Corporate Social Responsibility in Supply Chains of Information and Communication Technology Companies

A Focus Group Study on Perceptions and Attitudes of West European Students towards Corporate Social Responsibility in Supply Chains

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Abstract

The topic of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in supply chains is steadily emerging in the last couple of years across various sectors and especially in the information and communication technology (ICT) industry. The current research investigates consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards CSR in supply chains of ICT companies. The study relies on data collected from four in-depth focus groups that included 23 West European students. It provides valuable insights for scholars and professionals. The findings indicate the complex and controversial nature of the analyzed topic. Furthermore, CSR in supply chains is determined by consumers as an important factor that will shape the future development of the ICT sector.

Keywords: Corporate reputation, Corporate social responsibility, CSR communication, ICT industry, Purchase behavior, Supply chain management, Sustainability

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Traveling is one of my biggest passions. Thus, my Master studies in the Netherlands were an amazing journey – tough, but full of unforgettable memories and great friends. This journey has come to its end, but it also sets the stage for the next exciting chapter of my life. The Master thesis was an adventure written in five European countries. It sounds impressive, though I would not say that the process was easy. I had my ups and downs, but I am happy that I had the opportunity to work on this research project. There are many people who were next to me during the writing process. I want to thank all of them!

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Last but not least, thanks to all of my friends. Hurry up with finishing reading the thesis, because the Käsekuchen is ready.

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Abbreviations

BSR	Business for Social Responsibility
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EU	European Union
HP	Hewlett-Packard
FIAS	Facility for Investment Climate Advisory Services by the World Bank Group
FLA	Fair Labor Association
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SEA	Social and Environmental Accountability
SSCM	Sustainable Supply Chain Management
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact

1. Introduction

1.1. Problem Description

In March 2014, a film produced by Green America named "*Who Pays the Price? The Human Costs for Electronics*" went viral (White & Zhang, 2014), and within a short period of time it got almost a million views on the video-sharing platform YouTube. The documentary reported on the usage of harmful chemicals in Chinese factories producing goods for some of the biggest information and communication technology (ICT)[1] companies such as Apple, Samsung, Dell, and Hewlett-Packard (HP) (White & Zhang, 2014). Shortly after the video was released, *The Guardian* published an article on this case referring to workers' health and safety abuses in Chinese electronic ventures (Gibbs, 2014). Labor and environmental groups called for better health and safety working conditions, and trainings for the employees of suppliers located in China (Gibbs, 2014).

Just two years earlier – in March 2012, the Fair Labor Association (FLA) published an independent report on the working conditions at Foxconn – one of Apple's largest suppliers. The experts revealed about 50 labor issues: working hours exceeded law limits, health and safety regulations were violated, compensations and social security insurances were below the required limits (FLA, 2012). Another case reported about an explosion in the Foxconn factory in Chengdu, where three workers died (Areddy & Kane, 2012). Besides labor and social issues, many ICT companies face environmental challenges throughout their supply chains such as manufacturing processes which are harmful for the environment, as well as waste streams (Chen, Lai, & Wen, 2006; Facility for Investment Climate Advisory Services by the World Bank Group (FIAS) & Business for Social Responsibility (BSR), 2007; Wu, 2013). These and many other cases highlight the dimensions of the various problems in supply chains in the ICT sector and put the industry in the spotlight of the international community.

The social and environmental supply chain issues, in combination with the raised public scrutiny, have a big impact on companies. For instance, the Apple-Foxconn case received a tremendous attention worldwide, what challenged the corporate image and reputation of both companies (Chan, Pun, & Selden, 2013; Chase, 2013). As reported,

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[1] Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry refers to technologies and applications facilitating electronic processing, transfer, receiving, and storing of information to wide variety of users (Cohen, Salomon, & Nijkamp, 2002). The term ICT has been used by academia since the 1980s (Mansell, 1994). However, nowadays the abbreviation IT (Information Technology) has been employed in the public realm as a synonym of ICT (Murray, 2011).

Foxconn took "a big bite out of Apple reputation" (Shayon, 2012, para. 1). But despite these problems, for the last five years from 2010 to 2014, Apple has remained the world's most admired company (*Fortune*, 2014). Indeed, the firm's sales and shares are stable in their growth rates (Apple, 2013). Furthermore, the IT industry is perceived as the most trusted sector among consumers worldwide (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2014). In addition, most European citizens believe that IT companies behave in a responsible way towards society (Burson-Marsteller, 2011; Flash Eurobarometer 363, 2013). These findings raise important questions related to consumers' perception of CSR in supply chains in the ICT industry and the effects that the phenomenon has on corporate reputation and individuals' behavior. Moreover, the controversial nature of ICT makes its analysis valuable for the further development of the sector. Although the industry is part of the problem, it is also able to provide solutions to some of the social and environmental issues. Scholars emphasize the importance of various software applications for improving sustainability in supply chains across other industries (Jin, 2006; Wang, Lai, & Zhao, 2008; Wilson & Clarke, 1998).

1.2. Research Goals

The emergent supply chain problems highlight the social relevance of analyzing sustainability in supplier networks in the ICT sector. Although the literature on CSR is growing in the recent years, there are only a few studies analyzing the concept in the context of supply chain management in this specific sector. In order to bridge the gap in scientific research, this Master thesis examines how consumers perceive CSR in supply chains of ICT companies. This leading theme includes three interconnected research questions. The first one focuses on consumers' understanding and familiarity with the topic. The second question refers to the relationship between ICT companies' behavior and corporate reputation, as well as consumers' purchase intentions. Finally, the specifics of the ICT industry are addressed.

For the scope and time frame of the project, the Master thesis examines students from West European countries. Interestingly, students are also the biggest population segment that believes that the IT industry makes efforts to behave responsibly towards society (Flash Eurobarometer 363, 2013). This places the research in a specific cultural, social, and economic context, which is essential for companies when developing their consumer strategies. Moreover, the research outcomes are useful for ICT enterprises to rethink not only their sustainability strategies, but also the way they approach and communicate with suppliers and consumers.

More specifically, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What understanding and awareness do West European students have regarding CSR in supply chains in the ICT industry?

RQ2: What are the perceived effects of ICT companies' supply chain conduct on corporate reputation and West European students' purchase behavior?

RQ3: What, if any, are the differences in West European students' perception of CSR in supply chains in the ICT industry compared to other sectors?

1.3. Approach and Structure of the Work

The research approach provides knowledge from current studies and delivers practical insights on CSR in supply chains of ICT companies. The screening of literature builds the theoretical basis and helps to situate the thesis among the existing empirical research, while the analytical part tests the theory in practice and sets the stage for future studies.

The Master thesis is structured as follows: In chapter 2, the theoretical framework of the study is provided. This part touches upon the main terms in the field and their characteristics. Furthermore, the effects of CSR in supply chains on corporate reputation and customers' purchase behavior and attitudes are discussed. The concepts are applied in the context of the ICT industry. The research questions can be found in the end of this chapter. Chapter 3 encompasses the research process – from the choice of the method to the preparation and conduction of the focus groups. Chapter 4 focuses on the research results and their evaluation in light of the goals of the thesis. In the discussion part – Chapter 5, their conceptual and pragmatic implications for academia and business are analyzed. In addition, the limitations of the study are addressed and further research directions are suggested. The conclusion of the Master thesis can be found in Chapter 6. Supporting information and materials are provided in the appendix of the work.

2. Theoretical Framework

The main theoretical concepts are presented in this part of the Master thesis. The term corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its role in supply chains are explained. Furthermore, the relationships between CSR and corporate reputation, as well as customers' purchase behavior are discussed. In addition, this chapter elaborates on how these concepts are adopted in the context of the ICT industry.

2.1. Definition of Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility is a complex concept which has been a subject of discussions in academia and business for several decades. The term is introduced for the first time by Bowen (1953), who defines it as businessmen's obligations in terms of policies, decisions or actions, which are allied with society's values. Bowen argues that social responsibilities should guide business in the future. In his book *Business and Society* (1963), Joseph McGuire also refers to companies' responsibilities towards society that go beyond firms' economic and legal obligations. Another view on CSR highlights not only companies' social, but also their environmental responsibilities (Foran, 2001; Lea, 2002). Indeed, enterprises should take into account all positive and negative environmental effects they cause.

A widely accepted CSR definition among academics is provided by Archie Carroll, who explains that "four kinds of social responsibilities constitute total CSR: economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic" (Carroll, 1991, p. 40). The author structures these four dimensions as layers in a pyramid[2]. The economic category provides the base and includes maximizing earnings, being competitive and profitable, and operating efficiency. The legal components are on the next level in the pyramid and indicate that the organization should perform in a manner consistent with expectations of government and law. The third level, the ethical responsibilities, refers to the assumption that company's conduct should align with expectations of ethical/moral norms adopted by society. The last dimension in the pyramid focuses on the philanthropic responsibilities – companies should contribute resources to the community and improve quality of life. Although Carroll uses a pyramid form, he highlights that the business should not approach the dimensions in a sequential way, but each dimension should be fulfilled at all times (Carroll, 1999). The author summarizes that responsible firms should aim to "make a profit, obey the law, be ethical, and be a good corporate citizen"

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[2] The pyramid of corporate social responsibility by Carroll (1991) can be found in Appendix A.

(Carroll, 1991, p. 43). Although Carroll's model of CSR provides a detailed overview of concept's dimensions, it has been criticized because it is rather simplistic and does not refer to the problem of conflicting responsibilities (Matten, 2006). Furthermore, it does not situate CSR in a global context (Matten, 2006).

Screening through the literature focused on CSR theories, four main categories of theories can be identified (Garriga & Melé, 2004). The first group unites the *instrumental theories* (1) that are driven by the idea of profit maximization where socially responsible activities are considered a major task of governments (Friedman, 1962; Van Marrewijk, 2003). Companies are concerned with CSR only if it has a positive impact on the long-term value for business' owners (Foley, 2000). The second group is formed by the *political theories* (2). They emphasize the social power of companies in relationship with society (Garriga & Melé, 2004). This power refers to responsibility in the political arena, as well as to social duties and rights to participate in different social co-operations. The *integrative theories* (3) assume that business depends on society for its existence, continuity and growth (Garriga & Melé, 2004). Therefore, organizations are focused on social demands and needs satisfaction (Van Marrewijk, 2003). However, relationship between business and society should be embedded with social values. This is the assumption followed by the last group which includes the *ethical theories* (4) (Garriga & Melé, 2004). Summarizing, Garriga and Melé (2004) conclude that most CSR theories refer to at least one of the described aspects. Their classification aligns to Carroll's concept of CSR, but it shows again that most CSR theories and approaches fail to present any guidance on how to manage the challenges within the phenomenon (Dahlsrud, 2008). For businesses, it is more important to understand how CSR is socially constructed in a specific context and how to take this into account when developing their business strategies (Dahlsrud, 2008).

The notion that CSR is socially constructed refers to the idea that different stakeholder groups follow specific approaches when defining the concept. This assumption plays an essential role in this study, because it analyzes West European students. In order to investigate the perceptions of this specific population, the current work builds upon the definition of CSR provided by the European Commission. The institution provides a broad understanding of CSR focused on the social and environmental aspects of the construct. The term is described as "a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their stakeholders on a voluntary basis" (Commission of the European Communities, 2001, p. 6). However, the EU Commission goes beyond the

responsibilities outside the company and highlights the importance of the internal dimensions of CSR: "Within the company, socially responsible practices primarily involve employees and relate to issues such as investing in human capital, health and safety, and managing change" (Commission of the European Communities, 2001, p. 8). This approach is also supported by Hopkins (2003), who suggests that socially responsible behavior refers to stakeholders both within and outside the corporation. Organizations are accountable to all parties involved and should always take into consideration their interests that are or can be affected by organization's objectives (Freeman, 1984).

Additionally, the EU Commission introduced a renewed European strategy 2011-2014 for CSR. The document highlights the importance of the topic in the European realm and emphasizes Commission's aims to "create conditions favourable to sustainable growth, responsible business behavior and durable employment generation in the medium and short term" (European Commission, 2011, p. 4). Thus, the institution clarifies that consumers have been more focused on the social and ethical performance of enterprises in the last couple of years. These developments are explained with the economic crisis which had negative effects on consumer confidence and levels of trust in business (European Commission, 2011). Moreover, the 2013 Flash Eurobarometer 363 shows that European citizens' evaluation of companies' influence on society is divided – 52% perceive overall influence of firms as positive, while 41% of the population as negative. However, non-European countries are much more likely to be positive regarding companies' impact on society (Flash Eurobarometer 363, 2013), which highlights the cultural differences in citizens' perceptions regarding corporate conduct. The study also demonstrates the social specifics amongst consumers. For instance, students are the biggest group that sees firms' influence as positive. In addition, the European Commission underlines that the strategic approach to CSR can be beneficial for both companies and society. It can have a positive impact on "risk management, cost savings, access to capital, customer relationships, human resource management, and innovation capacity" (European Commission, 2011, p. 3). These assumptions strongly refer to the business case of CSR which is elaborated in detail in the following section.

2.2. The Business Case for CSR

> [Sustainability] [. . .] is not simply a matter of good corporate citizenship – earning brownie points for reducing noxious emissions from your factory or providing health care benefits to your employees [. . .]. Sustainability is now a fundamental principle of smart management.
>
> –Andrew Savitz and Karl Weber, *The Triple Bottom Line*, 2006

The provided definitions and clarifications of corporate social responsibility indicate the strong relationship between CSR and companies' core businesses. The leading concepts regarding the business case for CSR are presented in this part of the thesis. More specifically, the relationships between organization's CSR performance and corporate reputation as well as consumers' behavior and attitudes are discussed.

2.2.1. Identifying the Business Case for CSR

A study performed among German companies about their motives for applying CSR practices indicates that with these activities, 84% of the organizations want to foster employee morale, 66% intend to improve their corporate culture and 65% aim to boost their corporate reputation (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2006). As the findings show, companies are not deeply interested in the social and environmental impact of their CSR activities. Their motivation is mainly driven by the intention of increasing the benefits of their performance. This idea is known as *the business case for CSR*. It refers to the specific economic and financial benefits that occur as a result from CSR strategies and policies (Carroll & Shabana, 2010; Kurucz, Colbert, & Wheeler, 2008). The business case focuses on the leading question: "What do the business community and organizations get out of CSR?" (Carroll & Shabana, 2010, p. 85) and follows the assumption "doing good to do well" (Vogel, 2005, p.19).

Four approaches of the business case of CSR are identified in scholarship: (1) cost and risk reduction, (2) gaining competitive advantage, (3) developing reputation and legitimacy, and (4) seeking win-win outcomes towards synergetic value creation (Kurucz et al., 2008). According to the *cost and risk reduction* perspective (1), stakeholders' demands present potential threats to the viability of an organization that need to be reduced through a threshold level of social and environmental performance (Kurucz et al., 2008). Especially in small and medium-sized companies, the CSR activities are driven by regulatory structures and the

pursuit of direct cost reductions (Williamson, Lynch-Wood, & Ramsay, 2006). In today's fast developing economy, organizations struggle to differentiate from the rest. Therefore, they can use CSR activities to set themselves apart from the competition. But while some authors argue that firms' socially responsible behavior creates *competitive advantages* (2) for the company by developing strong and productive relationships with stakeholders (Jones, 1995; Markley & Davis, 2007), others suggest that engaging in CSR activities is related to higher costs and brings disadvantages for the organization compared to its less socially responsible competitors (Ullmann, 1985; Walley & Whitehead, 1994). A further assumption is that firms may *strengthen their reputation and legitimacy* (3) by engaging in CSR activities (Kurucz et al., 2008). The *synergetic value creation approach* (4) suggests that seeking out and connecting interests between stakeholders opens heretofore new opportunities for companies (Kurucz et al., 2008).

The relationship between social responsibility and organization's performance is another broad area of research within the realm of the business case of CSR. The empirical evidence related to the relationship between socially responsible corporate conduct and financial performance varies, with proofs of a positive relationship (Peloza, 2006; Rao & Holt, 2005; Tsoutsoura, 2004; Waddock & Graves, 1997), a neutral relationship (McWilliams & Siegel 2000; Mittal, Sinha, & Singh, 2008), and a negative relationship (Wright & Ferris, 1997). However, it seems that the studies reporting about a positive relationship prevail (Margolis & Walsh, 2001). It is interesting to highlight that while the findings of most of those studies refer to the impact of CSR on firm's financial performance, Scholtens (2008) argues that financial performance in general terms precedes social performance much more often than the other way around. This emphasizes the complexity of the field and the need for further research.

Moreover, the business case view has been criticized because it is based on linear relationships whereas the complex field of CSR demands a 'broader view' (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Thus, the outcomes of the studies analyzing the business case for CSR are rather mixed and do not fully support its positive impact on companies' financial performance. Further critique point is the fact that the business case underscores the influence of the market on CSR practices (Vogel, 2005). Since the business case follows the assumption that the market will reward CSR activities, it does not take into consideration the situation where the CSR practices are not supported. It remains open what are the consequences in this case and how companies should react. In addition, the business case has gained critical

attention because it questions the sincerity of corporate motives for CSR actions. Companies' CSR engagement is not driven by moral considerations, but by the willingness to boost their own reputation, to avoid costs of crises, or to improve their financial performance (Chandler, 2006). Roberts (2001) emphasizes that the "concern to be seen to be ethical" differs from "being responsible for" (p. 123). The author explains that this new ethical business model has nothing to do with ethics. It refers strongly to corporate image and reputation and even to corporate egoism to be seen "as both powerful and good" (Roberts, 2001, p. 123). This critique raises various questions regarding consumers' perceptions of enterprises' CSR conduct. Most specifically, it refers to the relationship between corporate behavior and company's reputation amongst consumers.

2.2.2. CSR and Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation is a multidimensional construct which is related to "stakeholder's overall evaluation of a company over time" (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001, p. 27). This evaluation is based on individual's direct experiences with the firm, as well as any form of communication providing information about organization's actions and its competitors (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). Corporate reputation refers to the alignment of three main elements: identity, desired identity, and image (Davies & Miles, 1998; Davies, Chun, da Silva, & Roper, 2001; Chun, 2005). Organizational identity concerns members' perception of the organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985). The desired identity emphasizes how the organization wants to be perceived, and corporate image connects to the perceptions of the others and how they experience the organization (Chun, 2005). The presented conception highlights the essential role of both internal (employees and managers) and external (customers, suppliers, partners, government, society, etc.) stakeholders. In the context of the current study, CSR activities and communication about them refer to company's identity and desired identity. Corporate image is built by customers' perceptions. In the best case, identity and desired identity overlap with the corporate image. However, discrepancies between what companies aim and actual stakeholder perceptions or experiences can damage organizations' reputation (Chun, 2005). Moreover, the inconsistency between the image that company communicates and its behavior can also cause a strong reputational damage (Wagner, Lutz, & Weitz, 2009). Especially nowadays the fast information exchange between various internal and external stakeholders, supported by the proliferation of new media channels, determines more than ever the essential role of reputation management (Gaines-Ross, 2008).

Corporate reputation includes various aspects, such as product and service quality, vision and leadership, workplace environment, finance performance, investment value, innovativeness, efficiency, and social and environmental responsibility (Albert, 1997; Chun, 2005; de Castro, López, & Sáez, 2006). Indeed, studies show that CSR activities have significant positive effects on organizations' reputation. Griffin (2008) explains that company's reputation relies on how well it overcomes crises and issues, and handles social responsibilities. Engaging in CSR activities provides organizations with an excellent opportunity to build strong image and to strengthen their relations with various stakeholder groups (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010; Lai, Chiu, Yang, & Pai, 2010). In addition, companies' rating on social and environmental responsibility correlates to their favorability among customers (Lewis, 2001). Reputation is also presented as a relevant gain resulting from participation in CSR programs (Garberg & Fombrun, 2006). For instance, 93% of U.S. consumers have a more positive image about a company that supports a social cause (Cone Communications, 2013).

Furthermore, responsible corporate behavior also has a positive impact on employer attractiveness for job seekers. Organizations with higher social corporate performance ratings have a better reputation and they are perceived as more attractive employers (Turban & Greening, 1997). Job seekers consider social responsibilities as essential to assessment of firms (Backhaus, Stone, & Heiner, 2002; Bhattacharya, Sen, & Korschun; 2008, Greening & Turban; 2000). Moreover, CSR is perceived as an important ethical fit condition among students (Kim & Park, 2011). *Forbes Magazine* even reported that MBA students place more emphasis on companies' CSR performance than on the offered salary (Munk, 1997). However, the level of job choice plays an essential role – job-seeking populations with high level of place of employment choice are more concerned about the social performance of organizations than potential employees with low levels of job choice (Albinger & Freeman, 2000).

2.2.3. CSR and Consumers' Purchasing Behavior

While most studies show that CSR activities have significant positive effects on organizations' reputation, empirical evidence about the impact of CSR corporate conduct on consumers' purchasing behavior and attitudes is inconclusive. Indeed, some works show the importance of consumer perspectives on CSR and others indicate how attitudes may not translate into behavior.

A robust relationship between strategic purchasing, supply management, customer responsiveness, and financial performance of the buying firm has been demonstrated by scholars (Chen, Paulraj, & Lado, 2004). Moreover, CSR has a positive impact on consumers' purchase intentions (Mohr & Webb, 2005). Thus, when these sustainable activities concern the environment, CSR affects purchase intent more strongly than the product price (Mohr & Webb, 2005). Furthermore, CSR initiatives are linked to stronger loyalty towards a company because consumers develop more positive evaluation of the organization and identify themselves more strongly with the company (Marin, Ruiz, & Rubio, 2008). However, Roberts (2003) expresses no doubt that consumers have latent interest in CSR, but this interest does not always translate into ethical purchasing decisions. Studies demonstrate that consumers do not really care that much about corporate behavior (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000). Even if consumers are sophisticated with ethical and socially responsible companies, this does not necessary translate into behavior which favors ethical firms and punishes unethical one (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). In addition, products of organizations with negative associations do not always receive negative responses (Brown & Dacin, 1997). These results refer to the complexity of consumer assessment of CSR when buying a product (Öberseder, Schlegelmilch, & Gruber, 2011). Öberseder et al. (2011) explain the limited role of CSR in purchasing behavior with the complex and hierarchically structured process of its evaluation. The authors argue that this process includes core, central, and peripheral factors (Öberseder, Schlegelmilch, & Gruber, 2011). Information and personal concern are the core factors for a potential consideration of CSR as a purchase criterion. Consumers' financial situation constitutes the central factor. The image of the company, the credibility of CSR initiatives, and the influence of peer groups are identified as peripheral factors.

But how do customers act when they have to make a trade-off between functional properties and CSR properties of the product? In the case of functionally equivalent products, consumers are willing to choose the product with additional CSR attributes (Barone, Miyazaki, & Taylor, 2000). However, when consumers have to choose between CSR properties and performance or price, most customers buy the cheaper or higher performance product (Barone et al. 2000). On the other hand, several studies suggest that consumers are concerned about sweatshop problems[3] and would pay higher product prices in order to foster improvements (Elliott & Freeman, 2000; Prasad, Kimeldorf, Meyer, & Robinson, 1999). However, Prasad et al. (2004) suggest that these studies may overestimate customer

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[3] Sweatshop refers to a workplace, where human and labor rights are violated (Elliott & Freeman, 2000).

willingness to pay more to solve sweatshop problems. Due to limited knowledge of the subject, consumers are not committed to CSR and pay attention to selection factors such as quality and price (Mohr, Webb, & Harris, 2001).

There are several important factors influencing the relationship between corporate behavior and individuals' purchasing decisions. Consumers' cultural background plays an important role. Experiments conducted in Hong Kong and Australia indicate that CSR features of products can affect individuals' likelihood of purchasing the good (Auger, Devinney, Louviere, & Burke, 2008). In addition, 98% of the American citizens tend to opt for brands associated with a cause, given comparable price and quality (Cone Communications, 2013). Most millennials in the U.S. consider CSR before deciding what to buy or where to shop (Cone Communications, 2013). In this regard, another study highlights the gender differences between consumers. Female Americans see noneconomic (society oriented) responsibilities as relatively more important than males do (Burton & Hegarty, 1999). However, it seems that the economic situation in the country plays an important role. A multi-country comparative study (Germany, Spain, Turkey, USA, India, South Korea) demonstrates that social attributes of products are generally more influential in developed than in emerging economies (Auger, Devinney, Louviere, & Burke, 2009). Geographical proximity is another factor affecting the relationship between CSR and purchase intention – when the CSR activity is performed in a near geographical distance to customers (domestically), the impact on purchase intention and attitude towards company's products is stronger than if the activities are performed further away (globally) (Russell & Russell, 2009).

In addition, consumer responses to CSR are shaped by company-specific and individual-specific factors (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). Company-specific factors refer to the CSR problems on which a company is focused, as well as to the firm's size and quality of the products. For instance, European citizens have more positive attitudes towards responsible behavior of small and medium-sized companies than of large enterprises (Flash Eurobarometer 363, 2013). Individual-specific factors include consumers' personal support for the CSR issues and their general believes about CSR. Therefore, under certain conditions, CSR activities can have a negative impact on consumers' purchase intentions (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). Furthermore, it is important to highlight that consumers take into consideration how the CSR practices are performed. Stakeholder driven and egoistic (Ellen, Mohr, & Webb, 2000; Yoon, Gürhan-Canli, & Black, 2006), as well as profit-oriented CSR

activities (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, & Hill, 2006) have negative impact on consumers' beliefs, attitudes, and purchasing intentions.

2.2.4. Communicating CSR

CSR has an important impact on companies' performance, like the majority of the presented studies show. This raises various questions such as how firms implement and perform CSR practices, as well as how CSR is communicated to different stakeholders. Many of them annually publish printed or online CSR reports. Since the Internet is identified as powerful CSR communication tool (Capriotti, 2011), the company website, Internet news media and the company Intranet are the most preferred channels for communicating CSR (Wang & Goodman, 2006). Sustainability blogs are also a valuable practice for communicating CSR activities, as well as for engaging with stakeholders (Fieseler, Fleck, & Meckel, 2010). Blogs open new horizons and opportunities for information and experiences exchange. Additionally, newspapers and trade magazines are described as the most favored communication channels among the traditional media outlook (Wang & Goodman, 2006).

However, studies demonstrate that firms are not realizing the full potential value of traditional and web-based communication vehicles (Wheeler & Elkington, 2001). Companies provide information about CSR activities on their homepage, but they do not follow an interactive and proactive approach of CSR communication (Capriotti & Moreno, 2007; Chaudhri & Wang, 2007). Firms are not taking full advantages of the online opportunities they have. In addition, stakeholders' low awareness and unfavorable attributions towards companies' CSR activities emphasize the need for organizations to communicate CSR more effectively to various stakeholders (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2010). Thus, better communication supports firms' attempts to maximize business benefits from their CSR engagement (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2010). Moreover, well-designed persuasive or informative CSR communication can have a positive impact on corporate reputation (McWilliams, Siegel, & Wright, 2006). On the other hand, Colleoni (2013) shows that neither the engaging nor the informational communication strategies lead to a better alignment between the company and its stakeholders. Even the dialog communication on social media is perceived only as a marketing practice (Colleoni, 2013). This is linked to consumers' skepticism towards CSR activities – they believe that these activities are carried out only with the attempt to boost corporate image (Yoon, Gürhan-Canli, & Black, 2006). Only intrinsically motivated CSR initiatives are perceived as honest.

Again, the cultural context plays an important role in the field of CSR communication. The topic receives a strong awareness among Chinese companies and consumers (Ramasamy & Yeung, 2009; Wang & Goodman, 2006). The majority of the Americans also want to hear more about the CSR efforts of companies (Cone Communications, 2013). Most European citizens are interested in firms' CSR activities, but only 36% feel well informed on this topic (Flash Eurobarometer 363, 2013). However, scholars address the paradoxical nature of CSR communication – Danish citizens emphasize the importance of firms' CSR activities, but they are also reluctant regarding the communication of corporate CSR conduct (Morsing, Schultz, & Nielsen, 2008). Individuals encourage companies to talk about their CSR policies and achievements, but in a discreet way. On the other hand, Malaysian citizens are not so interested in organizations' CSR performance, which explains why CSR reporting is in its infancy in the country (Thompson & Zakaria, 2004).

2.3. Corporate Social Responsibility in Supply Chains

Supply chain management is an area of increasing strategic importance in the realm of CSR due to the fast changing economic conditions, global competition, outsourcing processes, short product life cycles, time compressions, and shrinking budget (Skjøtt-Larsen, Schary, Mikkola, & Kotzab, 2007). Building strong and reliable relationships with suppliers has become an essential factor for ventures' success. During the last decades, the focus of various stakeholders, such as customers, shareholders, employees, non-governmental organizations, and authorities, has moved from single companies to their entire supply chains. Therefore, corporate social responsibility in supply chains is receiving growing attention in media, academia, and the corporate world (Andersen & Skjøtt-Larsen, 2009). This is also an effect of the rapid development of multimedia communication technologies, especially social media, which supports the flow of information across national and cultural boundaries and makes it more difficult for organizations to hide unethical behavior in their supply chains (Andersen & Skjøtt-Larsen, 2009). The next sections touch upon the definition and relevance of CSR in supplier networks.

2.3.1. Meaning and Clarifications

A supply chain "encompasses all activities associated with the flow and transformation of goods from raw materials stage (extraction), through to the end user, as well as the associated information flows" (Robert Handfield & Ernest Nichols, 1999, as cited in Seuring & Müller,

2008, p. 1700). The flow of materials and information goes up and down the chain. It is essential to highlight that supply chains are not linear but complex networks that include different actors, such as suppliers, customers and logistic providers, and the linkages between them (Bommel, 2011; Maloni & Brown, 2006). Furthermore, supplier networks cover the whole lifecycle of a product (Linton, Klassen, & Jayaraman, 2007). Good relationships among the participants and optimization of costs and resources are key drivers of supply chains management (Lakhal, Martel, Kettani, & Oral, 2001; Linton, Klassen, & Jayaraman, 2007).

The complexity of supply chains complicates the monitoring of ventures' practices (Cramer, 2008). In their attempt to offer fast and cheap services, suppliers often employ unsustainable practices, which could lead to various problems in the entire network. In general, sustainability in supply chains refers to the social and environmental responsibilities of a company along its supplier network, while considering the interests of different stakeholders (Amaeshi, Osuji, & Nnodim, 2008; Seuring & Müller, 2008). Researchers have attempted to create a broad concept of CSR in supply chains that is applicable across various industries. A specific set of supply chain CSR dimensions includes categories of environmental protection, diversity, labor and human rights, philanthropy, and health and safety throughout the entire chain (Carter & Jennings, 2002a, 2002b, 2004; Maloni & Brown, 2006).

However, supply chain sustainability is not only related to the social and environmental, but also to the economic impacts of firms on various stakeholders throughout their supply chains (United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) & Business for Social Responsibility (BSR), 2010). Organizations' behavior relates directly to their core business (products and services) (UNGC & BSR, 2010). The definition of the United Nations aligns with the concept proposed by Carter and Rogers (2008)[4]. The authors characterize sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) as "strategic, transparent integration and achievement of an organization's social, environmental, and economic goals in the systemic coordination of key interorganizational business processes for improving the long-term economic performance of the individual company and its supply chains" (Carter & Rogers, 2008, p. 368). This perspective corresponds to the idea of the triple bottom line that highlights the importance of balance of economic, environmental and social objectives from a

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[4] The framework of sustainable supply chain management by Carter and Rogers (2008) is visually presented in Appendix B.

microeconomic perspective (Elkington, 2004). Indeed, the intersection of these three dimensions positively influences not only the natural environment and society, but it also brings long-term economic benefits and competitive advantages for companies (Carter & Rogers, 2008). In addition, the triple bottom line is supported by four interrelated facets: (1) management of economic, environmental, and social risks in the supply chain (Carter & Rogers, 2008); (2) transparency of corporate motivations and actions, as well as accuracy and credibility while communicating them (Friedman, 2005); (3) alignment of corporate overall strategy and financial objectives with organization's sustainability strategy (Carter & Rogers, 2008); (4) strong relationship between organizational culture and firm's environmental and social responsibility (Carter & Jennings, 2004). These four facets support companies to attend to supply chain issues as part of CSR. To sum up, CSR in supply chains refers to the responsible balance between companies' "concerns for economic prosperity ('Profit'), ecological quality ('Planet'), and people's well-being ('People') in their product chains" (Cramer, 2008, p. 396).

As already mentioned, expectations of various stakeholders towards corporate CSR activities are rising (Andersen & Skjøtt-Larsen, 2009). Thus, many companies have responded to stakeholders' requirements by developing and implementing different systems and procedures to improve the conditions in their supply chains and to ensure the sustainable conduct of their suppliers (Andersen & Skjøtt-Larsen, 2009). Organizations' approaches differ based on the company, industry, and national context. The creation of codes of conduct is a widely accepted procedure. These documents aim to establish social and environmental standards that venture's suppliers are expected to apply (Mamic, 2005; Jenkins, 2001). Besides codes of conduct, organizations also develop managerial systems for implementing and revising the standards outlined in the documents. However, empirical research emphasizes that multinational corporations struggle to formulate (Klein, 2000) and apply (Leigh & Waddock, 2006) these standards. The standards' controversial nature raises various questions, but definitely a leading one is: Who should take the responsibility – the big enterprises or their suppliers?

2.3.2. Responsible or Not?

The limits of big companies' responsibilities in their supply chains have been an important subject of discussion for academia and business (Amaeshi, Osuji, & Nnodim, 2008; Roberts, 2003). Since companies have no legal obligations towards practices of their suppliers, the

main questions that remain are, if these corporations should be responsible for suppliers' activities and if yes, how should they translate the responsibility into practice? The size of the company plays an essential role in these processes (Amaeshi et al., 2008). Big corporations have more power and they can use their capabilities and influence to affect the weaker parties throughout the supply chain in a positive way. But this is not an easy task. In today's globalized world, suppliers are often spread around various countries on different continents. Suppliers' diffuseness is a crucial problem for big companies because of the different political and legal systems worldwide (Roberts, 2003). Moreover, depending on the industry, the number of suppliers varies. For instance, the cocoa used in the chocolate industry is produced by many small farmers from Asia, Africa, and South America. Therefore, it is very hard for big companies to reach out to them and audit the work and trade conditions (Blowfield, 2003). Furthermore, the power of the single suppliers and the connections between them should not be underestimated in the processes of building sustainable networks (Roberts, 2003).

Despite the discussion about the limits of big companies' responsibility, the positive impact of sustainability in supply chains on corporate reputation serves as a gear to all firms involved. For instance, buyer's ethical perception about suppliers builds the basis of corporate reputation (Bendixen & Abratt, 2007). In addition, activities for improving the conditions in the supply chain, such as reducing packaging, better working conditions, more efficient transportation, and requiring suppliers to apply environmental and social measures, can lead to cost reduction as well as to improvement of the corporate image (Carter & Rogers, 2008). On the other hand, bad environmental and social conditions in supply networks can have a negative impact on firms' reputation (Amaeshi, Osuji, & Nnodim, 2008; Roberts, 2003). Since companies in supply chains are strongly interconnected, the reputation of the members can be tainted by the actions of a particular member who engages in activities resulting in negative public sentiment (Spekman & Davis, 2004).

2.4. CSR in Supply Chains of ICT Companies

As already explained, this Master thesis analyses CSR in supply chains in the context of the ICT industry. The information and communication technology sector plays an essential role in modern economic development worldwide (Kramer, Jenkins, & Katz, 2007). It is one of the faster growing sectors with a great influence on peoples' everyday life. However, the industry is facing various problems related to supply chain management. Many of the biggest ICT corporations have been criticized because of unethical practices of their suppliers. Bad

working conditions, long working hours, limited or missing health and safety regulations, child labor, and violated human rights are among the most common issues occurring in suppliers of ICT companies, as the example of Apple and Foxconn presented in the introduction of the thesis (FLA, 2012) indicates. Besides this, the manufacturing processes and waste streams in the IT sector have an essential impact on environmental pollution (Chen, Lai, & Wen, 2006; FIAS & BSR, 2007; Wu, 2013). Another problem refers to data security and usage of information by the parties throughout the supply chain.

Social and environmental issues throughout enterprises' supply chains drive the development of new strategies for maintaining the supplier network. As the preliminary research of this thesis shows[5], big ICT companies are taking actions in order to improve the conditions throughout their supply chains. However, this is not an easy task – firms and their suppliers face various problems. First of all, maintaining sustainable supply chains requires a lot of financial and human resources. Companies should extend the capacity of the procurement function to manage suppliers' social and environmental issues. The benefits are long-term and often go beyond the contract term between the organization and its suppliers. Moreover, the furious competition between ICT companies significantly shortens the innovation, creation, and manufacturing processes of the products. This puts a lot of pressure on the suppliers. In order to execute the production orders, workers need to work close to their limits. In addition, many suppliers are actually not convinced in the business case of CSR and do not feel the need to take any actions (FIAS & BSR, 2007). Since many of them are located in less developed countries, the whole mindset of these societies needs to change. Last but not least, the majority of ICT companies have very large and complex supply chains. For instance, HP works with more than 1000 production and tens of thousands of non-production suppliers spread on six continents (HP, 2012). This complicates the coordination and monitoring of the whole network.

On the other hand, scholars and professionals emphasize the importance of the information and communication technology for improving sustainability in supply chains of other industries. Sustainability is indicated as a key driver of innovation (Nidumolu, Prahalad, & Rangaswami, 2009), which is essential for the ICT industry. For instance, software systems can support food safety and traceability in the agricultural supply chains (Wilson & Clarke, 1998). Furthermore, Jin (2006) focuses on the performance implications of information

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[5] The preliminary research and its outcomes are presented in section 3.2 in the following chapter.

technology implementation in apparel supply chains. Another study performed in China reports about the impact of IT on the financial performance of third-party logistics firms (Wang, Lai, & Zhao, 2008). The paradoxical nature of the problem is clearly evident – the ICT industry offers solutions while being part of the problem.

2.5. Summary

The literature review referred to the growing awareness and importance of CSR in society, as well as to the development opportunities that responsible behavior opens for companies. The majority of the studies focused on CSR report about a positive relationship between responsible conduct and corporate reputation. On the other hand, there is a lack of consensus over consumers' attitudes and behavior towards CSR. While some individuals explain that responsible behavior affects their buying decisions, others argue that this is not a factor for them. The differing outcomes lead to various questions regarding consumers' perceptions of CSR. Moreover, although the literature in the realm of CSR is emerging in recent years, there are only a few studies examining the topic in the context of supply chain management. This thesis contributes to academic research by investigating consumers' perceptions and attitudes regarding CSR in supply chains in the context of the ICT industry. This decision is mainly driven by the cases of irresponsible behavior throughout the supplier networks and the emerging awareness of the topic in the public sphere. But despite these problems, studies show that the ICT industry is viewed as the most trusted sector among consumers worldwide. These findings raise important questions related to customers' perception of CSR in supply chains in this sector. In addition, the controversial nature of ICT being part of the problem, but also able to provide solutions for it, highlights the importance of this analysis for the further development of the industry.

Cultural differences and social construction of consumers' perceptions of corporate CSR behavior also became evident from the literature review. Therefore, the current research focuses on West European consumers. This study allows to position this population among other cultural groups and to identify the similarities and differences between them. Since big ICT companies are located in various countries around the world, it is fundamental for them to gather information about the specific perceptions and behavior of consumers from particular locations. This knowledge strongly affects corporate behavior, strategy and communication. Not only the cultural, but also the social background of consumers has an impact on their perceptions. The Flash Eurobarometer 363 (2013) indicates that students are

the biggest population segment that believes that the ICT industry makes efforts to behave responsibly towards society. This social group is investigated in the scope of the current study in order to verify and enrich these results.

2.6. Research Questions

Based on the literature review and the addressed research gaps, the purpose of this Master thesis is to examine West European students' perceptions and attitudes towards CSR in supply chains of ICT companies. This main theme leads to the formulation of three research questions. The first question focuses on students' understanding and familiarity regarding CSR in supply chain of ICT companies. The second research question touches upon the business case for CSR in supplier networks. More specifically, it investigates the relationship between ICT companies' behavior and corporate reputation, as well as students' purchase intentions. Last but not least, the specifics of the ICT sector regarding CSR in supply chains are discussed. The research questions are framed as follows:

> **RQ1:** What understanding and awareness do West European students have regarding CSR in supply chains in the ICT industry?

> **RQ2:** What are the perceived effects of ICT companies' supply chain conduct on corporate reputation and West European students' purchase behavior?

> **RQ3**: What, if any, are the differences in West European students' perception of CSR in supply chains in the ICT industry compared to other sectors?

3. Research Design

In order to analyze the research questions, the study follows a qualitative research perspective and utilizes a focus groups method. The research design is elaborated in this chapter.

3.1. Research Perspective

A widely accepted classification of research approaches is *qualitative* and *quantitative*. Both methods have differing strengths and weaknesses; therefore the choice of research perspective is strongly determined by the scope and objectives of the performed study. This work relies on a qualitative methodology to examine consumers' attitudes and beliefs regarding CSR in supply chains in the ICT sector.

While quantitative research is associated with systematic empirical analysis of phenomena via statistical or mathematical techniques, the qualitative perspective follows more open design (Brosius, Haas, & Koschel, 2012; Patton, 2002). Approaching the fieldwork without predetermined categories supports the comprehensive analysis of qualitative inquiries (Patton, 2002). Since the current project investigates complex phenomena and relationships, the qualitative perspective facilitates their in-depth investigation and takes into account the social context of the study (Collis & Hussey, 2003; Jensen, 2002). Opposed to quantitative approaches, qualitative methods provide rich of details information about a much smaller number of cases (Patton, 2002). This reduces the generalizability of the results, but increases the depth of understanding the analyzed issue (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, qualitative research concerns the exploration of perceptions to better examine human behavior, which also refers to the purposes of the current work (Collis & Hussey, 2003). In addition, the qualitative perspective allows researchers to capture participants' opinion "in their own terms" (Lofland, 1971, p. 7), which underlines the authenticity of the collected data.

3.2. Preliminary Research[6]

As mentioned, the current study relies on a focus groups method. A preliminary research was conducted first, to deliver more detailed information of corporate social responsibility in supply chains of major ICT companies. Three worldwide-known ICT enterprises were selected – Apple, Microsoft, and Hewlett-Packard (HP). The small-scale research examined

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[6] The information in this chapter is collected in Mid of April 2014, since the results from the preliminary study are used for the development of the focus groups guide. Changes in the information provided by companies after this time period are possible.

mainly the importance of CSR in supply chains for these companies. It gathered information about firms' CSR activities regarding their supply networks, the extent to which sustainable practices are integrated into companies' core businesses, as well as the way organizations communicate their commitment and try to engage with consumers. The real-case practices aimed to broaden researcher's knowledge on the topic. In addition, they were used as a starting point for the preparation of the actual research and the development of the focus groups guide. The preliminary results are tied to the research questions of the thesis, since the information about companies' practices supports the analysis of consumers' attitudes and perceptions of firms' actions/inactions.

The analyzed companies were selected based on several criteria. First of all, they are among the biggest and most profitable organizations in the ICT industry. According to the *Fortune 500* ranking for 2013, Apple places sixth in the overall list, as well as first in the computers/office equipment sector (*Fortune*, 2013). Moreover, the firm has been ranked number one as 'Most Admired Brand' for the last three years (*Fortune*, 2014). HP is the second largest company in the computer/office equipment category, and Microsoft is the leader in the computer software sector (*Fortune*, 2013). Not only organizations' revenue, but also their CSR reputation was taken into consideration. Microsoft is perceived as the most socially responsible company for two years in a row – 2012 and 2013 (*CSR RepTrak 100*, Reputation Institute, 2012/2013). Apple has also been present in the top 10 of the *CSR RepTrak 100* ranking for the last three years.

For the purposes of the preliminary research, the information available on the official websites of the selected companies was screened. The small-scale study followed an approach of textual (Feldman & Sanger, 2007) and visual (Müller-Doohm, 1997) analysis. The examination included the following criteria: (1) size and complexity of supplier network; (2) kind of sustainable practices regarding the supply chain (if any); (3) availability of supplier responsibility section and supply chain sustainability report; (4) communication approach.

The preliminary research showed that all three companies provide detailed information on their corporate websites about CSR activities in the supply chains. The information disseminated by Microsoft and Apple was up-to-date and easily accessible. On the other hand, the content of HP's CSR website was outdated. The page was also difficult to find. All companies had separate or integrated reports about their CSR activities in form of PDF documents that can be easily downloaded. The reports included information about the audits

that the companies perform to ensure that their suppliers are following the codes of conduct. For example, Apple has conducted 451 audits in 2013 (Apple, 2014a) and Microsoft has completed 278 third-party audits and 149 assessments of direct suppliers in 2012 (Microsoft, 2013). It can be concluded that CSR in supply chains is an important topic for these ICT companies and it is part of organizations' culture, since they have been engaged with it for several years. The information on the websites was presented mainly in informative manner (McWilliams et al., 2006) directed from the company to the customers. Still, the analyzed ICT companies aimed to engage with their consumers by connecting the corporate website to firm's blog and social media channels, as well as by providing contact persons (in the case of HP). In addition, the companies were utilizing various visualization forms such as videos, graphics and tables to present their CSR activities in the supply chains. The information on Apple's website was presented in a very entertaining and engaging manner. In general, the results of the preliminary research contradict previous studies which indicate that firms are not following an interactive and proactive approach of CSR communication (Capriotti & Moreno, 2007; Chaudhri & Wang, 2007; Wheeler & Elkington, 2001). Thus, it remained unclear from this small-scale research how successful the communication approaches of Microsoft, Apple, and HP are.

The analyzed companies had large and very complex supply chains. For instance, Apple had 750 suppliers (Apple, 2014b) and HP more than 1000 (HP, 2012). Therefore, perhaps the most interesting finding was related to the aspects of CSR in supply chains that the three companies refer to. Microsoft, Apple, and HP had a common understanding of CSR in supply chains. They emphasized mainly their labor and environmental activities across the network of suppliers. The labor issues included labor and human rights, health and safety, and fair working conditions. Apple and HP also mentioned diversity as an essential part of their supply chains. In addition, the environmental activities of the analyzed companies covered the lifecycle of firms' products – from the raw materials to the recycling. Interestingly, HP was the first IT company to announce that it is working on reducing the greenhouse gas emissions in its supply chain (http://www8.hp.com/us/en/hp-information/global-citizenship/environment/supplychain.html).

3.3. Research Method – Focus Groups

The results from the preliminary research were used for the preparation of the focus groups. Focus groups are a special application of the qualitative interview. They refer to discussions

with a small number of participants on a particular topic (Patton, 2002). Focus groups are an established method for analyzing consumer behavior (Calder, 1977). They are widely used to gather information about consumer decision making processes and product preferences (Higginbotham & Cox, 1979). Focus groups follow the assumption that many consumer decisions are made in a social context that often occur in discussions with other people (Patton, 2002). Since the method is suitable to assess customers' attitudes (Morgan, 1990), it connects very well to the research goals of the current study.

Focus groups follow an inductive logic, which means that categories or dimensions emerge during the research process and help the researchers to extract and understand patterns that exist in the analyzed phenomenon (Patton, 2002). The objective of focus groups is to collect detailed data in a social context where people can consider their own views along with the views of others (Patton, 2002). Although the method struggles with providing generalizable results, the interaction between the participants stimulates richer responses and new and valuable thoughts on the topic (Debus, 1990; Krueger & Casey, 2000). In addition, the advantages of focus groups such as speed, flexibility, and economy make them suitable for the scope of this project. Furthermore, the interpersonal communication is fundamental for highlighting different group norms and values (Kitzinger, 1995), which helps the author of this work to analyze possible differences between the participants from various West European countries. On the other hand, due to the group dynamic, some individual voices may remain silent (Kitzinger, 1995). Individuals whose viewpoints are a minority may not be inclined to express them and to risk causing negative reactions amongst the other participants. Therefore, the moderator[7] should ensure that every participant has the chance to express his or her opinion on the topic.

3.3.1. Sampling

"There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p. 245). Instead, the validity and the meaningfulness of the results depend on the information richness of the investigated cases as well as the analytical capabilities of the researcher, and not on the sample size (Patton, 2002). For this study, four focus groups were conducted. Initially, each group was supposed to include six participants, which would result in a sample of 24 students. Unfortunately, one participant did not attend the discussion although he/she had confirmed

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[7] The researcher is called 'moderator' in the literature about focus groups, which highlights his specific function as interviewer (Krueger, 1994; Patton, 2002).

his/her participation. Therefore, the final research sample included 23 West European students (N=23). In general, the number of participants in a group may vary from four to eight (Kitzinger, 1995). However, groups of six participants are very suitable for complex topics such as CSR. They enable more in-depth discussions and analysis. In addition, small groups facilitate the exploration of peer interaction as well as of individual contributions (O'Donohoe & Tynan, 1998).

The recruiting process of participants included two sampling techniques. The logic of criterion or purposive sampling was leading in the current study, since it focuses specifically on West European students. This approach aims to facilitate the credibility of the study results (Patton, 2002). The researcher also recruited female and male individuals from different West European countries who were organized in mixed groups, since diversity is important for maximizing exploration of different perspectives within a group setting (Kitzinger, 1995). Moreover, in order to recruit the targeted number of participants, a snowball sampling was employed. Students were selected from the range of the study population of the Erasmus University Rotterdam.

3.3.2. Procedure

The focus groups had a semi-structured character, since a discussion guide supported the moderator during the sessions. All questions were open-ended, which permits the researcher to "understand the world as seen by the respondents" (Patton, 2002, p. 21). However, the questions were adapted and also complemented by follow-up questions during the different focus groups. It should be highlighted that the semi-structured framework was designed in a way allowing participants to openly express their points of view.

The findings from the preliminary research were used as a basis for the development of the discussion guide. A small experiment was performed as a warm-up before each discussion. A fictional scenario for a smart phone purchase was created. Participants had to choose between three products manufactured by three different companies. The information provided about each company briefly referred to its headquarters, location of suppliers, responsible/irresponsible behavior towards supplier networks, and the price of the product. The profile of Company A was created based on the initiative of Hewlett-Packard to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions among all of its suppliers. The scenario for Company B was inspired by the Apple-Foxconn case. So it was communicated that 10 workers died because of

the bad working conditions in the factory of one of company's suppliers from China. Company C was presented as an organization that aims to work with a variety of suppliers and actively supports women- and minority-owned businesses. This scenario was inspired by Microsoft's CSR activities. General information about other ICT firms was also used for the creation of the scenarios. They can be found in the focus group guide under Appendix C.

The focus groups also included questions focused on the aspects shaping CSR in supply chains. Participants were provided with a list of dimensions, and they had to identify the most important one to them. The list incorporated ten items and was created based on the sustainable supply chain management model by Carter and Rogers (2008) in a combination with the CSR dimensions proposed by Wang and Goodman (2006) and by the European Commission (2011). The rest of the questions were developed based on the available literature on the topic and the information gathered from the preliminary research.

In the end of each focus group, participants were asked to fill in a form with some demographic information, such as gender, age, nationality, study program, and preferred industry to work in after graduation. The focus group guide along with the demographic questions is attached in Appendix C.

A pilot study was performed to ensure that the questions were understandable and met the purposes of the current research. It included three students from different West European countries – The Netherlands, Germany, and Austria. Participants were encouraged to be critical towards the questions, the research setting and researcher's professionalism. The feedback provided was used for improvement of the research instrument. It also made the researcher more confident and relaxed for the actual focus groups. Minor changes in the focus group guide were made after the pilot study. Mainly the formulation of the questions was improved to make them easier to understand by the participants.

The actual research took place in the end of April 2014 at the campus of the Erasmus University Rotterdam. The sessions were conducted in English. In the beginning of each discussion, participants filled in a *Consent Form for Participating in Research*. The form was provided by the Faculty of History, Culture and Communication and it was tailored to the purposes of the current study. The document describes participants' rights and guarantees their voluntarily participation in the research. The form can be found in Appendix D.

Each focus group was recorded and transcribed within 48 hours after the conversation to ensure no loss of information and optimal recall from the researcher. To each participant

was assigned a numerical pseudonym to protect individuals' anonymity. Since there were six participants in all except the third group, the numerical indicators corresponded with the order of the focus groups: the first group included participants 1 to 6 (P1 – P6), the second group – participants 7 to 12 (P7 – P12), the third group – participants 13 to 17 (P13 – P17), and the last group – participants 18 to 23 (P18 – P23). This classification was used to present the participants in the results section. It also supported the researcher during the data analysis.

In general, focus group sessions may last one to two hours (Kitzinger, 1995). The longest discussion within the current study was 92 minutes and the shortest one – 59 minutes. Altogether, 283 minutes of audio recording were analyzed. In addition, the moderator created protocols during each focus group that included information about the sequence of responses, as well as about participants' behavior and nonverbal communication. This data was used as a supplement of the transcripts.

3.3.3. Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using qualitative methodology; more specifically, it relied on the strategy of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This is a systematic methodology involved in the discovery of theory throughout data analysis. Since the method is mainly used for investigation of semi-structured interviews (Patton, 2002) and includes the development of abstract categories assigned to the empirical data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), it is very useful in the context of the current study. It is essential to highlight that although the thesis refers to the grounded theory, it does not rely on the pure form of this methodology, since the research is based on a theoretical framework and does not aim to discover a completely new theory.

The qualitative analysis transforms the data into valuable findings and aims to extract the major messages from the massive amount of data (Patton, 2002). This includes reducing the volume of information, evaluating its significance, identifying leading patterns and relationships, and constructing a framework of communicating the results. The current analysis relies on the transcripts of the audio files and the protocols created during the focus group interviews. First, evaluation categories were formed based on the research questions. Then statements of similar themes were compared, drawn together and linked to these categories. The data analysis followed three main steps of coding: open, axial, and selective coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Creswell, 1998). Finally, the researcher developed a conditional matrix (Creswell, 1998) that referred to the social and economic conditions

influencing the central phenomenon. The themes that emerged from the analysis and their interpretation are elaborated in the following chapter.

4. Findings

In this chapter, the research outcomes are evaluated and structured in the light of the research goals of the work. The section delves into the three research questions of the Master thesis: (1) What understanding and awareness do West European students have regarding CSR in supply chains in the ICT industry?, (2) What are the perceived effects of ICT companies' supply chain conduct on corporate reputation and West European students' purchase behavior?, (3) What, if any, are the differences in West European students' perception of CSR in supply chains in the ICT industry compared to other sectors?

As explained, 23 students took part in the focus groups (N=23). To each individual was assigned a numerical pseudonym (P1 though P23) to anonymously present the focus group participants. The number of female individuals slightly prevailed – 13 female (56.5%) and 10 male (43.5%) students participated in the research. Respondents' age ranged from 21 to 29 years, and the average was 23.4 years. The study included students from eight West European countries. 7 Dutch students (30.4%) formed the biggest group. They were followed by four representatives from Germany (17.4%), three from France (13%), again three from Austria (13%), two from Belgium (8.6%), and another two from Switzerland (8.6%). There was one respondent from Luxembourg, and one from Liechtenstein. This cultural diversity within the focus groups facilitated the analysis of a wide range of perspectives.

82.6% of the participants were currently completing their Master's studies, and 17.4% were pursuing a Bachelor's degree. The students represented three Bachelor and nine Master programs. However, the majority of all respondents (34.8%) were studying Master Marketing Management. 39% of the students answered that they were willing to look for a job in the advertising/communication/PR sector when asked about their preferred industry to work in after graduation. Another 17.4% wanted to be employed in the IT industry. Other popular sectors among the students were banking/finance/insurance, public sector/government, and media. It is interesting to note that most of these industries are strongly related to the topic of the current study. The information provided shed some light on students' interests, and raised the question how these interests refer to participants' attitudes and perceptions regarding CSR in supply chains of ICT companies. More detailed information about the sample demographics is provided in Table A1 in the appendix.

4.1. Understanding and Awareness of CSR in Supply Chains in the ICT Industry

This section elaborates on the first research question of the thesis, focused on West European students' understanding and awareness regarding CSR in supply chains in the ICT industry. The analysis also touches upon the CSR communication in the sector and how students gather information on the topic.

4.1.1. Defining CSR Supply Chains in the ICT Sector

In the beginning of each focus group, participants were asked if they were familiar with the concept of corporate social responsibility in supply chains. Initially, about 70% of the students admitted that they were not aware of the concept. Likewise, their familiarity with CSR issues in supplier networks of ICT enterprises was low. However, students were stimulated in the course of the discussions by the information provided by participants who had better knowledge on the topic. This helped them to recall various aspects and cases of CSR in supply chains. It is interesting to highlight that the tone voice and the body language of most students revealed their uncertainty when talking about their understanding and knowledge of the concept. The responses were often brief, incomplete and required further clarifications. In addition, some participants found it difficult to explicitly connect corporate social responsibility with supply chain management. The following statement illustrates these findings:

> Now that people started mentioning, I started recognizing some of the things I have read before. But I haven't thought on the topic CSR specifically in supply chains. It was something that I have not really thought about…. Not really… (P18, Group 4)

Students expressed several meanings and interpretations of sustainable supply chain management. These varied from single words to more complex explanations. Prevalent keywords were 'responsible behavior', 'ethical behavior', 'human and labor rights', and 'environment'. One student explained:

> It [CSR in supply chains] basically aims to make sure that all of your products, and all the parts of your products, or service, everything your business uses to manufacture products or provided service is done by suppliers that are sustainable or don't have practices you consider unethical. (P13, Group 3)

In general, respondents associated CSR in supply chains with responsible behavior towards society. The social aspect of the concept referred to protecting the wellbeing and health of employees in the suppliers, providing good working conditions, and preventing child labor. Giving back to the local community from the region where the suppliers are located was another aspect that was mentioned. Furthermore, respondents explained that companies were also responsible for the ways their businesses impact the environment. Organizations and their suppliers should not harm the environment but employ sustainable practices. In addition, students related the environmental protection to the production of more 'green products' and the reduction of CO_2 emissions during the logistical processes.

During the discussions, participants were also provided with a list of dimensions of CSR in supply chains and were asked to identify the most important ones to them in the context of the ICT industry. The results aligned to a certain extent with the general perception of the concept. About two thirds of the students identified labor and human rights, as well as workplace health and safety as the most essential aspects. In their opinion, these two dimensions were strongly related and could form a single category. Students perceived these CSR aspects as basic and necessary. They believed that every company in the value chain has to provide convenient working conditions to its employees. An essential reason for selecting these categories was that the students felt these aspects closest to themselves, considering the fact that after graduation they will enter the job market. Furthermore, participants reported that these aspects are the most discussed in media and society. One respondent clarified:

> I based my decisions on what happened recently [meant here are the Apple-Foxconn case and the collapse of the garment factory in Bangladesh[8]]. So there were a lot of problems and issues in this direction, so I though this should be considered. (P20, Group 4)

According to the students, environmental protection was the second most important aspect of supply chains in the ICT industry. This referred to the whole product lifecycle – from the origin of the materials to the disposal of the products. Participants explained that the main problems were related to the environmental pollution and to limited resources. Furthermore, four students emphasized the importance of data protection as an emerging issue. Participants did not want their data to be sold to the suppliers of a particular company:

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[8] On April 24th, a garment factory collapsed in Bangladesh and caused the death of more than 1000 mainly female workers (Ahmed & Fantz, 2013).

"[…] in the last 5-10 years maybe this [data protection] has been a growing issue, especially in regards to IT, big IT companies using people's data without telling them." (P16, Group 3). In addition, two participants addressed the relevance of the economic impact on stakeholders throughout the supply chain (P1, Group 1 & P21, Group 4). They clarified that this aspect was often neglected. However, big companies were able to contribute to the development of the suppliers and the areas where they are located. One female student remarked the importance of diversity in the supply network, because she felt personally involved as a woman (P9, Group 2). On the other hand, another respondent expressed his doubts regarding diversity and philanthropy: "I don't believe in diversity as … something that has to come from the company. […] And also philanthropy, that's… […] I mean it is not substantial." (P4, Group 1).

4.1.2. Familiarity with ICT Companies' Conduct

As mentioned, participants' familiarity with CSR in supplier networks of ICT enterprises was rather low. Students were also asked to provide examples of responsible or irresponsible behavior of ICT companies regarding their supply chains. However, the moderator needed to ask additional questions to get some response. Actually, they were able to provide many more examples from the food and the retail industry than from the ICT sector. Participants talked mostly about the supply chains of big multinational companies such as Unilever, Nike, Mango, Zara, and H&M whose suppliers were mainly located in Asia (India, China, Bangladesh) and Africa (Nigeria, Algeria, Morocco). It is interesting to highlight that the examples of irresponsible corporate behavior prevailed over those about responsible activities.

The Apple-Foxconn case was the most discussed one from the ICT industry. The violations of human and labor rights in the Chinese Foxconn factories were addressed in all focus groups. Although students were familiar with the case, nobody knew what had happened after the problem had escalated in the public realm. They were not aware if the companies had taken any actions and if yes, what they were. The following statement indicates the general perception of the case:

> Apple and Foxconn – that is probably the most prominent example for irresponsible behavior. The people are committing suicides at Foxconn companies because working conditions were so bad. And actually I don't know if Apple did anything about it. (P7, Group 2)

Apple, together with Samsung, was mentioned in regards to another example – a video that went viral, named "*What Samsung and Apple Don't Want to Know?*" (White & Zhang, 2014). However, only few students were familiar with the problem and have seen the video on the social network platform Facebook. Except from watching the video, the students have not searched for additional information on the topic.

Another case that was addressed in two of the focus groups was the Phonebloks[9] concept. The idea of Phonebloks was developed to reduce various ethical and environmental problems in the ICT market. Participants explained that the idea for a phone made out of blocks was a good solution to minimize electronic waste. The parts of the product are "interchangeable and you don't have to throw the whole phone when one part is not working" (P10, Group 2); therefore, it causes "less burden on the whole production chain" (P5, Group 1). The new phone concept was perceived positively among the participants, but the majority of them identified it as an unfeasible alternative and did not express willingness to buy such a product. They pointed out several issues – one of the biggest problems was that the phone is still just a concept and is not established on the market. It brings a lot of uncertainty as one of the participants clarified: "And that's just because it is not a familiar brand, don't know, if it can carry WhatsApp, if it has IOS or Android, if it has updates. I don't know the brand." (P2, Group 1). Another problem mentioned was the lack of knowledge among consumers to select the different parts to build the phone: "[…] will you know which processor to buy and know exactly which camera to buy? Will you have all the knowledge to choose which parts… [are suitable]?" (P9, Group 2).

Participants also underlined the differences between hardware and software ICT companies: "And where is and who is the supply chain of software companies?" (P18, Group 4). Mainly hardware companies were associated with irresponsible behavior. On the other hand, SAP and Microsoft were mentioned as software corporations with responsible CSR activities. The student who acknowledged SAP for its efforts to give back to the community knew about the firm's initiatives because he was living in the area where the headquarters of the company are located (P18, Group 4). On the other hand, Microsoft was associated with the philanthropic work of Bill Gates and his foundation. The case of Microsoft is discussed in detail in section 4.2.1.

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[9] Phonebloks is an idea for smart phones that aims to reduce electronic waste. The phones are made by block that can be changed if they do not work properly. More information about the concept can be found under https://phonebloks.com/en/about.

Interestingly, participants indicated that the ICT industry can contribute to the improvement of sustainability in supply chains. One student explained that for example IBM works on software solutions for solving issues such "[…] environment, community development and health care" (P22, Group 4). A software tool used by the German chemical company BASF was also mentioned (P20, Group 4). The application is used for evaluation of suppliers to ensure their responsible behavior.

4.1.3. Who Should Take the Responsibility?

While discussing the cases about irresponsible and responsible corporate behavior, the limited knowledge on the topic among the students became evident. However, although they did not have information about the development of the cases that were mentioned, participants underlined that the big companies are the ones to take responsibility.

The majority of the respondents indicated that they did not feel personally responsible for the sustainability in supply chains, when purchasing an ICT product. Students explained that companies have normative obligations to engage with CSR. They clarified that corporations were not legally obliged to take responsibility of suppliers' practices, but they had the power to foster improvements: "I think that if they [companies] have the power over them [suppliers], they should be able to use it to improve the situation there." (P8, Group 2). The participants mentioned several reasons why big companies should take the responsibility. First of all, they had not only the power, but also the resources to do so. In addition, big companies with sustainable practices can be an example for small firms. Moreover, since most suppliers were located in developing countries in Asia, Africa, and South America, students highlighted that they were constrained by the political and economic conditions in those countries. Therefore, these firms were not able to take care of their CSR practices alone.

Respondents also believed that big corporations should work with the governments where the suppliers are located. Enterprises should push them, because these governments were rarely able to deal with the problems. One participant reiterated this sentiment:

> I think they [big companies] should definitely take the responsibility, because also those governments there, they don't always function in a democratic way or not the same as we know it here from the Western world, and actually the companies have the power to push governments into a certain direction as well. So I think that is kind of the key. (P10, Group 2)

In addition, participants indicated that companies were the one that choose their suppliers and take the decision to work with them. Therefore, they should be aware of suppliers' practices and not tolerate irresponsible behavior. Moreover, they should put more pressure on the suppliers to take actions to improve the ways they treat their employees and to reduce their negative environmental impact. As elaborated on the issue:

> […] you have to be responsible. You make the conscious choice to sign a contract with China and child labor… (P2, Group 1)

> If you make a deal with country such as China, you know what you're getting yourself into. […] At least you can minimize or try to not go and sign deals with companies, if you know for certain that has it [violations of human and labor rights]. (P2, Group 1)

Several participants mentioned companies' code of conduct as an integral part of the supply chain management. They were seen as mechanisms to maintain the supplier network. According to students, companies should audit the practices of their suppliers in order to minimize possible harms on their own brand. Participants illustrated this as a damage control, because irresponsible behavior of suppliers might have negative consequences for big enterprises.

4.1.4. Perceptions of Corporate Motivations

Discerning questions regarding corporate motivations for CSR activities among suppliers in the ICT industry were raised in the course of the conversations about corporate obligations and codes of conducts. These discussions emerged with negative connotations. The majority of the students agreed that sustainable supply chain management is driven by commercial motivations. They perceived companies' motivations as marketing tricks. The following statement addressed the marketing nature of CSR in supply chains: "A lot of companies go for what is nice and what is marketable instead of what actually makes a difference." (P6, Group 1). According to the participants, these activities were part of firm's strategy and aim to raise awareness and boost sales. Moreover, companies were using their statements mainly to push their business forward, because they want to keep their investors and shareholders: "The only thing they [companies] have to do is be as friendly enough to not let their investors down or people who buy shares – shareholders." (P4, Group 1). In addition, one participant explained that "companies don't have a soul" and that they were strongly profit-oriented and not putting a lot of emphasizes on CSR topics (P11, Group 2). Another student referred to CSR activities

in supply chains as a political tool and not as an effort to support workers and protect the environment (P4, Group 1). However, these statements contradict the results reported in the previous section. While students indicated that big companies should take the responsibility for maintaining their supply chains, they mistrust corporations' claims and actions.

The majority of the students perceived direct communication (from the company to consumers) regarding companies' motivations for CSR activities as mistrustful. Few students commented that the information about sustainable supply chain management on companies' websites is often exaggerated: "Of course they [companies] will make things look a little bit better […]. So they exaggerate their efforts." (P21, Group 4). Interestingly, some respondents explained that due to this exaggeration, they did not consider the information about CSR activities as an essential factor when evaluating a company as a future employer. Students did not perceive enterprises' claims as trustworthy: "Again, we are coming to the reliability of the information. I wouldn't know what to believe and will be skeptical about it." (P16, Group 3). In addition, some participants indicated that companies use social media to intentionally influence the public opinion and create an image of a responsible organization with sustainable supply management. One of the students also argued that enterprises utilize these channels because they were public and the information posted was perceived by users as not coming from the company, but from an external source, which gave the information more credibility (P1, Group 1).

However, participants mentioned several factors that could influence their perceptions of companies' motivations and claims in a positive way. Participants clarified that they would trust companies' claims, if enterprises can substantiate their statements and prove them with facts: "You have to watch carefully what they [companies] claim and if they can really substantiate what they claim." (P5, Group 1). Respondents also emphasized that they were more willing to trust motivations of companies located and involved in activities in their living area not only because these firms contribute to the development of the local business and community, but also because the students could see and experience the effects. Furthermore, students said that they would accept companies' claims if the firms would work in cooperation with NGOs, or if their activities are monitored by external independent organizations. Actually, communication originating from a third party sources, and more specifically NGOs and governmental institutions like the European Union, was considered rather credible, mainly because these organizations were not profit-oriented. Moreover, checking the competition was identified as a common practice among students in case they

wanted to verify corporate motivations and actions. In addition, the size of the company played an essential role for positive perceptions of its motivations. Participants highlighted that they were more inclined to trust small firms than big multinational companies, because smaller firms were less complex and stronger connected to local suppliers.

4.1.5. Information Seeking

Most participants actually admitted that they do not actively seek for information about companies' CSR activities. The following statement illustrates the attitude of the majority: "Let's put it this way – it is not on the top of my mind to check CSR activities of companies." (P19, Group 4). Mostly, students have been confronted with the topic by media reporting about issues that have currently emerged. Participants alluded to traditional and new media. They have received information about CSR in supply chains mostly via the business newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Economist*, as well as via international (*CNN* and *BBC*) and national broadcasting news channels. The social media platforms Facebook and Twitter were also recognized as sources providing information on the topic: "Normally, these scandals are so big that actually they come to you. When you open like Google, or when you open Facebook, they just appear in your face. Normally… personally I don't search for it." (P15, Group 3).

Participants explained that one of the main reasons to not actively seek for information about CSR in supply chains is the fact that they do not trust the media when it comes to complex topics like CSR. Mainly, this was because of the commercialization and the increasing number of advertisements in the media, as well as the different interests that channels might serve. One respondent elaborated on media objectivity:

> […] I think that a lot of the information on the topic is a bit twisted. You always think who is writing this, is it objective or someone has an interest. […] When I read something about CSR, I always think: Is it objective or not? (P18, Group 4)

Furthermore, participants argued that most media channels were primarily seeking the sensation, reporting mostly when the interests of big and well-known brands or of powerful countries are involved. According to the students, these factors make the story more relevant: "But the story is more newsworthy if you put that Apple kills employees [meant here is the Apple-Foxconn case]." (P5, Group 1).

Although participants expressed general mistrust towards information about CSR in supply chains, the discussions showed that they do not perceive all media channels in the same way. The outcomes emphasized that students tend to trust traditional channels a bit more than social media. On the other hand, one participant highlighted the interconnectivity between different media, which makes it very hard to draw a clear line between traditional and new media: "[…] if you 'like' *BBC* on Facebook, you also get the traditional news output via Facebook, so it's hard to differentiate if you prefer social media or traditional media." (P8, Group 2). Thus, participants admitted that social media were fast information channels, especially if someone was blogging from the place where the issue is emerging. But the uploaded information was often not verified. In addition, information on social media was perceived mainly as a way for making money rather than as an objective presentation of facts or support of efforts for improvement. Also, everybody had access to social media and could post anything: "I think, when there is something on social media, which are an open source, and everybody can actually add information, I will always doubt and go to the official newspaper or official company website just to match the information." (P15, Group 3).

Despite the general limited information seeking on CSR in supply chains, some students indicated that they look for information about CSR (but not specifically about CSR in the ICT industry) if it is related to their studies. They see this as an opportunity to broaden their academic knowledge as well as to gain practical insights that they might apply at their future workplace: "It is very interesting to look at the company – how it reacts when something like this happens – especially when we have in mind that we study business and that we are going to work in the case area afterwards." (P21, Group 4). Moreover, these students perceive the information provided during lectures as credible and accurate: "For me, a lot of the information I have is through lecturers or professors and I think they are quite trustworthy. […] [They] should be unbiased, so I will trust them." (P13, Group 3).

Participants expressed controversial opinions when asked if they are willing to receive more information about CSR in supply chains. Several students stated that they do not want to receive more input on the topic. Others confirmed that the information should not be more, but in general it had to be more easily accessible. In addition, they argued that the information overload could actually have negative consequences for firms:

I would like it [information] to be accessible, so can use when I want to, but I don't really want them [companies] to push it and scream it. If every company now starts to

push it forward to the consumers that would be contra-productive that in the end, just everyone seems the same. (P14, Group 3)

On the other hand, five students disagreed and emphasized that companies should push this information as much as they can. These participants indicated this as a way to make consumers aware of the problems and to establish sustainability in supply chains as a standard on the market. One of the female students clarified:

I would like them to push it [information] as much as possible, because then it would come to a point it will become a standard. […] And in the future, more people would go for this more sustainable option and more companies would become more sustainable. (P13, Group 3)

4.2. The Business Case for CSR in Supply Chains of ICT Companies

After analyzing participants' understanding and familiarity with CSR in supply chains in the ICT industry, the next research question examined the perceived effects of ICT companies' supply chain conduct on corporate reputation and students' purchase behavior.

4.2.1. Supply Chain Conduct and Corporate Reputation

Two real-life examples were discussed in order to analyze the relationship between corporate behavior regarding CSR in supply chains and enterprises' reputation. The first one was focused on Microsoft and the fact that it was called the most socially responsible company for 2012 and 2013 (*CSR RepTrak*, 2012, 2013). The second case referred to the usage of benzene in Chinese factories manufacturing products for Apple, Samsung, and other big ICT companies (Gibbs, 2014; White & Zhang, 2014). In addition to these cases, the topic about corporate reputation was addressed on a general level, while other examples were discussed in the course of the focus groups.

The analysis of participants' responses showed very limited influence of companies' behavior regarding their supply chain management on their corporate reputation. Neither the information about Microsoft's first place in the ranking nor Apple's and Samsung's involvement in the usage of harmful materials by their suppliers affected the image that students had about these ICT companies. The following statement illustrates this: "They [Microsoft] are trying really hard, but I think, as we said previously, for technology there are so many other features… they go first." (P15, Group 3). In general, participants clarified that

technology and product quality, usability and performance were the leading factors shaping the reputation of ICT enterprises. It also became evident that products with bad performance or very high prices could damage corporate reputation.

However, some students explained that responsible as well as irresponsible behavior regarding the supplier network could have some short-term effects on their perceptions of a particular firm. One of the participants clarified: "That [the case Apple-Foxconn] was all over the media for a few weeks and after that nobody knows what happened and nobody really cares." (P19, Group 4). Though, one student explained that the information about responsible corporate behavior would thrill her to learn more about company's activities (P13, Group 3). But the reported short-term effects rarely translated into factors influencing consumers' purchase decisions. The following quotes illustrated students' attitudes:

It makes me think, but it's not gonna make me not buy. (P14, Group 3)

Does it affect my image about Apple? Yes, a bit. Would I still buy an Apple product? Yes, I will. This is my opinion. Because in the end, when you buy a product with the ICT you look at different things. I look for specific technical features. (P18, Group 4)

Only one student indicated that information about responsible corporate behavior could improve the image she had of a company. Thus, the participant clarified again that this positive development would not change her purchase behavior: "It improves the image, but for me I don't think that this would come to end result [purchase]." (P13, Group 3). Again, only one respondent indicated that information related to violation of human rights in suppliers' factories would reshape the image she had about a big ICT enterprise and would convince her not to buy its products anymore: "The information definitely makes me think about the practices of the company… Just don't want my purchase to 'sponsor' companies that do not value human rights and cannot encourage simple safety standards at the working place in their suppliers." (P22, Group 4). It should be highlighted that the two participants mentioned here were female. In general, female students put more emphasis on companies' behavior in maintaining supply chains as a factor that might influence the image they have of a particular organization. Interestingly, a few female participants were concerned if their future employers would be socially responsible companies. For instance, one female respondent underlined the importance to work for a company with such values, because they would align with her own philosophy of life (P13, Group 3). Another female student, who

was active in the cinema and TV industry, explained that she was willing to work on projects about small and not very well developed countries to raise awareness of their problems (P15, Group 3). On the contrary, more than 60% of the participants emphasized that they do not care about companies' social responsibility in general or in supply chains when applying for a job: "I don't really care that much. If I was interested in that, I would consider going to an NGO or something." (P9, Group 2).

Mistrust and Lack of Information. Several patterns explaining the very limited influence of companies' behavior regarding their supply chain management on corporate reputation were identified. First of all, the mistrust in the information about corporate CSR activities in supply chains was determined as a reason for the weak impact of corporate conduct on companies' reputation. Students wanted to see evidence of organizations' actions and mistrusted rankings and information on corporate websites. For instance, respondents questioned the accuracy of the *CSR RepTrack* ranking and wanted to know more about its selection criteria and by which organization the ranking has been done. One student even called the ranking "advertising" (P16, Group 3), and another clarified that since Microsoft was lacking behind in the technological and innovation factor, the company was trying to use sustainability to enhance its sales (P13, Group 3). Finally, the participant expressed doubts that this would work.

The lack of additional information was identified as a further explanation for the weak relationship between corporate behavior and companies' reputation. Students had limited familiarity with companies' CSR strategies and activities. For example, when talking about Microsoft and the reasons for its leadership in the *CSR RepTrack* ranking, only one participant mentioned that the company is also involved in various education programs focused on children in the Third World (P9, Group 2). However, no other respondent was able to name concrete examples of Microsoft's activities regarding CSR, neither in general nor specifically in their supply chains. In the case of irresponsible corporate behavior, students explained that often they were not familiar with case-specific details and how the involved parties have reacted. Therefore, participants argued that they could not relate corporate conduct to company's reputation.

The Power of Executives' Behavior. During the discussion about Microsoft, it also became evident that some participants were better informed about the individual behavior of company's founder and former CEO Bill Gates than about corporate activities and engagement in CSR. Bill Gates was perceived as a "flagship" (P10, Group 2), and the

philanthropic work of his foundation had an impact on how students saw Microsoft. One participant shared:

> […] I always associated it [Microsoft] a lot with Bill Gates as a person, who is really conscious and has his own foundation. […] So I would think of Microsoft for one as a good employer and secondly as really aware of CSR activities. (P10, Group 2)

In this regard, it can be stated that participants' beliefs seemed to be biased to a certain extent, because their opinion about the individual was transferred to the company. Only one respondent was skeptical about Bill Gates' philanthropic work (P1, Group 1). He explained that Gates started his foundation not driven by a good will, but because he wanted to keep his power after he was forced to leave his function as a CEO after a major lawsuit with Netscape.

The Role of the General Corporate Image. Furthermore, some students explained that often the general corporate image affected their perceptions regarding corporate behavior, and not the other way around. One student highlighted: "This is how a brand affects you." (P2, Group 1). Interestingly, another participant reported that he associated Apple with responsible supply chain management, based on his positive perception of the company as a brand. In addition, some students also highlighted the importance of company's size. Indeed, big international companies were viewed as powerful and well-established brands on the market, therefore CSR cases of irresponsible behavior could hardly influence their reputation compared to small enterprises with weaker brand image.

4.2.2. Supply Chain Conduct and Students' Purchase Behavior

CSR activities in supply chains do not affect students' purchasing behavior as it became evident from the previous part of the analysis. This topic is elaborated in detail here.

As explained in section 3.3.2 from the methodology part, three scenarios for purchasing a smart phone were discussed in the focus groups. Scenario A was inspired by the initiative of HP to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions among all of its suppliers. Company A was headquartered in Germany and its products were produced in Europe, the United States, and India. The scenario for Company B referred to the Apple-Foxconn case. So, it was communicated that 10 workers died because of the bad working conditions in the factory of company's Chinese supplier. Inspired by Microsoft's approach, Company C was presented as an organization that aims to work with a variety of suppliers and that actively supports

women- and minority-owned businesses. Its headquarters were in South Korea and the production sites were located in South-East Asia. The cheapest product was product C, followed by product B and product A. The full scenarios can be found in the focus group guide in Appendix C.

The most favored one was product C. It was chosen by 74% of the participants (n=17). 4 students (17%) indicated that they would buy product A and only 2 respondents (9%) were willing to buy product B. Product C was defined as the best option by the majority of the participants. This was the cheapest product of all and at the same time, the producer was supporting the society. One participant explained: "I chose C, because it was cheapest first of all and also did something good." (P2, Group 1). In general, CSR activities related to support of women and minorities among the suppliers were perceived very positive by the participants. Two female students explained that they have chosen product C not only because of the low price, but also because of their own sensitivity to gender and minorities issues (P2, Group 1 & P15, Group 3). In addition, Product A was preferred mainly because the producer company was headquartered in Germany. It is interesting to highlight that two of the four students who opted for this product were actually German and their purchase decision was driven by the fact that German companies "ensure high quality standard" (P10, Group 2) and take care of their suppliers. Furthermore, the participants explained that, with their purchase they were feeling like "help[ing] the local market" (P14, Group 3) and investing "in your local economy." (P5, Group 1). On the other hand, the students that have decided to buy product B clarified that they have made this decision because they related the scenario to Apple – the leading purchasing factor was the strong brand image of the company: "Maybe I just thought too much about it as Apple. That it still has this quality image. Although it is produced in China, you have this feeling of design […]." (P11, Group 2).

Since the scenarios were developed based on real-life cases, the information about the actual companies was presented to the students. Then they were asked if knowing the names of the involved corporations would affect their purchase decision. The majority of the participants indicated that they would rethink their choice and maybe would buy another product. This was mainly driven by students' familiarity with the brands and their products, as well as the technical features and performance of the phones. The following statement summarizes participants' attitudes:

With those brands I would be more… well it depends on the products… but I personally will be between Samsung and Apple. They are the brands I am most familiar with. I've had Apple kind of phone, so I know how to use them. And also they seemed to be most technologically advanced. So even though my first reaction was to not choose company B, that would be Apple, knowing that it is an Apple product and the benefits of this product… I would reconsider it [reconsider the initial choice not to buy product B]. (P13, Group 3)

Although students highlighted the important role of CSR in supply chains before the real names of the companies were disclosed to them, they underlined that in real life sustainable supply chain management was not a factor influencing their purchase decisions. One of the main explanations provided was that when consumers are in the shop and comparing various ICT products, they do not receive information about the CSR activities of the producers and their suppliers. This suggested that individuals have to take the initiative to find out more about the companies. However, the majority of the students indicated that normally they did not look for information related to CSR in supply chains when buying an ICT product. One student explained that this is very time inefficient: "Also, it takes a lot of your time to research what is good and what is not good. I'm not gonna bother, I will just buy the iPhone." (P4, Group 1). In addition, the participants emphasized again that even if they were informed about unsustainable practices in supply chains, this information had only short terms effects and it was quickly forgotten:

But we tend to forget general knowledge. When I see 10 people died next to company B, I am like No, No! But when you go and you see the product without this part and even I've heard that this company has bad practices in the supply chain… after a while it doesn't play that much. God, I am a bad person! [Laughing] (P18, Group 4)

Innovation and Technology. The innovation factor and the technical features of the products were identified as the leading criteria shaping consumers' purchase decisions: "[…] especially in the ICT companies, it has always been about innovation. More, more, more and then also the customer wants more and is willing to pay more for the innovation." (P10, Group 2). Thus, the majority of the students explained that they look for the product which best suits their needs and demands. In addition, they were not willing to make trade-offs in the quality of the product because of its sustainability: "I would mostly care about the functionality of the products, the technology. I mean, you are not gonna go for something more expensive, which

is less effective, just because of CSR." (P9, Group 2). One student explained that sustainability is an "extra to the whole package" (P13, Group 3). Another participant argued: "I wouldn't consider it even as an extra – totally unimportant for such products." (P16, Group 2).

Price. The price of the ICT product was also a leading factor for the majority of the students. In general, sustainable products were perceived more expensive. The common attitude towards paying more for ICT products manufactured in sustainable conditions was negative. "I wouldn't pay more just for sustainability" (P4, Group 1), emphasized one of the participants. Students admitted that because of their economic situation, they did not have the financial resources to buy such products. Not surprisingly, respondents were willing and ready to pay more for products with innovative features.

Still a few students explained that they would pay more for a sustainable ICT product depending on the price difference and their financial situation. One student highlighted the important role of individual's income:

> Yeah, I have to say also being a student is a big factor. If I was, I don't know, 55 and I have my income and I do care, you know, and I have the money to care as well, then I would always go for the in my eyes the better option, which is most probably more expensive. (P10, Group 2)

Feeling Powerless. Another major reason for not considering CSR in supply chains in purchasing decisions were participants' beliefs that as single individuals they were not making a difference. Several students explained that their individual actions would not have an impact on how ICT companies are maintaining their supply chains. They also expressed doubts that consumers from Western countries could fight for the rights of stakeholders located in other parts of the world.

Some participants, however, provided examples of successful consumer activism. One student referred to the problems with the foie gras (goose liver) and the caviar in the Netherlands, and explained that because of consumers' pressure, the issues with the production of these products were solved (P4, Group 1). Another respondent talked about the recycling system in Germany and how this contributed to the reduction of waste disposal and environmental pollution because every citizen has been involved (P10, Group 2). However, participants noted that these cases were mainly determined by the specifics of the industry.

For instance, in the food sector products had a direct impact on consumers' health, therefore students cared more about the way these goods were produced. Respondents underlined that this is not the case in the ICT industry. The following statement summarized participants' attitudes: "[…] it [CSR in supply chains] only matters if the phone is bad to us. If it radiates you and you got tumor in your head because of the radiation." (P4, Group 1).

No Choice. Another reason for not paying attention to sustainability in supply chains of ICT companies is that participants felt locked-in when buying an ICT product. They argued that while in the clothing or food industry the variety of products and brands was greater, in the ICT sector the leading companies producing high-quality products were only a few. Students highlighted that the firms were actually working with the same suppliers. One participant provided the following example:

> But with the telephone industry Samsung does it, and Nokia does it, and Apple does it, and HTS does it. So what else can you buy? I think that for most of these things, you don't really have a feasible choice. (P6, Group 1)

Respondents felt that they do not have a choice to buy a sustainable ICT product. The Phonebloks concept was the only sustainable option they could think of. Unfortunately, the majority considered it as unfeasible alternative because it was not yet established on the market; students did not know how it will work; and also felt that they did not have sufficient knowledge to select the different parts to build the phone. In addition, one student clarified that often the software products were exclusively developed for a specific hardware (P15, Group 3). So in order to perform their work, individuals were forced to operate with certain ICT products, which excluded the option for selection based on companies' supply chain conduct.

The Bandwagon Effect[10]. Several statements indicated that often students' purchase decisions of ICT products were influenced by the behavior of their peers in the aim to follow the latest trends on the market. This buying behavior was mostly related to Apple products. For instance, one student explained that despite the problems which the company has with its suppliers, she had recently bought an Apple product because "everybody's doing it" (P2,

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[10] The bandwagon effect follows the assumption that individual's consumption is influenced by the actions or beliefs of others. Consumers ´jump´ on the wagon with the aim to be part of the latest trends and developments (Biddle, 1991).

Group 1). The participant defined the purchase not only as an investment in a high quality product but also as a belonging to a specific part of the population. In addition, another respondent who was using Apple products underlined that she felt as part of the Apple fans community. These community feelings were leading for her when choosing an ICT product. Moreover, the student explained that "Apple lovers are genuine Apple lovers" and that the CSR problems that the company was facing would not affect consumers' perception of the brand and its products (P7, Group 2).

4.3. The ICT Industry – The Different One

The ICT industry was compared to other industries in the course of the focus groups, which led to the identification of several differences in students' perceptions. This section provides insights into the third research question: What, if any, are the differences in West European students' perception of CSR in supply chains in the ICT industry compared to other sectors? The distinctive nature of the ICT industry as well as the future role of CSR in supply chains in this sector are discussed here.

4.3.1. The Distinctive Nature of the ICT Industry

It became evident that participants perceive the ICT industry differently compared to other sectors like the clothing or the food industry. First, students explained that most big ICT companies had large supply chains and these suppliers were producing very specific products. Therefore, often big enterprises were facing the problem that only a very limited number of suppliers could produce the parts needed. The smart phone screens and the computer chips were given as examples. Thus, students clarified that the supply chains of ICT firms were not that flexible and often companies had no options to find other more socially responsible suppliers.

The rapid development of the ICT industry was a further factor that was discussed. Participants argued that the product life cycles were very short because of the ongoing innovation processes. One student emphasized:

> […] we go through these products so incredibly fast because the average person in Europe has a phone for a year and then gets a new one. In Japan is 9 months that people have a phone. After 9 months they buy a new one. (P6, Group 1)

Students agreed that consumers' willingness to have the latest products put a lot of pressure on ICT companies and respectively on their suppliers, because the production cycles were short. Thus, for a short period of time suppliers had to produce large amounts of parts/products. According to the respondents, this could increase the risk of human and labor rights violations, such as working for many hours without breaks and/or using materials that accelerate the production process, but are harmful for humans and the environment.

Participants believed that the ICT industry is generally judged for technology and innovation, and sustainability is not in the mind of stakeholders. The ICT sector was called "sophisticated" and "pretty untouchable" (P1, Group 1). Some respondents indicated that the retail industry and the oil sector were judged more harshly, because people were more familiar with these products and the ways they are produced. This assumption became evident from the examples provided in the focus groups. The majority of the examples mentioned by the participants originated from the retail and the food industry. Indeed, the awareness of supply chain issues in the ICT sector was pretty low. The major explanation provided by the students was the fact that the ICT industry was relatively new, but also rapidly developing. So, individuals were still fascinated by the innovation and the performance of the various devices and tools. Products' complexity was addressed as another reason for the low awareness of CSR in supply chains. Often students did not have sufficient knowledge about how products work and how the single parts are produced:

> If you think what is happening with your phone around you, that's insane. And that corporate responsibility thing… you don't know where the parts come from, how your phone works. If you are a regular Dutch person, you don't understand. […] we don't see where the parts are coming from. Is it the outlet, is it only the screens, the chips inside, is it the memory card? Which part of this isn't environmental-friendly? Which part isn't workplace-healthy, 'cause there are so many parts. (P2, Group 1)

The complexity of the products and production processes was indicated as a major difference between ICT and other industries. Participants elaborated that, for instance, in the apparel industry, they could touch the clothes and identify the materials and how they were sewed. In the ICT industry, they were only able to examine the performance and technical features of the products. Another example came from the food sector: "With the food industry, the regular consumer has an idea in his head: OK, this is prepared in this way or these are the suppliers. In the ICT industry you cannot get really behind the products and

understand them." (P18, Group 4). In addition, the Fair Trade label and the Rainforest Alliance certificate were perceived as useful indications about the origin of the products in the food industry. According to the students, such certifications were missing in the ICT sector, so consumers were not able to differentiate sustainable from unsustainable products.

4.3.2. CSR – Part of the Future ICT Development

Although the results of the study indicated that companies' supply chain conduct had very limited effect on firms' reputation and did not influence students' purchase behavior, several participants identified CSR in supply chains as an important factor that will shape the future development of the ICT sector. Some participants highlighted that because the ICT industry was relatively new, CSR was still hidden behind the innovation and technology factors. However, students indicated that the scandals focused on irresponsible behavior were increasing. Furthermore, ICT companies were not innovating with the same rapid speed as couple of years ago. These factors were determining the growing importance of CSR in supply chains.

One student indicated that because of the emergence of the topic in other industries, CSR in supply chains would also become important in the ICT sector: "And when it becomes a trend, then the companies try to follow, because then people will search for it, will be more aware of this […]." (P15, Group 3). Several times during the discussions CSR was mentioned as a strategic move for ICT companies to differentiate from the competition. One student explained that ICT firms would be more concerned about their operation processes and the environmental-friendly conduct of their suppliers (P13, Group 3). Thus, the essential future role of CSR in supply chains raises various questions and brings different challenges for ICT enterprises. Some valuable recommendations for companies can be found in the following chapter of the thesis.

5. Discussion

The findings of the Master thesis are summarized and situated among the existing empirical research in this chapter. Moreover, the conceptual and pragmatic implications of the outcomes for academia and business are discussed. Finally, the limitations of the Master thesis as well as suggestions for further research are addressed.

5.1. Low Familiarity and Industry-Specific Understanding

This research suggests low awareness of CSR in supply chains of ICT companies among West European students. Likewise, participants had limited knowledge of corporate behavior regarding their networks of suppliers. It should be also noted that some participants found it difficult to explicitly connect corporate social responsibility with supply chain management. In the course of the discussions, they were often talking about CSR in general and not specifically in the context of supply chains. The discussed cases from the ICT industry were only a few and they were mostly related to irresponsible behavior of big multinational enterprises. There was lack of information amongst the students about efforts of big companies and suppliers to solve the problems. These findings uncover students' disinterest in learning more about the development of the cases. Actually, participants were more aware of the CSR topic in the context of the food and retail industries. These are valuable outcomes when comparing with the report of the European Commission (2011), which argues that European consumers have been more focused on the social and ethical performance of enterprises in the last couple of years. The study of Andersen and Skjøtt-Larsen (2009) also refers to the growing attention in society and media about CSR in supply chains. However, the outcomes of this thesis contradict with the results from previous studies and show the importance of analyzing the topic in the context of a specific industry. The report by the EU Commission (2011) and the research project by Andersen and Skjøtt-Larsen (2009) have a general character and are not focused on a single sector or aspect of CSR. Therefore, the specifications of the ICT industry might be the key factor explaining the results of this Master thesis. The ICT sector is developing very rapidly and is still relatively new compared to other industries. Thus, students were mostly fascinated by the innovation of the latest technologies and did not pay attention to companies' CSR conduct. It can be concluded that the topic of CSR in supply chains still remains hidden behind the 'high-tech curtain'.

Products' complexity was revealed as another reason for the low awareness of CSR in supply chains. Students admitted that they lack knowledge about how the products function and in which conditions the single parts are produced. This seems logical, since the majority of respondents admitted that they do not actively seek for information about companies' activities regarding CSR in supply chains. Participants were mostly unintentionally confronted with the topic via the mass media, when a specific problem had emerged. Interestingly, some students indicated that they look for information about CSR (but not specifically about CSR in the ICT industry) if this is related to their studies. In addition, they perceived the information on this topic provided at the university as trustful. This can be considered as an opportunity for academia and non-profit organizations to make students more aware of problems related to supply chain management. At the same time, this can be a possibility for companies to engage with students on various projects in order to demonstrate their corporate commitment. Since students explained that they want to see proofs of firms' statements, companies can substantiate their claims when presenting their achievements during university courses.

Furthermore, the lack of knowledge amongst consumers can be interpreted as a call for the ICT enterprises to provide more insights about their products. However, ICT companies should be very careful in their attempts to release more information, since generally respondents demonstrated low levels of motivation to gather and/or critically process information about corporate behavior regarding CSR in supply chains. This reveals the controversial nature of the topic. Students provided inconsistent answers when asked if they want to receive more information about CSR in supply chains of ICT companies. While most of the participants were not willing to receive additional input, some argued that companies should push this information as much as possible in order to make consumers aware and to establish sustainability in supply chains as a standard on the market. Interestingly, these results suggest some gender and cultural similarities as well as differences between consumers. In general, female participants seemed more interested and put more emphasis on companies' behavior in maintaining supply chains. These insights correspond to the findings of Burton and Hegarty (1999). They show that female U.S. students perceive companies' noneconomic (society oriented) responsibilities as relatively more important as males do. On the other hand, the study highlights the differences between West Europeans and Chinese (Wang & Goodman, 2006) and American consumers (Cone Communications, 2013) – in general, Chinese and Americans want to hear more about CSR efforts of companies. Thus, the

findings from the focus groups support the results of the study by Morsing, Schultz and Nielsen (2008) that illustrates Danish consumers' reluctance regarding communication on CSR activities.

When asked to define the concept of CSR in supply chains in the ICT industry, students identified labor and human rights, workplace health and safety as well as environmental protection as the most essential aspects of the construct. This corresponds to the definition of CSR provided by the Commission of the European Communities (2001). The results of the thesis also align with the general interpretation of sustainability in supply chains that refers to the social and environmental responsibilities of a company along its supplier network (Amaeshi, Osuji, & Nnodim, 2008; Seuring & Müller, 2008). However, the relevance of data protection and economic impact on stakeholders throughout the supply chains were addressed as emerging facets too. Thus, students' understanding of CSR in supplier networks supports the idea for balance of economic, environmental and social objectives throughout the supply chain (Carter & Rogers, 2008; Elkington, 2004). In the literature, the intersection of these three aspects is related to the long-term economic benefits and competitive advantages of companies (Carter & Rogers, 2008; Elkington, 2004). However, the aspects of CSR in supply chains were not discussed in the sense of a long-term financial performance in the current research. They were characterized as doing well for the society, various stakeholders, and the environment without being driven by profit-oriented goals. Moreover, the dimension of data protection goes beyond the broad concept of sustainability in supply chains. These outcomes highlight the need for more specific definition to be developed in the context of the ICT industry and the emerging issues in the field. Researchers could also investigate in detail the impact of other dimensions in their attempt to create an industry-specific definition. Thus, the definition should be situated amongst the ethical theories (Garriga & Melé, 2004), since the current study demonstrates the essential role of social values for corporate behavior.

It is also interesting to compare students' perceptions of CSR in supply chains with the way that companies see it. The preliminary research showed that Microsoft, Apple, and HP emphasize mainly labor and environmental activities in their supplier networks, which suggests that their definition relies on these two dimensions. Hence, a common core understanding of CSR in supply chains can be identified between the interviewed West European students and ICT companies. However, additional aspects such as data protection

were also considered important by the participants. This can be an indication for companies to expand the scope of their CSR activities.

The results of this thesis also contribute to the discussions in academia and business about the limits of big companies' responsibilities in their supply chains (Amaeshi, Osuji, & Nnodim, 2008; Roberts, 2003). More specifically, it supports the assumption that big corporations have to use their capabilities and influence to affect in a positive way the weaker parties in their supply chains (Amaeshi, Osuji, & Nnodim, 2008). The majority of the participants indicated that companies should bear the responsibility for maintaining sustainable networks of suppliers, mostly because they have the power and the resources to do it. In addition, students referred to the role of governmental and political bodies in the countries where the suppliers are located. Companies need to work with these local institutions in order to help them develop structures and strategies to ensure the sustainable conduct of the suppliers. Additionally, participants touched upon the complexity of the supply chains and the consequential problems in the ICT sector. This complexity has been demonstrated also in the chocolate industry (Blowfield, 2003). Thus, a comparative study focused on these two sectors will foster the exchange of ideas, tools and practices for improving the supply chain management in both fields.

5.2. The Distrustful Consumer

A further outcome of the current research refers to the common mistrust among students in corporate claims regarding CSR in supply chains. Most participants perceived corporate claims as profit-oriented "marketing tricks". This connects to consumers' skepticism towards CSR activities detected in the academic realm (Colleoni, 2013; Yoon et al., 2006) and highlights the importance of the transparency facet of the sustainable supply chains construct (Carter & Rogers, 2008). In addition, the results align with the academic discussion focused on the sincerity of corporate motives for CSR actions and the way they are perceived among consumers (Chandler, 2006; Roberts, 2001). Thus, the current thesis refers to the negative perceptions and effects of insincere motives. On the other hand, it does not prove the positive impact of trustworthy claims and intentions. Interestingly, the external monitoring of an independent institution is another possibility for companies to convince students of the truthfulness of their actions. This highlights the essential role of NGOs and governmental institutions in monitoring and communicating CSR activities in supply chains. Moreover, it initiates a debate about involvement and limits of responsibility of non-profit organizations.

Participants distrusted not only corporate claims and general CSR communication regarding supply chains, but also the sources of information. First of all, students expressed their skepticism towards direct communication coming from the company. In addition, most participants did not perceive the media as credible when it comes to topics such as sustainable supply chain management. Still, the results of the current study highlight that students tend to trust traditional a bit more than social media. These findings substantiate the essential role of newspapers in CSR communication (Wang & Goodman, 2006) but contradict previous studies identifying the Internet as a powerful CSR communication tool (Capriotti, 2011; Fieseler et al., 2010; Wang & Goodman, 2006). The results provide valuable insights for companies in their attempts to establish effective CSR communication strategies. Indeed, the outcomes raise important questions related to social media usage. Should companies avoid using social network channels as part of their CSR communication and focus only on traditional media? Social network sites have attracted billions of users since their introduction and have succeeded to become a daily practice for most of them (Alexa, 2014). Therefore, social media should not be excluded from corporate CSR communication, but companies should definitely rethink how to utilize them in an efficient manner. This requires more detailed research to better understand consumers' perceptions of social media in regard to CSR-related topics.

The majority of the participants in the focus groups were studying Master Marketing Management and most of them expressed willingness to work in the field of advertising/communication/PR. Actually, several studies identify CSR as a PR tool (e.g. Capriotti & Moreno, 2007; Chandler, 2006; Clark, 2000). It is quite ironical that professions that students aspire to are often the ones creating CSR messages that were identified as untrustworthy by the participants. It can be suggested that participants' mistrust in companies' motivations and CSR communication is related in a way to students' knowledge and experience in the field of marketing and business communication. This demonstrates a possible impact of consumers' educational background on their perceptions. However, the study results cannot be generalized due to their small scale. This aspect requires more in-depth analysis.

5.3. Innovation, Technology and Brands Trump CSR in Supply Chains

The current study shows that corporate conduct regarding CSR in supply chains has a very limited short-term influence on corporate reputation. According to students, innovation,

technology, and quality of the products are the leading factors shaping the image of ICT companies. These results strongly contradict previous findings in the academic realm. While studies report about a strong positive relationship between CSR activities and organizations' reputation (e.g. Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010; Garberg & Fombrun, 2006; Griffin, 2008; Lai et al., 2010; Lewis, 2001), this thesis shows that corporate conduct regarding the supplier network can have very weak effects on students' perceptions of a particular ICT firm. The short-term impact of CSR activities was considered only by a few students and did not translate into purchasing behavior.

In addition, this study highlights the brand power of market leaders. Some students explained that the general corporate image often affects their perceptions about corporate behavior and not the other way around. This applies especially in the case of big enterprises such as Apple. These results raise questions about the direction of the relationship between consumers' perceptions of corporate behavior and corporate image. While most current studies focus on the impact of corporate conduct perceptions on firm's reputation, they do not take into consideration the converse relationship.

As shown, CSR activities in supply chains do not affect students' purchasing behavior. Even if students were aware of company's problems related to their supply chain management, they admitted that they would still buy the products without doubts. These results are inconsistent with the study of Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) who suggest that negative CSR practices can have a negative impact on consumers' purchase intentions. Again, the innovation factor, technical features, high performance, and products' usability were identified as most essential criteria impacting consumers' purchase decisions. This shows that students are willing to maximize their personal benefits when buying new ICT goods. Very few respondents were sophisticated with ethical and socially responsible companies, but they clarified that this did not translate into favoring ethical firms and punishing unethical ones. These findings align with consumers' rationality reported by other scholars (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). In general, participants expressed unwillingness to make tradeoffs in price, product performance and functionality because of CSR. This connects to the study of Barone and colleagues (2000) who argued that, when consumers have to choose between CSR properties and performance or price, most of them buy the cheaper or higher-performing product. On the other hand, while the same study of Barone et al. (2000) suggests that in the case of functionally equivalent products, consumers are willing to choose the product with additional CSR attributes, the outcomes of this research are inconsistent.

Whereas for some students responsible supply chain management was a bonus to the product, for others it was completely irrelevant. It is interesting to highlight that although most participants reported that they would not pay more for sustainable products because of their limited financial opportunities, they were willing to pay more for ICT products with innovative features. This uncovers in a way the egoistic nature of consumers. In addition, students' willingness to buy more expensive but technologically advanced products can be aligned with consumers' interests in ICT. Four participants expressed willingness to work in the ICT industry after graduation. But despite their affinity for the ICT field, they were lacking knowledge of CSR in their supply chains. This can be related to the fact that supply chain sustainability was not immediately associated with CSR by the respondents. In addition, the lack of information as a factor for not paying attention to sustainability in supply chains when buying a product is identified by other scholars. Mohr and colleagues (2001) argue that due to limited knowledge, consumers are not committed to CSR and pay attention to selection criteria such as quality and price instead.

Several reasons for not considering CSR in supply chains when buying an ICT product were identified. First of all, the specifications of the ICT industry need to be taken into account. Innovation and technology are the heart of ICT. They drive its development and are most important for companies and consumers. Furthermore, participants felt locked-in when buying an ICT product. They could not provide any other examples of sustainable ICT products except the Phonebloks concept, but it was not perceived as a feasible option. These outcomes put the variety of products regarding their CSR features up for discussion. Actually, a new market niche for sustainable ICT products can be defined. This aligns with students' identification of CSR in supply chains as a factor that will shape the future development of the ICT sector. However, companies will have to find the right balance between technology, performance, price, and sustainability.

Another reason for not paying attention to sustainability in supply chains when buying a product is the fact that participants in this study seemed convinced of their own powerlessness. Thus, the majority of the respondents indicated that they did not feel personally responsible as consumers for sustainability in supply chains. This contradicts again the Flash Eurobarometer 363 (2013) performed among representatives of all 27 European

Union members[11]. According to the research, European citizens think that they should take the lead role in influencing the actions of companies through the purchasing decisions they make. These discrepancies raise important questions about the differences between representatives of various parts of Europe, but also about the role of consumers' social background.

The findings of the current work refer to a complex and in a way hierarchical process of evaluation of CSR in supply chains when purchasing an ICT product. This relates to the idea proposed by Öberseder and colleagues (2011) for core, central, and peripheral factors defining this evaluation process. With regards to CSR in supply chains in the ICT sector, *price*, *information about companies' activities*, and *credibility of CSR conduct* can be identified as core factors in the evaluation process of CSR. Furthermore, *available choice of sustainable products* and *consumers' power to contribute to CSR causes* can be described as additional criteria. This way, the Master thesis fosters the discussion focused on the business case of CSR (Vogel, 2005) and more specifically on the situation when the market does not reward CSR activities. It still remains open for future research what the consequences in this case are and how companies should react. Further research directions are addressed in the following section.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

This Master thesis focused on a relatively small research sample, limiting the ability to generalize the results. Moreover, the study investigated only students. Therefore, future research should analyze various social groups to provide more insights into the impact of the social status on consumers' perceptions and attitudes regarding CSR in supply chains. Interesting will be to compare students and professionals. In addition, this work examines specifically West European students. Although they represented eight countries, no differences between their perceptions and attitudes were identified based on their origin. However, this research project sets the stage for more comprehensive analysis of representatives from other European regions, in order to identify and compare the perceptions across countries. Further limitation of the current work is the fact that although it included representatives of several West European countries, these students were all studying at the same academic institution and were living in the same location. In addition, living in a

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[11] The number of EU member states was 27at the time when the study was conducted. The member states are 28 at present – Croatia joined the EU in 2013 (http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/index_en.htm).

country different from your native one requires some level of adaptation, so the participants in this study cannot be considered as typical representatives of the student population in their homelands. Moreover, the different demographic groups were not equally represented in the sample – Dutch students prevailed, the majority was Master students, and there were more female students. These inconsistencies may have biased the research results.

Since this thesis examined consumers' point of view, it will be interesting if future research analyzes CSR in supply chains from an internal corporate perspective – how employees in ICT companies perceive the supply chain management of their employer and how this affects internal processes such as identification, motivation for work, and integrity. The results will help enterprises to build stronger internal teams and possibly to improve their performance.

The current study also highlighted the specifications of the ICT industry. However, participants elaborated on the differences between the ICT companies producing hardware and those involved in development of software solutions. Future research should be more strategic regarding the various ICT sub-sectors.

Focus groups were used as a research method in the Master thesis. This qualitative perspective facilitated the in-depth analysis of the topic while taking into account the social/national background of participants. However, the study relied on a self-reported data, which suggests that participants might have provided untruthful information about their perceptions, influenced by social desirability in the groups. In addition, although the moderator stayed professional and objective during the discussions, the possibility to affect respondents still remained. Moreover, the qualitative analysis depends to a great extent on the skills, knowledge and competence of the researcher (Patton, 2002), which raises questions about the subjectivity and the possibility for replication of the analysis.

Future research should approach consumers' perceptions and attitudes regarding CSR in supply chains via multiple methodologies. For instance, a quantitative survey can facilitate the analysis of a bigger sample and show how the outcomes of the focus groups correspond to a broader population. Qualitative interviews can minimize the effects of social desirability (Kaplowitz, 2000). A longitudinal study can allow researchers to investigate how students' perceptions and behavior change over time, especially when they step into the professional

world. A longitudinal study could also analyze the phenomenon over periods of time and determine if there is any causality between the investigated concepts.

5.5. Practical Implications

Despite its limitations, this Master thesis provides valuable insights for practitioners. Although the results of the study indicate that companies' supply chains conduct have very limited influence on corporate reputation and no impact on consumer purchase behavior, students identified CSR in supply chains as an important factor that will shape the future development of the ICT sector. This is an indication for corporations to continue improving the conditions throughout their supplier networks. How ICT companies communicate their CSR strategies and activities is crucial. Since students mistrust CSR communication and perceive companies' claims as "marketing tricks", corporations can consider the option to ignore CSR as part of their marketing communication plans. Instead, ICT companies should be more focused on maintaining a positive image. Consumers do not trust claims – they want to see facts and evidences. This exemplifies that companies should show concrete results of their CSR strategies and actions. Moreover, they should try to present their CSR activities regarding the suppliers in a tangible and accessible manner. Companies' leaderships can play an important role in this process. Positive opinion about the leadership is often transferred onto the company, as the current study reports. Furthermore, students perceived as credible communication originating from non-governmental organizations and governmental institutions, such as the European Union and the United Nations. Thus, as mentioned, ICT companies can take into consideration involving such institutional bodies in their CSR activities. This might not be an easy task, but it would have a positive influence on consumers' perceptions. In addition, it would provide external resources for the company.

Another way for ICT companies to show their commitment to CSR in supply chains is through their products. The ICT industry is able to provide software solutions for solving various issues in supply chain management (e.g. Jin, 2006; Wang, Lai, & Zhao, 2008; Wilson & Clarke, 1998). Participants saw this as an opportunity for corporations to differentiate from the competition. Furthermore, it became evident from the discussions that certifications such as the Fair Trade and the Rainforest Alliance were perceived as indications for sustainable origin of the products in the food industry. Students were not familiar with such certifications in the ICT sector. In this context, companies could put more emphasis on providing information about the production of their products. The short sentence "Made in…" is simply not enough.

However, ICT companies should be very careful in their attempts to release more information, since CSR communication is a very delicate matter.

The Master thesis also contributes to the research by illustrating the cultural differences between West European consumers and those from other countries. This is an essential part of companies' target marketing for approaching their clients. Moreover, sustainable ICT products can be identified as a new market niche. Further investigation in this direction is needed. In the future, ICT enterprises will face the challenge to find the right balance between innovation and technical progress, product performance and price, and sustainable conduct.

6. Conclusion

This Master thesis contributes to academic research in its efforts to deliver empirical insights into consumers' perceptions towards CSR in supply chains. The topic of CSR is emerging in the last couple of years across various sectors and especially in the ICT industry. However there are only few studies investigating the subject. This work focused on West European students' perceptions and attitudes towards CSR in supply chains of ICT companies. This leading theme included three interconnected research questions. The first one referred to consumers' understanding and familiarity with the topic. The second question addressed the relationship between ICT companies' behavior and corporate reputation, as well as consumers' purchase intentions. The last research question focused on the differences in West European students' perception of CSR in supply chains in the ICT industry compared to other sectors.

Four focus groups were conducted to answer the research questions. 23 students from Erasmus University Rotterdam took part in the study. The findings indicate participants' low awareness and limited familiarity with CSR in supply chains in the ICT industry. Moreover, respondents demonstrated low levels of motivation to gather and/or critically process information about corporate behavior. This related to the common mistrust among students in corporate motivations regarding CSR in supply chains, and in general in the communication of the topic. Furthermore, students' understanding of the concept stretched over four dimensions: labor and human rights and workplace health and safety, environmental protection, data protection, and economic impact on stakeholders throughout the supply chains. These findings correspond to the general explanation of CSR in supply chains, but they also highlight the need for a more specific definition of the concept that is developed in the context of the ICT industry and the emerging issues in this sector.

While previous research reports on a strong positive relationship between CSR activities and organizations' reputation, the current study demonstrates very limited short-term influence of corporate conduct regarding CSR in supply chains on companies' reputation. Furthermore, CSR activities in the supplier network do not have an impact on students' purchasing behavior. Several reasons for these results were identified. The main one refers to the nature of the ICT sector. According to the students, innovation, technology, performance and quality of the products are the leading factors that shape the reputation of

ICT enterprises and affect consumers' buying decisions. Consumers act rationally, aiming to maximize their personal benefits.

Moreover, the outcomes of the current work refer to the complexity of the evaluation process of CSR in supply chains when purchasing an ICT product. Still, students identified CSR in supplier networks as an important factor that will shape the future development of the ICT sector. CSR is still hidden behind the innovation and technology factors because of the novelty of the ICT industry, but it will gain in importance. This is an essential indication for enterprises to continue improving the conditions throughout their supplier networks, as well as to be more conscious how they communicate their strategies and actions.

However, the readers of the current study should take into consideration that the research was performed among a specific social group, which limits the ability for generalization of the results. Despite its limitations, this Master thesis is important for understanding consumers' perceptions of CSR in supply chains. It builds a strong foundation for deeper academic research in the field of corporate social responsibility and provides valuable insights for the business.

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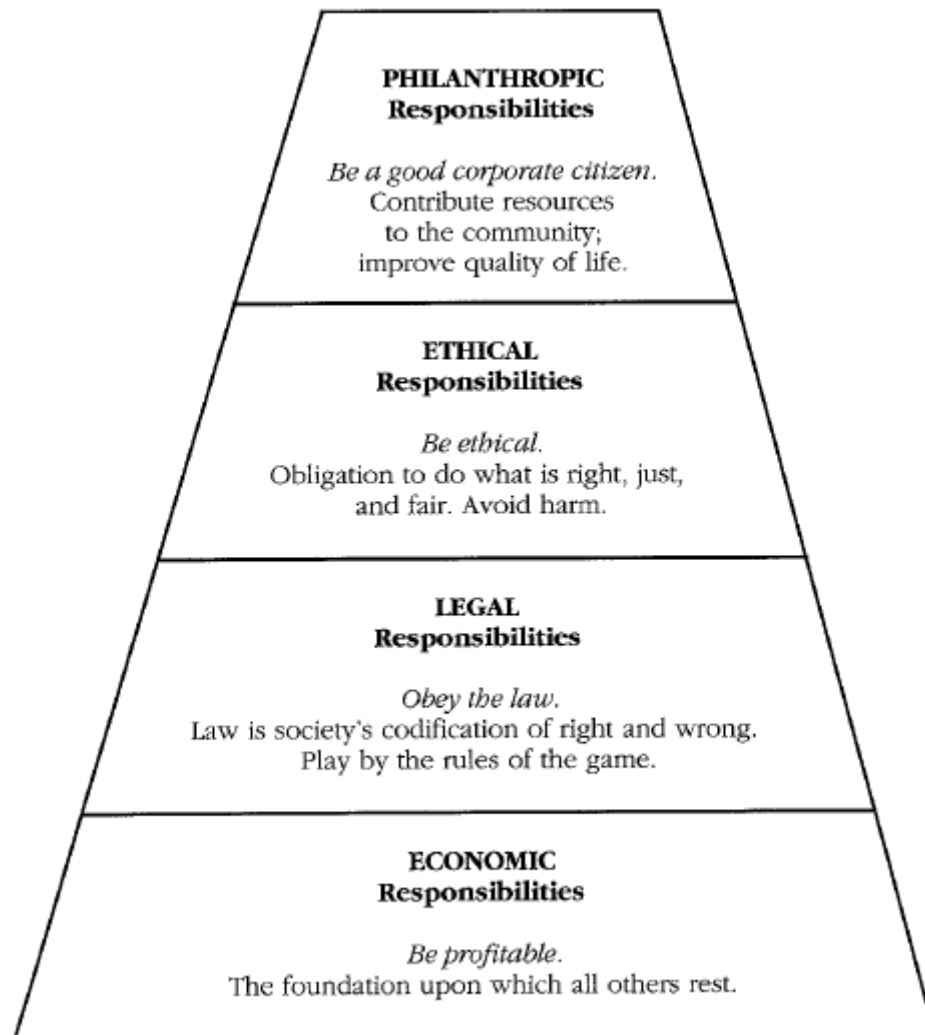
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Appendix A: Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility

(Carroll, 1991, p. 42)

PHILANTHROPIC
Responsibilities

Be a good corporate citizen.
Contribute resources
to the community;
improve quality of life.

ETHICAL
Responsibilities

Be ethical.
Obligation to do what is right, just,
and fair. Avoid harm.

LEGAL
Responsibilities

Obey the law.
Law is society's codification of right and wrong.
Play by the rules of the game.

ECONOMIC
Responsibilities

Be profitable.
The foundation upon which all others rest.

Appendix B: Sustainable Supply Chain Management

(Carter & Rogers, 2008, p. 369)
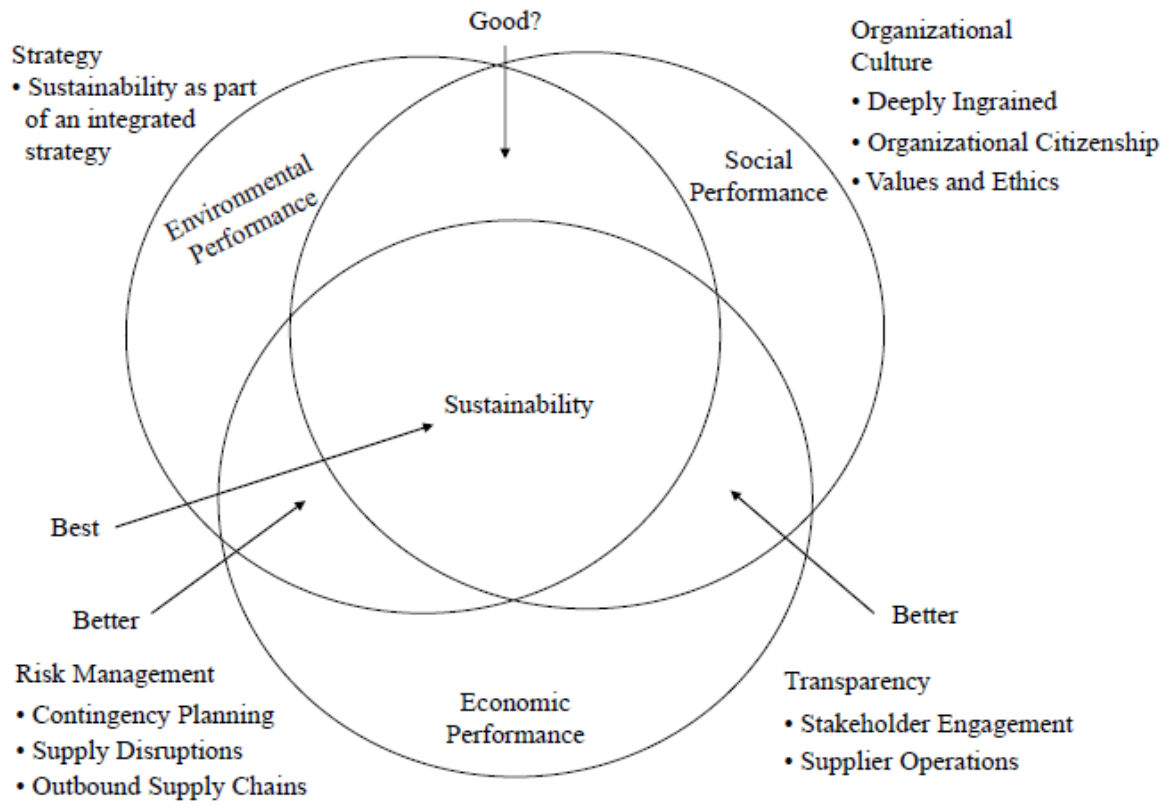
Appendix C: Focus Group Discussion Guide

1. Warm-up – Experiment

Provide participants with scenarios (descriptions of different products) and ask them to choose to buy one of the presented products. Participants should write down their choice on a piece of paper. Their choices will be discussed at a later point during the focus group.

Scenarios: Imagine that you need a new smart phone. You go to a store that has a number of brands and products and you start comparing them. You find three products that you like. They are produced by companies that are established industry leaders.

Company A is headquartered in Germany. Most of its products are produced in Europe, United States of America and India. You have recently learned that this company aims to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions among all of its suppliers.

Company B has its headquarters in the United States of America. Most of its products are produced in China. You have recently learned that 10 workers died because of the bad working conditions in a factory of one of the Chinese suppliers of the company.

Company C's headquarters are in South Korea. Most of its products are produced in South Korea, Japan and China. The company aims to work with a variety of suppliers and actively supports women- and minority-owned businesses.

The product of company C is the cheapest one and costs 420 Euro, followed by the product of company B – 500 Euro, and then of company A – 580 Euro.

Which product would you choose?

- The product produced by company A

- The product produced by company B

- The product produced by company C

2. Main part

2.1. How do West European consumers perceive CSR in supply chains?

    a. Are you familiar with the concept of CSR in supply chains?

b. What does it mean to you?

c. Can you give concrete examples of responsible/irresponsible behavior of companies regarding their supply chains?

d. What aspects of CSR in supply chains are most important to you? (Choose from a list)

List with aspects of CSR in supply chains:

- Environmental protection
- Energy conservation
- Workplace health and safety
- Diversity
- Labor and human rights
- Philanthropy
- Community development
- Fair trade
- Economic impact on stakeholders throughout the supply chains
- Data protection

e. Do you actively seek information regarding CSR in supply chains?

    i. If yes, do you trust the information available?

2.2. How do West European consumers perceive ICT companies' behavior regarding their supply chains?

a. How would you apply the concept of CSR in supply chains in the ICT industry?

    i. In your opinion, which of the discussed aspects are most relevant in the context of the ICT industry?

b. Which ICT companies have sustainable supply chains?

    i. Can you name some examples of ICT companies with sustainable supply chains?

    i.i. Which factors makes you draw this conclusion?

c. Can you name examples of CSR activities by ICT companies regarding their supply chains?

i. If applicable, how have you learned about it?

d. Do you personally care about responsible/irresponsible behavior of ICT companies in their supply chains?

    i. Should companies be responsible for the activities of their suppliers?

e. Do you think that the ICT industry is different from other industries regarding CSR in supply chains?

    i. If yes, in what way?

2.3. What, if any, is the relationship between CSR in supply chains of ICT companies and organizations' reputation?

a. According to *CSR RepTrak 100* ranking, Microsoft is called the most socially responsible company for two years in a row – 2012 and 2013. Any ideas why?

    i. Does this ranking/information influence your opinion about the company?

    i.i. Why? In what way?/Why not?

b. Lately, *The Guardian* published information about the usage of harmful chemicals in Chinese factories producing Apple products. According to Chinese government statistics, one person will get poisoned by toxic chemicals every 5 hours; the majority from benzene (White & Zhang, 2014). The carcinogen benzene can cause leukemia (cancer of the blood or bone marrow).

    i. Does this information affect the image you have about Apple?

    i.i. Why? In what way?/Why not?

    i.i.i. Do you think that and its Chinese suppliers are equally responsible?

c. In general, do you perceive CSR in supply chains as an important factor shaping ICT companies' reputation?

    i. Why?/Why not?

d. Going back to the scenarios introduced in the beginning of the focus group:

    i. Which product did you choose? What are the main factors that influenced your decision?

      i.i.   Do you trust ICT companies' CSR motivations regarding their supply chains?

      i.i.i.   Are you interested in the supply chain management of the producer when you purchase an ICT product? How important is CSR in supply chains compared to other factors?

      i.i.i.i.   Are you willing to pay more for a product produced by a company with sustainable supply network?

3. Conclusion

- To sum up, how important is CSR in supply chains for ICT companies?

- Do you have any further remarks/questions on the topic?

Demographic Questions

Please answer the following questions.

Your answers will be completely anonymous. The data collected will be kept strictly confidential and used only for the purposes of this study.

1. Please indicate your gender:

- Female
- Male

2. How old are you?

…………. years

3. Please specify your nationality:

…………………………………………….

4. What level of higher education are you completing?

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree

5. In what study program are you currently enrolled?

………………………………………………………………………………………………….

6. In which industry are you most willing to work after graduation? Please choose one option.

- ICT
- Legal
- Retail
- Public sector/government
- Non-profit sector
- Distribution/transport/logistics
- HR services/recruitment/selection
- Medical/health/social care
- Banking/finance/insurance
- Education
- Advertising/communication/PR
- Manufacturing
- Food and beverage
- Other. Please specify…………………………………………..

Thank you very much for participating!

Appendix D: Consent Request for Participating in Research

For questions about the study, contact:
Rayna Topalska
382631rt@student.eur.nl

Description

You are invited to participate in a research about corporate social responsibility (CSR) in supply chains in the information and communication technology (ICT) industry. The purpose of the study is to understand consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards CSR in supply chains of ICT companies.

Your acceptance to participate in this study means that you accept to be part of a focus group. In general terms, the questions of the focus group will be related to CSR in supply chains of ICT companies.

Unless you prefer that no recordings are made, I will use an audio recorder during the focus group.

You are always free not to answer any particular question, and/or stop participating at any point.

Risks and Benefits

I am aware that the possibility of identifying the people who participate in this study may involve risks for participant's reputation. For that reason – unless you prefer to be identified fully (first name, last name, occupation, etc.) – I will not keep any information that may lead to the identification of those involved in the study. I will use only pseudonyms to identify participants.

I will use the material from the focus group and my observation exclusively for academic work, such as further research, academic meetings and publications.

Time Involvement

Your participation in this study will take approximately 60 minutes. You may interrupt your participation at any time.

Payments

There will be no monetary compensation for your participation.

Participation Rights

If you have decided to accept to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. If you prefer, your identity will be made known in all written data resulting from the study. Otherwise, your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

Contacts and Questions

If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact – anonymously, if you wish – Vidhi Chaudhri, chaudhri@eshcc.eur.nl (supervisor of the thesis).

Signing the Consent Form

If you sign this consent form, your signature will be the only documentation of your identity. Thus, you DO NOT NEED to sign this form. In order to minimize risks and protect your identity, you may prefer to consent orally. Your oral consent is sufficient.

I give consent to be audiotaped during this study:

Name   Signature   Date

I prefer my identity to be revealed in all written data resulting from this study

Name   Signature   Date

This copy of the consent form is for you to keep.

Table A1: Sample Demographics

Demographic characteristics (N=23)		% or mean (n)
Gender	Female	56.5% (13)
	Male	43.5% (10)
Age		23,4
Nationality	Dutch	30.4% (7)
	German	17.4% (4)
	French	13% (3)
	Austrian	13% (3)
	Belgian	8.6% (2)
	Swiss	8.6% (2)
	Luxembourgish	4.3% (1)
	Liechtensteiner	4.3% (1)
Education	Bachelor's degree	17.4% (4)
	Master's degree	82.6% (19)
Study Program **Bachelor**	International Bachelor Communication and Media (IBCoM)	8.6% (2)
	International Bachelor of Economics and Business Economics (IBEB)	4.3% (1)
	International Bachelor in Psychology	4.3% (1)
Master	Master Marketing Management	34.8% (8)
	Master Finance and Investments	8.6% (2)
	Master Media, Culture and Society	8.6% (2)
	Master in Business Information Management	8.6% (2)
	Master Media and Culture	4.3% (1)
	Master Media and Business	4.3% (1)
	Master in Financial Economics	4.3% (1)
	Master International Management	4.3% (1)
	Master Global History and International Relations	4.3% (1)
Preferred industry to work in after graduation	Advertising/communication/PR	39% (9)
	ICT	17.4% (4)
	Public sector/government	8.6% (2)
	Banking/finance/insurance	8.6% (2)
	Other: Media	8.6% (2)

Non-profit sector	4.3% (1)
HR services/recruitment/selection	4.3% (1)
Medical/health/social care	4.3% (1)
Food and beverage	4.3% (1)
Legal	0%
Retail	0%
Distribution/transport/logistics	0%
Education	0%
Manufacturing	0%