Abstract

Purpose - Ability to identify and meet stakeholder expectations is seen as imperative for succeeding in corporate responsibility (CR). However, the existing literature of CR communication treats expectations predominantly as positive constructions. The article addresses this positivity bias and offers insights for a more profound conceptual and empirical understanding of stakeholder expectations.

Design/methodology/approach – The article presents findings from a targeted literature search and empirical illustrations from a thematic analysis of interview data with a focus on the media sector.

Findings – The conceptual understanding of expectations is advanced by exploring positive (optimistic and hopeful), and negative (cynical and pessimistic) expectations. The empirical examples portray expectation analysis and how it becomes more complex when expectations turn negative.

Research limitations/implications –The data is limited to one sector but implications are discussed with a wider lens to aid future studies in addressing expectations of CR with less positivity bias and, instead, with more conceptual and empirical precision.

Practical implications – The identification of different expectation types can help practitioners to map and analyze stakeholder expectations of CR, assess interlinking between positive and negative issues, and address stakeholder criticism in a meaningful way.

Social implications – A more precise understanding of stakeholder expectations has the potential to make organizations more sensitive to their societal context, especially concerning CR as social connectedness.

Originality/value – The article addresses a gap in current literature concerning the positivity bias of expectations and offers conceptual and empirical tools for future research and practice.

Introduction

There is a wide-spread agreement in the literature of corporate responsibility that identifying and meeting stakeholder expectations and societal expectations is an important factor for succeeding in corporate responsibility (e.g., introductions to literature by Scherer and Palazzo, 2007; 2011). More specifically, corporate responsibility is often explained as conformance to societal expectations or as anticipation of societal expectations (e.g., Westhues and Einwiller, 2006; Golob *et al.*, 2009). Essentially, the value in fulfilling expectations of moral and ethical behavior is the trust and legitimacy it can generate (Adams *et al.*, 2010). Trust, by definition, is based on positive expectations despite a possible risk (Lewicki *et al.*, 1998; Rousseau *et al.*, 1998). However, trust is not automatically generated by CR actions and by actively communicating (or

advertising) them—instead, efforts to communicate CR can backfire due to perceived hypocrisy, spin or lack of credibility (Waddock and Googins, 2014). Thus, succeeding in CR and its communication is said to require *negotiation* between companies, their stakeholders, and society at large about what constitutes CR, what issues it should address, and how (cf. Ihlen *et al*., 2014). Expectations as a forward-looking phenomenon are an area that can explain both the success and pitfalls of this negotiation as they set the frame for assessing CR efforts, their communication and future development. This article departs from this background.

The article has a conceptual tone as it aims to investigate the details of expectations as a concept and how to approach expectations in empirical research. First, a targeted literature search in communication journals is presented to map the use of expectations in the current literature of CR communication. As will be discussed in the article, despite the wide circulation and use of expectations in the literature, the conceptual understanding of expectations tends to be narrow and biased in the sense that expectations are understood solely or, at least, predominantly as positive anticipations that organizations can start to fulfill in order to attain important, tangible and intangible assets (Olkkonen and Luoma-aho, 2015; Olkkonen, 2015b).

Second, to broaden the existing understanding of expectations and mitigate the positivity bias, four types of expectations are explored; two positive (optimistic and hopeful) and two negative (cynical and pessimistic) that comprise the Expectation Grid (Olkkonen and Luoma-aho, 2015; Olkkonen, 2015b).

Third, light is shed on expectation analysis by illustrating each expectation type with an empirical example. Resting on the Expectation Grid, the analysis examples break expectations down by identifying (1) the issue that is addressed in the expectation, (2) the outcome that is assessed in the expectation, and (3) the confidence that is attached to the expectation. The

analysis examples will come to portray how an analysis of expectations becomes more complex when outcomes and expectations turn negative.

The input of this article advances the viewpoints in existing literature on what we know about what expectations are—conceptually and empirically—that is, how they form, and how they are attached to organizations when stakeholders assess organizations and, more specifically, their corporate responsibility. The value of this input, as discussed toward the end of the article, is especially important in the light of corporate responsibility as social connection. Social connection means that corporate responsibility is assessed not only as liabilities (direct consequences between an action and an outcome), but as the perceived indirect consequences of doing business and responsibilities that different actors have in interdependent processes (Young, 2006; Schrempf 2012; see also Scherer and Palazzo, 2011). Therefore, social connection recognizes corporate responsibility as not only causal (and easily proven) links between an action and an outcome, but also as indirect responsibilities and responsibilities that cannot be pinned on a single actor (Young, 2006; Schrempf, 2012).

Social connection makes corporate responsibility a very versatile phenomenon as the impacts of conducting business for each sector—or even each organization—can be unique. It has been argued that corporate responsibility deals increasingly with social connection as the division of labor between business and nation-states changes and corporate responsibility comes to cover even broader societal issues (Scherer and Palazzo, 2007; 2011). This can set challenges to corporate responsibility communication, as certain (positive) issues can draw other (negative) issues in the spotlight due to their interconnectedness, as the empirical examples of this article will demonstrate. Hence, one issue may not necessarily be discussed without the other.

Before discussing expectation types and empirical examples, the next section maps how expectations are currently understood in the literature of corporate responsibility communication by presenting results from a targeted literature search.

How responsibility and expectations are currently connected

It is not uncommon to find references to expectations in the literature of corporate responsibility. Corporate responsibility is often explained as conformance to societal expectations or as anticipation of societal expectations (e.g., Westhues and Einwiller, 2006; Golob et al., 2009), or succeeding in corporate responsibility is seen as the ability to identify and meet stakeholder expectations and societal expectations (e.g., Scherer and Palazzo, 2007; 2011). Expectations are central, for example, to research that utilizes the viewpoints of (neo-)institutionalism and use expectations to explain how corporate responsibility is shaped in different cultural and regional contexts (e.g., Matten & Moon, 2008; Schultz and Wehmeier, 2010). Therefore, expectations seem to be a relevant concept for CR research. To explore the use of expectations more systematically, this section presents results from a targeted literature search with a focus on journals of corporate communication and public relations.

The search was executed in six central journals of corporate communication and public relations (*Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, *Corporate Reputation Review*, *Journal of Communication Management*, *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, and *Public Relations Review*; reported in full in Olkkonen and Luoma-aho, 2015). Responsibility was one of the concepts that expectations was most often connected to, ranking second after reputation and followed by relationship, legitimacy, satisfaction, trust, and identity. The search was done on August 13th, 2013 using EBSCO. The

sample was broad as there were no time limitations set and the search words expectations, expectations, expectancy, and expectancies were allowed to appear anywhere in the text. The initial search returned 353 articles, which was narrowed down to a sample of 197 articles that actually mentioned expectations in relation to organization-stakeholder relations, and had a full file available.

TABLE 1 The connection of expectations to corporate responsibility in the literature sample

Expectations' connection to corporate responsibility	Authors
CR as driven/defined by expectations	Heath and Palenchar, 2000; Hanson and Stuart, 2001; Bruning and Galloway, 2003; Berens and van Riel, 2004; Dawkins, 2004; Lindgreen and Swaen, 2005; Kampf, 2007; Peloza and Papania, 2008; Carroll, 2009; Friedman, 2009; Golob, Jancic and Lah, 2009; Lee, Fairhurst and Wesley, 2009; Kim, Park and Wertz, 2010
CR as meeting/satisfying/responding to expectations	Anderson, 1992; de Quevedo-Puente, de la Fuente-Sabaté and Delgado-García, 2007; Hillenbrand and Money, 2007; Podnar and Golob, 2007; Bertels and Peloza, 2008; Steyn and Niemann, 2010; Bae and Park, 2011
CR as aligning company operations with expectations	González-Herrero and Pratt, 1996; Westhues and Einwiller, 2006; Colleoni, 2013
CR as identifying/exploring/understanding expectations	Signitzer & Prexl, 2008; Vaaland and Heide, 2008; Lindgreen, Swaen, and Johnston, 2009
CR as reputation building where reputation is (partly) assessed based on expectations	Ki & Hon, 2007; Ponzi, Fombrun, and Gardberg, 2011; Soppe, Schauten, Soppe and Kaymak, 2011; Brønn, 2012
CR as legitimacy building where legitimacy (partly) depend on expectations	Ihlen, 2008; Johansen and Nielsen, 2011; Johansen and Nielsen, 2012
CR as branding/marketing that is (partly) guided by expectations	Griffin, 2002; Hagen, 2008; Kim, 2011; Papasolomou and Kitchen, 2011
CR as trust building that is (partly) affected by expectations	Adams, Highhouse and Zickar, 2010

Of the 197 articles that were analyzed, roughly one article in five mentioned expectations in connection to corporate responsibility. These 38 articles are further analyzed next. The sample included only academic, peer-reviewed articles (for example, editorials were removed) that mentioned expectations and corporate responsibility to a degree that it was possible to identify how the authors connected the two. Table 1 lists these 38 articles and distinguishes between different ways of connecting expectations and corporate responsibility (See Appendix 1 for full reference information of the sample).

As Table 1 portrays, corporate responsibility is often seen to be driven or defined by societal or stakeholder expectations, or corporate responsibility is seen as meeting, satisfying, or responding to expectations. Furthermore, alignment of company operations with expectations, and the ability to identify, explore, or understand expectations are given as explanations to corporate responsibility. In addition, some scholars discuss expectations in order to explain the connections between corporate responsibility and reputation, legitimacy, branding, marketing, or trust.

Overall, in this sample of articles there seemed to be some sort of agreement that societal or stakeholder expectations are important for corporate responsibility, both in articles that mentioned the connection only briefly and concentrated on studying something else (e.g., Ki and Hon 2007; Carroll 2009) and in articles that concentrated particularly on studying expectations of corporate responsibility (e.g., Podnar and Golob, 2007; Bertels and Peloza, 2008; Colleoni, 2013). However, it was rarely explained what these societal or stakeholder expectations are and especially how they form in more detail. Some hints were given, for example, by Podnar and Golob (2007) who mention that societal expectations can be economic, legal, ethical and

discretionary, and they can touch upon issues such as legislative rules, ethical conduct, trustworthiness, transparency and responsiveness.

In only four articles out of the 38 that were analyzed, expectations were given an explicit definition. Golob *et al.* (2009, p. 458) define expectations as beliefs of what should happen, and Podnar and Golob (2007, p. 329) follow a definition according to which expectations are beliefs of what is to be expected. Furthermore, Brønn (2012, p. 81) and de Quevedo-Puente *et al.* (2007, p. 66) connect their definitions of expectations in institutional contexts where elements such as norms, values, legal demands, and social definitions shape expectations.

What is worth noting is that based on this sample the current literature understands expectations predominantly as positive constructions—meeting expectations is seen to lead to more responsibility, a better reputation, a more solid legitimacy. Only two of the 38 articles attempt to break this positivity bias: Adams *et al.* (2010) mention that expectations can be distrusting when, for example, there is reason to expect exploitation or deceiving behavior, and Golob *et al.* (2009) briefly mention that expectations can be skeptical. Thus, although expectations seem to be often mentioned in the literature and seen important for corporate responsibility communication, there are gaps in how expectations have been understood, and hence, there is room for further conceptual and empirical work on what expectations actually are.

The next chapter offers some viewpoints for a more solid conceptual foundation for expectations, followed by empirical examples that further unravel expectations as positive *and* negative constructions.

Stakeholder expectations: optimistic, hopeful, cynical, and pessimistic

The existing literature on expectations and corporate responsibility in communication journals tell relatively little about what expectations are conceptually and empirically—how they form, and how they are attached to organizations when stakeholders assess organizations and, more specifically, their corporate responsibility. Other streams of research, such as customer management and customer satisfaction, have developed models that explain, for example, the gaps between expectations and perceived quality or performance. The gap model (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993) suggest that a perceived mismatch between expectations and performance lead to dissatisfaction in service encounters. The same idea of gaps between expectations and performance has been explained with the expectancy disconfirmation model (Oliver 1980), and gaps that result from expectation violations are also central for the expectancy violation theory that focuses on interpersonal communication (Burgoon, 1993).

The aforementioned models further emphasize the importance of expectations for relationships. When it comes to breaking expectations down as a concept, customer management and customer satisfaction literature offer support as this stream of research presents expectations as a dynamic phenomenon where different factors can affect the final formation of an expectation (see, e.g., Miller, 1977; Summers and Granbois, 1977; Swan *et al.*, 1982; Woodruff *et al.*, 1983; Zeithaml *et al.*, 1993; see also Olkkonen and Luoma-aho, 2015). These factors have been suggested to create different expectation types that have different origins (Summers and Granbois, 1977; Woodruff et al., 1983). The types suggested are abundant (see Olkkonen and Luoma-aho, 2015), some dealing with *values*, such as "normative" (Summers and Granbois, 1977) or "ideal" expectations (Miller, 1977), while some rest on the *information* that is available, such as "precise" or "realistic" expectations (Ojasalo, 2001). Furthermore, previous *experience* is

recognized as a factor, for example, in "experience-based" expectations (Woodruff *et al.*, 1983). Finally, expectations can be driven by *personal interest* as suggested in "deserved" (Miller, 1977) or "desired" expectations (Swan et al., 1982).

Building on these four factors that shape expectations—values, information, experience, and personal interest—in a recent earlier work by the author it was suggested that to understand stakeholder expectations in the context of stakeholder-organization relations, one needs to understand both a normative assessment and an organization-specific assessment, where the latter is embedded in the former (Olkkonen, 2015b). This makes expectations "*positive or negative future-oriented assessments of an organization's ability and willingness that form in the interplay between normative and predictive factors and can, ultimately, convey optimism, hope, cynicism, or pessimism toward the organization and its actions*" (Olkkonen, 2015b, p. 60).

As part of the normative assessment, expectations are influenced by values and interests that are relatively static in the sense that they remain the same when stakeholders assess different organizations (Olkkonen, 2015b). Values and interests are the baseline for forming expectations, and they represent what an individual or a group finds valuable and good, and hence, they vary depending on *what* is valued and *why*, bound not only by individual variance but cultural variance. Hence, values can, for example, range from economic values to societal values, and interests can be anything from very limited self-interest to utilitarianism.

The organization-specific assessment, in turn, is predictive and it describes how likely it is that an organization *will* do something (Olkkonen, 2015b). This predictive element has not, thus far, been strongly present in the literature of CR communication, as it implies that expectations can be not only positive but negative. In the predictive assessment, stakeholders assess how likely it is that their expectations will be fulfilled—that is, how willing and able the

organization is perceived to meet their values and interests. The organization-specific assessment can turn an expectation negative, if the organization is perceived as unwilling or unable to either offer an outcome that is valued, or to prevent an outcome that is not valued (Olkkonen, 2015b).

The two embedded assessments—normative assessment of different outcomes and organization-specific assessment dealing with confidence in a particular organization—are the basis for the Expectation Grid (first introduced by Olkkonen and Luoma-aho, 2015; empirically tested and revised by Olkkonen, 2015a; 2015b). Figure 1 below depicts the Expectation Grid and opens up the differences between the positive (optimistic or hopeful), and negative (cynical or pessimistic) expectations.

The realm of positive expectations *The realm of negative expectations*

Positive outcome

OPTIMISTIC
Confidence in a positive outcome

C
A
U
T
I
O
N

CYNICAL
Lack of confidence in a positive outcome

HOPEFUL
Confidence in preventing a negative outcome

PESSIMISTIC
Lack of confidence in preventing a negative outcome

Negative outcome
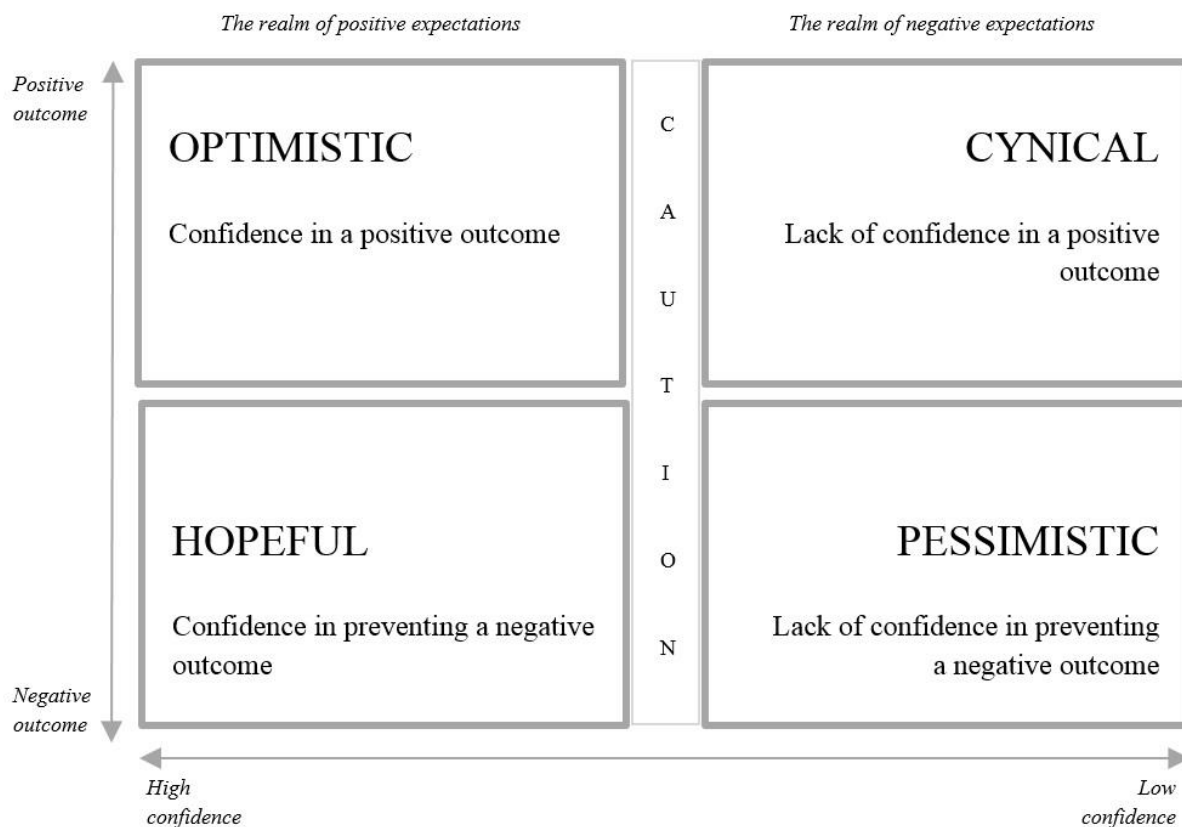
High confidence *Low confidence*

FIGURE 1 The realm of positive and negative expectations on the Expectation Grid

When stakeholders have *optimistic expectations*, they anticipate that the organization is willing and able to offer outcomes that they value. The other positive expectation type is *hopeful* that indicates an anticipation that the organization is willing and able to prevent an outcome the stakeholder perceives negative. The difference between these two is the outcome that is assessed—an optimistic expectation is connected to a positive outcome (and its delivery), whereas a hopeful expectation is connected to a negative outcome (and its prevention). Overall, positive expectations are a sign of confidence and trust in the organization, and hence, their violation is likely to violate also the trust invested in them.

When stakeholder expectations are negative, confidence in the organization's willingness and ability is low. *Cynical expectations* indicate an anticipation that the organization is unwilling or unable to offer outcomes that the stakeholder perceives as positive. The difference to a *pessimistic expectation*, is again, the outcome—a pessimistic expectation indicates an anticipation that the organization is unwilling or unable to prevent an outcome that the stakeholder perceives as negative.

As noted during the testing and revising of the Expectation Grid (Olkkonen, 2015a; 2015b), these four expectation types are extremities as in reality stakeholders might display caution in their expectation rather than, for example, pure optimism or cynicism. Thus, an area of caution was added between the positive and negative realms of expectations. Furthermore, an empirical testing of expectation mapping showed that expectations are often interconnected; the optimism or hopes in positive expectations can be pulled down by a simultaneous impact of negative expectations (Olkkonen, 2015a). This can happen, for example, if the organization's good deeds are perceived as insufficient to counteract (broader) negative trends, such as commercialization and concentration of ownership.

The next section presents empirical examples of the different expectation types in the context of sector-based corporate responsibility. If stakeholders' expectations of corporate responsibility—on a general level—deal with the societal role of business and how an organization is performing as a member of the society (cf. Dahlsrud, 2008; Matten and Moon, 2008; Okoye, 2009), expectations that concern sector-based corporate responsibilities deal with the specific consequences of doing a certain type of business and the broader issues and processes a certain business is connected to, both from the liability perspective and social connection perspective (cf. Young, 2006; Timonen and Luoma-aho, 2010; Vidal *et al.*, 2010; Schrempf, 2012; Olkkonen, 2015a). After focusing on the empirical examples as specific CR issues of the sector that was studied—the media sector—the end of the paper will discuss the more general implications of expectation analysis for corporate communication.

Empirical examples

To illustrate how expectations can be analyzed and categorized, this section presents empirical examples from a sub-study of a recent doctoral dissertation (Olkkonen, 2015b) and deepens their analysis. The empirical data for the sub-study was generated by interviewing 13 Finnish non-governmental organization (NGO) experts about their views on corporate responsibility and the societal role of a specific sector—the media sector. The interviewees had followed the development of the media sector as part of their jobs that concentrated either directly (e.g., media education), or indirectly (e.g. global education, Internet issues) on media-related issues. The interviews and analysis concentrated especially on the sector-specific traits of corporate responsibility in the media sector that are defined by the direct and indirect consequences of producing media content (cf. Young, 2006; Schrempf, 2012). Hence, the issues that are included

in the empirical examples relate to both business ethics and media/journalism ethics that together constitute the corporate responsibility of the media sector (Olkkonen, 2015a; Adams-Bloom and Cleary, 2009; Global Reporting Initiative, 2014).

Though the empirical examples that are presented next take place in this specific context of the media sector, this article concentrates less on making conclusions about media sector and media organizations, and more on shedding light on how expectations (as a phenomenon) can be analyzed and understood. Hence, this empirical section will not present a comprehensive description of the data and results (for this, see Olkkonen, 2015a) but, rather, it will go deeper into individual analysis examples and further empirical illustrations of the different expectation types: optimistic, hopeful, cynical, and pessimistic. Furthermore, the empirical examples will portray how an analysis of expectations becomes more complex when outcomes and expectations turn negative, as negative outcomes are contrasted with positive outcomes.

The analysis examples utilize the Expectation Grid and the four expectation types in it. The analysis concentrated in identifying, first, (1) the issue that is addressed in the expectation, (2) the outcome that is assessed in the expectation (positive or negative), and (3) the confidence that is attached to the expectation (high to low). This was done by coding the qualitative interview data with the help of thematic analysis (see e.g., Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis progressed from familiarizing with the data, to coding the data and further onwards to searching, reviewing, and defining themes. The purpose of a code was to capture a specific feature of the data and to describe the qualitative richness of the phenomenon, whereas a theme constituted a pattern that described and organized the observations that were made during coding (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis of the NGO expert interview data revealed that the interviewees expressed both positive and negative expectations

that often seemed to be discussed together when the interviewees assessed media organizations and their responsibilities. To open up the analysis and coding of expectations and to display the analyzed elements that determine expectation category, three analysis examples are presented next.

The first example concerns optimistic expectations. In the interview extract below, the interviewed NGO expert talks about how media companies should participate in media education that promote media literacy as part of their corporate responsibility:

> Part of the media's responsibility could be that the leading commercial media would cooperate somehow in terms of media education, that they would offer, for example, some tools for it, kind of like the Newspaper Week and others. But, somehow, more broadly connected to social media.
>
> (NGO expert 6)

To analyze an individual interview extract such as the one above, first the extract was coded by giving it a general category based on the issue that was addressed in the extract—in this case, media literacy. Media literacy has been generally noted as one of the central issues for CR in the media sector (Global Reporting Initiative, 2014; Media CSR Forum, 2008), and the interviewee stresses that media organizations' can take action by providing tools for it. Media literacy is a typical CR issue when viewed from the viewpoint of social connection: it deals with the broad consequences of media products on society. Therefore, by promoting media literacy, media organizations can contribute to citizens' media reading skills and take part in building a more analytical and critical audience. The reason the expectation expressed in this extract was identified as optimistic depended on the outcome the interviewee discussed, and how likely the

interviewee assessed the outcome, based on the four-fold model presented in the Expectation Grid. Table 2 below explicates how the extract was analyzed.

TABLE 2 Analysis example: optimistic expectation

Extract	Code/Issue	Outcome	Confidence	Expectation
Part of the media's responsibility could be that the leading commercial media would cooperate somehow in terms of media education, that they would offer, for example, some tools for it, kind of like the Newspaper Week and others. But, somehow, more broadly connected to social media.	media literacy	positive	high (in achieving a positive outcome)	*optimistic*

Optimistic expectations, such as the one in the extract above, were relatively straightforward to identify and analyze as they dealt with positive outcomes that stakeholders would like organizations to deliver. When mirroring back to how expectations are currently understood in the literature of CR communication, optimistic expectations seem to follow the current dominant view—that expectations are positive hopes or wishes that, when recognized, organizations can address.

Compared to optimistic expectations, hopeful expectations were less obvious to identify. This was because hopeful expectations are connected to negative outcomes that were often contrasted with how things should be (positive outcomes), and hence, negative and positive outcomes were often discussed together. This interlinking often resulted in cautious expectations with mixed confidence as opposed to clear positive or negative expectation types. In the following extract, an interviewee discusses some large trends that are affecting media

organizations and their societal role as an example of interlinking between a hopeful and a cautious expectation:

> We have great things happening—there are magazines […] that form a counterforce somehow, even though one can argue that even their journalism is produced from an elitist perspective. But there are attempts to break [mainstream journalism]—for example, the youth have their own [magazine]. There are attempts, and as a media educator I would hope that we will not stay in this [state] that we already have some [new forms] but that we try to develop it further and bring forth opportunities. And this has to do with the future in the sense that I would be very hopeful to see how mainstream journalism might be a lot different than it currently is. (NGO expert 8)

In the extract, the interviewee discusses interlinking that occurs between concentrated media and the hope of increased diversity brought about by new media forms. Media concentration and market-driven media production are among the most critical issues media organizations are currently criticized for—the ethics of media production has been questioned as concentrated media production is often connected with negative trends such as tabloidization and sensationalism (Connell, 1998), "infotainment" or the "dumbing down" of media content (Thussu, 2007). Table 3 breaks the interview extract to smaller proportions to show how to distinguish between positive and negative elements and analyze them further. In the first part of the extract the interviewee expresses caution, both concerning diversity and media concentration, but toward the end the expectations that concern media concentration turn from cautious to hopeful.

TABLE 3   Analysis example: cautious and hopeful expectations

Extract	Code/Issue	Outcome	Confidence	Expectation
We have great things happening—there are magazines […] that form a counterforce somehow,	diversity	positive	mixed	*cautious*
even though one can argue that even their journalism is produced from an elitist perspective.	media concentration	negative	mixed	*cautious*
But there are attempts to break [mainstream journalism]—for example, the youth have their own [magazine]. There are attempts, and as a media educator I would hope that we will not stay in this [state] that we already have some [new forms]	diversity	positive	mixed	*cautious*
but that we try to develop it further and bring forth opportunities. And this has to do with the future in the sense that I would be very hopeful to see how mainstream journalism might be a lot different than it currently is.	media concentration	negative	high (in preventing a negative outcome)	*hopeful*

When assessed in the light of previous literature, hopeful expectations are nothing new in the sense that societal or stakeholder expectations can include also issues that deal with what sort of negative outcomes organizations should avoid, if they want to meet expectations. In the case of the media industry, issues to avoid can relate to above examples of concentration and one-sided media production, whereas more generally speaking, the issues may touch upon topics such as pollution, discrimination, and abuse of human rights. Hopeful expectations are, essentially, anticipations that a negative development or an outcome can be avoided. However, what can be

previously incompletely recognized is that expectations are not only about future opportunities for the organization, but they can convey also caution and doubt toward the organization and its actions. To specify, the example of cautious expectations above indicate how stakeholder expectations are not always positive—cautious expectations express a mixed confidence in the organization's ability to either offer positive outcomes or to prevent negative outcomes.

Proceeding further to negative expectations, the confidence turns from mixed to low. The following extract portrays both forms of negative expectations: cynical and pessimistic. In the extract, the interviewee assesses media content and media's behavior in connection to crises:

> [News include] pictures from accidents scenes and of people covered in blood, and they take interviews from people who are clearly in shock and they surely cannot assess whether they are in a condition to make statements on the subject […]. This kind of information I don't need, I need information such as figures and… I mean that the fact that someone is in shock does not interest me, I can figure that out when I know what has happened. But what I do need is how such an event is possible and how—is there something bigger in the background. (NGO expert 6)

In this extract, similar to the earlier example of hopeful expectations, the interviewee discusses positive and negative outcomes simultaneously and interconnected. The negative outcome that is assessed is scandal seeking, and this negative development is assessed in the light of the outcomes the interviewee would like to see more of, sensitivity and curating. While on the one hand the problem that is being discussed deals with the conduct of individual journalists, on the other hand it connects more broadly to organizational practices and policies—journalists now work increasingly for competitive and commercial media, which can put pressure on protecting

professional ethics and integrity against upper-level policies (e.g., Raittila *et al.*, 2010; Richards, 2004). Table 4 portrays the analysis in more detail.

TABLE 4 Analysis example: pessimistic, cynical, and cautious expectations

Extract	Code/Issue	Outcome	Confidence	Expectation
	(1) scandal seeking	negative	low (in preventing negative outcome)	*pessimistic*
	(2) sensitivity	positive	low (in achieving positive outcome)	*cynical*
I need information such as figures and…	curating	positive	mixed	*cautious*
	(1) scandal seeking	negative	low (in preventing negative outcome)	*pessimistic*
	(2) sensitivity	positive	low (in achieving positive outcome)	*cynical*
But what I do need is how such an event is possible and how—is there something bigger in the background.	curating	positive	mixed	*cautious*

The interconnectedness becomes particularly visible in this example, as even a single comment such as "I mean the fact that someone is in shock does not interest me, I can figure that out when I know what has happened" is connected to a negative (scandal seeking) and a positive outcome (sensitivity) that are weighed simultaneously by the interviewee. This means that while the interviewee discusses corporate irresponsibility and the negative development of scandal seeking that the interviewee sees likely to continue, the desired state of affairs is implicitly expressed in

the same comment: the interviewee sees a need for sensitivity in media's conduct. In essence, sensitivity is the counterforce to allegations of quick-win journalism such as click-baiting (e.g., Nygaard Blom and Reinecke Hansen, 2015). These questionable practices relate strongly to organizational practices and policies, as sensitivity can be an overwhelming goal to fulfill for an individual journalist if it is not supported by organizational level policies that permeate both editorial and financial management. In the extract above, the interviewee is left to expect pessimistically that scandal-seeking will continue, cynically that sensitivity will not be achieved, and cautiously that curating is threatened.

Especially this type of example of negative expectations shows that to treat stakeholder expectations only as positive constructions paints an incomplete picture of expectations as a phenomenon. The positivity bias and lack of definitions in the current literature demerits expectations close to observable data and presumes that one automatically know what is meant by expectations and how to identify what they are.

While the empirical examples presented above had a narrow focus in the media sector, the few examples show how there are several components that need to be taken into account when expectations are analyzed, especially when expectations turn negative. Figure 2 presents the analyzed expectation examples on the Expectation Grid and shows interlinking between the hopeful expectation of media concentration and cautious expectation of diversity, and between the pessimistic expectation of scandal seeking and cautious expectation of curating and cynical expectation of sensitivity.
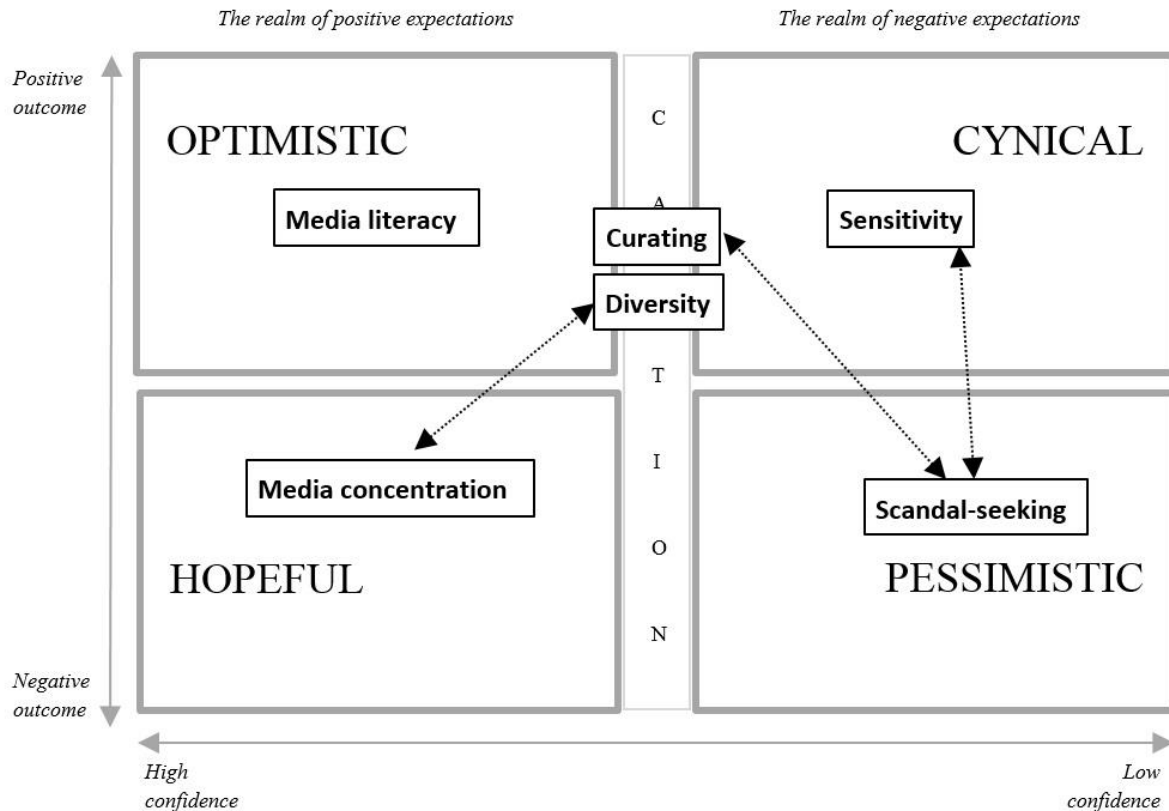
FIGURE 2 Expectation examples on the Expectation Grid

What seems to be happening on the Expectation Grid is that when negative outcomes are interlinked with issues associated with positive outcomes (diversity, curating, sensitivity), they are "pulled" to the area of caution. Understanding these connections can be crucial for CR communication, as interlinking may mean that one issue cannot be discussed without the other—or at least without raising questions about the other. Thus, by revealing these interlinkings, organizations can be more equipped to negotiate corporate responsibility with their stakeholders, and address stakeholder criticism in a meaningful way. Furthermore, as the importance social connection grows, it is a relevant question whether the current CR communication research is equipped well enough to understand stakeholder expectations that are influenced by the

complexity of social connection, and whether the positively biased view to expectations needs to be more strongly challenged.

Next, some concluding remarks are offered as insights on how to use the input of this article and proceed with a less positivity-biased conceptual understanding of stakeholder expectations. Finally, the limitations of this article are discussed, followed by suggestions for future research.

Conclusions

This article set out to address and mitigate the positivity bias in studying expectations of corporate responsibility. The purpose was to advance the viewpoints in existing literature both in terms of conceptual and empirical understanding. This was done by exploring four expectation types, two positive (optimistic and hopeful) and two negative (cynical and pessimistic). The empirical examples concentrated on expectation analysis and broke examples of each expectation type down by identifying (1) the issue that is addressed in the expectation, (2) the outcome that is assessed in the expectation, and (3) the confidence that is attached to the expectation.

Thus far, the problematization, analysis, and conceptualization of expectations has been largely missing from the current research of corporate responsibility communication. The current research has been mostly preoccupied with optimistic expectations and, to some degree, hopeful expectations, while the negative forms of expectations are almost completely missing from empirical research. The empirical examples of this article showed that to analyze expectations, they need to be broken down to several components rather than only observed. This kind of analysis can reveal how expectations function as both positive and negative constructions.

Especially when the sector-specific traits of corporate responsibility are under analysis, corporate responsibility is connected to complex issues and interdependent processes that are difficult to identify and unravel without a thorough analysis. This relates to corporate responsibility as social connection and the change in the scope of corporate responsibility when businesses address issues that have previously belonged to nation-states, such as public health, education, social security, business regulation, human rights, and social stability (cf. Scherer and Palazzo, 2011). Social connection adds complexity to expectations, and an analysis of positive and negative expectations can help to unravel that complexity and how positive and negative assessments actually influence each other and are connected.

A more profound understanding of stakeholder expectations has the potential to make organizations more sensitive toward their societal context where social connectedness comes to play. Expectation analysis brings stakeholders' values, perceptions, assessments and views of the future into the organizational awareness and agenda and, thus, it can help organizations to craft their (strategic) communication when it comes to the vast field of CR issues. Moreover, understanding especially the interlinking between positive and negative expectations can help CR communication to avoid some of the allegations of hypocrisy, spin, window-dressing or other criticism associated with CR actions. Addressing one (positive) issue might require equal attention to another (negative) issue, and expectation analysis has the potential to make these connections visible.

Furthermore, the ability to analyze expectations can help organizations to distinguish not only between different form of expectations, but where they are actually rooted to and how widely they are spread. This information can significantly help organizations to negotiate corporate responsibility with their stakeholders and institutional contexts. The empirical

examples of this article only addressed a handful of CR issues, whereas the reality for organizations is "a jungle" of different issues that require careful management. When issues are added, the map formed on the Expectation Grid gets more complex and expectations can form overarching themes that relate to larger issues and trends (that may deal with social connection). As the importance of certain issues can be different in different times due to, for example, current visibility and level of conversation, the Expectation Grid can turn into a heat map that identifies the current hot spots of CR issues for a specific sector or organization. Monitoring changes in expectations can help to distinguish between maturing and institutionalized expectations as well as emerging expectations and their development.

To summarize, expectation analysis that recognizes positive and negative expectations is an opportunity to understand the multitude of CR issues and make sense of the interlinking between different issues. In their expectations, the stakeholders assess the pros and cons of the current direction and future development of corporate responsibility and, hence, understanding expectations is key to understanding how stakeholders make sense of corporate responsibility and the societal role of business.

Limitations and Future Research

This article aimed to make a contribution to the general discussion on expectations in connection to corporate responsibility, but used a very limited data to make empirical observations. Not only was the industry of choice a very specific—the media—but also the interviewees were formed by a specific group of experts. Hence, the suggestions put forth in this article can need further validation and assessment in other settings. However, as the data was used primarily to demonstrate expectation analysis and components that it include, the purpose of the limited data

was not to make conclusions about, for example, the current state of important (general or industry-specific) corporate responsibility issues.

Hopefully the input of this article will aid future studies to address expectations of corporate responsibility with more conceptual and analytical precision and to further theorize their relevance for corporate responsibility communication. Future research is invited to take part in mitigating the positivity bias in understanding expectations and to execute empirical studies where expectations are studied and analyzed both as positive and negative constructions. This article utilized thematic analysis to tap into expectation analysis, but there may be other qualitative methods that can become suitable, for example, narrative analysis and grounded theory.

Furthermore, the article used interview data which, especially when thinking the practice of corporate communication, can be a demanding technique to gain information about stakeholders' expectations. Therefore, practitioners can benefit from assessing the value of their existing monitoring channels for expectation identification. Expectations may not always be explicitly articulated, but identifiable from the feedback the organization receives and especially from the discussions that concern the organization or themes that are relevant for the organization and/or the industry. These discussions can be spread across different online and offline arenas (cf. Luoma-aho and Vos, 2010). Thus, relying on feedback alone is not necessarily sufficient, but organizations may need to actively search for relevant groups and discussions in order to tap into expectations. To make further contributions to practice, future research could address also this question of how organizations can develop their channels for expectation monitoring.

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Appendix 1

Sample of academic articles listed in Table 1

Author(s)	Year	Title	Journal, volume, number, and pages
Adams, J. E., Highhouse, S. and Zickar, M. J.	2010	Understanding general distrust in corporations	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 13 No 1, pp. 38-51
Anderson, D. S.	1992	Identifying and responding to activist publics: A case study	Journal of Public Relations Research, Vol. 4 No. 3, pp. 151-165
Bae, J. and Park, S-A.	2011	Socio-contextual influences on the Korean news media's interpretation of Samsung's $847.6 million donation	Journal of Public Relations Research, Vol. 23 No. 2, pp. 141-166
Berens, G. and van Riel, C. B. M.	2004	Corporate associations in the academic literature: Three main streams of thought in the reputation measurement literature	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 161–178
Bertels, S. and Peloza, J.	2008	Running just to stand still? Managing CSR reputation in an era of ratcheting expectations	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 56-72
Brønn, P. S.	2012	Adapting the PZB service quality model to reputation risk analysis and the implications for CSR communication	Journal of Communication Management, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 77-94
Bruning, S. D. and Galloway, T.	2003	Expanding the organization–public relationship scale: Exploring the role that structural and personal commitment play in organization–public relationships	Public Relations Review, Vol. 29, pp. 309-319
Carroll, C.	2009	Defying a reputational crisis: Cadbury's salmonella scare: why are customers willing to forgive and forget?	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 64–82
Colleoni, E.	2013	CSR communication strategies for organizational legitimacy in social media	Corporate Communications: An International Journal Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 228-248
Dawkins, J.	2004	Corporate responsibility: The communication challenge	Journal of Communication Management, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp 108-119
de Quevedo-Puente, E., de la Fuente-Sabaté, J. M. and Delgado-García, J. B.	2007	Corporate social performance and corporate reputation: Two interwoven perspectives	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 60–72
Friedman, B. A.	2009	Human resource management role implications for corporate reputation	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 229-244
Golob, U., Jancic, Z. and Lah, B. M.	2009	Corporate social responsibility and transparent pricing in the case of the euro changeover	Corporate Communications: An International Journal, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 456-469

González-Herrero, A. and Pratt, C. B.	1996	An integrated symmetrical model for crisis-communications management	Journal of Public Relations Research, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 79-105
Griffin, J. J.	2002	To brand or not to brand? Trade-offs in corporate branding decisions	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 5 No 2-3, pp. 228-240
Hanson, D. and Stuart, H.	2001	Failing the reputation management test: The case of BHP, the big Australian	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 128–143
Hagen, Ø.	2008	Seduced by their proactive image? On using auto communication to enhance CSR	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 130-144
Heath, R. L. and Palenchar, M.	2000	Community relations and risk communication: A longitudinal study of the impact of emergency response messages	Journal of Public Relations Research, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 131-161
Hillenbrand, C. and Money, K.	2007	Corporate responsibility and corporate reputation: Two separate concepts of two sides of the same coin?	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 261-277
Ihlen, Ø.	2008	Mapping the environment for corporate social responsibility: Stakeholders, publics and the public sphere	Corporate Communications: An International Journal, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 135-146
Johansen, T. S. and Nielsen, A. E.	2011	Strategic stakeholder dialogues: A discursive perspective on relationship building	Corporate Communications: An International Journal Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 204-217
Johansen, T. S. and Nielsen, A. E.	2012	CSR in corporate self-storying: Legitimacy as a question of differentiation and conformity	Corporate Communications: An International Journal Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 434-448
Kampf, C.	2007	Corporate social responsibility: WalMart, Maersk and the cultural bounds of representation in corporate web sites	Corporate Communications: An International Journal Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 41-57
Ki, E.-J. and Hon, L. C.	2007	Testing the linkages among the organization-public relationship and attitude and behavioral intentions	Journal of Public Relations Research, Vol. 19 No. 1, pp. 1-23
Kim, S.	2011	Transferring effects of CSR strategy on consumer responses: The synergistic model of corporate communication strategy	Journal of Public Relations Research, Vol. 23 No. 2, pp. 218-241
Kim, S., Park, J.-H. and Wertz, E. M.	2010	Expectation gaps between stakeholders and web-based corporate public relations efforts: Focusing on Fortune 500 corporate web sites	Public Relations Review, Vol. 36, pp. 215-221
Lee, M.-Y., Fairhurst, A. and Wesley, S.	2009	Corporate social responsibility: A review of the Top 100 US retailers	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 140–158
Lindgreen, A. and Swaen, V.	2005	Corporate citizenship: Let not relationship marketing escape the management toolbox	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 7 No. 4, pp. 346-363
Lindgreen, A., Swaen, V. and Johnston, W.	2009	The supporting function of marketing in corporate social responsibility	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 120-139

Papasolomou, I. and Kitchen, P. J.	2011	Cause related marketing: Developing a tripartite approach with BWM	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 63–75
Peloza, J. and Papania, L.	2008	The missing link between corporate social responsibility and financial performance: Stakeholder salience and identification	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 169–181
Podnar, K. and Golob, U.	2007	CSR expectations: The focus of corporate marketing	Corporate Communications: An International Journal Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 326-340
Ponzi, L. J., Fombrun, C. J. and Gardberg, N. A.	2011	RepTrak ™ Pulse: Conceptualizing and validating a short-form measure of corporate reputation	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 15–35
Signitzer, B. and Prexl, A.	2008	Corporate sustainability communications: Aspects of theory and professionalization	Journal of Public Relations Research, Vol. 20, pp. 1-19
Soppe, A., Schauten, M., Soppe, J. and Kaymak, U.	2011	Corporate social responsibility reputation (CSRR): Do companies comply with their raised CSR expectations ?	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 300–323
Steyn, B. and Niemann, L.	2010	Enterprise strategy: A concept that explicates corporate communication's strategic contribution at the macro-organisational level	Journal of Communication Management, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 106-126
Vaaland, T. I. and Heide, M.	2008	Managing corporate social responsibility: Lessons from the oil industry	Corporate Communications: An International Journal Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 212-225
Westhues, M. and Einwiller, S.	2006	Corporate foundations: Their role for corporate social responsibility	Corporate Reputation Review, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 144–153