



DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM, MEDIA  
AND COMMUNICATION

# CORPORATIONS, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Investigating Corporate Engagement with the Black  
Lives Matter Movement on Twitter

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# Abstract

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The thesis investigates to what extent corporations engage with the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement on Twitter. The purpose is to facilitate a better understanding of corporate communication on social media in general, and around social movements in particular. This aim is approached through a textual analysis of 20 corporation's communicative practices around the BLM movement on Twitter. In more detail, each corporate utterance is subjected to an operationalization of Kent and Taylor's five components of engagement to investigate to what extent corporations engage with the BLM movement on Twitter. This method is supplemented by the normative theoretical framework of dialogue theory which accentuates a public-centered approach to corporate communication.

The investigation shows that corporations have primarily engaged with the BLM movement to an extent to which they demonstrate positive regard for the Black community's input, experiences, and needs, and to an extent to which they communicate specific actions such as donations and policy change that benefit the Black community and the BLM movement. Corporations have generally neither engaged with the BLM movement to an extent to which they communicate whether they have engaged in an effort to understand the socio-cultural circumstances related to the BLM movement before communicating around it on Twitter, nor to an extent to which they demonstrate openness towards public feedback on ways to improve their conduct with regard to the Black community and the BLM movement.

The findings demonstrate that corporations increasingly disregard traditional norms such as control and persuasion within their communicative practices on social media. Instead, there are signs of a development towards communicative norms such as empathy, listening and mutuality. Hence, the thesis argues that corporations have not entirely adapted a public-centered approach to communication on social media, but that there are signs of a gradual development towards said direction.

# Acknowledgement

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In addition, I have never felt compelled to invest my time and energy into essays that do not interest me. The freedom that I have always been given when it came to selecting topics to write about developed my understanding of what it is that I am passionate about. As a consequence, I have been able to dedicate this thesis to a topic that reflects said interest and passion. I am a strong supporter of the idea that passion and quality of work go hand in hand. As a result of the supportive academic environment at Gothenburg University, I have not read scientific articles, book chapters, dissertations, and conference reports about corporate communication because I had to, but because I wanted to. I have not written this thesis because I had to in order to graduate with a degree in Media and Communication, but because I wanted to learn more about what I am interested in.

Lastly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my Supervisor Orla Vigsø. Everyone who has ever written a thesis likely agrees that it is not a particularly easy undertaking. However, the constant attentiveness, availability, and help of professor Vigsø have made it significantly easier than it would have otherwise been. Our numerous supervisions have not felt like mandatory meetings reflecting scenarios in which I interview professor Vigsø about what I am supposed to do next. Instead, we engaged in interesting conversations about my ideas which resulted in relevant points of consideration for my research process. I have rarely felt lost or insecure about my work for this thesis. And when I did it has only been briefly until my next “chat” with professor Vigsø. Thank you.

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## 1.0 Introduction

Social media have transformed how people communicate on a global scale. Their seemingly ever-extending reach encompasses all sectors of society of which corporations are no exception. Communicative practices consisting of quarterly reports designed for shareholders have been supplemented by social media posts reaching millions of public stakeholders at once. A new phenomenon arising from this development is the communicative integration of corporations into social movements on social media. Consequently, this thesis investigates to what extent corporations engage with the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement on Twitter.

Several points underline the investigation's societal relevance. First, corporations reach millions of people on social media which is why they exert influence on social movements when they communicate around them through their outlets. For example, the combined number of people following the 25 most followed corporations on Twitter is roughly 162 million (Ramakrishnan, 2019). Secondly, the communicative integration of corporations into social movements is marked by controversy. More specifically, some demographics welcome corporate communication around societal issues and others believe they ought to be separated, thus fueling the societal relevance of this thesis's study (Agozzino, 2015).

Thirdly, corporate communication around social movements on social media is unlikely to decline in the near future. More specifically, the communicative integration into social movements is not only in the interest of corporations, but to an extent also in the interest of public stakeholders. To clarify, it has been found that a majority of Millennials (born 1981-1996) believe that corporations should be more involved with social movements (YPulse, 2020a). This is significant because millennials are the demographic most active on social media whose spending power just in the US is estimated at 2.5 trillion USD a year (Smith & Gallicano, 2015; Wang *et al.*, 2012; YPulse, 2020b). This reciprocal interest between corporations and their public stakeholders and the subsequent gradually increasing influence corporations exert on social movements underlines the study's societal relevance.

Studying corporate communication around social movements is also of academic relevance for several reasons. First, the field is scarcely researched because corporate communication on social media around social movements is a novel phenomenon. Secondly, most studies investigating corporate communication on social media prioritize the responses of public stakeholders which results in a limited number of studies examining the original utterances of

corporations (Tsai & Men, 2018). Thirdly, the Public Relations concept of engagement has only scarcely been applied to corporate communication around social movements on social media within an academic context. Hence, studying the particular concept of engagement is a relevant case within this otherwise already understudied field. It thus drives the academic fields of Public Relations, Strategic Communication, and Media and Communication studies forward.

The consideration of the BLM movement in particular has been motivated by the following points. First, the BLM movement's global expansion originated primarily on Twitter. It therefore represents the power of social media to transcend local, demographic and ideological borders. Secondly, and arising from the previous point, no other social movement concerned with the issue of racism has established itself so widely through the use of social media (Byrd *et al.*, 2017:1880). Thirdly, the BLM movement as a focal point for the study is timely. The movement underwent several resurgences on social media whereby its largest resurgence to date occurred just several months before the time of writing. More specifically, the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter has been used 8.8 million times on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (Anderson *et al.*, 2020). In essence, this thesis aims to analyze corporate engagement with the BLM movement on Twitter as a case study to facilitate a better understanding of corporate communication on social media. The following research question will guide the further course of this thesis: *To what extent do corporations engage with the BLM movement on Twitter?*

The thesis is structured as follows; First, the subsequent chapter provides a foundation of academic literature upon which the thesis has been built. The academic work relevant to the aim ranges from the properties of corporate communication to the development of the BLM movement. The previous studies point towards the need for a more public-centered approach to corporate communication which is accentuated by dialogue theory. Hence, the thesis secondly introduces the theoretical framework of dialogue theory which supports the aim and thus guides the further course of the thesis. Thirdly, the methodology based upon a textual analysis is introduced because its qualitative properties produce relevant data to understand to what extent corporations engage with the BLM movement on Twitter. Fourthly, the results produced by said analysis are presented and consequently discussed. The discussion of the study's results illuminates several points of consideration for future research which are presented within the conclusion.

## 2.0 Background

This thesis aims to analyze corporate engagement with the BLM movement on Twitter as a case study to facilitate a better understanding of corporate communication on social media. This chapter discusses previous research to provide a basis of understanding relevant to pursuing the aforementioned aim. First, a foundation is established through considering how corporate communication in general has been developing academically and empirically. Secondly, building on this foundation the chapter delves deeper into the properties of corporate communication on social media and what role stakeholder perception plays to narrow the focus towards the thesis' aim. The chapter is finally distilled down to considering previous research on corporate communication around social movements in general and the BLM movement in particular.

### 2.1 Corporate Communication

#### 2.1.1 Defining Corporate Communication

Communication is an essential aspect of every profit-oriented business. How well corporations function depends on how they are viewed by their stakeholders as a result of successful communication efforts (Balmer & Illia, 2012:417). It can be debated that the most familiar concept that comes to mind when one thinks of corporate communication is therefore that of public relations. However, public relations largely consists of external communication whereas corporate communication is a broader concept which does not only incorporate external but also internal communication (Watson, 2012:395). Because corporate communication is such a broad and volatile concept it has been defined similarly, but not unanimously. Van Riel (1995:26) defines corporate communication as:

*“An instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonized as effectively and efficiently as possible with the overall objective of creating a favorable basis for relationships with groups upon which the company is dependent”*

This definition places an emphasis on the instrumentality of corporate communication in that it emphasizes the tasks ascribable to managers within the field of corporate communications.

Cornelissen (2011:5) approached the concept by placing weight on functionality, which makes for a more general definition:

*“A management function that offers a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favorable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organization is dependent”*

The two definitions highlight different aspects of the properties ascribable to corporate communication but converge with regards to the dependence on stakeholders. This exemplifies that there is no *one* definition of corporate communication. As indicated above, that is partially due to its volatile nature as it is bound to the rapid developments occurring in the empirical world.

### **2.1.2 Corporate Identity, Image, and Reputation**

Now that an understanding of the general concept of corporate communication has been established it is possible to dig a little deeper by establishing *what* it is exactly that is being communicated and *whom* it is communicated to. As indicated above, the most crucial recipients of corporate communication are stakeholders. Generally, stakeholders can be referred to as any group or individual who can affect or is affected by how a corporation operates. Examples for stakeholders are investors, employees, members of the branch in which the corporation is positioned, but also customers and consumers (Cornelissen, 2011:4). All instances of corporate communication ought to revolve around stakeholders and their needs (Balmer, 2017:1418).

In recent years there has been a rising awareness with regard to stakeholder inclusivity, which represents a shift away from solely focusing on stakeholders such as investors and financiers and instead focuses on including public stakeholders such as consumers and customers (Charest *et al.*, 2016; Cornelissen, 2011; Hurst & Ihlen, 2018). The reason for said shift has been a rise in cases in which lacking regard towards public stakeholders has led to organizational crises (Cornelissen, 2011:7). An example of such a crisis is the case of the international fast food restaurant chain Chick-fil-A in which the corporation’s CEO uttered a series of public comments opposing same-sex marriage. Public stakeholders such as customers and consumers engaged in boycotting the restaurant chain and went as far as to organize protests (Valinsky, 2018). Hence, it is possible to argue that a corporation’s identity, image, and reputation are the core elements of



what is being communicated within corporate communication. Especially with regard to the growing importance of public stakeholders and their perception.

Corporate identity can be referred to as the basic profile that a corporation aims to project to its stakeholders. Said identity is based on the image stakeholders associate with a corporation. A corporate image can be defined as “the immediate set of associations of an individual in response to one or more signals or messages from or about a particular organization at a single point in time” (Cornelissen, 2011:8). Scholarship has identified several positive outcomes directly related to the consistent communication of a corporate image. For instance, it triggers recognition, creates awareness, and may even result in increased confidence in the corporation among public stakeholders (Ko *et al.*, 2013:1710). This, in turn, has a direct impact on a corporation’s performance as more public stakeholders decide to support the corporation by buying its products or even investing in it.

A corporate reputation is therefore the resulting collective representation of past images established over time. A positive reputation signals the underlying quality of a corporation’s products and services towards its public stakeholders (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012:1050). Thus, increasing weight is placed on how well a corporation communicates its identity and image because it affects how successful a corporation establishes and maintains its reputation towards public stakeholders upon which they are not just economically, but also socially dependent (Cornelissen, 2011:10). This thesis aims to analyze corporate engagement with the BLM movement on Twitter as a case study to facilitate a better understanding of corporate communication on social media. It thus integrates itself into the research increasingly placing weight on how well corporations project themselves towards their public stakeholders. Now that it is established *what* is being communicated, and to *whom*, it is possible to determine *how* corporate communication is being conducted.

### **2.1.3 Digital Media as a Channel for Corporate Communication**

There is a variety of channels through which corporate communication occurs. One of said channels are news media which are considered to be vital for generating publicity. News around businesses has repeatedly proven to be influential in how a business is being perceived by various stakeholders of a corporation (Cornelissen, 2011:146). However, this influence is limited as news media do not directly determine a corporation’s reputation. Instead, they are influential with regard to highlighting issues or increasing stakeholder’s predispositions. Therefore,

corporate communication has been subjected to studies oriented around the foundations of agenda-setting theory. The theory generally entails that the frequency with which an issue is reported by news media determines its salience in the minds of the public. In essence, news media might not tell the public what to think, but what to think *about* (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2017).

However, channels increasingly utilized by corporations that have proven to directly impact reputation are recurrently referred to as “Digital Media”. The dissemination of communication through digital channels has proven to be a challenge as receivers have become increasingly fragmented (Reilly & Larya, 2018:621). Nonetheless, this new development also bears a plethora of opportunities for practitioners of corporate communication. For instance, digital media make for new opportunities of reaching and engaging with public stakeholders (van Den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017:150). Especially engagement, a core theme of this thesis, is a concept in a state of infancy both empirically and academically.

Academia was quick to realize that corporate communication via digital media has less to do with control or dominance and more with proactive engagement within online communities (Byrd *et al.*, 2017; Charest *et al.*, 2016; Ciszek, 2016; Kim, 2020). Especially the rapidly increasing frequency of how social media are being used has not only changed how people engage with one another but also with corporations. Social media virtually revolutionized how corporations disseminate information and how subsequent stakeholder perceptions are shaped. This thesis captivates said development as it integrates itself into research interested in understanding how digital media shaped corporate communication.

The potential this development holds is nowhere near its limit when considering the ever-increasing number of individuals around the world who will access the internet in the near future. Every one of these individuals will eventually be a stakeholder to one or another corporation and thus influence and be influenced by how it communicates. This motivates this thesis’s aim to further investigate corporate communication via social media. Hence, the following section provides an overview of empirical developments related to corporate communication on social media and how they have been investigated academically.

## 2.2 Corporate Communication and Social Media

Just as the corporate use of social media is a rather new phenomenon, so is the academic research revolving around it. The following section provides an overview of how the field has been

developing empirically and academically, thus providing an understanding of the positioning of this thesis within the said field.

### **2.2.1 The Development of Corporate Communication on Social Media**

The early stages of the research and the high velocity of empirical development resulted in a diversity of approaches taken to understand how corporations communicate via social media. This also entails that there are differences as to how researchers delimit social media within their investigations. The most prominent delimitation is that to a specific website; Twitter. More specifically, some researchers take a more holistic approach to social media (Charest *et al.*, 2016; Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012; Shami & Ashfaq, 2018), and others delimit their analysis to Twitter (Colleoni, 2013; Jansen *et al.*, 2009; Saxton *et al.*, 2017). A popular argument for why this seems to be the case is how prominently Twitter is being used by publics, corporations, and governments simultaneously. Hence, Saxton *et al.* argued that the platform constitutes an information-rich environment for researchers interested in the uncharted territory of corporate use of social media (Saxton *et al.*, 2017: 266).

The use of social media for the sake of corporate communication is not just fairly uncharted territory for scholars, but also for corporations themselves. More specifically, the corporate integration of such communicative practices is still widely experimental (Tsai & Men, 2018:421). This is not least attributable to the fact that each social media platform functions according to its own logic. Whereas different newspapers from two different countries, for example, only differ slightly in the way information is portrayed, social media differ to significantly higher degrees.

Additionally, the properties of each platform change at considerably higher rates compared to that of a newspaper during the same timeframe. This renders generalized corporate communication practices on social media virtually impossible. Especially when considering the importance of maintaining an understanding of how stakeholders respond to communication on social media. For example, corporations can make use of Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest, and LinkedIn to just name a few. Such cross-platform communication can be troublesome for corporations as it limits the oversight of information dissemination, as well as stakeholder responses.

To gain insight into how corporations track their communicative practices across social media platforms Zerfass and Schramm (2014) focused their study on Social Media Newsrooms

(SMNRs). SMNRs were created with the purpose to cluster all social media outlets on one single website. The authors define SMNRs as “modular online platforms which aggregate and present content published by the organization or content dealing with the organization from different social web applications” (Zerfass & Schramm, 2014:81). Hence, Zerfass and Schramm dedicated their article to investigating just how useful such SMNRs are to maintain a favorable stakeholder relationship through a comprehensive content analysis of the 600 largest companies in the world.

An interesting finding is that only 100 out of the 600 corporations (10.5%) actively use SMNRs. This is particularly fascinating as previous empirical studies concerned with SMNRs have praised them and argued for their benefits within corporate communication practices (Zerfass & Schramm, 2014:90). Hence, there is a contrast between the academic view of SMNRs and their implementation in the empirical world by corporations. For that reason, Zerfass and Schramm conclude their article by arguing for the untapped potential of SMNRs, which could contribute towards a more favorable stakeholder relationship via social media. This argument, however, is just another instance of the aforementioned research praising the use of SMNRs, whilst the concept does not gain traction among corporate social media practitioners.

The finding highlights the argument that the vision behind the effectiveness of SMNRs might be *too good to be true*. Especially when considering the complicatedness behind distributing the same communication to facilitate a favorable corporate image on differently functioning platforms simultaneously. This fundamentally leads to the fact that it is rather troublesome for corporations to develop *one* strategy for social media in general because a strategy that might work for one platform might not work for another. Consequently, there has been a vibrant academic discussion around whether there ought to be a strategy behind the use of social media, or whether it ought to be used whenever a need for it arises (Charest, *et al.*, 2016; Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012; Zerfass & Schramm, 2014).

Macnamara and Zerfass (2012) engaged in a mixed-method approach by investigating how corporations use social media through identifying the tensions between uncontrolled practices, and ones that take place according to strategy and policy. The study found that roughly 25% of the corporations under investigation had policies outlining social media objectives or a strategy with an equivalent purpose. The other 75% of the corporations subjected to the study engaged in social media experimentally. The two scholars, therefore, conclude that the use of social media by corporations requires a balance between strategy and experimentality. What motivates this

argument is the importance of fluctuating stakeholder responsiveness, and therefore the constant potential need for revision of implemented strategies (Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012:307).

Charest *et al.* (2016) adopted an interpersonal approach by conducting semi-structured qualitative interviews with communications managers to understand whether they make use of social media according to a strategy, or whether it is used rather sporadically. The findings indicate that most communication via social media was experimental when the platforms first arose during the 2000s. As time progressed, however, it was integrated into a strategy and became less experimental due to an accumulation of experience over time. A strong indicator for success for most interviewed subjects was the orientation around public stakeholders on social media platforms (Charest *et al.*, 2016:536).

As mentioned above, communication via social media is an inherently multidirectional practice that calls for consistent attentiveness. Hence, Charest *et al.* synthesized that nowadays most social media communications take place according to a strategy, but that said strategy is modified when the need for it arises due to changes in stakeholder receptiveness (Charest *et al.*, 2016:537). This means that it is necessary for corporations to constantly orientate themselves around their stakeholder's needs and demands to successfully communicate via social media. This finding motivates this thesis's aim to consider corporate communication around a social movement that emerged on social media as it reflects the sentiments of public stakeholders.

Furthermore, with the increasing relevance of corporate orientation around stakeholder needs and demands came the awareness of complexity around the ever-changing stakeholder expectations. In light of this complexity practitioners of corporate communication began to emphasize developing stakeholder relationships on social media to ensure a longitudinal favorable reputation. As indicated above, a positive reputation signals underlying quality of a corporation's products and services towards its public stakeholders.

Shami and Ashfaq (2018) included themselves in the academic debate around reputation management via social media by reviewing relationship cultivation strategies through social media as a theoretical foundation for empirical derivations. The authors argue that corporations ought to cultivate social capital as it results in improving reputational capital. Shami and Ashfaq also found that corporations increasingly politicize their communications via social media to achieve this aim (Shami & Ashfaq, 2018:153). However, the scholar's finding relies on a theoretical approach as a foundation for empirical derivations. Therefore, it further underlines the

necessity of this thesis's empirical investigation because it provides empirical evidence that contributes to a better understanding of corporate communication around politicized topics such as the BLM movement on Twitter.

Overall, the findings indicate that social media are not just a platform for message dissemination. Instead, they are a site for corporate communication practitioners to learn about cultural and social values that ultimately help inform future practices to develop a favorable reputation (Charest *et al.*, 2016). Additionally, whereas there seems to be a difference in approaches to understanding how corporations attain a favorable reputation via social media, academia seemingly agrees on the importance of corporations capitalizing the newfound communicative potential social media provide. Therefore, in accordance with the aforementioned utterances, a basis of understanding of stakeholder receptiveness ought to be established to research the extent to which corporations engage with the BLM movement on social media.

## 2.3 Stakeholder Receptiveness

As indicated above, researchers captivated the importance of how public stakeholders perceive corporate communication on social media. This conviction has reached an extent to which the need for understanding stakeholder reception dominates the need for understanding the original utterances of corporations on social media. In other words, the amount of available research concerned with stakeholder receptiveness significantly exceeds that of research concerned with the original utterances of corporations. Hence, such original utterances are understudied within the academic field of Public Relations, Strategic Communication, and Media and Communication studies.

Nonetheless, a basis of understanding for research on stakeholder receptiveness benefits the further course of this thesis. Particularly, the reciprocal nature of social media necessitates an understanding of both sides of the communitive spectrum, meaning both corporate communication and public stakeholders. This, in turn, further consolidates the research gap which this thesis positions itself within to illuminate an understudied subject.

A study that sheds light on how corporations aim to orientate themselves around their stakeholder's needs and demands has been conducted by Colleoni (2013). The study investigates which social media strategies create a convergence between a corporation's corporate social responsibility (CSR) and stakeholder expectations. The findings are derived from a network analysis of Twitter to study the structural properties of the CSR community. As the academic

research mentioned above indicates, the inclusion of stakeholder expectations is highly relevant for successful corporate communication via social media (Charest *et al.*, 2016).

However, Colleoni's work suggests that such claims are *easier said than done*. Specifically, her findings imply that simply engaging stakeholders in dialogue via social media does not necessarily lead to a favorable reputation for a corporation. Instead, the corporation's social media communication efforts are still widely perceived as marketing practices rather than efforts to engage with the public (Colleoni, 2013:247). This finding accentuates the importance of the need for corporations to move beyond simplistic posts with empty words. Instead, there is a need for posts with qualitative attributes which demonstrate, for instance, engagement towards subjects that are important to the public stakeholders of a corporation. This notion has, *inter alia*, motivated this thesis's aim to analyze corporate engagement with the BLM movement on Twitter.

Researchers interested in the diversification between social media use and social media engagement criticize how many studies around stakeholder receptiveness still generalize all social media usage without drawing distinctions between various degrees to which they are being used. Consequently, studies rallied around the importance of distinguishing between "using" social media and "engaging" in it, as stakeholder engagement results in a corporation's desired behavioral outcomes (Smith & Gallicano, 2015; Paek *et al.*, 2013).

Interestingly, among researchers emphasizing engagement it is possible to draw distinctions between ones that delimit stakeholders according to certain demographics, and ones that treat stakeholders as a whole without demographic delimitations. The most prominently used demographic delimitation is age. More specifically, several researchers emphasized millennial stakeholders. Smith and Gallicano (2015) argue that Millennials are the most active on social media, which is why examining this demographic leads to more significant findings when accounting for engagement. Wang *et al.* argue similarly by stating that social media use for adults between 18 and 29 is a common activity within daily routines (Wang *et al.*, 2012).

With that in mind, Smith and Gallicano (2015) argue that engagement among public stakeholders involves emotional and cognitive immersion, which are not traits generalizable for all social media usage. More specifically, the authors emphasize that corporations ought to captivate said distinction to better understand their stakeholders and how to communicate with them successfully (Smith & Gallicano, 2015:83). Moreover, Smith and Gallicano (2015) found

that it ought to be in the interest of corporations to make sure their stakeholders do not just see their social media utterances, but that they cognitively engage with them. The authors therefore argue that corporations will find value in building personal, participatory, and social elements into their social media pages if they truly want their stakeholders to engage (Smith & Gallicano, 2015:88).

Paek et al. (2013) also positioned themselves within the branch of research and emphasize the difficulty of gauging public stakeholder engagement and subsequently translating it into positive communicative outcomes for corporations. It is debatable that this is due to the volatility of social media as an environment for corporate communication. In other words, social media platforms are in a state of constant change and stakeholder sentiments respond accordingly in unpredictable ways (Paek et al., 2013:528)

For that reason, it is possible to assess an understanding of existing research on stakeholder receptiveness when considering similar studies from different points in time. Hence, the following studies were published in 2009 and 2017, respectively. Jansen *et al.* (2009) examined to what extent consumers use Twitter as a platform for “word of mouth” to share their opinions on brands. To do so, more than 150.000 tweets were analyzed to determine whether consumer responses to brands were rather positive or rather negative (Jansen *et al.*, 2009). Jansen *et al.* found that above 60% of aggregate weekly consumer sentiments of brands on Twitter were positive and only 22% were negative (Jansen *et al.*, 2009:2187). This showcases the essentiality of corporate communication via social media as, according to this investigation, most stakeholder responses to corporate messages were positive.

Saxton *et al.* (2017) published a similar study eight years later. Their research also investigated which corporate social media messages resonated with the public the most. However, the authors took a different approach by focusing on tweets with CSR-related topics, and which topics in particular are the most effective. To do so 1500 tweets by 42 CSR-focused Twitter accounts of the largest 200 firms within the Fortune 500 were analyzed. Specifically, the authors examined how many of those tweets were retweeted (shared) as a sign of public resonance and engagement.

The findings indicate that the highest level of effectiveness (retweets) comes with tweets that are posted in the context of preexisting movements created by other social movement actors. Especially when the respective hashtag is used within the tweet (Saxton *et al.*, 2017:375).



Furthermore, public stakeholders were more likely to engage with messages conveyed by socially responsible companies than with messages conveyed by companies with a less favorable reputation. Saxton *et al*'s findings also demonstrate the development of social media environments themselves. More specifically, the emergence of social movements on social media and the subsequent public resonance with said movements.

In summary, previous studies around corporate communication on social media accentuate that it has become increasingly important to differentiate between social media use and social media engagement as the number of social media platforms, the number of people using them, as well as the number of ways in which they are being used have increased. For corporations, this means that engagement on social media ought to be reciprocal. Public stakeholders cannot be incentivized to engage with corporate social media utterances if corporations do not demonstrate engagement in the first place.

The aim of this thesis captivates this increasingly relevant development through the consideration of corporate engagement with the BLM movement on Twitter. The contribution to the field in this respect lies in the fact that this thesis does not limit itself to investigating public resonance, but that it emphasizes the scarcely investigated manner in which corporations communicate around such issues. Hence, a more thorough consideration of corporate communication around social movements is necessary to provide a better understanding of the aim of the thesis. The following section sheds more light on the empirical and academic field of corporate communication around social movements on social media.

## 2.4 Corporations and Social Movements

The previous sections have established *what corporate communication is* from a range of perspectives. Hence, it is now in order to establish an understanding of what social movements are. Georgallis (2017) defines social movements as:

*“Coalitions that engage in sustained action to promote ideas and preferences for changing prominent social, cultural and business practices”*

This definition applies the meaning of the term not just to the societal sector, but also to the cultural and business sector. It thus captivates the overarching nature social movements acquired over time, especially when considering how rapidly they have begun to spread through the

emergence of social media. Furthermore, it stresses the argument that social movements emerge out of a dissatisfaction which they aim to redress. There is a wide range of social movements addressing an even wider array of issues. However, what all social movements have in common is an ideology reflecting “a vision of what a society is and should be” (Georgallis, 2017:736). Examples of social movements include civil rights movements, women’s movements, environmental movements, and social justice movements like the BLM movement.

Furthermore, there exists plenty of research concerned with the question of *why* corporations integrate themselves into social movements (Banerjee, 2020; de Bakker *et al.*, 2013; Georgallis, 2017; Uldam, 2016). Research going beyond this aim and asking *how* corporations do so is in a state of infancy and thus scarcely represented within the academic fields of Public Relations, Strategic Communication, and Media and Communication Studies. Consequently, the objective of this thesis is not to understand *why* corporations engage in social movements, but to understand *how* they do so. Nonetheless, the pursuit of this objective also necessitates an understanding of *why* corporations engage in social movements in the first place to ground the aforementioned aim.

Social movements can induce corporations to invest in practices revolving around participation within them. This process is primarily triggered by how social movements form stakeholder expectations, that transcends into a prerequisite of a corporation’s image and reputation (Georgallis, 2017:737). In other words, social movements can exert social pressure which drives firms to engage in practices that go beyond the usual economic objectives and contribute to solving social ills. To illustrate, it has been found that public stakeholders tend to favor and are more likely to buy products from corporations that engage in social movements. Specifically, a survey has found that corporations which are perceived to be socially oriented can market Fair Trade products better than corporations that are not (Castaldo *et al.*, 2009).

This finding is also reflected in Youmans and York’s (2012) study which aimed to understand corporate “slacktivism” around social movements on social media. Slacktivism refers to “activity that uses the internet to support political or social causes in a way that does not need much effort” (Cambridge, 2020). An example is the creation or signing of online petitions. Specifically, it is easy for corporations to position themselves behind a social movement through, e.g., including a hashtag representing a societal movement into a social media post, and then not acting beyond said post (Youmans & York, 2012:328). However, as indicated above, this cannot

be considered as a successful, long-term strategy as stakeholders tend to favor socially responsible corporations, which means going beyond simply posting a hashtag and engaging in so-called slacktivism. This thesis contributes to a better understanding of corporate communication that transcends practices attributable to slacktivism as it investigates to what extent corporations engage with the BLM movement on Twitter.

To further clarify the relationship between corporations and social movements Georgallis (2017) has identified two mechanisms by which social movements provoke corporations to integrate themselves into social movements directly and indirectly. The direct mechanism reflects situations in which social movement activists attack corporations which influences the underlying costs and benefits of engaging in the related social initiatives. Research around the direct mechanism emphasizes that social movement activists employ disruptive tactics to pressure corporations to adopt changes in favor of the movement. King (2008), for instance, showed that boycotts effectively threaten a corporation's reputation by generating unwanted attention from the media. An example is the aforementioned Chick-fil-A case in which the corporation's CEO uttered a series of public comments opposing same-sex marriage. Activists of LGBTQ+ movements subsequently scrutinized Chick-fil-A directly and called upon its stakeholders to engage in boycotting the restaurant chain (Valinsky, 2018).

The indirect mechanism refers to situations in which social movement organizations frame social movements in a way that elicits support from critical stakeholders, which in turn expect corporations to engage with said movements. Additionally, Banerjee (2020) found that this indirect mechanism is not limited to narrow industry logics but transcends the broader business community. The integration of corporations from various industries into the BLM movement is an example of this mechanism. In more detail, the movement's constituents did not generally demand specific corporations to support the movement's efforts, but they created an environment through framing the social issue of racism which prompted corporations to integrate themselves into the movement.

Research around the corporate integration into social movements has been dominated by the direct mechanism in which the constituents of social movements directly exert pressure on corporations. Meanwhile, studies considering cases in which social movements indirectly prompt corporations to integrate themselves into social movements are lacking. That is arguably because such cases surged in parallel to the wider corporate integration into social media and are thus a

comparatively novel phenomenon that is yet to be studied. This thesis is positioned within a largely unexplored phenomenon as it considers the case of the BLM movement whereby the movement's constituents have generally not directly targeted corporations and demanded their support, but in which the movement indirectly prompted corporate alignment.

It therefore builds upon the aforementioned research concerned with the corporate integration into social movements with regard to two aspects. One, it considers an understudied phenomenon in which a social movement indirectly prompted corporations to integrate themselves into the movement. Two, because it does not ask questions related to *why* corporations integrate themselves into social movements, but it pertains to the understudied logics of *how* they do so through adhering to practices of corporate communication on social media. Consequently, the thesis integrates itself into a branch of research that is in a state of infancy and thus scarcely represented within academia and in need of further investigation. The following section provides insight into the specific case this thesis is considering within its analysis; The BLM movement.

## 2.5 The Black Lives Matter Movement

Whereas social movements have been part of human history for hundreds of years, their emergence and development on social media is a rather novel phenomenon that necessitates further investigation (Ince *et al*, 2017). This thesis considers one of such movements, the BLM movement, in particular. In general, it can be referred to as a social movement advocating non-violent protest against all racially motivated violence against Black people (Friedersdorf, 2017). BLM as a social movement emerged and developed on Twitter in 2013, one year following the shooting death of unarmed African American teenager Trayvon Martin when the shooter, George Zimmerman, was acquitted of all charges (Day, 2015). The movement gained momentum as countless people expressed their outrage about the court's decision on Twitter using the hashtag (#BlackLivesMatter).

The widespread use of the hashtag facilitated the foundation of the official Black Lives Matter organization in 2013. The organization stated that its mission is to “eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes” (Black Lives Matter, 2021a). Through its expansion especially on social media, but also other platforms the movement has transcended the limits of the official organization. More specifically, the movement underwent several resurgences since the initial

surge of the hashtag's use in 2013. In 2014, for example, African American teenager Michael Brown was shot by a police officer, which reignited support for the BLM movement on Twitter. In the years that followed users were able to join with others in pinpointing racism through the hashtag as a social issue to build online communities aimed at promoting collective action (Edrington & Lee, 2018:291).

The movement underwent its latest resurgence throughout June 2020. This resurgence can be ascribed to the outcry around the publicized death of George Floyd on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020. More specifically, George Floyd was an African American man who was murdered by a police officer during an arrest (Eligon *et al.*, 2021). The video of the arrest and the subsequent death have been filmed by a passer-by who then publicized the footage. The circulation of the video on social media, and especially Twitter, led to the BLM movement undergoing its largest resurgence yet throughout June 2020.

Several functions and features attributable to Twitter facilitated the movement's expansion and resurgences. First, the platform's implementation of the hashtag function (#) and the subsequent feature of the Trending Topic facilitated the movement's wider expansion. In other words, the technological advancements linked to social media platforms eliminate spatial and temporal boundaries (Edrington & Lee, 2018:291). The BLM movement has thus become a movement that is diffuse, but powerful as it does not depend on a wider political consensus or physical closeness. Instead, it merely relies on the substantial mobilizing force of social media. This leads to the second point that the movement benefits from Twitter allowing users to depersonalize the self-concept for the sake of acting as a group to fight racism within the framework of the BLM movement (Edrington & Lee, 2018:292).

Thirdly, social media facilitate the exchange of media such as pictures and videos. For the BLM movement, this meant that the death of Trayvon Martin and George Floyd, for instance, could be seen and shared through the use of graphic content at a rapid speed, which resulted in a wider public outcry around the incidents. Fourthly, Twitter facilitated the organization of protests within a wide variety of settings which transformed the movement from one that took place only within online spaces to one that mobilizes people within physical settings (Ince *et al.*, 2018:1817). Lastly, Twitter is not only used by the broader public, but also by other institutions and organizations. Hence, the movement did not only captivate publics, but also political institutions, NGOs, and corporations.

The aforementioned points support the argument that the BLM movement is unique because previous social movements around racism were not able to establish themselves so widely through the use of technology and social media to the same extent (Byrd *et al*, 2017:1880). The unique character of the movement has attracted the attention of academics who longed to establish a better understanding of social movements on social media. However, since the aforementioned phenomenon is a new one there has not been much research on the subject within the academic fields of Public Relations, Strategic Communication, and Media and Communication Studies.

Most of the studies around the BLM movement that exist are conducted on Twitter (Byrd *et al*, 2017; Edrington & Lee, 2018; Ince *et al*, 2017). As with research on corporate communication on social media in general, the little research that has investigated the BLM movement on Twitter is dominated by an emphasis on public interactions with the movement. For instance, Cox (2017) emphasizes the importance of regarding social media as informational sources for users by investigating college Millennial's thoughts on the BLM movement. Ince *et al*. (2018) emphasized the concept of framing by examining how social media users interact with the movement through the use of hashtags.

The aforementioned studies share the common feature of utilizing social media as a data source. This is based on the conviction that they provide information on publics in real-time which allows scholars to leave their academic "ivory tower" when investigating the wider public (Byrd *et al*, 2017:1879). With this in mind, a focus on the public use of social media is of great academic and empirical relevance because it provides an important insight into how the BLM movement expanded. However, as mentioned above, the movement did not only attract the attention of public users, but also that of political institutions, NGOs and especially corporations which also contributed to the expansion. Seemingly, there exists little to no research on the corporate integration into the BLM movement on social media. Thus, a focus on corporations within research around the BLM movement on social media is lacking and in need of further investigation. The following points underline this necessity.

First, corporations reach millions of people through their Twitter accounts. For example, the combined number of people following the 25 most followed corporations on Twitter is roughly 162 million (Ramakrishnan, 2019). Corporate utterances around the BLM movement are not just seen, but shared, commented on, and discussed by millions of people. Secondly, in addition to

reaching followers on Twitter, corporate integration into social movements via the platform gains wide-ranging attention from news media (Van der Meer & Verhoeven, 2013). Thus, the combined number of people reached undoubtedly exerts influence on the BLM movement, and thus on society as a whole. Especially when considering the aforementioned points underlining the power social media has to influence social movements.

To limit its scope and thus also to captivate the latest developments of the movement this thesis focuses on the most recent surge of the movement between May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup> 2020. Several points necessitate the specific investigation of corporate utterances on Twitter from the movement's latest resurgence. First, the movement has never received as much public recognition as it did in 2020. A Pew Research Center study found that the use of the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter hit record levels in 2020. Specifically, nearly 8.8 million tweets contained the hashtag on May 28<sup>th</sup>, making it the highest number of uses for the hashtag in a single day (Anderson *et al*, 2020).

Secondly, a post-Floyd study found that nearly 90% of Generation Z (born 1997-2005) support BLM in contrast to a 2016 study in which just 60% of respondents under 30 said they supported the movement (Jurkowitz, 2020; Horowitz & Livingston, 2016). Thirdly, in 2020 more than two-thirds of Generation Z and Millennials think brands should be more involved in BLM (YPulse, 2020a). Fourthly, as of 2020 there were 82 million millennials in the US with an estimated spending power of about 2.5 trillion USD a year (YPulse, 2020b).

These points, along with the previously mentioned findings around the importance of public resonance on social media, showcase that it has never been more relevant for profit-oriented corporations to integrate themselves into a social movement on social media. Notably, in addition to this wide public outcry against racially motivated violence, many corporations voiced their alignment with the movement on Twitter predominantly between May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>. The previous points in concurrence with the fact that the recency of the 2020 surge has not been objected to many academic studies underline the societal and academic relevance of investigating the research question: *To what extent do corporations engage with the BLM movement on Twitter?* The following section introduces the theoretical foundations aimed at supporting this aim.

## 3.0 Theoretical Framework

### 3.1 Theories and Explanatory Models Applied by Previous Research

Corporations integrating wider communication practices on social media is a rather novel phenomenon. Consequently, it has not been subjected to a wide range of theoretical foundations attributable to academia in general and the fields of Public Relations, Strategic Communication and, Media and Communication specifically. In addition, there is a degree of complicatedness to approaching corporate communication on social media through a theoretical lens because the practice pertains to many logics already associated with corporate communication in general. For that reason, many of the theories applied were fundamentally tailored around a comparatively established practice.

Hence, there have been scholars who pertained to an approach of appropriation which collects knowledge from social sources and subsequently integrates them into pre-existing schemas (Billett, 1998). In other words, the appropriation approach aims to conceptualize a theory of ongoing communicative practices which has proven to be more difficult than effective. Especially when emphasizing the complexity related to studying the daily practices of professionals who still rely on a great extent of experimentality when communicating on social media (Chia & Rasche, 2011; Charest *et al.*, 2016).

Furthermore, the theoretical lenses pertaining to established practices of corporate communication were tailored around norms such as control and persuasion. A general theory of Public Relations representing such norms is excellence theory. Its foundations are centered around organizational effectiveness which has the consequence of communication being merely seen as a means to an end, instead of an end in itself (Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012:291).

However, these approaches have proven to produce poor results which did not represent the true intent behind corporate communication on social media (Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012:288). In more detail, the integration of corporate communicative efforts on social media has changed how corporations communicate. New means of communication brought about by social media create new opportunities, but also challenges. The perhaps most significant shift in communication is that corporations now have the opportunity to pay closer attention to their public stakeholders through the means of social media. The challenge that comes with said



development is therefore to halt from seeing publics as a means to an end, or just as customers, and to instead incorporate their needs as public stakeholders into communicative efforts.

Hence, a growing number of scholars have recently realized the importance of breaking the dominant approach to strategic communication and public relations. Instead, approaches that reflect this new reality of corporate communication and take into account public-centered efforts of corporations to incorporate what stakeholders want and need have been developed. More specifically, academia realized that there is a need for theories that incorporate the dynamic nature of social media not as a means to organizational ends exclusively, but as a space for incorporating a diversity of perspectives, which provides a better understanding of the current developments within corporate communication practices (Ciszek, 2016:318).

As a result, scholarship increasingly applies models of communication that recognize the importance of considering the needs of public audiences to facilitate so-called “win-win processes” (Macnamara and Zerfass, 2012:290). One of such approaches is reflected within dialogue theory. This thesis is going to rely on the general theoretical foundations of dialogue theory because it supports the aim of analyzing corporate engagement with the BLM movement. The following section lays out the foundations of dialogue theory to further motivate this choice.

## 3.2 Dialogue Theory

Dialogue theory arose out of the need to better understand how corporations facilitate and maintain relationships with their public stakeholders within the academic field of Public Relations. More specifically, the theory provides an explanatory foundation to facilitate an understanding of more public-centered communication between corporations and stakeholders. It generally holds that corporations should intentionally interact with publics in honest and ethical ways that benefit both corporations and public stakeholders as a way to facilitate more effective corporation-public communication channels (Kent, 2003:64).

Dialogue is a complex process, especially within the realm of new communicative logics brought about by social media. Nonetheless, the inclusion of the term into the Public Relations vocabulary is necessary to facilitate a better understanding of how corporations can communicate in ways that benefit both corporate and public interests (Kent & Taylor, 2002:21). In more detail, one cannot expect dialogue to take place on social media in a traditional sense whereby two people talk to each other in person (Hearn *et al.*, 2018:521). Instead, dialogue within the limits of

dialogue theory represents virtues such as empathy, listening, being able to identify common ground between two parties, pursuing long-term rather than short-term objectives, or seeking out opposing viewpoints. Thus, dialogue theory essentially represents a dimension of communication quality that accentuates mutuality rather than self-interest and access rather than domination (Kent & Taylor, 2002:30).

It also promotes a public-centered, rhetorical approach to Public Relations and accentuates the need to place the communicative emphasis on the needs of public stakeholders, and building genuine relationships with stakeholders, rather than viewing corporate communication practitioners as headhunters who only seek to fulfill corporate goals (Theunissen & Wan Noorbin, 2012:7). With this in mind, the dialogic approach is not about a corporation controlling communication to persuade stakeholders to act in a way that is beneficial to the corporation, but about mutual satisfaction of both ends of the communication (Kent, 2017:5). Hence, the theory represents a shift away from the aforementioned approaches accentuating control and domination within online practices of Public Relations.

Furthermore, in order to reflect the aforementioned communicative attributes, dialogue theory assumes that corporations ought to be socially responsible entities with the wellbeing of their environments in mind to make society a better place (Kent, 2017:50). In that sense, dialogue theory converges with the concept of ethical Public Relations to a certain extent. Particularly, ethical Public Relations accentuates attributes of communication such as empathy, listening, openness, fair-mindedness, and respect (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

However, there have been scholars who voiced their criticism towards the claim that corporate communication reflecting the normative foundations of dialogue theory converges with a more ethical approach to communication. Specifically, the assumption that such an approach to communication is more ethical rests solely on the argument that it is merely based on principles such as trust, honesty, and positive regard for the other instead of simply viewing public stakeholders as a means to a corporate end (Kent & Taylor, 2002:33). Whether such communicative elements can be considered ethical ought to be subjected to a certain degree of skepticism as perceptions of *the ethical* tend to be highly subjective.

Nonetheless, dialogue theory has been continuously applied to various practices of corporate communication since its emergence. The advent of the internet accelerated the speed at which the theory has been developed. Already roughly 30 years ago Capps excellently captured this

need of understanding emerging technology within a framework that emphasizes public-centered attributes of communication: “The trick is to realize the technology, at hand and forthcoming, must be used to keep in touch and not to distance ourselves from clients, peers, and the media” (Capps, 1993:24).

Evidently, the subsequent dawn of social media increased the academic demand for a theory that rejects traditional norms such as control and persuasion and instead places emphasis on mutuality and access. Steensen and Ahva (2014) successfully captivated this notion through the claim that “the digital era has opened up a Pandora’s Box of dialogical opportunities”. In consequence, scholars began developing dialogue theory within Public Relations around corporate social media use to better understand new practices of corporate communication online (Kent, 2017:14).

In doing so, many previous studies investigating corporate communication on social media through the lens of dialogue theory have applied “Kent and Taylor’s five dialogic principles” which are aimed at guiding corporations to establish dialogic relationships on websites (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010; Agozzino, 2015). The fact that the five principles were developed around websites resulted in findings that lacked generalizability. For example, Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) examined how Fortune 500 companies use Twitter to facilitate communication reflecting the normative attributes of dialogue theory. The study produced poor evidence of such attributes because it applied the framework of Kent and Taylor’s five dialogic principles that have originally been developed around corporate websites, and not social media platforms.

Agozzino (2015) also applied Kent and Taylor’s dialogic principles on corporate brand’s communicative efforts on the social media platform Pinterest. Whereas the results point towards the potential for corporations to cultivate relationships with their public stakeholders, it also lacked evidence of communicative emphases on the needs of public stakeholders. In essence, the scholars who applied Kent and Taylor’s dialogic principles to corporate communication on social media claimed that these platforms are ultimately poor tools for building genuine relationships with stakeholders, rather than yet another means for corporate headhunters to exclusively fulfill corporate goals. However, Kent (2017) engaged in reviewing these studies and argued that this is not the case because of the lacking potential of social media, but because scholarship had applied tools that could not have resulted in findings reflecting the normative foundations of dialogue theory within corporate social media communication channels. (Kent, 2017:51).

Hence, there is a need for academia to continue the investigation of communication reflecting attributes of dialogue theory of which there is great potential within corporate communication on social media (Kent, 2017:52). Therefore, it is necessary to employ a different way of approaching an understanding to what extent corporations can communicate according to the foundations of dialogue theory. In other words, to what extent corporations communicate in ways that reflect a public-centered approach and accentuate mutuality rather than self-interest and access rather than domination. Fortunately, a useful communicative concept for investigating such normative attributes of dialogue theory on corporate social media channels is that of engagement. The following section delves deeper into the properties of engagement and subsequently motivates its applicability for the aim of this thesis.

### **3.2.1 Engagement**

Studies around corporate engagement are a fairly unexplored branch within dialogue theory. This thesis makes particular use of the concept of engagement whilst pertaining to the theoretical foundation of dialogue theory. In other words, dialogue theory as a normative theoretical framework that accentuates a public-centered rhetorical approach to corporate communication is a useful lens for research on corporate communication engagement (Hearn *et al.*, 2018:516). Engagement can generally be defined as “a set of behaviors reflecting demonstrated willingness to participate and cooperate with others in a way that creates value for themselves and for others” (Van Weezel & Benavides, 2013:704).

When applied to corporate communication, engagement can be understood as corporations acting in ways that contribute to social capital rather than the exclusive pursuit of corporate interests (Kent & Taylor, 2014:385). This understanding of corporate engagement is based upon the assumption that public relations in general can help communities solve problems. It assumes a corporation’s accessibility, presentness, and willingness to interact and can therefore be positioned within the wider normative framework of dialogue theory (Kent & Taylor, 2014:387).

The advent of social media has presented corporations with a wide range of opportunities to facilitate engagement with public stakeholders. Particularly, publics increasingly accept and invest in digital forms of presence and the subsequent formation of groups with participants who have never met and might never meet (Hearn *et al.*, 2018:521). Interpersonal interactions are gradually being replaced by communicative patterns such as liking a post on Facebook or posting comments underneath a tweet which paves the way for new forms of corporate communication

engagement (Hearn *et al.*, 2014). Chewning has defined engagement within online spaces as “the social enactment of information and communication technology as part of a larger relational context in which one connects with social, information, and resource networks to affect change, cocreation, and commitment toward a particular engagement object” (Chewning, 2018:441). This definition accentuates that online engagement is beneficial for both corporations and the causes in which corporations engage.

Chewning also emphasizes that engagement within online spaces is context-specific in that it is tied to a specific cause and/or population. In relation to that, it can lead to reinforcing social capital through empowerment, cocreation, and change on micro and macro levels (Chewning, 2018:442). Social media particularly facilitate the opportunity for corporations to engage around particular causes in that they enable resource sharing and pathways for collaboration outside the setting of markets and exchange (Chewning, 2018:441). This underlines the concept’s applicability to the case of corporate communication around a social movement such as BLM as it is also tied to a specific cause and population.

Consequently, corporations have begun to place a higher emphasis on engagement within an interactive, algorithmic and global online environment. In other words, corporate communication is being restructured to facilitate engagement in light of the logics of social media (Hearn, *et al.*, 2018). Such communicative efforts which accentuate corporate engagement in online communities around particular causes have resulted in increased stakeholder loyalty, trust, commitment, and satisfaction (Chewning, 2018:446). Such findings reflect that the way people perceive the world is inextricably bound to our media practices and rejecting this fact would jeopardize the development of the branch (Hearn *et al.*, 2015:515). The academic investigation of corporate online engagement in light of said transformation is important because of the potential it holds to have a positive impact on both corporations and public stakeholders.

However, despite its increasing academic and societal relevance, there is little research focusing on corporate social media engagement, especially with regard to social movements. To counter this academic ebb, Kent and Taylor (2014) situated engagement within dialogue theory by conceptualizing five components of engagement. These can guide the analysis of corporate utterances to measure attributes of engagement. When applied to corporate tweets, the five components provide a framework that enables testing whether or not corporations communicate information that exhibits attributes of engagement with the BLM movement on Twitter. This

distinction is especially important to identify in situations such as the BLM movement where there is arguably a higher level of conflict with a greater need for engagement. In other words, corporate communication around a topic such as the BLM movement without attributes of engagement would risk merely increasing the noise in an already bustling communication environment (Picard, 2013).

Furthermore, the five components of engagement provide a way to test whether corporations communicate in light of the normative framework of dialogue theory. In other words, whether they express attributes of engagement that reflect a public-centered approach to corporate communication on social media. With this in mind, dialogue theory as a normative framework accentuates a public-centered, rhetorical approach to corporate communication and makes for a useful lens for researching corporate communication engagement. The operationalization of the five components avoids the shortcomings of previous research employing the normative foundations of dialogue theory. In more detail, research that operationalized outdated tools designed for corporate websites and so failed to uncover corporate communication reflecting audience-centric approaches on social media.

In essence, social media increasingly reject environments in which corporations communicate in ways that reflect control and domination. Instead, they progressively facilitate environments of access and mutuality which allow corporations to communicate in ways that incorporate what their public stakeholders need and want. The expansion of the BLM movement on Twitter is an example of such environments because it reflects what online publics want with regard to changes around racially motivated violence against Black people. It is essential not to dismiss the potential said environments bear for corporations to cultivate communication which has a positive impact on *both* corporations and public stakeholders. When realized through corporate communication engagement said potential can lead to increased stakeholder loyalty, trust, commitment, and satisfaction. Hence, in light of dialogue theory, this thesis operationalizes Kent and Taylor's five components of engagement to investigate to what extent corporations engage with the BLM movement on Twitter. The following chapter presents the five components and explicates upon the methodological framework this thesis employs to operationalize them.

## 4.0 Methodological Framework

### 4.1 Textual Analysis

The investigation of to what extent corporations engage with the BLM movement on Twitter is based on a qualitative methodological approach. A wider corporate integration into social movements is a rather novel phenomenon and new communicative phenomena are usually first explored with qualitative data (Gerring, 2017:17). As established above, not much is known about corporate communication around social movements on social media. A qualitative method therefore sheds light on how such novel communicative practices take place because they facilitate uncovering essential information around new mechanisms of communication (Gerring, 2017:16).

Furthermore, the study is based on the scarcely explored conceptualization of engagement within the wider theoretical framework of dialogue theory. A qualitative method provides a foundation to identify uncharted theoretical mechanisms neglected by existing literature on the subject (Gerring, 2017:17). The general design upon which the analysis is based is descriptive because the thesis describes to what extent corporations engage with the BLM movement on Twitter.

The particular method which has been applied during the investigation is a textual analysis of corporation's communicative practices around the BLM movement on Twitter. The operationalization of Kent and Taylor's five components within a textual analysis allows for the investigation to move beyond the basic assumptions derived from corporate communication on Twitter revolving around the BLM movement. Instead, textual analysis enables the evaluation of meaning behind the tweets with regard to the social practices, representations, and assumptions in light of corporate engagement. More specifically, textual analysis emphasizes on language, what it represents, and how the subsequent meanings of social life are constructed (Fürsich, 2009:241).

This emphasis is crucial to distill a deeper awareness of the way corporate profiles on Twitter construct a connection between themselves and the BLM movement. In essence, the thorough consideration of language through textual analysis allows for a better understanding of what kinds of corporations there are and what images they aim to project through text on Twitter in

relation to the BLM movement. This ultimately contributes to a better understanding of the extent corporations engage with the BLM movement.

Furthermore, text does not only refer to written content within books or magazines, but it also includes elements such as films or pictures which can be interpreted in an effort to make sense of the relationships between media, culture, and society (Brennen, 2012:193). This is particularly important for analyzing communication on social media because platforms such as Twitter place great emphasis on the integration of visual elements such as images, hashtags, and emojis. In other words, the understanding of what a text is constantly develops and thus expands into incorporating posts, pictures, emojis, hashtags, threads, and comments on social media platforms such as Twitter. Hence, the thesis has accounted for non-textual communicative elements because they are vital to understanding the words, concepts, themes, ideas, and issues which they convey within the context of a socially constructed reality.

This leads to another crucial element within the analysis of corporate tweets around the BLM movement on Twitter; context. In other words, qualitative textual analysis allows for the consideration of an author's intention as well as their rationale behind the creation of the text in question (Fürsich, 2009:242). A text is therefore not just what it seems like at first sight, but a network of cultural and economic relationships that exist between the text and a specific society that make for the context at a certain point in time (Brennen, 2012:195). Context is particularly important with regard to the case of corporate communication around the BLM movement. More specifically, the movement's origin, its resurgence, and constituents ought to be taken into consideration throughout the investigation.

The aim of accounting for context within the framework of textual analysis thus also incorporates the consideration of intertextuality. The concept generally refers to the way texts relate to one another. Since the investigation considers multiple corporations and more than one tweet per corporation it is important to consider how the different utterances relate to one another to ensure a better understanding. A crucial factor aiding in determining this relationship is ideology. Generally, it refers to dominant ideas of groups, classes, or society upon which a social, political, or economic system is based (Brennen, 2012:196). The corporate utterances considered throughout the analysis are based upon dominant ideological positions within a culture at a specific place and time. Not accounting for the aforementioned contextual factors would risk disregarding information that is necessary throughout the process of interpretation in



itself, and the subsequent explanation behind different interpretations (Fürsich, 2009:241). Therefore, the textual analysis within this thesis considered the relationships between texts, the creator, and the intended audience of said text, as well as the relevant context within which the text has been produced.

Moreover, the textual analysis is guided by the theoretical framework of dialogue theory. More specifically, the concept of engagement situated within dialogue theory as a normative theoretical framework which accentuates a public-centered approach to corporate communication. The theory brings directionality to the process of interpretation in that it provides the textual analysis with particular questions which are being asked towards the corporate tweets. In more detail, it has guided the operationalization of Kent and Taylor's five components of engagement. The following section elaborates upon said operationalization which guides the textual analysis of corporate tweets around the BLM movement.

## 4.2 Operationalization

Kent and Taylor developed five components that create the public relations conceptualization of engagement. The motivation behind such an effort was to unify the widely scattered academic understandings and subsequent approaches to engagement. Hence, Kent and Taylor's conceptualization was developed to accommodate a range of investigations within the field of Public Relations. The general applicability calls for an operationalization to answer this thesis's underlying research question: *To what extent do corporations engage with the BLM movement on Twitter?* In consequence, the five components of engagement ought to be operationalized to investigate whether they are present within corporate tweets around the BLM movement in particular. The following demonstrates how the five components have been operationalized to analyze corporate engagement with the BLM movement on Twitter.

### **Component 1:**

*Engagement requires interaction with stakeholders/publics to begin only after secondary research has been conducted to understand an issue(s), key publics, cultural variables, etc.*

With regard to the BLM movement this component reflects what other researchers have accentuated within corporate engagement. Specifically, the importance of primarily

understanding what can, and what cannot be considered socially responsible behavior before publicizing information around controversial topics such as the BLM movement. This ultimately demonstrates whether corporations engaged understanding the circumstances under which they are communicating before practicing the communication (Hurst & Ihlen, 2018:136). Engaging in an effort to understand the socio-cultural circumstances around the BLM movement also reflects the communicative norm of being able to identify common ground between two parties which is accentuated within the wider normative framework of dialogue theory. Hence, the investigation incorporated the following question to test for component one: Does the corporation communicate whether it engaged in an effort to understand the socio-cultural circumstances related to the BLM movement before communicating around it on Twitter?

**Component 2:**

*Engagement requires demonstration of positive regard for stakeholders/publics' input, experiences, and needs.*

The communicative practices that have been considered for the analysis take place within the context of the BLM movement. Therefore, component two has been operationalized to revolve around the Black community which captivates the aforementioned argument that corporate engagement is context-specific in that it is tied to a specific cause and/or population (Chewning, 2018:441). Hence, the thesis has identified whether a corporation communicated positive regard for the Black community's input, experiences, and needs within their tweet. Such efforts also reflect the communicative norms of listening and empathy which are present within the wider normative framework of dialogue theory. The following question has been asked throughout the analysis to test for component two: Does the corporation communicate positive regard for the Black community's input, experiences, and needs?

**Component 3:**

*Engagement requires interaction with stakeholder/publics for relational purposes outside of an immediate problem/issue.*

As mentioned above, corporate engagement in general has resulted in positive returns with regard to stakeholder loyalty. Component three reflects this notion through accentuating the importance of consistency. In other words, a corporate image creates awareness and instills confidence among stakeholder groups through consistently communicated information (Cornelissen, 2011:75). It is therefore important for corporations to tweet around the BLM movement more than once to facilitate engagement. Thus, to operationalize component three to accommodate the context of the BLM movement the thesis argues that the immediate problem is the death of George Floyd which triggered the resurgence of the movement in 2020.

Hence, this component aids to test whether a corporation's response to BLM went beyond a single post and whether they continue to post information about the BLM movement on Twitter between May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>. The operationalization of component three therefore reflects the communicative norm of pursuing long-term rather than short-term objectives which is accentuated within the wider normative framework of dialogue theory. More specifically, corporations that transcend a solely reactionary response to an online trend by posting about the movement more than once reflect more of a long-term interest as opposed to a short-term interest. The following question has been asked throughout the analysis: Does the corporation communicate around the BLM movement more than once between May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>?

**Component 4:**

*Engagement requires interaction with stakeholder/publics for their advice and counsel on issues of organizational/public/community concern.*

In essence, tweets can be categorized as unidirectional elements of communication in contrast to, for example, chat messages which promote two-directional communication more vehemently. This makes for tweets being an excellent tool for information dissemination within which the incorporation of a public-centered approach ought to be actively pursued. Van Weezel, for instance, has stated that tweets need to be constructed in a way that facilitates conversation

through demonstrating openness towards outside opinions (Van Weezel, 2013:712). Component four accentuates said notion. Demonstrating openness towards outside opinions also reflects the communicative norms of seeking out opposing viewpoints and access which are present within the wider framework of dialogue theory. To accommodate it within the framework of corporate communication around the BLM movement the following question has been posed throughout the analysis: Does the corporation demonstrate openness towards public feedback on ways to improve their conduct with regard to the Black community and the BLM movement?

### **Component 5:**

*Engagement requires interaction that contributes to a fully functioning society whereby organizations and publics recognize their interdependence and act together for the good of the community.*

First, and as mentioned above, engagement can be understood as corporations acting in ways that contribute to social capital rather than the exclusive pursuit of organizational interests (Kent & Taylor, 2014:385). Secondly, corporate engagement is then also context-specific in that it is tied to a specific cause and/or population (Chewning, 2018:441). Component five reflects the combination of the two aforementioned notions. Since the analysis takes place within the context of the BLM movement the term “community” is operationalized to refer to the Black community. Subsequently, the thesis has investigated whether a corporation communicated on how they plan to engage in the Black community in the form of explicit actions such as donations or ways to improve racial equality. Such communicative efforts thus reflect the norm of mutuality as opposed to corporate self-interest which is present within the wider normative framework of dialogue theory.

Additionally, Kent and Taylor accentuated the importance of corporations communicating their dependence on publics. Hence, the investigation also accounted for whether corporations communicate their dependence on the Black community in relation to the specific actions. This contributes to a more thorough insight into how corporations have communicated the actions they are planning to take within the context of the BLM movement. The following question has been posed to test for component five throughout the analysis: Does the corporation

communicate specific actions such as donations and policy change that benefit the Black community and the BLM movement?

The aforementioned operationalization of Kent and Taylor's public relations conceptualization of engagement contributes to answering the research question "To what extent do corporations engage with the BLM movement on Twitter?" The analysis built upon this operationalization is guided by the wider theoretical framework of dialogue theory. Specifically, the consideration of engagement situated within the wider normative framework of dialogue theory which accentuates a public-centered approach to corporate communication.

### 4.3 Sampling Procedure

The corporations that have been placed under investigation during the analysis have been chosen with regard to three factors that contribute to the study's generalizability. First, and rather evidently, corporations ought to have posted a tweet about the BLM movement between May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>. As mentioned above, this time period is when the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter had the highest number of uses. Secondly, corporations had to belong to a specific industry to account for a wider range of corporations. However, this thesis does not aim to identify differences in corporate engagement with the BLM movement depending on industry. Instead, corporations from different industries have been considered because a corporation's strategy and targeted stakeholder groups differ depending on the industry it belongs to (Cornelissen, 2011:7). Considering various industries therefore increases the study's generalizability.

Third, a corporation ought to have at least two million followers on Twitter. More specifically, it has been important for the study to not just consider any corporation which has communicated around the BLM movement, but ones that have a wider societal influence. Influence through social media can be measured by the amount of followers as a higher amount of followers results in more people being exposed to the same communicative effort. In addition, followers of a corporate social media profile act as catalyzers by exposing the contents of such profiles to others through various sharing functions (Kim, 2020:175).

The reason why the study has not considered corporations with more than 2 million followers is that the number represents the highest possible threshold for followers on Twitter while accounting for a diversity of industries represented. In more detail, luxury fashion corporations

within the textile industry have significantly more followers than corporations within the food and beverage industry. For example, the average amount of followers for luxury fashion corporations within the textile industry accumulates to roughly 7.3 million followers whereas the average amount of followers for corporations within the food and beverage industry accumulates to 1.7 million (Socialbakers, 2021).

Hence, a higher number than 2 million could not have been selected as the study would have otherwise been dominated by corporations of an industry that happened to have more followers on Twitter. Therefore, two million followers represent a reasonable threshold to argue for a corporation’s larger societal influence whilst pertaining to the importance of integrating corporations from various industries and contributing to the wider representativeness of the study’s findings. The following 20 corporations have fulfilled the aforementioned criteria:

Textiles	Commerce	Transport	Food & Drink	Conglomerate	Media
Adidas	Amazon	BMW	Coca-Cola	Intel	Disney
Burberry	Etsy		Starbucks	Sony	Netflix
Gucci	Target		Subway	Google	Nintendo
Nike			Wendy’s		Ubisoft
					Warner Bros.

#### 4.4 Data Collection

The following describes how the Twitter data from the aforementioned corporations has been collected. What data in particular has been processed depended on the properties of Twitter. More specifically, each social media platform functions according to different logics of communication. For example, whereas Instagram heavily relies on visual communication through pictures, Twitter is a microblogging platform on which users can post and interact with messages known as tweets. Each tweet is limited to 280 characters. As a result, instead of releasing one post after another on the same topic, the corporations under investigation have utilized other alternatives.

One such alternative is so-called “threads”. Essentially, a thread is a collection of comments which corporations have written underneath their original tweet as a way to elaborate on the original message. Another alternative that has been utilized by the corporations under

investigation is pictures portraying written text. Pictures can be added to any post on Twitter and facilitate the distribution of additional textual content without overarching the platform's limitation of 280 characters per tweet. The utilization of the aforementioned alternatives enables corporations to communicate information to their stakeholders within the limits of one post at a time instead of having to rely on stakeholders actively seeking out the information by browsing through the corporation's Twitter page. Consequently, the aforementioned alternatives to tweets containing 280 characters at most have also been subjected to the investigation.

Furthermore, the analysis has not only subjected the original tweets of corporations to the investigation, but also further extensions to stakeholder communication. More specifically, it incorporated the responses corporations have formulated to stakeholder inquiries about the corporation's conduct around the BLM movement. The consideration of replies to stakeholder comments is essential as they oftentimes include further information on how corporations engage with the BLM movement which has not been mentioned as part of the original tweet. More specifically, the information gathered from responses to the comments of public stakeholders has been considered significant for the investigation of the five components of engagement.

Each corporation's Twitter activity around the BLM movement between May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup> has been accessed via Twitter. To do so, Twitter's own Advanced Search function and the free online program Vicinitas which is a tool for tracking data on Twitter have been utilized. This is because several months have passed since the corporations under investigation have posted tweets on the BLM movement between May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>. Some corporations post multiple tweets a day and so the data collection would have otherwise required scrolling through hundreds of tweets without the use of the Advanced Search function or Vicinitas as a tool. To be more specific, the Advanced Search function on Twitter allows for the filtration of tweets and replies from accounts within specific points in time. Vicinitas provides links to the latest 3,000 tweets of a specific account and allows for the filtration of said tweets based on specific hashtags and keywords.

Using the keywords "black lives matter, BLM, BLM movement" and the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter within the aforementioned tools made the process of locating corporate tweets dedicated to the BLM movement more reliable. In other words, the use of filtration tools enabled access to the original posts without having to scroll through each corporation's profile and risking missing information which would have been crucial for the analysis due to personal

error. All of the aforementioned data for each corporation has been compiled before beginning the investigation. The following described how said data has been analyzed within the framework of a textual analysis.

## 4.5 Data Processing

Upon collecting the aforementioned data from the 20 corporations on Twitter it was possible to begin the investigation. The 20 corporations have been investigated one after another in an alphabetical order to lower the risk of confirmation bias. In essence, confirmation bias entails the tendency to search for, interpret, favor, and recall information in a way that confirms or supports one's prior beliefs or values (Noor, 2020). More specifically, processing the data for the corporations in alphabetical order eliminates the risk to choose corporations based on previous expectations upon which the order could have otherwise been based.

Furthermore, each tweet around the BLM movement of each corporation has been investigated based on the aforementioned questions resulting from the operationalization of Kent and Taylor's five components of engagement. The components have been investigated based upon the numerical order in which they have been presented within the operationalization (1-5). More specifically, the questions relating to each component have been posed to the pool of data that has been collected for each corporation's Twitter activity around the BLM movement between May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>.

A component has either been fulfilled or not been fulfilled based upon the question posed for each component of engagement. In more detail, each question has either been answered with yes, the corporation has exhibited the attributes posed within the question, or no, the corporation has not exhibited the attributes posed within the question. A Microsoft Word document containing the operationalization of each component of engagement has been created for each of the twenty corporations to ensure oversight of the data which is being collected and subsequently processed.

Moreover, a Microsoft Excel document containing a table documenting which corporation fulfilled the requirements for which component has been created to maintain an overview of the data processing procedure throughout the analytical process. Said table has subsequently been translated into numerical data to make for a better overview of the results stemming from the analysis. More specifically, it has been documented what percentage of corporations fulfilled each of the five components and what percentage has not.



## 4.6 Validity and Reliability

The study has not been subjected to a pre-established hypothesis with regard to an outcome of the analysis to avoid making the data fit with said hypothesis. This is particularly important within open-ended qualitative studies such as the one of this thesis. Furthermore, the analysis of this thesis revolves around a movement related to racism. Questions around validity and reliability might arise when issues such as racism and oppression are being discussed within an academic analysis. That is because a researcher can strive for, but not entirely assume the position of an objective outside observer. Instead, the study's objects can be shaped by subconscious prejudice which might impede with the study's validity (Boréus & Bergström, 2017:18).

Particularly interpretations derived through textual analysis can fall victim to such subconscious prejudice. More specifically, whereas there is never just one "true" interpretation of a text, there are interpretations that are more reasonable than others. Thus, it has been essential for the study to draw on the social, economic, and political context of the subjected corporate utterances in light of the BLM movement to validate interpretations through positioning them within the respective contextual niche. The study's validity and reliability have in this regard been improved by continuous references to quotes of texts and descriptions of the context wherein they are positioned to ensure accuracy, precision, and transparency of the interpretations along the lines of the five components. This also facilitates intersubjectivity whereby other researchers can reproduce the investigation of this thesis to reach similar, if not the same results.

## 5.0 Results

This chapter presents the findings of the investigation. More specifically, it accounts for the results of the analysis whereby tweets around the BLM movement of the 20 corporations have been subjected to a textual analysis based upon the operationalization of Kent and Taylor’s five components of engagement. The following table visualizes the results to provide an overview of the following argumentation behind the findings.

	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4	Component 5
Adidas		X			X
Amazon					X
BMW		X			X
Burberry					
Coca-Cola		X	X	X	X
Disney		X	X		X
Etsy		X	X		X
Google		X	X		X
Gucci	X	X	X		X
Intel		X	X	X	X
Netflix			X		X
Nike					
Nintendo		X			
Sony	X	X	X	X	X
Starbucks	X	X	X	X	X
Subway		X			
Target		X	X		X
Ubisoft		X			X
Warner		X	X	X	
Wendy’s	X	X	X	X	X

**Table 1, Instances of fulfilled Components of Engagement:**

**Table 1:** *The table visualizes the findings of the investigation. More specifically, it shows which corporations fulfilled which components of engagement within their tweets around the BLM movement between May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>. An “X” indicates that a corporation has fulfilled a component. A blank space indicates that it has not.*

## Component 1:

The corporations have been subjected to the following question in light of the operationalization of component one: *Does the corporation communicate whether it engaged in an effort to understand the socio-cultural circumstances related to the BLM movement before communicating around it on Twitter?*

Only four of the 20 corporations that have been placed under investigation for the analysis have exhibited communicative elements reflecting component one. This indicates that only 20% of the corporations communicated whether they have engaged in an effort to understand the socio-cultural circumstances related to the BLM movement before communicating around it on Twitter. For instance, underneath Sony's first post on the BLM movement on Twitter a public stakeholder has commented "*Please list your actions*". As a reply to said comment Sony wrote: "*We're working on it internally and we'll be sharing our plans shortly*" (Sony, 2020a). This has been communicated before any other information on the corporation's conduct around the BLM movement was released. Hence, through this utterance Sony communicates that they are taking the time to better understand the movement *before* releasing more information. Moreover, the fact that the utterance has been conveyed in the form of a response to the comment of an individual exhibits the attribute of interaction. It thus amplifies how Sony conveys the importance of better understanding the BLM movement before taking further actions.

Furthermore, also within their first tweet on the BLM movement in June 2020 Starbucks tweeted "*partners came together in an open forum to listen and support one another*" (Starbucks, 2020b). This also implies that the chain of coffeehouses took time to understand the movement before posting further information about it on Twitter. The international restaurant chain Wendy's tweeted "*We've taken the time to ensure we're focused on the best ways to support positive change*" (Wendy's, 2020a). This communicates that the corporation has not just implemented ad hoc actions, but that there has been a process to evaluate which actions contribute to the BLM movement. It thus also reflects that Wendy's engages in an effort to identify common ground between themselves and the BLM movement before engaging in further action; a norm also present within the wider framework of dialogue theory.

Lastly, the luxury fashion corporation Gucci tweeted "*On Thursday, June 4th all Gucci operations in the United States will pause for employees to have a day of mourning, honor the*

*lives lost, and recommit ourselves to being part of the solution*” (Gucci, 2020a). The word “*recommit*” arguably refers to an effort to review how the company can better combat racism before taking specific actions. This argument is further underlined by the fact that this is the first tweet Gucci has uttered and that only the subsequent tweets refer to further commitments in the forms of actions.

The aforementioned utterances communicate that Sony, Starbucks, Wendy’s, and Gucci have taken time to understand the key issues and publics related to the BLM movement. More specifically, it implies that the four aforementioned corporations realized the importance of primarily understanding what can, and what cannot be considered socially responsible behavior before publicizing information around a topic as controversial as the BLM movement; a notion that has been accentuated within previous scholarship around engagement (Hurst & Ihlen, 2018:136). This ultimately demonstrates that the aforementioned corporations engaged in an effort to understand the socio-cultural circumstances related to the BLM movement before practicing further communication.

Nonetheless, only 20% of the corporations under investigation fulfilled the requirements of component one and the ones that did so communicated implicitly. This also means that only 20% of the corporations engaged in identifying common ground between themselves and the BLM movement which is a communicative norm accentuated within the wider normative framework of dialogue theory. It is possible to argue that timing played an important role as to why this might be the case. If corporations had engaged in lengthy analyses of policy and secondary data before communicating on the issue, they would have not been able to integrate themselves into the momentum behind the movement which had been building up immediately after the death of George Floyd.

Furthermore, the fact that the corporations that have been investigated did not explicitly refer to, for example, reviewing their policy or conducting secondary research could also be attributed to the argument that they did not want to showcase insecurity as to knowing what had to be done to counter an issue as crucial as racism. Based on this finding it is possible to argue that most corporations had not engaged in understanding the socio-cultural circumstances related to the BLM movement before communicating around it on Twitter.

## Component 2:

The corporations have been subjected to the following question in light of the operationalization of component two: *Does the corporation communicate positive regard for the Black community's input, experiences, and needs?*

16 out of the 20 corporations that have been subjected to the analysis fulfilled the requirements for component two. More specifically, 80% of corporations demonstrated positive regard for the Black community's input, experiences, and needs within their tweets around the BLM movement between May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>. The examples that have been selected demonstrate a range of various communicative practices which demonstrate positive regard for the Black community's input, experiences, and needs.

For example, Gucci tweeted "*we stand with those demanding justice for the violence against them*" (Gucci, 2020a), which implies solidarity with the BLM movement's demands for justice. The corporation also tweeted "*injustice and discrimination in all their forms cannot be allowed to prevail*" (Gucci, 2020a). These words exhibit positive regard for the Black community's experiences and support for the community's need to halt such experiences from continuing in the future. Additionally, Gucci wrote "*we join the fight to end systemic racism, bigotry, police violence and oppression*" (Gucci, 2020a). This also demonstrates positive regard for the Black community's needs with regard to ending racism.

Gucci's aforementioned utterances have been posted in the form of a picture that corporations have used to exceed the limit of 280 characters per tweet. The text within the picture is positioned on top of a black background, which reflects the sadness and seriousness around the death of George Floyd upon which the utterance has been based. Additionally, the text within the picture ends with "*Marco Bizzarri*", the name of Gucci's CEO and "*all the Gucci employees*" (Gucci, 2020a). This demonstrates that not just the largest shareholders condone the message, but the corporation as a whole. Interestingly, neither the tweet nor the text within the picture include the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. The reason why this might be the case is because Gucci wanted to distinguish their message from the other millions of voices that have demonstrated their support for the movement during that time.

Furthermore, the American e-commerce corporation Etsy tweeted: "*we stand in solidarity with communities who are voicing their anguish, anger, and deep frustration with systems that*

*oppress and devalue Black lives*” (Etsy, 2020a). This utterance demonstrates positive regard for the Black community’s experiences and needs. Especially when noting the definitive stance towards the argument that there are systems in place which oppress and devalue Black lives. This text has also been posted in the form of a picture consisting of a dark background with white text written on top of it. The choice of color is here arguably motivated according to the same factors as Gucci had for their similar design.

Additionally, the text within the picture ends with the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. Etsy also demonstrated positive regard for the Black community’s needs by referring to several “*Black-owned Etsy small businesses that you can support*”. More specifically, the e-commerce corporation tweeted about several Black designers and creators with the argument “*to stand with Black small business owners in our community and to showcase their work*” (Etsy, 2020b). It is possible to argue that this is merely a marketing effort as the businesses are still part of Etsy’s e-commerce platform. Nonetheless, the corporation engages in a trend to support Black businesses which has gained traction throughout the resurgence of the BLM movement throughout June 2020. It therefore also demonstrates positive regard for the Black community’s needs.

Furthermore, the French video game corporation Ubisoft tweeted “*the systemic racism faced by the Black community is deeply disturbing and painful*” (Ubisoft, 2020). Just as Etsy, Ubisoft refers to racism being an issue on a system-level which demonstrates the corporation’s awareness of the severity behind the movement. It thus underlines the corporation’s positive regard for the Black community’s experiences on a system-level. Ubisoft has also portrayed their message in the form of an image with white text on a black background.

Moreover, Wendy’s tweeted “*Right now, a lot of people are hurting because of blatant racism against Black people. Their voices need to be heard. Period*” (Wendy’s 2020b). This demonstrates positive regard for the Black community’s input and needs through a reference to the necessity for listening to the voices of the Black community. Calling for the need to listen to the Black community in this regard also reflects the communicative norms of listening and empathy which are present within the wider normative framework of dialogue theory.

Furthermore, German clothing manufacturer Adidas tweeted “*remaining silent is not a neutral position when the people we should be standing with live in fear of police brutality due to systemic racism*”. This utterance particularly indicates that the Black community needs outspoken support in light of a systemic threat. Adidas has further demonstrated positive regard

for the Black community's input by tweeting "*Black co-workers have shown us through their words and actions what leadership looks like, and the changes Adidas can make. They've led the response that we will continue to implement together*" (Adidas, 2020). Although Adidas specifically refers to its co-workers, the message represents the Black community in general. This can be argued because the corporation does not refer to all co-workers, but specifically to "*Black co-workers*", who are arguably supposed to be representative of the Black community in general.

Adidas supplemented this utterance through a picture that states Black Lives Matter in yellow all capital letters on a black background. This particular color scheme is also used on the website of the official Black Lives Matter organization. The choice of color possibly reflects Adidas' alignment not just with the movement in general, but also with the organization in particular. To a lesser extent, just the words "*black lives matter*" in themselves also demonstrate positive regard for the Black community's input, experiences, and needs.

Moreover, Nintendo tweeted "*we stand with the Black community and all those who recognize our shared humanity and fundamental belief in equity and justice. We reject bias, exclusion, oppression and violence (...)*" (Nintendo, 2020). Through this utterance the Japanese multinational videogame corporation demonstrates positive regard for the Black community's need for racial equity in particular. The utterance has been conveyed in the form of a text within an image to transcend the character limitation of Twitter. It is interesting to note that Nintendo has not used a dark color tone within its picture. Instead, the corporation stuck to a red and white color scheme which reflects that of its logo. This demonstrates that most, but not all corporations have used dark color schemes throughout their communication around the BLM movement on Twitter.

BMW tweeted that they "*stand with those who demand a more inclusive, equal and just society*", which reflects positive regard for the Black community's experiences, and needs. This utterance has been supplemented by a picture which shows the words "*we must all drive for equality*" written in white on a black background (BMW, 2020). This utterance connects the movement for racial equality with the German car manufacturer's brand. Furthermore, the tweet does interestingly not include the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter, but the hashtag #wesupportblacklives. It is possible to argue that this might have been done to distinguish the

tweet from all the other tweets just as Gucci has done to elicit a more individualized demonstration of support for the movement.

As previously stated, corporate engagement is context-specific in that it is tied to a specific cause and/or population. In relation to that, it can lead to reinforcing social capital through empowerment, cocreation, and change on micro and macro levels. Social media particularly facilitate engagement around particular causes in that they enable dialogue, resource sharing and pathways for collaboration outside the setting of markets and exchange (Chewning, 2018:441). Thus, communicative engagement via social media such as demonstrating positive regard for the Black community's input, experiences, and needs is particularly important within the context of an issue as controversial as racism and especially in light of the unprecedented surge of the BLM movement. The aforementioned findings exhibit that a majority of corporations have grasped this importance within their tweets around the BLM movement between May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>. They also reflect that 80% of the corporations under investigation have reflected the communicative norms of listening and empathy which are present within the wider normative framework of dialogue theory.

### Component 3

The corporations have been subjected to the following question in light of the operationalization of component three: *Does the corporation communicate around the BLM movement more than once between May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>?*

12 out of 20 corporations have exhibited engagement by tweeting around the BLM movement more than once between May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>. This demonstrates that 60% of the corporations that have been investigated communicated on the topic of the movement outside of the immediate issue which has previously been established to be the death of George Floyd which led to the resurgence of the movement in 2020. As previously indicated, there are several positive outcomes related to consistent communication of a corporate image. In more detail, the consistent communication of messages from a corporation has a positive impact on the immediate set of associations stakeholders have of said corporation (Cornelissen, 2011:75).

Especially engagement consists of the social enactment of communication as part of a larger relational context which requires corporations to move beyond a single reference towards a topic



such as the BLM movement. Hence, corporations ought to exhibit consistency with regard to context-specific communication to harvest the crops of engagement such as stakeholder loyalty, triggering recognition, and creating awareness for the corporation's CSR efforts related to racism. This, in turn, has a direct impact on a corporation's performance as more public stakeholders decide to support the corporation by buying its products or even investing in it (Chewning, 2018:446).

Essentially, engagement in the form of consistent communication creates awareness and instills confidence among stakeholder groups which reinforces a positive corporate image. 60% of the investigated corporations grasped said importance and tweeted around the BLM movement more than once to facilitate engagement. This also means that 60% have transcended a solely reactionary response to an online trend and thus reflected the communicative norm of pursuing long-term rather than short-term objectives which is accentuated within the wider normative framework of dialogue theory.

The remaining 40% have only posted once in response to the immediate issue and subsequently returned to regular communication which exhibited communicative attributes of marketing rather than public relations. Additionally, it is interesting to note that corporations that have not posted around the BLM movement at all generally halted their communications on Twitter for several days and sometimes several weeks. This demonstrates that such corporations might have been worried about portraying an image of carelessness around the issue of racism towards their customers if they had continued their regular communicative practices reflecting marketing efforts.

With this argumentation in mind, it is curious to note that corporations that have only posted about the BLM movement once immediately reinstated regular communicative practices on Twitter. It is possible to argue that corporations that have done so posted about the movement to justify returning to regular communication in contrast to corporations that have not posted about the movement at all and could have been portrayed as careless.

## Component 4

The corporations have been subjected to the following question in light of the operationalization of component four: *Does the corporation demonstrate openness towards public feedback on ways to improve their conduct with regard to the Black community and the BLM movement?*

Six out of 20 corporations have fulfilled the requirements for component four. More specifically, only 30% of the corporations under investigation demonstrated openness towards public feedback on ways to improve their conduct with regard to the Black community and the BLM movement on Twitter. For example, underneath one of Coca-Cola's original posts on the BLM movement someone asked "*What else are you doing? If it's just the first step, what's the second step?*". The carbonated soft drink manufacturer replied to said comment and wrote "*We will continue to listen and learn, actively seek solutions for our business and our communities, and encourage collaboration*" (Coca-Cola, 2020b).

The utterance in itself demonstrates the corporation's openness towards public feedback on ways to improve their conduct with regard to the Black community and the BLM movement on Twitter. It is especially the words "*continue to listen*" and "*encourage collaboration*" which can generally be referred to as signs of openness towards improvement of the corporations conduct around the BLM movement in the future. This particular response to the public stakeholder's comment therefore also reflects the communicative norms of seeking out opposing viewpoints and access which are present within the wider framework of dialogue theory.

However, it is not just the utterance in itself which demonstrates openness towards public feedback, but also the fact that it is a response to the comment of a public stakeholder. Posts that include corporate responses to the comments of public stakeholders resemble interaction to a greater extent than posts that lack further interaction between a corporation and its stakeholders within the comment section. Interaction can in turn be equated with a greater degree of openness towards public feedback. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the utterance in itself and the fact that it is a response to a public stakeholder comment in the name of the entire corporation demonstrates Coca-Cola's openness toward public feedback on Twitter.

Intel similarly demonstrates openness. More specifically, someone wrote that a manager had been racist to his employees underneath one of Intel's posts supporting the BLM movement. The technology corporation answered, "*We take concerns of this nature seriously and we would like to look into them*" (Intel, 2020a). This exhibits openness towards feedback on an issue directly related to the movement. In more detail, the comment of the public stakeholder moves the corporation in a very negative light with regard to the fact that the original post is supposed to convey an anti-racist message.

The contrast between the original post and the subsequent public stakeholder comment amplifies Intel's demonstration of openness towards public feedback on ways to improve their conduct with regard to the Black community and the BLM movement. More specifically, the contrast emphasizes the need for Intel to demonstrate openness, especially because it is someone within their own ranks who is being accused of racist misconduct, the exact opposite of what Intel aims to convey through their original post. Moreover, just as Coca-Cola, Intel also exhibits openness towards public feedback through releasing the previously mentioned utterance in the form of a response to the comment of a public stakeholder.

Furthermore, Wendy's has tweeted "*Our employees and customers have spoken loud and clear*" and "*We're committed to doing the work and we hear you*" (Wendy's 2020b). This utterance demonstrates that the corporation is open towards public feedback on ways to improve their conduct with regard to the Black community and the BLM movement in the future. More specifically, the use of the word "*we*" within the framework of a message which has been conveyed by the corporation as a whole demonstrates that it is not just managers within the higher ranks of Wendy's who share the meaning behind the message, but the corporation as a whole. Moreover, the mention of customers who have "*spoken loud and clear*" demonstrates that Wendy's does not only consider signals from within its own ranks but also signals from public stakeholders.

Another example of demonstrating openness towards ways to improve its conduct is Warner Bros. The multimedia and entertainment corporation wrote "*we pledge to hold ourselves accountable*" (Warner Bros., 2020a). Holding oneself accountable can be equated with taking responsibility or taking blame upon oneself. Therefore, this utterance indicates that Warner Bros. takes external feedback into consideration throughout further conduct around the movement. This argument is further amplified by the fact that this information has been uttered on social media which is visible to everyone which demonstrates openness towards public scrutiny of Warner Bros.'s conduct with regard to the BLM movement. It can therefore be argued that the corporation demonstrates openness towards public feedback on ways to improve their conduct with regard to the Black community and the BLM movement. Additionally, it demonstrates that Warner Bros. makes itself accessible towards opposing viewpoints which is a communicative norm present within the wider framework of dialogue theory.

Furthermore, Starbucks has been involved in a situation in which its employees were not allowed to wear clothing which represents solidarity with the BLM movement when it first resurged in late May 2020 (Segran, 2020). When confronted about this issue by stakeholders who demanded the corporation to revoke their decision on Twitter Starbucks replied *“We hear your desire for clarity and understanding. Our store dress code now allows the use of Black Lives Matter pins/t-shirts and we will be sending Starbucks designed t-shirts to our partners in the U.S. and Canada”* (Starbucks, 2020d). This shift in the corporation’s conduct implies responsiveness towards public feedback and thus demonstrates openness towards public input around the BLM movement.

Moreover, Starbucks has replied to multiple comments underneath the original post that communicated the shift in their conduct with regard to the clothing of their employees. The reactions towards said shift have been both positive and negative and the corporation has interacted with both spectrums of stakeholder sentiments in the forms of responses. For example, one public stakeholder commented: *“Your black employees are standing. Are you really standing with them? You have to do better than just a t-shirt!!”* Starbucks replied to this comment which contains a negative undertone by writing: *“Yes. Starbucks stands in solidarity with our Black partners, allies, community and customers, and understands the desire to express themselves”* (Starbucks, 2020c). Within this response, Starbucks explicitly mentions the Black community and customers which demonstrates the corporation’s openness towards public feedback on ways to improve their conduct with regard to the Black community and the BLM movement.

There have been other instances of interactions between Starbucks and public stakeholders. For example, someone asked whether the corporation provides the t-shirts which express support for the BLM movement specifically designed by Starbucks would be provided to its employees for free. The corporation responded by writing *“Yes, the shirt will be provided to store partners for free”* (Starbucks, 2020e). This is another instance of how Starbucks interacted with stakeholders in a way that demonstrates openness toward public feedback on ways to improve their conduct with regard to the Black community and the BLM movement.

Sony also demonstrated openness towards public feedback in the form of responding to the comment of a public stakeholder. To provide some context, the corporation’s first tweet around the movement had not included specific actions in the forms of, for example, donations.

Instead, the post included utterances such as *“Being silent about the violence and racism Black people experience is being complicit”*. Arguably out of frustration with the lack of information on specific actions a public stakeholder commented *“Back it up with some donations and actual work though unlike other companies”*. As a response to said utterance, the Japanese conglomerate corporation wrote *“We understand what you mean for sure”* (Sony, 2020b). Through these words, Sony conveys understanding towards the public stakeholder’s frustration with the original message of the tweet. Exhibiting understanding towards a message with a negative undertone criticizing Sony’s conduct, in turn, demonstrates openness towards feedback. Hence, it can be argued that the corporation fulfills the requirements for the operationalization of component four.

To recapture, 30% of the investigated corporations demonstrated openness towards public feedback on a topic as sensitive as racism. In other words, they have constructed their communication around the BLM movement in a way that facilitates conversation through demonstrating openness towards outside opinions which exhibited attributes of engagement. This also means that only 30% have reflected the communicative norms of seeking out opposing viewpoints and access which are present within the wider framework of dialogue theory. It also reflects the aforementioned notion that tweets need to be constructed in a way that facilitates conversation through demonstrating openness towards outside opinions (Van Weezel, 2013:712). The remaining 70%, and thus the majority of corporations under investigation, have not exhibited any signs of openness towards public feedback on ways to improve their conduct with regard to the Black community and the BLM movement on twitter.

A possible reason for why this might be the case is that openness towards public feedback could also be perceived as indecisiveness on a topic such as racism which requires a definitive stance. As previously established, a corporate image is the immediate set of associations of individuals in response to the communicative practices of a corporation (Cornelissen, 2011:8). With that in mind, a majority of the investigated corporations seemingly did not want to risk an unfavorable image towards their stakeholders by seeming indecisive on how to respond to a topic as sensitive as racism. This underlines the significance of context within corporate communication on social media.

## Component 5

The corporations have been subjected to the following question in light of the operationalization of component five: *Does the corporation communicate specific actions such as donations and policy change that benefit the Black community and the BLM movement?*

15 out of 20 corporations fulfilled the criteria for component five. In more detail, 75% of the corporations placed under investigation communicated specific actions such as donations and policy change that benefit the Black community and the BLM movement. In most cases, corporations donated money to organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Urban League, or the African American Leadership Forum whose endeavor it is to advance justice for African Americans (NAACP, 2021).

Several distinctions can be made with regard to how corporations communicated their pledges to make donations. In particular, there have been both corporations that communicated the specific amount of money they donate, and ones that have not specified said amount. Additionally, some corporations have stated that they will be making one-time donations and others have established funds that will donate money over a period of time. Adidas is the corporation that has pledged the highest amount of money among the corporations subjected to the analysis by tweeting that they will donate USD 120 million over the next four years following the original tweet in June 2020. Sony has also pledged to launch a USD 100 million fund *“to support social justice and anti-racist initiatives around the world”* (Sony, 2020c). Other examples of comparatively high donations are Google with USD 15 million and Amazon with USD 10 million. Another distinction identifiable here is the difference between corporations donating money to organizations focusing on the US in particular and corporations which distribute their donations worldwide. Racism is a global issue and not exclusively attributable to the US. The BLM movement, however, originated in the US which is the reason why corporations have predominantly limited their donations to American organizations.

Furthermore, it is possible to distinguish between corporations that specified the ends which the money they donated ought to accomplish and corporations that have not done so. An example of a corporation that elaborated upon the reasoning is Amazon. The American e-commerce, cloud computing, digital streaming, and artificial intelligence corporation specified within their

tweet that they donate USD 10 million to eleven different organizations which “*support economic opportunities, education, and justice for Black Americans*” (Amazon, 2020). The reference to the specific ends that ought to be accomplished through the donation makes it possible to argue that Amazon did not just merely communicate that it donates money to organizations, but it elaborated upon the reasoning behind why it is donating to the organizations in particular.

Etsy can also be considered as an example of a corporation that referred to the ends that ought to be met with the donation they pledged to make within their tweet. More specifically, the American e-commerce corporation tweeted that it will be donating USD 1 million to organizations that focus particularly on reforming the criminal justice system in the US (Etsy, 2020a). Just as Amazon, Etsy refers to a particular end that ought to be accomplished through the means of the donation they have pledged to make within their tweet. Moreover, Wendy’s tweeted that they are donating USD 500 thousand “*to support social justice, the youth and education in the Black community*” (Wendy’s 2020b). This utterance also refers to more specific ends that ought to be met through the money they pledged to donate. It thus also reflects the norm of mutuality as opposed to corporate self-interest which is present within the wider normative framework of dialogue theory.

As indicated above, there have also been corporations which pledged to make donations without specifying the ends that ought to be accomplished by them. Instead, these corporations have motivated their donations by referring to the issue of racism as a wider, system-level issue. For instance, Coca-Cola tweeted that they are donating to the organization 100 Black Men of America to “*as part of the effort to end systemic racism and bring true equality to all*” (Coca-Cola, 2020a). In contrast to the previously mentioned examples, Coca-Cola does not specify any ends that ought to be accomplished in a more detailed manner, but they merely refer to ending systemic racism in general.

Another example where this is the case is Disney. The multinational mass media and entertainment conglomerate tweeted that it will be donating USD 5 million “*to support nonprofit organizations that advance social justice*” (Disney, 2020a). Whereas the donation is targeted towards the Black people in particular because the utterance exists within the context of a tweet around the BLM movement, Disney does not refer to the Black community in particular. This extends the argument that the pledge is comparatively general and does not refer to specific ends.

Ubisoft also merely tweeted that it will be donating USD 100 thousand, a comparatively small amount, to the NAACP and the official Black Lives Matter organization. In this case, the French videogame corporation does not elaborate upon reasoning behind the donation, but merely states that it will be making the donation (Ubisoft, 2020).

Moreover, some of the corporations under investigation who have pledged to make a donation have not elaborated upon why they are donating the money to the organizations they have mentioned within their tweets. For example, BMW wrote that they will be making a donation to the NAACP “*in support of the Black community*” (BMW, 2020). Again, this is a rather vague manner of elaborating upon the reasoning behind why the German car manufacturer is donating to the NAACP in particular. The American retail corporation Target communicated similarly by tweeting “*we’re investing 10 million USD to long-lasting partners like the National Urban and the African American Leadership Forum*” (Target, 2020a). Again, no mention of specific ends or reasoning behind why said organizations have been chosen in particular.

In some rare cases, corporations went beyond making donations and communicated a list of more specific actions. Adidas tweeted a list of actions which included “*developing a program to ensure fair and equitable hiring*”, “*creating a team to manage and facilitate the increased funding of grassroots programs that support and empower Black communities*”, and “*putting in place a 3rd party investigator to govern Adidas’ policy*” (Adidas, 2020). These pledges benefit the Black community and the BLM movement and differ from donations that have been communicated more frequently among the investigated corporations. Similarly, Google has tweeted that they will “*improve leadership representation of under-represented groups by 30% by 2025*”, “*establish a range of anti-racism educational programs*”, “*support the health and well-being of the Black community*”, “*establish new ways for people to find and support Black-owned businesses in their area through Google services*” and “*close racial equity gaps in computer science education*” (Google, 2020b). Just as Adidas, Google has communicated non-monetary actions that benefit the BLM movement.

Another interesting example of a corporation using not just its resources, but also its reach within the sector it is positioned in is Netflix. The entertainment content and production corporation tweeted that their “*commitment to true, systematic change will take time*” and that they are “*starting by highlighting powerful and complex narratives about the Black experience*” (Netflix, 2020b). This communicates a change in how the Black community is treated and



portrayed through the industrial means Netflix controls. In other words, the corporation pledges to emphasize stories about the Black community within the production of their series and movies which are subsequently accessible on their online streaming platform. This is aimed at benefitting the Black community because Black characters have been previously underrepresented in movies and series (Dunn *et al.*, 2021). Hence Netflix communicates an action that benefits the BLM movement.

Starbucks has also communicated actions transcending donations by tweeting “*We have partnered with Arizona State University to design anti-bias resources and training*” (Starbucks, 2020a). The partnership with a university to facilitate reconnaissance about fundamental issues related to racism benefits the Black community and thus communicates actions that benefit the BLM movement. It is noteworthy that this pledge has been posted in the form of a white text on a green background. The combination of white and green is what Starbucks uses within its logo. Similar to the aforementioned example of BMW this demonstrates that the corporation tried to connect their brand image with the movement by choosing the color scheme which reflects their brand instead of the dark theme used within most of the other investigated tweets.

Another example can be found within one of Wendy’s tweets. The international restaurant chain has tweeted “*in the coming days, we’ll be using our Twitter account to amplify Black voices*” (Wendy’s 2020b). It is possible to argue that such an amplification benefits the BLM movement when considering that potentially 3.7 million of Wendy’s followers have been exposed to messages aimed at benefiting the Black community.

However, the operationalization of component five has not only considered whether a corporation communicates specific actions such as donations and policy change that benefit the Black community and the BLM movement, but also whether a corporation communicates its dependence on the Black community in relation to the specific actions. Interestingly, only five out of these 15 corporations also communicated their dependence on the Black community in relation to the specific actions. For example, Adidas wrote “*the success of Adidas would be nothing without Black athletes, Black artists, Black employees, and Black consumers*”. The words “*would be nothing*” used in relation to consumers communicates Adidas’ dependence on the Black community.

Moreover, Sony has tweeted that “*racial injustice is a global issue that affects our artists, songwriters, people and society at large*” (Sony, 2020c). The fact that this utterance has been

communicated in relation to the announcement of several donations to organizations whose endeavor it is to advance justice for African Americans communicates Sony's dependence on the Black community in the US. Especially when considering that Sony benefits financially not just from artists, but also from consumers from all ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, Wendy's has tweeted that its voice "*would be nothing without Black culture*" which implies the corporation's dependence on the Black community at large (Wendy's, 2020b).

The luxury fashion corporation Gucci tweeted "*We stand in solidarity and in action with the Black community that has always supported us*" (Gucci, 2020a). This utterance communicates the corporation's financial dependence on Black stakeholders to uphold its profit-oriented business. Lastly, Target tweeted "*we are a community in pain*" and "*as a team we face pain with purpose*" (Target, 2020b). The narrative of using words like "*we*" and "*as a team*" communicates interdependence between the Black community and the American retail corporation.

In essence, 80% of the investigated corporations have communicated specific actions that benefit the BLM movement within their tweet around the movement. Hence, a majority of the investigated corporations reflect Kent and Taylor's idea behind the argument that engagement can be understood as corporations acting in ways that contribute to social capital rather than the exclusive pursuit of organizational interests (Kent & Taylor, 2014:385). This also means that 80% of the corporations have reflected the communicative norm of mutuality as opposed to corporate self-interest which is present within the wider normative framework of dialogue theory. Interestingly, only five out of 15 corporations communicated their dependence on the Black community in relation to the communicated actions. Nonetheless, the fifth component of engagement has been fulfilled by the majority of corporations whereby only a minority communicated dependence on the Black community which indicates a higher extent of engagement.

The following chapter will discuss the implications of the aforementioned findings.

## 6.0 Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis has captivated the importance of advancing the understanding of corporate communication around social movements on social media through considering the concept of engagement. In essence, corporate engagement is a multifaceted process that necessitates multiple communicative attributes. Hence, Kent and Taylor's five components of engagement have been operationalized to analyze the tweets of 20 corporations around the BLM movement between May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup> 2020. Consequently, the following research question has guided the analysis: *To what extent do corporations engage with the BLM movement on Twitter?*

This aim has been supplemented by the normative framework of dialogue theory which accentuates a public-centered approach to corporate communication. More specifically, it has been applied to current developments of corporate communication whereby corporations increasingly invest in communicative practices around social movements on social media. The thesis has thereby captivated the potential of social media to facilitate environments of access and mutuality which give corporations the opportunity to communicate in ways that incorporate what their public stakeholders want.

Based on the results of this approach it is possible to argue that corporations have primarily engaged with the BLM movement on Twitter to an extent to which they exhibit attributes pertaining to components two and five. More specifically, corporations have primarily engaged with the BLM movement to an extent to which they demonstrate positive regard for the Black community's input, experiences, and needs, and to an extent to which they communicate specific actions such as donations and policy change that benefit the Black community and the BLM movement. As mentioned above, in light of dialogue theory the exhibition of component two reflects norms such as listening and empathy and the exhibition of component five reflects mutuality rather than corporate self-interest.

Several derivations can be made from the aforementioned finding. First, it is interesting to note that 13 out of the 16 corporations that have demonstrated positive regard for the Black community's input, experiences, and needs (Component two) also engaged with the movement to an extent to which they communicate specific actions such as donations and policy change that benefit the Black community and the BLM movement (Component five). This is because the expression of empathy for the suffering of the Black community would only be perceived as

empty words without meaning when they are not followed by concrete actions. This argument is derived from the logic that words and actions are essentially interrelated and the case of corporate communication around the BLM movement on Twitter is no exception.

This interrelation is, in addition, two-sided. More specifically, Amazon and Netflix have been the only corporations that communicated specific actions without demonstrating positive regard for the Black community's input, experiences, and needs. In this case, Amazon and Netflix's actions have less meaning compared to the actions of other corporations because they have not been underlined by the communication of empathy.

Corporations have generally neither engaged in an effort to understand the socio-cultural circumstances related to the BLM movement before communicating around it on Twitter nor demonstrated openness towards public feedback on ways to improve their conduct with regard to the Black community and the BLM movement. Consequently, it is possible to argue that the corporations under investigation have generally not reflected norms of seeking out opposing viewpoints, access, and listening which are present within the wider normative framework of dialogue theory.

Interestingly, three out of the four corporations that have communicated whether they have engaged in an effort to understand the socio-cultural circumstances related to the BLM movement before communicating around it on Twitter (Component one), have also fulfilled all of the other remaining components of engagement. More specifically, Gucci is the only corporation that has only fulfilled three of the four remaining other components in addition to component one. It is thus possible to derive that corporations that have engaged in an effort to understand the socio-cultural circumstances in advance of further communicative efforts also grasped the importance of engagement reflected by the other components. In other words, said corporations have taken the time to consider what can and what cannot be considered socially responsible behavior within the limits of a movement as sensitive as BLM and transcended a solely reactionary response to an online trend as a consequence.

Additionally, only three of the corporations under investigation fulfilled only one component of engagement. This means that 85% of the corporations that have communicated around the movement have generally done so according to at least two of the five components of engagement. In other words, the data supports the argument that a wide majority of corporations grasped that communicative efforts around a movement as sensitive as BLM cannot take place

half-heartedly. Either such communication ought to take place according to a standard reflecting engagement or not take place at all.

Furthermore, 60% of the corporations under investigation have engaged with the BLM movement to an extent to which they communicate around the movement for relational purposes outside of the immediate issue by posting a tweet around it more than once between May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>. This means that roughly more than half of the corporations exhibited the norm of pursuing long-term rather than short-term objectives which is accentuated within the wider normative framework of dialogue theory. The adaptation of said norm ultimately benefits a corporation's image as consistent communication creates awareness and instills confidence within stakeholders.

In essence, the findings reflect that social media increasingly reject environments in which corporations communicate in ways that portray control and domination. Instead, social media progressively facilitate environments of access and mutuality which give corporations the opportunity to communicate in ways that incorporate what their public stakeholders want. This notion is fundamentally reflected within the framework of dialogue theory which essentially accentuates a more public-centered approach to corporate communication throughout its normative framework.

The thesis demonstrates that corporations are beginning to captivate the value of such a more public-centered approach throughout their communication around social movements on social media. In other words, there is evidence that corporations are beginning to captivate the potential behind cultivating communication which has a positive impact on *both* corporations and public stakeholders. The aforementioned findings reveal that, to an extent, the realization of said potential takes place through the corporate engagement with the BLM movement on Twitter.

In that sense, the results reaffirm the necessity of determining “to what extent” corporations engage with the BLM movement on twitter. Engagement is essentially a multilayered concept that cannot be determined through a more simplistic approach such as asking *how* corporations engage with the movement. Asking *how* they would do so inherently assumes there to be engagement prior to an investigation. Hence, asking *to what extent* corporations do so leaves ample space for discussion around corporate efforts to engage in a social movement without assuming there to be engagement in the first place. This aim has been accentuated by the consideration of not just one requirement which determines engagement, but an interplay of five

separate components which conceptualize corporate engagement with the BLM movement on Twitter.

The effectiveness of this investigation is underlined by the example of Burberry which has replied to the comments of public stakeholders but has not fulfilled any of the operationalized components of engagement. In more detail, Burberry tweeted an image with a dark background upon which the following words were written in white letters *“There is no place for racism. As human beings, we all need to do better #BlackLivesMatter”* (Burberry, 2020). With this utterance, Burberry claimed the position of an educator on the topic of racism instead of a corporation that uses its reach and resources to engage with the BLM movement.

The example of Burberry’s communication around the BLM movement on Twitter can thus be referred to as slacktivism. As previously mentioned, slacktivism refers to an activity that uses the internet to support political or social causes in a way that does not need much effort. *One* post around a social movement as sensitive as BLM and then not acting beyond it reflects the notion that Burberry wanted to align themselves with the movement to benefit its image without actively engaging with it in any other way.

Not surprisingly this “slacktivist” communication around an issue as critical as racism has been met with backlash from public stakeholders within the comment section underneath the tweet. Some comments include utterances such as *“stop sending vibes and send money”* and *“time to put your money where your mouth is”*. Another example includes a comment stating *“so what are you going to DO about the matter, then? If you’re speaking against racism, actively work to dismantle it”*. Whereas Burberry has replied to some comments, they have neither, for instance, demonstrated positive regard for the Black community’s experiences, and needs, nor communicated around the BLM movement more than once. This demonstrates that corporate engagement around a social movement such as the BLM movement necessitates a more multifarious approach which has been reflected within the five components of engagement.

The investigation in light of this conviction has brought forth a range of significant data. In fact, Burberry and Nike are the only two out of the 20 investigated corporations that have not fulfilled any of the operationalized components. The reason why Nike might not have fulfilled the requirements for the operationalized components is a little more complex. Especially when considering that the corporation has been highly involved with the advancement of social justice for the Black community before the resurgence of the BLM movement in June 2020. More

specifically, Nike engaged in an advertising partnership with American football player Colin Kaepernick who kneeled during the US national anthem at an NFL game to raise awareness for racial justice. The significance behind this partnership lies in the fact that Nike threw their weight behind Kaepernick when he was at odds with the NFL because of his actions for racial justice (Intravia *et al.*, 2020).

Therefore, the reason why Nike has not exhibited attributes of engagement throughout the 2020 surge of the BLM movement is not attributable to the corporation's lack of caring about the Black community. Instead, Nike might not have wanted to be held to the same standard as corporations that have only begun to *engage* with the movement once it reached high levels of public recognition. This argument is reflected in the formulation of Nike's one (and only) tweet around the movement throughout the June 2020 resurgence: "*We will continue to stand up for equality and work to break down barriers for athletes\* all over the world*" (Nike, 2020). The specific use of the word "*continue*" underlines the argument that Nike views itself as a corporation which has already addressed the issue of racism before the resurgence of the BLM movement in June 2020. It also amplifies the aforementioned argument that Nike might not want to be held to the same standard as corporations that *only* got involved with speaking out against racism through the resurgence.

Hence, the reason why Nike has not exhibited characteristics of engagement on Twitter throughout the 2020 surge of the BLM movement is not attributable to the corporation's lack of caring about the movement. This, in consequence, demonstrates the complexity around corporate communication within online spaces in general and within the context of social movements in particular. The complexity lies within the argument that just because Nike does not exhibit the operationalized components of engagement, it does not mean that the corporation is not engaged in speaking out against racism on social media otherwise. This leads to the argument that the historical context of how a corporation has communicated around a sensitive topic previously determines future communicative endeavors on social media. This points towards the necessity to develop an academic understanding of corporate communication through the continuous consideration of empirical examples and especially the historical context in which they exist.

On another note, the investigation has brought forth three corporations that have fulfilled all five of Kent and Taylor's components of engagement. Said corporations are Sony, Starbucks and Wendy's. This means that only 15% of all investigated corporations reflected what this thesis

conceptualized as engagement throughout their tweets around the BLM movement between May 25<sup>th</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup>. These findings, however, ought to be examined with a critical eye. Especially when considering the state of infancy in which the concept of corporate engagement on social media exists within the academic field of Public Relations.

More specifically, it currently exists in a comparatively transparent form which tends to overlap with more established practices of corporate communication such as marketing or strategic communication which are governed by notions such as control, persuasion, and domination. Presently, efforts of drawing a distinction between such traditional approaches and more progressive forms of corporate communication are being impeded by the blurry borders of social media. This is reflected within the finding that there have been instances in which public stakeholders perceive corporate communication on social media as marketing practices rather than efforts to genuinely engage with the public (Colleoni, 2013:247). Thus, the concept of corporate engagement on social media needs to be distinguished from more traditional forms of corporate communication through a process of continuous academic investigation.

Nonetheless, research is in unison about the underlying empirical development that corporations have increasingly invested in CSR efforts on social media over the last decade to facilitate a positive corporate image. This development contributes to the fundamental argument around engagement that, even though corporations might essentially pursue their own interest, they can still contribute to social capital in doing so. This underlying development has supported this thesis's notion to investigate the concept of engagement through the normative lens of dialogue theory which accentuates the need to place the communicative emphasis on the needs of public stakeholders rather than viewing corporate communication practitioners as headhunters who only seek to fulfill corporate goals.

Furthermore, the thesis considered corporations from different economic industries. This choice has been made because the corporate communicative integration into social movements such as the BLM movement has not been limited to the logics of a singular industry but transcends such borders on social media. In this respect, a corporation's strategy and targeted stakeholder groups still differ depending on the industry they belongs to. However, the motivation behind the inclusion of corporations from different industries has been the succeeding contribution to the finding's generalizability. Thus, the differences between industries have not been at the center of what this thesis aimed to investigate. Nonetheless, the findings do allow for



the observation that corporations from the food and beverage industry generally engaged with the BLM movement more than corporations from any other industry.

The reason behind said finding could be that the business logics for corporations from the food and beverage industry require more interaction with customers than those of another industry. For example, the frequency at which customers of Starbucks come into direct contact with constituents of the corporation is higher than that of, for instance, Ubisoft or BMW. Hence, the findings point towards the argument that a higher level of interaction between public stakeholders and corporations converges with a higher extent of engagement with the BLM movement. However, this is merely a peripheral finding of an otherwise differently situated analytical core. Thus, a more thorough investigation of industry differences in this regard ought to be undertaken to confirm, revoke, or translate the aforementioned observation into solid scientific data.

Moreover, it is important to discuss whether corporate communication around the BLM movement on Twitter generally converges with the demands of the official Black Lives Matter organization. Especially when considering that many of the investigated corporations utilized the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter which relates not just to the movement but is also tied to the official organization. It is thus necessary to consider whether corporations used the hashtag to demonstrate alignment solely with the movement or also with the organizations behind the movement. Interestingly, there is little to no convergence between the specific demands of the BLM organization and the corporate utterances around the movement on Twitter.

It is possible to argue that this is the case because the official organization strives for goals with a distinct political partisan undertone. For instance, the organization demands to “*convict and ban Trump from future political office*”, to “*permanently ban Trump from all digital media platforms*”, or to “*expel Republican members of Congress who attempted to overturn the election and incited a white supremacist attack*” (Black Lives Matter, 2021b). Quite evidently, these demands are highly partisan in their nature which matters because corporations are fundamentally profit-oriented and thus generally conditioned to facilitate sustainable corporation-stakeholder relationships regardless of the partisan predisposition of public stakeholders.

More specifically, corporate alignment with the aforementioned demands of the Black Lives Matter organization would have had a significant impact on a corporation’s image and reputation

and thus impede with the potential of facilitating sustainable corporation-stakeholder relationships with *all* public stakeholders. However, this is yet another peripheral finding that ought to be further investigated in the future. Especially corporate partisanship, whether purposeful or accidental, is likely linked to communicative practices on social media. To what extent such processes take place ought to be investigated by future research.

Lastly, whereas racial injustice is a global phenomenon it is interesting to note that a majority of the communicated donations and actions have been directed exclusively to the US. Even though the death of George Floyd led to a global outcry against racial injustice, the movement underwent its strongest resurgence in the US. Subsequently, the movement expanded in the US to a wider extent which possibly caused corporate actions to be primarily directed towards the US in particular.

## 6.1 Future Directions

Several points of consideration for the future development of corporate communication on social media have arisen throughout the research process of this thesis. The thesis has recurrently referred to the constantly developing properties of social media in themselves, and the constituents who use them. Hence, it is virtually impossible to claim that the findings of this thesis will stand the tearing force of time. Nonetheless, the findings of the analysis provide a solid foundation upon which future research can be built to sustain the momentum of social media development.

Future researchers ought to integrate themselves into wider practices of corporate communication on social media. More specifically, the investigation has found that corporations are beginning to captivate the value of a more public-centered approach throughout their communication around social movements on social media. In light of that scholars ought to consider whether corporations do so whenever the need for it arises around isolated instances such as social movement resurgences at different points in time, or whether they continuously reproduce a rhetoric of engagement around the social movements they have already integrated themselves into. This is particularly relevant in light of the argument that a corporate image creates awareness and instills confidence among stakeholder groups through consistently

communicated information. A range of longitudinal studies on different corporations over the time of several years would likely produce insightful information on this subject.

Moreover, research is in unison about the underlying empirical development that corporations increasingly invest in CSR efforts on social media to facilitate a positive corporate image. In light of this development, the corporate communicative integration into social movements such as the BLM movement has not been limited to the logics of a singular industry but transcends such borders on social media. In this respect, however, a corporation's strategy and targeted stakeholder groups still differ depending on the industry it belongs to. Therefore, future research ought to recurrently incorporate corporations from different economic industries to identify whether there are significant differences with regard to whether and how they communicate around social movements on social media. Such efforts could also be accommodated by the frameworks of longitudinal studies to gather information on whether industry influences the longevity of corporate social media communication around social movements.

Furthermore, the thesis has contributed to the adaptation of dialogue theory into corporate communication practices on social media. As stated in a multitude of ways throughout this thesis, the way people communicate has fundamentally changed through social media. Thus, the transformational power social media exert on communication ought to be perceived as an opportunity for corporations to facilitate and maintain relationships with their public stakeholders, and not as something that threatens and gradually disintegrates the control corporations exert throughout their communication channels. If not for the reasons mentioned throughout this thesis, then perhaps simply because of the fact that it is highly unlikely that social media will disappear. It is the responsibility of academia to recognize this and to strive for development with the stream of empirical development, not against it. Therefore, researchers ought to continue developing dialogue theory as a foundation for understanding said development.

In doing so, however, one ought to consider the different properties of various social media outlets. For instance, Instagram primarily facilitates visual communication while Twitter's main emphasis lies on microblogs in the form of written text. Another example is the rising popularity of messenger apps through which public stakeholders can directly interact with the constituents of a corporation. Their wider expansion could have an effect on the potential for corporate communication according to the standards of dialogue theory's wider normative framework or

Kent and Taylor's five components of engagement. Future studies ought to captivate said potential through academic investigation.

Furthermore, the advancing academic consideration of engagement represents a step in the right direction of capitalizing on the potential social media bear for corporate communication. This directionality should be expanded by measuring the outcomes of corporate engagement with social movements. An approach to this aim would be to test the effectiveness of communicative efforts which reflect Kent and Taylor's five components of engagement by asking public stakeholders whether they perceive such efforts as favorable or unfavorable. Such approaches would also develop the academic understanding of how corporate images are being shaped and perceived within the realm of social media communication.

In conclusion, corporations increasingly communicate around social movements on social media. This thesis has contributed to the academic understanding of said development by investigating to what extent corporations engage with the BLM movement on Twitter. Whether such communicative practices resonate with public stakeholders and ultimately benefit a corporation's image and reputation in the future is yet to be determined. Questions of this nature are not easily answered. However, this thesis along with the following quote hopefully provide future research with a promising directionality: "Social Media is about the people. Not about your business. Provide for the people and the people will provide for you" (Goulart, 2020).

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# Appendix

Below is a list of links to the tweets that have been used throughout the analysis of this thesis. The tweets of corporations that have posted with regard to the BLM movement more than once throughout the timeframe selected for the analysis have been listed in alphabetical order.

Adidas (2020). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/adidas/status/1270800426456227841>. Read 05.02.2021. Read 05.02.2021.

Amazon (2020). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/amazon/status/1268240752309669888>. Read 05.02.2021.

BMW (2020). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/BMWUSA/status/1268165618915827713>. Read 05.02.2021.

Burberry (2020). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/Burberry/status/1267594369139433487>. Read 04.02.2021.

Coca-Cola (2020a). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/CocaCola/status/1268176865967169537>. Read 04.02.2021.

Coca-Cola (2020b). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/chellestarshine/status/1268187038282657795>. Read 04.02.2021.

Disney (2020a). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/waltdisneyco/status/1268236683255795712?lang=en>. Read 06.02.2021.

Disney (2020b). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/disney/status/1267224613152571393?lang=en>. Read 06.02.2021.

Etsy (2020a). Black Lives Matter. <https://twitter.com/Etsy/status/1267588670837731333>. Read 04.02.2021.

Etsy (2020b). Black Lives Matter. <https://twitter.com/Etsy/status/1270370171929202691>. Read 04.02.2021.

Google (2020a), Black Lives Matter on Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/sundarpichai/status/1267094364976672768>. Read 05.02.2021.

Google (2020b), Black Lives Matter on Twitter  
<https://twitter.com/google/status/1273335919865671682?lang=en>. Read 05.02.2021.

Gucci (2020a). Black Lives Matter. <https://twitter.com/gucci/status/1267974693874737157>.  
Read 03.02.2021.

Gucci (2020b). Black Lives Matter. <https://twitter.com/gucci/status/1267978445117698049>.  
Read 03.02.2021.

Gucci (2020c). Black Lives Matter. <https://twitter.com/gucci/status/1270754471593881600>.  
Read 03.02.2021.

Intel (2020a). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/intel/status/1237476856556904448>. Read 03.02.2021.

Intel (2020b). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/intel/status/1267175738165194752>. Read 03.02.2021.

Intel (2020c). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.  
<https://twitter.com/intel/status/1267344628426178567>. Read 03.02.2021.

Intel (2020d). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/intel/status/1267686382849441792>. Read 03.02.2021.

Netflix (2020a). Black Lives Matter in Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/netflix/status/1266829242353893376?lang=en>. Read 04.02.2021.

Netflix (2020b). Black Lives Matter in Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/netflix/status/1270702290702184454?lang=en>. Read 04.02.2021.

Nike (2020). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/Nike/status/1271585740980285442>. Read 04.02.2021.

Nintendo (2020). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/NintendoAmerica/status/1268203291470528512>. Read 06.02.2021.

Sony (2020a). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/Sony/status/1267201754367737857>. Read 07.02.2021.

Sony (2020b). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/Sony/status/1267248594911887362>. Read 07.02.2021.

Sony (2020c). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/Sony/status/1269289191923257345>. Read 07.02.2021.

Starbucks (2020a). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/starbucks/status/1268513794172411905?lang=en>. Read 02.02.2021.

Starbucks (2020b). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/Starbucks/status/1271440945028796417> Read 02.02.2021.



Starbucks (2020c). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/sony/status/1267248594911887362?lang=en> Read 03.02.2021.

Starbucks (2020c). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/Starbucks/status/1271440942591913986> Read 02.02.2021.

Starbucks (2020d). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/Starbucks/status/1271841533361139712> Read 02.02.2021.

Starbucks, 2020e). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/Starbucks/status/1271561795178651649> Read 02.02.2021.

Subway (2020). <https://twitter.com/SUBWAY/status/1267833123129241600>. Read 06.02.2021.

Target (2020a). <https://twitter.com/TargetNews/status/1268924275597160450>. Read 07.02.2021.

Target (2020b). <https://twitter.com/TargetNews/status/1266493082163392516>. Read 07.02.2021.

Target (2020c). <https://twitter.com/TargetNews/status/1269081577474138113>. Read 07.02.2021.

Ubisoft (2020). Black Lives Matter on Twitter.

<https://twitter.com/Ubisoft/status/1267785187880062976>. Read 04.02.2021.

Warner Bros. (2020a). <https://twitter.com/warnerbros/status/1268653775016701953>. Read 08.02.2021.

Warner Bros. (2020b). <https://twitter.com/warnerbros/status/1267139745408151553>. Read 08.02.2021.

Wendy's (2020a). Black Lives Matter.

<https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/1276283355768803330>. Read 08.02.2021.

Wendy's (2020b). Black Lives Matter.

<https://twitter.com/wendys/status/1268325890037030912?lang=en>. Read 08.02.2021.

