexist. Consequently, diversity seems to become the prerequisite for a good working climate in the company. Attention appears to be given to the cultural differences of the employees rather than any other dimensions. This way of dealing with diversity reminds how some countries are facing the challenge of multiculturalism. It is close to the affirmative action, where any ethnic and cultural specificity is addressed and responded in a tailored manner. In this sense, the discourse of diversity may be used as a way of managing social relations within the organisation as to prevent tensions among employees from different cultures and nationalities.

Some companies provided rough elements of diversity in terms of intrinsic characteristics. Those intrinsic characteristics were often used for valuing differences that composed diversity rather than explaining diversity by itself. They are very close of the conception of Litvin (1997) as secondary differences. As Litvin (1997) explains the secondary differences are more individualized and therefore richer. Within the sample of corporations, those differences were somehow used to reflect on the advantages that a diverse workforce can bring and this support what Litvin (1997) considered to be beneficial for a corporation. Even though a company was mentioning cultural, gender or ethnic differences to set the context of diversity, it often appears that the elements provided further in the development of the content were more based on dimensions such as experience or background. It is sometimes paradoxical because what constitute the richness of diversity therefore are not visible characteristics but rather what people cannot see at first sight. The question that remains is to know why companies still insist on those visible characteristics? Part of the answer must reside in the consensual way of perceiving diversity, which strongly relies on the social justice case and the government legislation.

Regarding the social justice case for diversity, it was the main artefact of diversity for some corporations. They seem to consider that mentioning their compliance to the legislation is by itself enough to talk about diversity. So they wrote about anti-discrimination laws and equal opportunities.

Overall, analysing those 25 companies through their corporate website shows that perceptions of diversity differ: there was no clear corporate definition of it. Only one corporation out of those 25 companies provided a definition of diversity. This may also indicate that corporations are actually reluctant to plainly stand for a single definition and rather prefer to quote the equal opportunities legislation as to show their alignment with the society and provide some vague insights on what diversity means in terms of other dimensions. Such approach could relate to “strategic ambiguity”, a concept developed by Eisenberg (1984). He explains that there is a great article that you may cite here. Search for

strategic ambiguity, seen as ambiguity in the communication goals, may have a discursive power. Contrary to most experts in organizational communication preaching clarity and perceiving ambiguity as deviational, Eisenberg (1984) highlights the capital of ambiguity to enable different actors to give different meanings to the same goal, or to construct or adapt different meanings for any given goal according to the interests of their different stakeholders. In the case of diversity, adapting vagueness may show an attempt to actually provide several elements that are likely to be comprehended differently depending on the kind of constituent or stakeholders. For instance, saying that the corporations celebrate differences is perhaps perceived as more powerful in terms of image representation than factually providing a list of differences. Not only it seems easier but it may be less damaging because the risk to include/exclude dimensions that could be perceived as good or bad for one or another constituents is higher and therefore satisfaction may be affected. Vagueness therefore appear as a strategy rather than a lack of interest for the topic. Flexibility in defining diversity may be demonstrated with interviews or attendance to specific events, however nothing would be clearly written down.

5.3 Quality and format of the content

Along with framing the dimensions and giving an attempt to identify different meanings for diversity, it was interesting to look at the quality of the content. It basically consisted of looking at what was offered in the diversity section in addition of the elements that explained how diversity was perceived by the organizations. The argument for looking at the richness of the content is that it may implicitly show the dedication of the corporations for dealing with diversity. Having a single paragraph in a diversity section may not say that a corporation does not care about diversity but it should be noted that it might be interpreted as a lack of interest.

For instance, Microsoft is the only corporation that provided a section dedicated to the business case for diversity. Cisco and Intel also provided less developed elements in this way. Having a section that explains why diversity is

inherent to their businesses is perhaps the best approach to show that the organization value diversity. Unfortunately the other organizations provided arguments for the business case in a more sporadically way. Even though the arguments were featured in the content, the fact that they are disseminated over the structure does not help clearly comprehend why it matters so much for the organization. Unlike other organizations, Microsoft provided a clear window on how the company assesses diversity. It makes the approach more “scientific” and solid. Relying on common and unexplained beliefs makes it look more like an accessory.

Regarding beliefs, those were also often spread through the intervention of the top management or the CEOs. The fact of having high representatives of the organization talking about diversity gives the impression that they are personally engaged in promoting diversity. It is a tactic to show how the corporation cares about the topic of diversity. 9 corporations out of 25 have adopted this way of treating diversity, as if the personality of their CEOs was enough to show their engagement: “if the CEO says so, it must be true”. Although those messages were highly used, words from a lower level in the hierarchy were rather missing. Indeed, only 3 corporations out of 25 provided testimonials of employees. This is the last straw compared to CEOs messages, since diversity primarily concerns employees at the entry level. It seems that the main alternative over the employees testimonials was only to share networks or associations of employees. Little information was actually given on the purpose of the networks and their composition; how those networks evolve in the corporations remains a mystery.

Numbers and figures were the least provided elements. This was rather surprising for multinational corporations because they feature consequent numbers of employees, suppliers or business partners. Even though 8 corporations provided numbers, it was in such a weak way that it cannot be considered as diversity reporting. Gender appears to be the only dimension of interest for statistics. All the corporations that provided figures were referring to the gender dimension. It sometimes features a paradox as the emphasis is put on

dimensions such as ethnicity or cultures in their textual elements, but when looking at numbers, the focus is on gender. This clearly seems to lack of coherence. Only two organizations, Intel and National Instruments, provided more detailed numbers in addition of those regarding gender dimension. They included the ethnical dimension (e.g. people of color for National Instruments, minorities for Intel) and it was double-crossed with the different positions and level of hierarchy over the organization. It appears to be a rather fair way to provide numbers about diversity. As Holton (2005) concluded, the work on diversity reporting is still poor. Almost ten years after her research, it appears that corporations are still reluctant to share numbers. This reluctance can be comprehended for some dimensions such as the ethnicity or the sexual orientation, as it is equivalent as putting a tag on people. However dimensions such as gender, nationality, age or disability should be more communicated. And yet, it is a disturbing observation because any organizations can claim to embrace diversity but on the other hand practice discriminative policies of recruitment thanks to a secret agenda (e.g. pregnant women discrimination, passive racism, nationalities avoidance etc.).

It appears that elements related to public relations were rather privileged over the 25 multinational companies. 15 are communicating about programs or initiatives they consider to illustrate their devotion to diversity. Along with this advertisement strategy, it was not rare to observe a section or a part of the content dedicated to the awards and recognition the company has earned over the years. Compared to diversity reporting, this looks absurd because it seems strange to be able to give an overview of the recognition they have received over the years but not to provide consistent figures of the evolution of their human resources over the year as well. It gives the impression that the topic of diversity is taken lightly. In addition, is an award significant of their commitment to diversity? Most of the corporation mentioned the best multinational to work for award in their diversity section and yet it does not seem to correlate with diversity according the findings of this thesis. For instance, Diageo, Quintiles and NetApp provided extremely little content about diversity and this creates a

doubt about the quality of the award itself if we consider diversity and inclusion as a capital asset for the wellness of employees.

Even more related to public relations is the fact of sharing a calendar. Google and Microsoft offered access to the events where they were officially participating. Providing such information may be useful for journalistic purposes and particularly for a researcher willing to meet and discuss about diversity with the teams of the corporation but do not really seem of interest for a lambda person. In a lesser extent, the use of corporate images and videos was rather limited. The only corporation to use the video format was American Express to introduce the testimonials of its employees. It is a more interactive ways of providing information. Surprisingly corporate images were rather rare and not stereotyped (e.g. the picture of people belonging to different ethnic groups). Nowadays, the power of images is rather limited, as people understand that a picture is not a big part of reality.

5.4 Limitations and contribution of the research

Several limitations exist regarding the development of this research. First, the collection of data itself featured some points that are likely to be criticized. The position of only taking into consideration the content that was available on the website pages was taken. Despite having little information on diversity online, some corporations still had materials to download about diversity. Those were often annual/half year reports or corporate social responsibility reports. They were only available for download in a PDF format. It appeared impartial to ignore those PDF files because a lambda person is more likely to navigate through the website pages than seeking the desired information through a multitude of pages in report.

In addition, the way of reporting can be influenced by the legislation. For instance, it is mandatory to report the statistics about disabled staff in some countries. And yet, the analysis of the website pages showed that actually only one corporation (Telefonica) made the choice to communicate about those figure

in the online pages. The legal framework may have biased the results if such reports had been analysed.

Another limitation is based on the ephemeral aspect of the content. Since the content is online, it can be subject to modification or withdrawal. The content for the research has been retrieved in May 2013 and therefore it represented a snapshot of what was available at that time. It is also likely that some of the content about diversity was missing during the collection of the data because the content was not always directly available through the navigation. Internal search engines as well as Internet search engine as Google were used to access the information about diversity.

Regarding the limitations of the methodology and the consequent findings, it has to be reminded that this study does not aim at providing a sense of generalizability. The number of multinational companies that were studied is not significant enough to advance that it fairly represent the multinational companies of the world. However, as more than 25 multinational corporations had in common their position in the ranking of the best multinational companies to work for in 2012, it is actually possible to generalize only and for the ranking.

Also, the fact that only the corporate website were analysed could be considered as a limitation. Methods such as surveys, focus groups or interviews with representatives and/or employees could have been used to provide a deeper understanding of how those corporations perceive diversity. However once again the purpose of this research was to picture how those were communicating diversity online. In any cases, using such methods to get access to information from the 25 multinational companies would not have been possible for this master thesis because of the lack of time but mostly because the access to those companies is too strict.

6. Conclusion

This part of this thesis aims to summarize the main notions and results of the previous chapters, and it establishes conclusions about how diversity is communicated online by the 25 best multinational companies to work for in 2012. First, the research questions and elements of answer will be reminded and further explained. Secondly, a reflection on the findings in relation with the literature review and the methodology will be provided. In addition, the possible further research will be drawn.

6.1 Summary: Research questions and findings

The thesis focused on the content related to diversity from 25 multinational companies that were considered to be the best places to work in 2012 by the Great Place to Work Institute. As the literature review meant to show, the concept of diversity is highly discussed because it is not easy do clearly define what is exactly bounded in it, particularly in terms of dimensions. If diversity is mostly agreed as the assemblage of multiple differences, the perception of those differences (called dimensions in the literature) are more subject to interpretation. Mostly agreed are the visible dimensions, often described as protected characteristics. They are highly inspired by the social justice case for diversity: the legislation and to some extent the society have created a set of dimensions that are protected as to prevent discrimination and form a climate of acceptance over those visible characteristics (disability, race, sexual orientation, age, gender). The business case for diversity itself is highly inspired by those dimensions and therefore corporations tend to include those dimensions in their diversity policies. The purpose of this thesis was to explore the way diversity is interpreted by those multinational companies and get a picture of their communication strategy regarding the concept of diversity.

The thesis was guided by one main research questions: How do the corporations, from the top 25 best multinationals to work in 2012, communicate about diversity? In order to answer this question, four sub-questions that follow

a sort of steps approach were created. The following section will provide an answer to each sub-question.

The first sub-question was related to the navigation through the website. By asking in which section was found the content of diversity, the purpose was to interpret the angle from which the multinational companies perceived diversity. The findings revealed that they mostly consider it as human resources related issue, since more than half of the corporation has their content available in the Careers/Employment section of their corporate website. To a lesser extent, the content was also found in overview pages, corporate responsibility pages and sustainability as well. The fact that the content about diversity is mostly found in the careers sections may suggest that corporations see it as a lever for human resources performance. This is strongly related to the business case for diversity. Diversity is therefore perceived as something strongly positive for the corporation because practicing discrimination could actually be an obstacle for the selection of the most competent individuals. In that perspective, diversity is not the pomp of social responsibility but rather a performance device. This way of thinking is predominant since the end of the 1950's. Before the establishment of anti-discrimination laws, the American economist, Gary Becker, used to say that corporations that would abandon discriminative practices would select the best talents. Not to mention that he added for a less cost. Indeed, promoting diversity on a career or overview page may mean that the corporation is willing to have a diverse workforce, but it does not mean as well that the treatment is fully equal. For instance, women on average make only 77 cents to every dollar earned by men according to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, and yet they perform the same tasks. It could be argued that sharing the diversity content on CSR or sustainability pages may be indicative of a real will to be more socially responsible. Only seven corporations had such approach. The fact of providing the content in such pages may suggest that diversity is a social investment on the long-term. Compared to the career/overview section, the interest regarding performance for the corporation seems more distanced. It makes the corporation more citizen-like, and perhaps more comprehensive of the fight for equal rights and opportunities. This is also more likely to have a

favourable effect on the corporation reputation toward its stakeholders, and particularly the consumers that were often mentioned in the diversity content of those CSR and sustainability pages.

The second sub-question was related to the structure of the content in term of navigation and the purpose was to comprehend how some corporation addresses diversity. The analysis resulted in the identification of three particular structures. Some companies structured their content according to their stakeholders, which suggests that they consider diversity to be inherent to all segments (e.g. employees, shareholders, suppliers and business partners). Such structure shows that some corporations have taken the position not to only consider diversity as a human resources issue. It creates a new level in the way diversity is perceived. Communicating to each stakeholder about diversity could be a way to educate and spread a certain philosophy to all stakeholders as to create harmony. Some corporations structured their content like a business or marketing plan, and this is why the structure was given the name of funnel-shaped. Within this structure, the companies provided a clear picture of their visions about diversity alongside illustrating it with their activities. In that case, the arguments in favour of diversity rely on a real business case for diversity rather than on general beliefs. The content is highly elaborated, which gives the impression that the corporations are strongly involved in promoting diversity. To a lesser extent, a third shape was identified and called the 360 degree-structure because the content seemed to provide an overview from all the internal actors of the corporation, from the top management, the boards to the managers and employees.

The third sub-question was linked to the dimensions of diversity and aimed to know how the corporations from the top 25 were actually defining it. Only a single corporation provided a clear definition of it, which demonstrates how the concept of diversity is not easy to define. Other corporations (10 in total) preferred to rely on the equal opportunities and therefore only focused on protected characteristics. However, this did not feature a clear definition of diversity but rather a fragment of it. It helps comprehend how diversity is

intrinsically linked to the social justice case and the legislation for them. Some corporations were more emphasizing the intrinsic characteristics of diversity. Opinion and experience were dimensions that were often cited in their content. Even though they also mentioned the protected characteristics, the arguments in favour of diversity were more related to such dimensions rather than the advantages that multiculturalism could bring to the corporation.

Last but not least, the final sub-question invited to explore the content and evaluate its richness. Different kind of artefacts were identified: arguments from the business case for diversity, number and figures, executives messages, testimonials, networks information, programs and initiatives, awards, calendars and digital media such as videos and pictures. The most relevant findings were the lack of diversity reporting. Numbers and figures are missing in those corporate pages. Use of testimonial messages and listing of awards, activities and programs in which the companies were involved were very often observed. This gave the impression that corporations consider than their involvement into activities somehow linked to diversity illustrates better their credibility than providing a single table with numbers. This is a paradox, since little information is actually given about their initiatives but also because diversity reporting would be more representative of their engagement toward diversity.

6.2 Reflection on the research and the findings

What emerges from the findings is that diversity is a concept that is dependant upon the way organizational mind-sets are oriented. Internet is an interesting tool for promoting any kind of causes or interests and the manner in which the content is created and structured can already give a picture of how a corporation is interacting with the concept. Analysing those 25 companies through their corporate website shows that perceptions of diversity differ: there was no clear corporate definition of it. Only one corporation out of 25 companies examined for this study provided a definition of diversity. This may also indicate that corporations are actually reluctant to plainly stand for a single definition and rather prefer to quote the equal opportunities legislation as to show their

alignment with the society. It illustrates how complex are the dimensions of diversity and moreover, how diverse can be the approaches toward diversity. Is it a social responsibility issue? Is it a matter of sustainability? Is it only a lever for human resources and economic performance?

What is most surprising is that the assumption that those corporations would have a set definition of what diversity features for them due to their presence in the top 25 of the best multinational companies to work is not working. Even though those corporations are considered to be the best at providing good conditions to employees, they do not particularly provide detailed materials on their practices and policies regarding diversity. Most surprising is the fact of relying on executives' messages and philanthropy activities through programs as to show their engagement to diversity. Only 3 corporations provided testimonials of employees. Even though they claim to finance organizations promoting diversity or having partnership with those, it does not explain how they perceive diversity to be valuable for them. Little arguments in favour of diversity were generally brought and this gave the impression that those corporations were actually considering diversity as another accessory for their website. The lack of numbers and figures emphasized this impression, no real proof of long-term commitment has been found. The way diversity is perceived undoubtedly influenced the content, as the structure analysis tended to show.

This study is believed to be socially relevant because diversity is still a topic of taboo for some corporations. The study shows that it is particularly easy to provide content about diversity but illustrating it with real facts is more challenging. Efforts to enrich the definition of diversity may be source of a better climate inside corporations and consequently in society, it is also an indirect way to build a better society. Regarding the scientific relevance because it explores the discourses of organizations and demonstrate that the way the content is provided can tell a little about mind-sets and organizational approaches. Thus focusing on those 25 corporations was relevant because their use of the Internet offered a way to further comprehend how diversity is perceived and expressed.

Further research could be conducted to provide better insights on how organizations are dealing with the concept of diversity. This thesis only focused on a limited sample of corporations, which is not representative of all organizations. This Master thesis would be interesting to read for people or organizations that would seek for information on the way diversity is communicated. Because the corporations were from diverse countries, the insights are not representative of the mind-set of a nation or a culture. It could be interested to focus on corporations from a specific area such as the Middle East or Asia to understand how diversity is culturally perceived over their organizations and what are the kinds of discourses that can be framed. This features a challenge as it supposes a sample that would considerably features all the big companies of a nation. Focusing on small and medium corporations could also be of interest to identify differences in the way of approaching diversity.

7. References

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