Writing Case Studies
OLP
2018
General Recommendations for Academic Writing

- Introduce your thesis
- Make sure the information is organized
- Use subheadings or level headings
- Make sure each section or paragraph has related information and don’t be redundant
- Provide transition words or phrases that help your reader follow the points your are making
- Don’t just report what others have said; Connect, analyze, critique
- Acknowledge limitations in your argument
- Summarize what you have found or concluded
How you organize what you write counts.....

You have to provide your reader with a roadmap of where you are going
Organizing your paper

1. Introduction
2. Background
3. Intervention/Action
4. Results
5. Discussion & Action Plan
1. The introduction (or thesis statement)

– The referral question

– Quick introduction to the organization/case studied

– The dilemma or goal addressed
During the last two decades, companies in the global fashion industry have undergone major changes in their business models. One of the driving factors was opening global markets for suppliers and consumers, as well as increasing global competition. Another important factor was the changing demands of consumers, who desired decreasing prices of clothing, as well as shorter life-cycles of fashion. ...These developments had several unpleasant side effects. Textile companies received substantial attention due to the unfortunate consequences of outsourcing to emerging countries. Issues such as child labor, uncertified use of chemicals in production, and hazardous working conditions for employees have become common topics in the traditional media (Haddock-Fraser, 2012). With the rise of internet-based social media, stakeholders of the fashion industry have facilitated access to voice their concerns elaborately to large audiences within short time frames (Chu and Kim, 2011; Jones et al., 2009; Yan, 2011). As a response, consumers, ethicists and regulators have shown interest in ethical production processes branded as corporate social responsibility (CSR) or corporate sustainability...
However, conflicts can arise between low-cost business models and CSR (Beckmann et al., 2013; Hahn et al., 2010). Low-cost business models focus on direct stakeholders such as owners, while CSR rather considers the concerns of less related stakeholders.

On the one hand, several authors find a positive effect from CSR on performance (for an extensive review, see Peloza, 2009). ...On the other hand, several authors document that CSR in for-profit companies leads to underperformance.

This paper aims at understanding such seemingly contradicting evidence and its causalities in practice. We pose the research question ‘In what way can corporate sustainability add value to a low cost business model?’ We conduct a case study on the role of corporate sustainability in a large Scandinavian clothing and apparel company (SCAC).
We get a glimpse of

• Referral question:  Can a low cost business model support CSR?

• The organization:  Scandinavian clothing company: SCAC

• Goal/dilemma to be addressed:  How SCAC supports CSR
2. The background

- Detail relevant facts or research related to the case
- Describe the company/case
Organize from general to specific
Literature Review

Corporate Sustainability

One of the common concepts addressing companies’ responsibility toward their external environment is CSR...Sharma and Henriques (2005) follow the definition of corporate sustainability by the World Commission of Environment and Development: “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability for future generations to meet their own needs.” (p. 160) ....Concerning the outcome of corporate sustainability, Peloza (2009) reviews 128 academic articles on corporate sustainability and concludes that the effect of corporate sustainability on company performance is highly disputed. While 59% of his reviewed studies report a positive relationship, 27% present mixed results and 14% find that corporate sustainability is detrimental to corporate performance.
Low Cost Business Models in the Fashion Industry

Nike was faced with student protests in the US due to the poor labor practices of its suppliers abroad. The notion of child labor sharply contrasted with the values Nike attempted to sell, and thereby endangered its reputational business model. In order not to lose the profitable business of university clothing, Nike gave up its resistance: it introduced CSR in 1997 and agreed to disclose a relevant set of suppliers in 1999 (Doorey, 2011). Doorey (2011, p. 601) closes his case by hypothesizing that CSR has less appeal for fashion companies with low cost business models. These companies aim at providing inexpensive products to customers who care little about sustainability, impressive brand names or premium prices.....

We will uncover SCAC’s reason to subscribe to corporate sustainability and contrast it to CSR at Nike.
3

The intervention

• Describe what you did or propose to do

• Explain why you chose your intervention or proposal
Case Study Method

We opted to conduct a case study within a single company in line with the recommendations given by Scapens (1990). The strict focus of our study enables us to investigate the phenomena of corporate sustainability and business models in their real-life context.

Data Collection

We draw on four major sources of data. First, we rely on publicly available sources on both SCAC and Nike such as descriptions of the business model and corporate sustainability in the annual reports, the websites and newspaper archives. The second and most important source for this case study consists of five interviews we conducted at SCAC in the second quarter of 2012. We conducted two of the five semi-structured interviews with corporate SCAC key informants who work in the different departments of corporate sustainability and corporate finance. As a third source of data, we used overt participant observation. We paid unannounced visits to three selected ‘flagship’ retail outlets of SCAC that are located close to the SCAC headquarters. Our fourth source of data consists of structured interviews on corporate sustainability with 10 randomly chosen customers of SCAC.
4.
The findings or results

• Describe what you found
Findings

Organization and Business Model

SCAC is a very large Scandinavian fashion company that engages in sales of clothing and apparel (wholesale and retail). Its core markets are Europe, the Middle East, Asia and parts of North America. The decentralized organizational structure of SCAC delegates responsibilities toward middle managers. Thus, unambiguous communication is essential for the implementation of concepts such as corporate sustainability.

The Corporate Sustainability Initiative

SCAC’s corporate sustainability initiative was launched in the early 2000s with the creation of an independent department. The corporate sustainability department employs 20 people, has a considerable budget, issues its own report and assumes responsibility for many different initiatives. These include the management of SCAC’s code of conduct; ethical training for SCAC purchasers; supplier guidelines for health and safety including production guidelines for clothing and apparel (e.g., hazardous treatments of jeans); training and educational material for suppliers; repudiation of child labor; repudiation of unnatural growth or treatment of livestock; chemical restrictions as well as air and water treatment;
The Link Between the Business Model and Corporate Sustainability

Suppliers. …SCAC supports the implementation of the code of conduct with several initiatives – e.g. training for suppliers or production manuals – but does not supervise or evaluate it. Neither are other controls imposed directly, because this would be too expensive. Indirectly, external audit firms perform routine checks at supplier factories and report their findings to SCAC. The corporate sustainability department evaluates these reports and makes ad hoc decisions if actions are needed. However, Executive X explains SCAC is not giving any guarantees that corporate sustainability is enacted across the whole supply chain:

Corporate sustainability has really progressed. But still, you need to see it as a continuous process. We work hard on improving our work every day but operating in countries with different cultures and in a complex supply chain it is hard to give final guarantees.
Retail stores....We found that our interview partners (managers A–C) were aware that SCAC had a corporate sustainability initiative. Yet, they were largely uninformed about any further particularities, even about those that were available on the website...Yet, all managers agreed that corporate sustainability constitutes an important societal topic, and that they would therefore like to be better educated in corporate sustainability (consistent with Bansal, 2003; Bansal and Roth, 2000; Mudrack, 2007). They also declared pride that SCAC seemed to engage in such activities.

On the surface, these findings seem to suggest again that corporate sustainability is a non-value-adding activity in SCAC’s business model. Yet, our interpretation is more complex.

Customers. ....Concerning the customer perspective of the business model, we do not find any positive value added to the business model....We also provide (weak) evidence that customers of this low-cost fashion company might not be as interested in corporate sustainability as suggested by other parts of the literature. On the contrary, we find that the corporate sustainability is a reactive tactic that addresses the concerned customers only. Thereby, corporate sustainability lower the likelihood that concerned customers writing directly to SCAC will add negative value to the business model, e.g. through attacks against SCAC via social media
Comparison of Corporate Sustainability at SCAC to Nike’s Reputational Business Model

**Codes of conduct.** The codes of conduct mostly exhibit the same features, with SCAC being more elaborate and with more references to international treaties than Nike. The codes condemn forced labor and child labor...Both codes demand that employees have freedom of association and collective bargaining; regular employment; work schedules that do not exceed a 6-day/60-hour working week; compensation that is paid in a timely manner and in full; as well as healthy and safe work places

**Differences in control mechanisms and use of audit information.** The differences rather exist in the way in which the codes of conduct are enforced.
5. The discussion

- Summarize the important findings/results might be important
- Describe the implications of the findings
Discussion

Our findings have several implications that may improve corporate sustainability in companies with low-cost business models. First, they can learn that corporate sustainability is an implicit contract, which constitutes a fiduciary responsibility to shareholders...Empirical evidence backs our claim: e.g., Reverte (2012) shows that higher CSR disclosure lowers the cost of equity capital, i.e. how high shareholders perceive the risk of investing in a specific company to be (for further evidence on non-negative performance effects, see Blomgren, 2011; Michelon et al., 2013; Pätäri et al., 2012).

Second, we suggest that companies can use corporate sustainability to improve leadership in a company...We show that corporate sustainability is more than coercive control or certification: it is a communicative tool that directs managers’ attention to critical issues in the business model (Doorey, 2011, p. 599; Gond et al., 2012). At the same time, corporate sustainability exerts motivational influence on employees if they are involved in it
Implications for Public Policy.

...First, regulators could induce more external controls by commanding more transparency...Second, regulators could enforce more internal controls on companies. This could include the introduction of an industry-wide code of conduct that demands ‘comply-or-explain’....Third, policy makers could attempt to influence each other directly. As a response to the recent calamities in Bangladesh (Economist, 2012a, 2012b), the Obama administration has downgraded the terms of trade for Bangladesh’s 5 billion USD textile exports to the US (Wall Street Journal, 2012).

Reference

http://guides.williamjames.edu/ARC-Research_And_Writing_Resources

https://awc.ashford.edu/PDFHandouts/Case_Study_Sample_Annotated_08.31.2015.pdf