



JUSTIFYING CORPORATE IRRESPONSIBILITY

Brand statements and discourses about remaining in Russia despite the war in Ukraine

Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology LUT

Master of Science in Economics and Business Administration, Master's Thesis

Master's Programme in International Marketing Management (MIMM)

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ABSTRACT

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Faculty: LUT Business School

Degree programme: Business Administration

Major: International Marketing Management

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Master's thesis

2024

84 pages, 18 figures, and 2 appendices

Examiners: Associate Professor Laura Olkkonen and Associate Professor Joonas Keränen

Keywords: corporate irresponsibility, corporate social responsibility, war in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine, which began in February 2022, has highlighted corporate irresponsibility and corporate social responsibility. In the media, the brands that have remained in Russia are seen as part of the reason the war has continued for more than two years. This thesis examines how brands have reacted to the war in Ukraine, how brands justify remaining in Russia, and how brands' industries affect discourses.

The research strategy was an inductive approach, and qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis were used as methods. The data was collected from the Yale list maintained by Yale university and KSE Institute's Leave-Russia list, both of which collect brand statements directly from brands and news articles.

The findings were 35 different discourses identified from the data, of which 10 main discourses are presented with examples. Based on the findings, in Ukraine war context, the theory of corporate irresponsibility has been challenged by the emphasis on economic, ethical and political aspects - because environmental aspects were not mentioned once in the data, even though environmental protection is usually emphasized in the theory of corporate responsibility.

Future studies could also examine whether these findings of corporate irresponsibility are valid also in other contexts than this, as well as examine the illegality and legality of the activities of the brands remaining in Russia, as there was no opportunity to delve deeper into them within the framework of this thesis.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Lappeenrannan–Lahden teknillinen yliopisto LUT

Tiedekunta: LUT-kauppakorkeakoulu

Tutkinto-ohjelma: Kauppatieteet

Pääaine: kansainvälinen markkinointijohtaminen

Tekijä: Carla Pekander

YRITYSVASTUUTTUUMUUDEN PERUSTELEMINEN

Brändilausunnot ja diskurssit Venäjällä pysymisestä Ukrainan sodasta huolimatta

Kauppatieteiden pro gradu -tutkielma

2024

84 sivua, 18 kuvaa, ja 2 liitettä

Tarkastajat: Apulaisprofessori Laura Olkkonen ja apulaisprofessori Joonas Keränen

Avainsanat: yritysvastuuttomuus, yritysvastuullisuus, Ukrainan sota

Helmikuussa 2022 alkanut sota Ukrainassa on tuonut näkyviin yritysvastuuttomuuden ja yritysvastuullisuuden. Mediassa Venäjällä pysyneitä yrityksiä pidetään osasyynä sodan jatkumiselle yli kaksi vuotta. Tämä tutkielma tarkastelee, miten brändit ovat reagoineet Ukrainan sotaan, ja miten brändit perustelevat Venäjällä pysymistä sekä miten brändien toimiala vaikuttaa diskursseihin.

Tutkimusstrategiana oli induktiivinen lähestymistapa, ja metodeina käytettiin laadullista sisältöanalyysia ja diskurssianalyysia. Aineisto kerättiin Yalen yliopiston ylläpitämästä Yale-listasta sekä KSE-instituutin Leave-Russia-listasta, joihin molempiin on kerätty brändien lausuntoja suoraan yrityksiltä sekä uutisartikkeleista.

Tuloksina aineistosta identifioitiin 35 erilaista diskurssia, joista näistä 10 päädiskurssia esitellään esimerkkien avulla. Tulosten mukaan Ukrainan sodan yhteydessä yritysvastuuttomuuden teoria on haastettu taloudellisten, eettisten sekä poliittisten näkökulmien korostumisella, koska ympäristövaikutuksia aineistossa ei mainittu kertaakaan, vaikka ympäristönsuojelua yleensä painotetaan yritysvastuullisuuden teoriassa.

Tulevissa tutkimuksissa voisi tarkastella myös sitä, pätevätkö nämä havainnot yritysvastuuttomuudesta myös muissa konteksteissa, sekä tarkastella Venäjälle jääneiden brändien toiminnan laittomuutta ja laillisuutta, koska niihin ei ollut mahdollisuutta paneutua syvemmälle tämän tutkielman puitteissa.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I need thank Associate Professor Laura Olkkonen and Associate Profesor Joonas Keränen - my supervisors - for all their advice and support, this thesis would not have been possible without them. Second, I want to thank my husband for always cheering me and believing in me – even when I doubted myself at times.

Third, I want to say big thanks to my family and friends. My journey to LUT University was inspired by my father, who has been an entrepreneur for a big part of his life, and my mother, whose customer behaviour book I read growing up. I always dreamed of studying marketing one day, and I am very grateful for the opportunity I was given. Living in Lappeenranta was a lifechanging experience for me: I never knew the feeling of waking up birds singing and the forest being the first sight outside of my window in the morning. I am incredibly happy to have met some of the most amazing classmates at LUT, having worked on many group projects together, and participating in MIMM activities. I will cherish these memories dearly for years to come.

ABBREVIATIONS

CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CSI	Corporate Irresponsibility
KSE	Kyiv School of Economics
CELI	Chief Executive Leadership Institute
BRH	Business and human rights

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1 Introduction

Both corporate social responsibility and corporate irresponsibility are linked to many other aspects outside business, including geopolitical and ethical considerations. Since the war in Ukraine has continued for over two years, it has become clearer than ever that brands need to consider how their operations can influence violent human conflicts and face accountability. Corporate irresponsibility has been visible theme especially in news articles.

The conflict originates from 2014 and escalated into war in 2022, accentuating the need for brands consideration of human rights and responsible behaviour in wartime. The sanctions have become a tool to force ethical behaviour from brands when the market demand might be too appealing, and the outside intervention seems to play an increasing role for regulation. Brands ignore the human cost of the war by only focusing on their financial benefits and imagining new creative ways for benefiting from the war. Corporate social responsibility should not be used to mask corporate irresponsibility by offering generous donations and humanitarian aid while continuing operations in the Russian market.

This thesis will look at how brands justify their reasons to stay in Russia despite the war between Ukraine and Russia. Many brands have decided to leave Russia, but there are over 1200 brands that have stayed in Russia. The objective of this thesis is to first discover and categorise the reasons why the brands have stayed by qualitative content analysis, and then identify the discourses by brands and industries with discourse analysis. The research data included brands' direct statements and news articles, and data was collected from Yale CELI's list (Yale 2023) and KSE Institute's Leave-Russia list of brands (Leave-Russia.org 2023).

This study is necessary, because it is very contemporary, and it will bring more insight about how brands navigate business operations through geopolitical conflicts. This study found 35 varying discourses and explains the ten most frequent discourses in detail. The rest of the discourses could be looked more into in future studies. This study's limitations are timing constraints and not all 1200 brands still in Russian market had statements, and the group of 257 statements analysed will be quite small. This means that all the brands still staying in Russia that have neither internal or external statements explaining their justifications cannot be covered, and only those brands that have written material can be covered.

1.1 Background

The war in Ukraine began on 24 February 2022 with Russia's attack and has transformed the Russian economy and trade relations drastically (Korhonen 2023, 20). The difference between Russian and Western terminology on the war in Ukraine is that in Russian media the term is "special operation in Ukraine", whereas the Western media calls it the "war in Ukraine". If looking from the Western perspective where Russia initiated the war, then the war in Ukraine can be viewed as an "intended conflict" (Hofstede & Hofstede 2005, 321).

The war in Ukraine has served as a wakeup call for the West that wrongly assumed trade with Russia would force political and economic reform in the country in the same manner that happened in China (Pitkänen, Puranen, Taskinen, & Vartiainen 2023, 367). Many European countries realized the proximity of Russia, for example Sweden was reminded that Russian military vessels can use both the Arctic Sea and Baltic Sea (Kunnas & Näkki 2022, 173).

The Soviet mentality has stayed in Russia in the desire to expand Russian territory beyond its borders and the smaller surrounding countries belonging under its rule (Giles 2023, 49). The speech of Vladimir Putin in München security conference can be seen as the roots for Russia's focus on China relations and NATO resistance (Leikola 2022, 334). Russia views the regional crises as part of larger fight with the West (Giles & Rekiaro 2020, 81) - this has been the case also with Ukraine. Russia simply cannot stand Ukraine's independence (Remy, Jokela & Linkola 2022, 282). In March 2022, Russia experienced a flashback of the Soviet times with Putin's new laws controlling "fake news" (Harding, Karvonen & Tiirinen 2023, 235). The shared enemy of the West has been major catalyst for China-Russia partnership (Kanet 2019, 333) – as both countries share a history with communism. However, China is in a pickle with its hopes for international commerce and economic expansion trying to balance its relations with EU and Russia simultaneously (Hennessy 2023, 572).

In Western context, Ukrainian President Zelenskyy has become the "main character of the information wars in Ukraine", and Ukraine has obtained the moral sympathy on its side for defending its independence and democracy (Pantti 2023, 189). President Zelenskyy has indeed been in many news articles, and skilful with social media in bringing the war in Ukraine closer to average netizens and enabling interaction. The war in Ukraine has slowly turned into a war between Russia and the West (Pynnönniemi 2023, 24). In the era of

President Zelenskyy, the people of Ukraine have unified to break free from Russian influence (Rudenko, Balk & Kuronen 2022, 25). Since the war broke, Ukraine has been welcomed as part of the West (Salomaa 2022, 118). The motivations for brands to remain in Russia have revolved around the employer responsibility and high threshold for exiting due to investments (Kao, Abboud & Parkin 2022).

To briefly summarise the history of Ukraine, the country was torn internally to East and West Ukraine – the Eastern part wanted to be in Soviet Union, and Western part desired independence (Krasun 2010). Back in 2014, Russia invaded and annexed Crimea and at the time Ukrainian government (Norvanto, Ruotsalainen & Schroderus 2019) – already this was the prelude for Ukraine as the “great European conflict” (Sakwa 2016, 37). The sanctions forced on Russia earlier did not have the wanted effect and weakened the daily lives of the average Russian citizens (Freedman 2018, 152).

The conflict in Eastern Ukraine was an earlier example of information wars: there was more official video footage from Russian sources than Ukrainian sources (Roman, Wanta & Buniak. 2017). Already conflict imagery from 2014/2015 showed the “mediatized” Ukraine (Ojala, Pantti, & Kangas 2017, 493). During the war in Ukraine, horror propaganda has been used on both sides: Ukraine has published pictures of dead Russian soldiers, and it has been justified with humanitarian discourse of informing the relatives of the deceased, whereas Russia has told its own soldiers that the opposite side is full of satanists (Hietikko 2023,136).

Even before the war, there has been a difference of interpretation by Russia and the West – the Russian explanations can seem like an alternate universe from Western perspective (Sivonen 2015, 18). Although Ukraine used to be part of the Soviet Union, however after the independence it has levitated towards the West, much to Russia’s displeasure (Mbah & Wasum 2022). It could be that the war in Ukraine is not really about the conflict between two countries, but more widely a “Putin’s war against the West” (Michailova 2022, 1676).

1.2 Summary of the existing research and the identified research gap

The war in Ukraine has lasted more than two years now, and the behaviour of brands staying in Russia has been widely covered in the news, but not yet in academic research. Mainly

corporate social responsibility has been focused, and the brands exiting Russia due to the war in Ukraine in existing research. For example, Smorzewska-Mickiewicz (2022, 25) discussed the Ukrainian war and CSR, while also focusing on the brands that have stayed in Russia despite the war: for instance, Auchan, Leroy Merlin and Decathlon had no intention of leaving Russia, because of the political backing from Russian government. Most of the discussion on corporate irresponsibility has been from news articles, and there is research gap for justifications the brands staying in Russia from corporate irresponsibility angle.

Yale list has been used as research data before, however the focus was more on understanding the justifications for exiting Russia, where reputation, altruism and security were among the obvious reasons and stakes in Ukraine and the legal issues and institution reliability had an impact also (Huang, Lu & Li 2022). The ESG scores seem to have a correlation with the brand deciding on exiting or remaining in Russia in wartime (Basnet, Blomkvist & Galariotis 2022).

Although there are theoretical connections between the two themes, corporate irresponsibility (CSI) is the much less researched cousin of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Although corporate irresponsibility looks at the immoral and unethical behaviour of brands that is often defined as illegal, the line is not always that clear-cut, and an alternative explanation could be the brands acting reactively in CSI compared to proactively in CSR (Stachowicz-Stanusch 2016, 4). The “path theory” explains how brands either become stuck in harmful behaviour (“reactive path”) or move away from it towards better behaviour (“proactive path”) (Küberling-Jost 2021).

When performing the literature review, there was one article that became a benchmark for this thesis, as it discusses discourse analysis and corporate social irresponsibility (Herzig & Moon 2013). There are many articles about corporate social responsibility and corporate social irresponsibility, but not that many that include also discourse analysis. The earlier conflicts between Russia and Ukraine of time period 2014-2017 have been examined with discourse analysis of news articles by Horbyk (2017), Klimava & Moyer (2016), Lamminparras (2017) and Kolmogorova & Gornostaeva (2019).

As there is much less written on the justifications for corporate irresponsibility compared to CSR, which surely posed a challenge, but also enabled more space for new discoveries from the case of Ukraine war. The absence of wide body of academic literature on corporate

irresponsibility in the Ukraine war context specifically influenced the decision for inductive approach – chapter 3 will continue more on research strategies and methodology..

There is a research gap for understanding communications approaches of brands, creating in-depth classifications for them, and especially exploring their differences between industries in various social settings (Ekhlassi & Rahideh 2023, 331). While Ekhlassi & Rahideh (2023) created their own typology on the brands leaving the Russian market and noticed that finance industry was strongly represented in their data as most frequently exiting, there has not yet been similar systematic categorization for the justifications given by brands staying in Russia despite the war. The corporate responsibility and social entrepreneurship topics were also more researched already, and there was more of research gap in corporate irresponsibility. There is research gap in comprehending the connection between CSR and CSI, and especially with qualitative studies answering research questions with “how and why” (Iborra & Riera 2023, 1433).

1.3 Research questions

The aim of thesis is to understand what justifications brands have for staying in Russia despite the war in Ukraine, and what discourses are present in publicly available materials such as direct statements and news articles. This thesis will use statements from brands and news articles collected from Yale list and Leave-Russia list, analyse the data using qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis to understand corporate irresponsibility better. The main research question is:

1. How do brands justify staying in Russia despite the war in Ukraine?

The sub-research questions are:

2. Which patterns of justifications do brands use?
3. Do the justifications differ between industries?

The key research strategy is an inductive approach, meaning that there is no hypothesis determined, but rather the findings from data will lead the subsequent steps of analysis. The research process is discussed more details in chapter 3.

1.4 Delimitations

This study is limited to the brands that have stayed in Russia despite the war, since most of the existing research has looked at the justifications for exiting in Russia and there remains a research gap for the brands that have decided to stay. This focus also narrows down the amount of data needed, and makes the topic better suitable for the scope of Master's thesis. The time frame covered in this thesis starts from 22 February 2022 and ends 17 January 2023, because this helped to narrow down the data and give a cutout date for the study. The Yale list and Leave-Russia List were the used for data collection, because the statements were collected and archived into a public database for research use. ORBIS database was not used in this study, because the research approach focused on the statements.

1.5 Theoretical framework & research methodology

The overarching themes of and corporate irresponsibility and corporate social responsibility act as the lenses through which the justifications from brands staying in Russia are looked through. The theory of corporate irresponsibility (Herzig & Moon 2013; Tench 2019; Riera & Iborra 2019) and corporate social responsibility (Hawkins 2006; Braun 2019) be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. Considering only the data of statements and news articles it is difficult to determine whether staying in Russia could be considered responsible or irresponsible behaviour. The brands have justified staying in Russia in many ways, that some of them might be convincing. This is when the theory of how brands might try to justify reckless behaviour could help to investigate the truth.

The research strategies and methodology are covered more thoroughly in Chapter 3. In short, this study uses qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis, by first inductively identifying 3-4 categories of justifications for brands to stay in Russia from statements and news articles and these rose directly from the text, then later the analysing the data with discourse analysis to identify several discourses. The study uses exploratory and inductive approach to study the phenomenon of brands reaction to the war in Ukraine, through the theoretical lenses of corporate irresponsibility and corporate social responsibility as encompassing themes across the entire study.

1.6 Definitions

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can contain the aspects of ESG theory, such as brand's responsible behaviour, social responsibility including employees and customers, and environmental responsibility (Herzig & Moon 2013). Corporate social responsibility is often linked with sustainability, but they are different concepts – as CSR also includes the idea of profitability, and not only the environmental aspects (Hawkins 2006). Ethical, stakeholder-reliant, governance-related, and financial incentives can explain CSR, however for a brand the financial incentive is most significant as its “goal ultimately is successful business operations” (Rohweder 2004, 81).

However, to describe the definition of corporate irresponsibility – it needs to be understood as more complicated concept than merely antithesis of corporate social responsibility, following Riera & Iborra (2019). Corporate irresponsibility can be understood as either A) “illegal” or B) “legal but severely unsustainable, and/or unethical” (Tench, Sun & Jones 2012, 9). Some common cases of corporate irresponsibility include damage to the environment, human rights violations, and tax evasion (Nardella, Brammer & Surdu 2023). Corporate reputation has traditionally been seen as key factor discouraging brands from corporate irresponsibility, however, Nardella, Brammer & Surdu (2023) proved the reputation concern is not enough to stop recklessness.

It is crucial to have an understanding the difference between the two key concepts: corporate irresponsibility and corporate social responsibility. Corporate social irresponsibility means brands' failures “to meet the expectations of society” and corporate social responsibility means brands successful “responses to the expectations of society” (Herzig & Moon 2013). In contrast with CSR, corporate irresponsibility works in a significantly different way, that has been described for instance as “path theory” where the brands might either become trapped in bad behaviour (“reactive path”) or learn away from it (“proactive path”) (Küberling-Jost 2021).

Corporate irresponsibility is defined in this study as the unethical behaviour by brands that can be often illegal, but also more nuanced and not that easy to tell apart from corporate social responsibility – thus following Tench, Sun & Jones (2012). The reason for this definition is that in the context of Ukraine war the behaviour of the brands staying in Russia is not in all cases illegal - even if sanctions are applicable to Western countries and staying

in Russia can be considered illegal in the West, it is not the case for all countries. For instance, there are Chinese and Indian brands that do not follow the sanctions, but their behaviour to stay in Russia and benefit from the increase in market demand can still be immoral and unethical. It is worth to note also that the sanctions were not in place at first, and staying in Russia at first did not have any legal consequences. This definition of corporate irresponsibility in this study includes most of the pre-existing views in corporate irresponsibility theory that are adaptable to the Ukraine war context.

1.7 Structure

This study is following the structure of an inductive research. An introduction, including the research questions, is given in Chapter 1. Then, Chapter 2 contains theory & literature review on CSR, corporate irresponsibility, justifications for corporate irresponsibility in literature, and the existing research context on Ukraine war and the identified research gap that this study can provide more insights for. Chapter 3 describes the research strategies and methodologies, and in detail explains the preformed qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis. Chapter 4 explains the findings, focusing more on the 10 most frequently identified discourses, and explores the relationships and connections between different discourses. Due to the inductive and exploratory nature of this study, there was no predetermined hypothesis, and the theory becomes intertwined with finding in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 offers discussion, and Chapter 6 conclusions, including the scientific contributions of this study, and possible directions of future research.

2 Literature Review

Corporate social responsibility and corporate irresponsibility are the wider lenses through which the justifying corporate irresponsibility is looked at. These two concepts are critical for this thesis and are discussed in literature review. Staying in Russia can be seen as corporate irresponsibility as many brands have exited Russia due to the war in Ukraine. Corporate irresponsibility is part of a larger phenomenon where brands behave in unethical ways to increase profits. Examples of this include cocoa farming (Long 2008), human

trafficking (Van Buren, Schrempf-Stirling & Westermann-Behaylo 2021), tuna fishing (Leadbitter & Benguerel 2014), clothing factories in Bangladesh (Tarek & Mark 2017), and gold mining (Bester 2022).

Corporate social irresponsibility is the key concept for this thesis, because the expectation of many customers in Europe is that brands should stop operating in Russia and by staying in Russia the brands are going against the expectation. There has been debate about self-regulation and sanctions, as many brands will not leave unless they need to fear sanctions. There have been some sanctions imposed on brands that have made them change their mind about staying in Russia. Corporate irresponsibility has been rarely discussed in war context, where the border between CSR and CSI has become blurred. Typically, corporate irresponsibility is described “opposite of, CSR” (Jones 2013), and behaviour such as dumping waste to nearby lake (Tsuru 2021; Hakami, Seif & El-Shater 2021), whereas in this study the brands are going against the Western expectations by prioritising financial benefits over ethics.

2.1 Corporate responsibility

Corporate social responsibility has been increasingly aligned with the concept of sustainability (Aslaksen, Hildebrandt & Johnsen 2021). Corporate social irresponsibility is more than failure to be socially responsible, it is intentional behaviour (Riera & Iborra 2017). The expectations related to corporate social responsibility are made complicated by social connections (Olkkonen 2017). A key idea behind CSR is empathy, however oftentimes not in the innocent way: “empathy is created by capitalism to save as from capitalism” (Goodman 2023, 155). Brands can reap many benefits from sustainable practices, including diminished financial risks, green suppliers, gained competitive advantage, and better stakeholder relationships (Jackson 2006, 32-33).

CSR has been strongly influenced especially by environmental and social crisis, such as oil spills and child labour, which have received attention in the news (Braun 2019, 33-34). The key theories of CSR include the stakeholder theory (Phillips 2003; Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar & de Colle 2010), Friedman doctrine (Friedman 2007), ESG theory (“environmental, governmental, social”) (Stotz 2022; Fabozzi, Ng & Tunaru 2022), social contracts theory (Moir 2001), 3P theory (“people, planet, profit”) (Idowu & Kasum 2016),

legitimacy theory (Moir 2001), and Triple Bottom Line (TBL) (Willard 2012). However, the ESG theories mostly cannot be used for the war in Ukraine as there is no environmental aspect involved. CSR is “an ethical concept by economic interests” (Baden & Harwood 2013, 615).

Establishments including hospitals, asylums, orphanages, and hospitals, and orphanages were the origins of CSR already in Roman times (Chaffee 2017). Student protests in the 1960s grew into larger sociopolitical movements (Waterhouse 2017) - where brands were viewed as the "establishment" (Latapí Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir & Davídsdóttir 2019, 4).

Corporate responsibility has developed over the years through these stages: 1) greed-motivated, 2) charitable, 3) marketing-first, 4) strategic, and most recently 5) transformative due to digital transformation (Hlioui & Yousfi 2022, 4). There is also the alternate view of “political CSR” by Braun (2019, 21) where it is first political instead of social, and “institutional political process”. Out of these, greed-motivated, marketing-first, and political CSR could possibly help to explain corporate irresponsibility during the war in Ukraine.

Corporate social responsibility has been explained with a myriad of similar terms that do not significantly differ (Tench, Sun & Jones 2012). In this study the terms including corporate societal responsibility, corporate social responsiveness, BRH or “business and human rights” (Schrempf-Stirling & Van Buren 2020), stakeholder theory (Phillips 2003; Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar & de Colle 2010), corporate citizenship (Cornelissen 2014), sustainability, and shared value (Porter & Kramer 2011) are considered as belonging to corporate social responsibility - following streamlining done by Baden & Wilkinson (2014, 57). Social entrepreneurship is CSR related term, but still different and includes a wider range of topics: social entrepreneurship covers legal, cultural, social, political, and financial aspects – especially accentuating the role of culture (Zucchella, Hagen & Serapio 2018). There is a correlation between several aspects of ethical organisation culture and business innovation (Riivari & Lämsä 2014) – in other words, for a brand to be creative it should behave ethically.

The main way for brands to manage CSR is through self-regulation (Asemah 2022, 152). In the case of the war in Ukraine, there have been sanctions that influence the brands’ decisions whether to stay in Russia. However, in most cases, the main responsibility is on the company itself (Gottschalk 2011), but government intervention is necessary for “development of

socially responsible corporate culture” (Rahim 2013, 179) – as corporate greed has been too overpowering in Bangladesh’s case. Even before the war in Ukraine, brands have conducted “business as usual” (Rieper 2013, 23) despite violent conflict in the area. With the war between Russia and Ukraine, CSR has grown into a larger concept than before: brands need to be responsible in wartime and peacetime (Asemah-Ibrahim, Nwaoboli & Asemah 2022, 11). Brands with more CSR involvement are more resistant to geopolitical risk (GPR) (Chowdhury, Shahedur, Koussis, Makrominas & Trigeorgis 2023). The brands’ crisis communications can be viewed as part of “strategic CSR” (Ashraf, Afshan & Sahibzada 2022, 149), where brand is aiming for advantages over competition via improved stakeholder and employee relations.

Corporate social responsibility may be a need for some firms, and it now seems to also have strategic relevance (Smith 2003). The ex-CEO of Unilever Patrick Cescau saw sustainability as necessity since many of the brand’s product are depended on the environment (Berger, Dutta, Raffel & Samuels 2009, 81). Corporate social responsibility can be a way for brands to get on better terms with the stakeholders and possibly attract more investment, but the brands corporate social responsibility activities can be significant roadblocks if the stakeholders are not educated enough about the positive aspects and are a bit skeptical (Du, Bhattacharya & Sen 2010, 8). By building awareness among the stakeholders, it is possible to get rid of negative attitudes from stakeholders (Brønn & Vrioni 2001, 219).

From a theoretical viewpoint, CSR brings more profits to brands regardless of their size (Idowu 2012, 255). However, there are contradictions depending on the data used, for example in Turkey there was relationship between improved CSR and brand size financial performance but not CSR and profits increases (Aras, Aybars & Kutlu 2010). Whereas, in the Chinese medicinal industry improved financial performance happened in relation with the brands’ CSR efforts (Yang, Bento & Akbar 2019). Additionally, in China the brands with more CSR had smaller costs of financing (Wang, Zhao & Zhang 2021, 4). The differences in ESG scores can explain variances in financial performance, although in USA higher ESG can mean lower profits when the market demand regulates the prices more than ethics (Stotz 2022, 74). Similarly in Japan, the higher ESG performance does not always mean better economic performance (Fabozzi, Ng & Tunaru 2022, 16).

2.2 Corporate irresponsibility

Corporate irresponsibility is not as mature (Tench, Sun & Jones 2012) direction compared with CSR, and known as “the dark side”(Popa & Salanță 2014) since it looks at those bad and detrimental brand choices by business leaders. However, corporate irresponsibility deserves more research, since it is “phenomenon that directly affects business and society” (Sulphrey 2017, 299). It has been shown that there are cultural differences between Western and non-western countries in understanding the concepts of CSI & CSR (Baden & Wilkinson 2024). The view of what is corporate irresponsibility can be more “subjective” than “objective” (Lange & Wilde 2012, 319). It is worthy to note also differences in economic attitudes of West and developing countries including India and China, where the first focuses now more on “social interest” and the second on “self-interest” (Parkin 2010, 164). Drivers of CSI can include individuals (CEO), environmental, corporate-related, and both internal & external stakeholders (Iborra & Riera 2023).

Purposeful corporate irresponsibility has been more seen as more unethical by investors than accidental corporate irresponsibility (Zhang, Gong, Zhang & Jia 2023). The brands staying in Russia would mostly be staying on purpose within the context of the war in Ukraine, although some of them could explain the situation towards more incidental to decrease the negative response. The term BRH (“business and human rights”) is sometimes connected with corporate irresponsibility if there are violations, but it can also be understood broader as “role and responsibility of corporations for human rights” (Schrempf-Stirling & Van Buren 2020).

The corporate irresponsibility can be attributed to a combination of causes including “individual greed and a corporate culture of greed and unintended negative consequences of executive compensation plans” (Alexander 2015, 348). Corporate irresponsibility can include white-collar crime (Gottschalk 2011; Kempa 2010), lack of diversity (Bray 2023), racism (George 2021) and disregard of nature and environment (Panwar, Pinkse, Cashore & Husted 2023). White-collar crime is defined as financial crime perpetrated by white-collar criminals (Gottschalk 2011), and it includes fraud, bribery, embezzlement, corruption, and theft (Kempa 2010). In short, corporate irresponsibility is avoidable behaviour where brands are “doing wrong in relation to the environment, community, society, ethics, and business practices” (Jones 2013, 557). The “moral compass” of a person and ideals of societies are

not the only causes for CSI, but also the lack of methodically enforced regulations plays a part (Cruz Jr 2022). There has also been shown to be relationship between narcissistic personalities of CEOs and likelihood of brands' irresponsible behaviour (Riera & Iborra 2023).

When corporate social responsibility talks about the success of meeting the requirements of society, then corporate irresponsibility is the failure to meet those expectations. There has been discourse analysis made about corporate irresponsibility (Yngfalk 2019). Yngfalk (2019) used 25 interviews to investigate retail food waste as a tangible manifestation of corporate irresponsibility (Yngfalk 2019). As pointed out by Yngfalk (2019), previous marketing research focuses a lot on green marketing and sustainability. The popularity of sustainable business models is showing signs of corporate irresponsibility and “greening of industry” staggeringly often (Aagaard, Lüdeke-Freund & Wells 2021, 5).

Divergences in corporate social responsibility (CSR) implementation in Europe originate partly due to absence of a universally accepted definition and partly due to the many settings and views that define CSR perceptions (Yildiz & Özerim 2013). Since distinct historical, cultural, political, and economical elements have a vital influence in the understanding of CSR, there is a lack of a standard European framework or definition of CSR (Argandona & Hoivik 2009, 222). Corporate social responsibility is understood differently in different countries. While the EU has been working to standardize CSR, in contrast, in USA sustainable behaviour has been mostly non-mandatory (Yildiz & Özerim 2013, 51). European brands see CSR as a tool used in conjunction with laws and government policies, whereas it is optional behaviour for US brands (Yildiz & Özerim 2013; Argandona & Hoivik 2009).

2.3 Justifications for corporate irresponsibility in literature

In order to understand the justifications for corporate irresponsibility, firstly it is necessary to shortly summarize the topics for corporate social responsibility: social (“stakeholder responsibility”), legal (“contracts”, “financial profitability”), financial (“cost theory”), moral and ethical reasons (“shared value”) (Pellé 2017). These topics are also present in the corporate irresponsibility literature.

In corporate irresponsibility literature, the justifications for it include the “social benefit” of profit-generating business (Porter & Kramer 2011), the pressure from shareholders (Friedman 2007), the independence and freedom of upper management (Schrempf-Stirling & VanBuren 2020) and lack of government supervision (Tench, Sun & Jones 2012). The deep-rooted causes for corporate irresponsibility can be seen as “corporate greed” especially from rotten business leaders (Lorenz 2012). The Ukraine war can be viewed as the brands’ “test of business ethics and moral obligation” (Lim et al. 2022, 8).

2.3.1 The existing views for brands staying in Russia

The war in Ukraine is a special situation and so far, there have not been many scientific articles discussing the war and corporate irresponsibility. This topic is still more discussed on social media and the news, but probably there will be more academic literature on it as time passes. The ethics of researching an ongoing war need to be considered (Howlett & Lazarenko 2023). In the Ukraine war context, brands are increasingly political in their statements, and the explanations were fourfold: meeting stakeholder expectations, political intake, positive brand image and edge in competition (Ekhlassi & Rahideh 2023, 331).

Yale list has been used as source for research data mostly for brands that exited Russia. The Yale list is maintained by Yale School of Management (Yale Chief Executive Leadership Institute 2022) and acts as a database tracking the brands’ status. A bit later, the KSE Institute at Kyiv School of Economics has created an even more extensive list (Leave-Russia.org 2023) that is referred to as the Leave-Russia list in this study. With data from KSE list, Kulikov, Simanovskyy, Eichenberg & Braese (2024) noticed that especially brands from China, Italy, Japan and Germany remained in the Russian market more despite the war.

With data from Yale list, Huang, Lu & Li (2022) found five main reasons why brands would decide to leave Russia, including concerns about reputation, altruism, security, stakes in Ukraine, and legal origin and institution quality. The fear of “social sanction”—that the public or investors will penalize businesses for engaging in socially unacceptable behaviour—is the source of reputational anxiety (Huang, Lu & Li 2022, 11). It was discovered that brands with headquarters in nations with high institutional standards and a particular legal tradition, as well as those with country-level sanctions, may be more likely to leave Russia. (Huang, Lu & Li 2022, 12). Brands less likely to maintain their current

activities after the war begun if they hold higher human rights & ESG scores (Basnet, Blomkvist & Galariotis 2022, 4-5): findings by Huang, Lu & Li (2022) support this view.

Based on the news coverage on the brands staying in war, it was possible to see the opposite for corporate irresponsibility. If European and US brands were fast to exit from Russia, then Indian and Chinese brands were as quick to expand their operations in Russia to fill the market demand. Especially Russian oil sales to China and India have been seen as source of income for Russian military to continue the war in Ukraine (Krauss, Stevenson & Schmall 2022). The industries that have remained in Russia despite the war in Ukraine have been especially involved in pharmaceuticals, aviation, food & consumer goods, technology, energy & oil, and the justifications have ranged from firm's financial stability and high market demand, all the way to humanitarian reasons (Doherty 2023).

However, for over two years of the war in Ukraine, Indian and Chinese brands did not face any consequences for their business in Russia, however that might change if European Union forces sanctions on 3 Chinese (Nardelli 2024) and one Indian brand (Bounds & Espinoza 2024). The sanctions might have had the opposite effect than was originally intended by strengthening the ties with India and China and changing the energy industry to Russia's benefit (Saxena 2023). The Ukraine war's strengthened China-Russia relations are not only for geopolitics, but also the ideology and personal relationships play a part (Düben & Wang-Kaeding 2023). China benefits greatly from balancing between loyalty to Russia and conflict avoidance with West (Chang-Liao 2023, 239). The financial strain from sanctions can slow down Russia, but for bringing it to a full stop also martial and political measures are needed (Sonnenfeld 2024).

Most of the brands that were in Russia before the Ukrainian war have stayed in the Russian market, and there was a pattern that brands from Germany, China, USA, Japan, and France were among those that remained in Russia – these findings from ORBIS database challenge those made from the Yale list (Evenett & Pisani 2023). The debate of the differences between results from Yale list and Leave-Russia list and using ORBIS database for the same brands is due to the methodology: Yale list focuses on the statements from brands in English, whereas the ORBIS database provides actual information whether the brand is operating in Russia (Busvine 2023). In contrast with the Yale list, the Leave-Russia list collects statements in several languages including Japanese and Russian.

The findings by Sologoud (2022) - based on 60 statements from Yale list's pharmaceuticals and consumer goods brands- were that the brands needed to stay in Russia due to humanitarian reasons such as ensuring access to food, medicine and hygiene and their employer responsibility to Russians. Sologoud (2022) interpreted that these brands using such explanations as a weak justification to cover up they are in fact protecting their market position in Russia. In addition to these justifications, the Russian market providing financial stability and damage to brand image relatively little were among the justifications for brands to stay in Russia despite the war in Ukraine (Kao, Abboud & Parkin 2022).

Back in 2022, it was predicted the sanctions would have a debilitating effect on Russia (Sonnenfield, Tian, Sokolowski, Wyrebkovski & Kaspowisczh 2022). In 2023, the Western sanctions tightened (Kantchev & Gershkovich 2023) and remaining in Russia has increased in difficulty (Chasseny 2024). Based on opinion questionnaire by Caliber (2023), the consumers are not that interested in whether brands are staying in Russia and there were misunderstandings of brands staying when they had already exited. In spring 2024, it seems that brands no longer worry about their image since there has not been much damage or opposition from stakeholders for staying in Russia (Chasseny 2024). However, Popovych (2024) counterarguments that the coverage in media can alter the consumers' views, and brands still staying in Russia would be more inclined to exit if they were provided a clear risk assessment instead of focusing on the complicatedness of the process.

2.3.2 Impact on brand image when staying in Russia

There has been some research about how brand image has been affected by the Ukraine war, for example the reputation of IKEA brand (Yuzyk 2022). In the beginning of March, IKEA has suspended its Russia operations and donated 20 million EUR for Ukraine (Yuzyk 2022). In the international market, the withdrawal from Russia is seen as having a positive impact on the brand image. However, leaving Russia has meant that the company's IP is not that well protected anymore and there is a Russian equivalent of IKEA called IDEA that has registered a similar logo in Rospatent patent office (Yuzyk 2022). The intellectual property of companies is no longer protected if they leave Russia, and Russian companies are quick to copy the brand identity. The key justifications for brands exiting from Russia are either to

please the stakeholders and avoid backlash or if it makes sense from a marketing perspective, a practice known as "woke-washing" (Pajuste & Toniolo 2022).

Luxury brands leaving Russia because of the Ukrainian war has been a way for the brands to distance themselves from the war (Calboli & Sevastianova 2022). Some brands received social media backlash for leaving Russia. For example, some bloggers were destroying their Chanel bags on videos as a protest (Stewart 2022). Luxury brands have spent many years building their presence in the Russian market and some of them are hoping to return to Russia later. If the brand is not in use in Russia for three years, the trademark can be revoked in Russia, which would be a grave issue for the luxury brands (Calboli & Sevastianova 2022).

2.3.3 The economics of war in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine has had several impacts, there is an increase in asylum seekers, limited access to necessities and money, increase in unemployment, decrease in purchasing power, supply shortage and inflation (Lim et al. 2022). The war has forced many companies to rethink their policies, for example, German banks becoming more interested in defence investment (Arons & Ainger 2022). Most nations' gross domestic product (GDP) growth has been badly impacted by the war in Ukraine (Statista 2022). As European Council has estimated the economic fallout due to the war has been severe and the detrimental repercussions long-lasting for European Union and globally (Papunen 2024).

Brands were in Russian market and faced the worst stock-price reactions to the war were more likely to later withdraw or halt their business there, whereas those that experience modest initial repercussions are more likely to stay (Balyuk & Fedyk 2022). Based on stock data, the war's influence is lower on more global brands that can continue trade freely (Tajaddini & Gholipour 2023).

The Ukrainian war has affected prices of commodities, for instance, oil price has risen and there are problems with natural gas too (Mbah & Wasum 2022). The war has also devastated the gas market by supplies to Europe and shifting them towards Asian countries instead (Henderson 2024). Because everyone is connected in the global market, these issues can be felt all over the world (Egan 2022). The war in Ukraine has had an enormous cost on global scale, however the influence has been severest in Europe where proximity to Russia and

Ukraine and trade ties, accentuated especially by the dependence on energy and food imports from both nations in Germany, France and Italy (Liadze, Macchiarelli, Mortimer-Lee & Sanchez Juanino 2022, 11). Although the Ukraine-Russia war has seen Europe more impacted by the war, the sentiments from investors can “spillover” to other markets (Sulong, Abdullah, Abakah, Adeabah & Asongu 2023, 14) – which can be seen for example as support for Ukraine and compliance to sanctions for non-European states.

Statements of exiting Russian market - from Yale list - were met with negative effects, but many of the brands were able to recover from the financial losses within a few weeks (Glambosky & Peterburgsky 2022). Strong China connections made brands’ investors more cautious (Deng, Leippold, Wagner & Wang 2022.) – possibly fearing corporate irresponsibility claims. Large portions of oil and gas in Europe are sourced from Russia (Wiseman 2022). Some countries, such as Germany, might not want to take a stand against Russia, because they worry about natural gas and oil. In the past, there has been blackmailing from Russia to stop providing natural gas to Europe and this is still something that plays part in the Ukraine war.

The global stock market has been impacted by the war detrimentally (Boungou & Yatié 2022). Similarly, because of “proximity penalty” (Federle, Meier, Müller & Sehn 2022), the UN member nations and states with Russian and/or Ukrainian borders were the hardest hit (Boungou & Yatié 2022). The war has brought rises in bond spreads and increased risks for businesses whose income is heavily influenced by the Russian economy (Bougias, Episcopos, & Leledakis 2022, 4). With data from Leave-Russia list and the stocks, findings from Kiesel & Kolaric (2023) suggest reasons for leaving Russian market included the reputational damage and sanctions.

3 Research design and methodologies

The research approach was exploratory and inductive, and the methods consisted of qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis. The research strategies, data collection & analysis, biases and reliability are explained in this chapter. Justifications for the choices of these methods are also given here.

3.1 Research strategies

Since the research data consists of internal and external statements from brands, the research strategy of this project could be understood as “archival research” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 150). The statements were all saved with NVivo to ensure that the used data is still available even if the links stop working in the future. An “archival research” strategy means that there is the possibility for explanatory, descriptive or exploratory research, but there are limitations from the data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 150). Only things that were in the collected statements are considered, and there will be some issues that will stay unanswered. For example, many Chinese brands did not offer internal statements, and there were only news articles (external), which means there are no justifications given from primary source. As the theme of corporate irresponsibility is not very flattering to brands that have stayed in Russia despite the war, an interview approach was not really an option for this study - it could have been an option for brands that have already exited Russia as they might feel more confident in commenting their decision.

The initial categories and codes surfaced from the data, and by the end, the terminology had evolved from more descriptive beginnings to more sophisticated discourses, as in the inductive approach described by Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009, 493). Since back in summer 2022 when this project started, there was not much written on the justifications for brands staying in Russia despite the war in Ukraine, exploratory approach seemed reasonable. The initial plan was to only use internal statements from Yale list for data, however the usable data back in June 2022 was only 26 internal statements, and this turned out a problem. The issue was solved by considering both internal and external statements from two lists, the Yale list and Leave-Russia.org list from January 2023. In exploratory research, the initial data might be a lot, but it becomes more focused when the project advances (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 140).

Exploratory research means that the process is iterative, and “data accounting log” is used (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014, 122). This was the case for this project, as the author entered new information into each cell manually, and wrote additional notes, and kept version history of the Excel files. This data processing method turned out to be particularly good, because it was possible to locate the errors in accounting even multiple iterations later and fix them by comparing to the original lists from Octoparse web scraper from 17.1.2023.

Exploratory research was also good choice for this project, because the research questions were interested in “how brands have reacted” and “why brands have stayed in Russia despite the war in Ukraine” and exploring the research data inductively helped to keep the “observer error” and “observer bias” (Robson 2002) at bay. Biases of this study are addressed in subchapter 3.5 on reliability and validity of this study.

3.2 Data collection methods

The research data was collected from two lists: Yale CELI’s Yale list (Yale 2023) and Leave-Russia list that is maintained by the KSE Institute in Ukraine (Leave-Russia.org 2023). In the Leave-Russia list on 30 January 2023 (Figure 1) there were 1200 companies still staying in Russia (Leave-Russia.org 2023). The same day, on January 30, 2023, there were only 224 companies staying in Russia according to the Yale list (Yale 2023). Additionally, Leave-Russia.org list has more filtering options, and especially useful if one wanted to focus on a specific type of company for example the automotive industry (Figure 2). The Leave-Russia.org has more statements, which is the reason why it was decided to download the list of brands still staying in Russia on January 17, 2023, and compare it with Yale list from same date. There were initially too few statements for the brands staying in Russia from Yale List, whereas from Leave-Russia.org (244 of 1200 brands had statements or news about them). The Leave-Russia list (Leave-Russia.org 2023) and more exhaustive list than Yale list - was found later when all data had been first gathered from Yale list.

The web scraping tool Octoparse was used to extract the Leave-Russia.org list into Excel format (Figure 3). After the list was in Excel format, filtering could be used to select the companies that have statements. The total number of companies still staying in Russia was 1200 and the number of companies staying in Russia with statements was only 459. However, after further inspection, it was noticed that not all the statements linked were valid or discussed the war. For example, there was a broken link for “bloody energy” in the statement for 21 companies, and for 15 companies the links were just to the Russian website of the company. It was noticed there was the same issue with Yale list, as there some of the statement links were leading just to the company’s Russian website or the webpage where the company locations are listed, and these only prove that the companies are still operating in Russia, but do not provide any explanations. The “invalid” links have been excluded from

the research data, and only actual statements or news articles about brands still operating in Russia have been considered.

In the Leave-Russia.org Excel file, all the statement links were checked, and a color-coding system was developed to evaluate the validity of the link (Figure 4). Red meant “invalid” as in not having any relation to the war in Ukraine or even the company, orange “unsure about relevance to war in Ukraine,” and green meant “valid” as directly discussing the war in Ukraine. On the list of 918 companies from Leave-Russia.org, there were 65 companies with link that had “.ru”-ending, and it was decided to focus on them first. Out of the 65 companies with “.ru”-ending in the web link, 14 got marked as green, 8 as orange, and 43 as red. The red ones were mostly invalid URLs and were not relevant because they did not mention war at all and several of the links were only to the companies’ Russian websites.

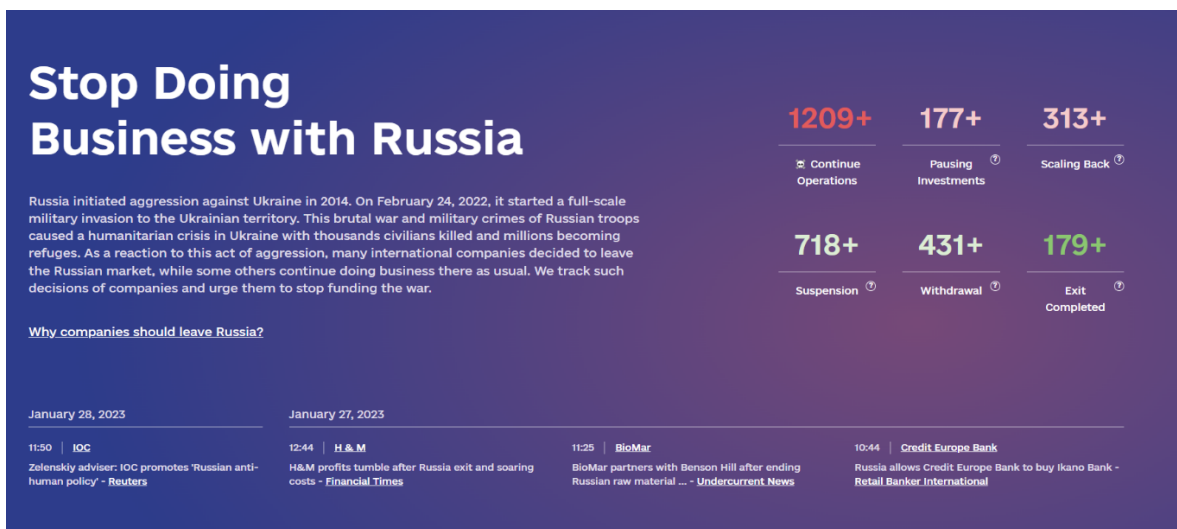


Figure 1: Screenshot of the company’s status situation of Leave-Russia.org list on January 30, 2023. Captured by the author.

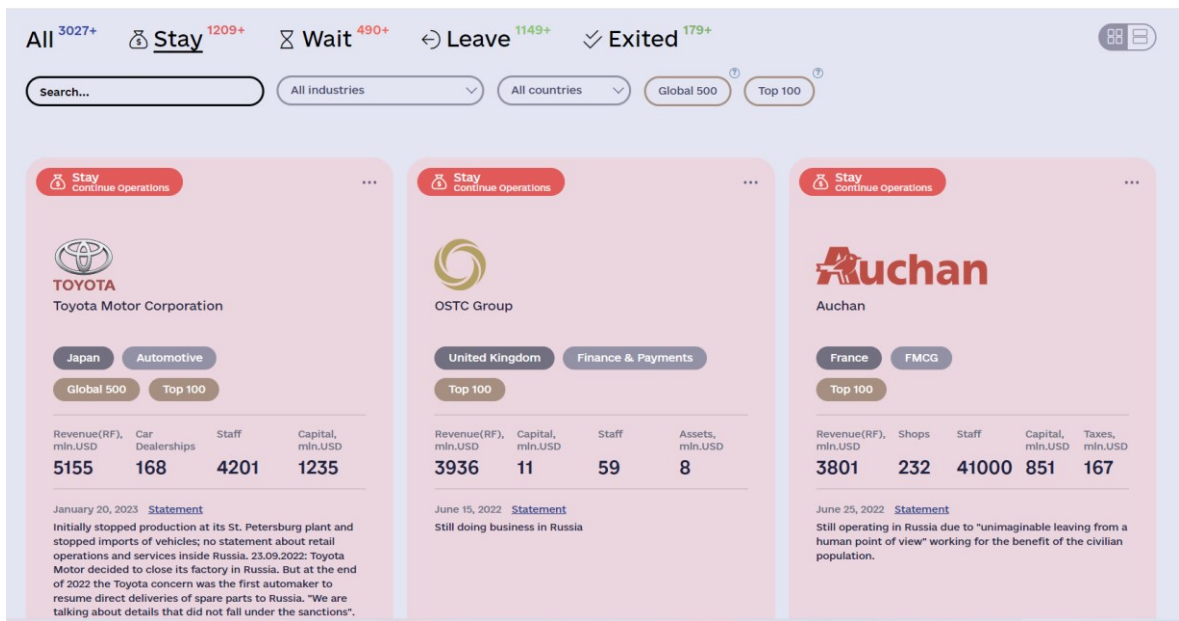


Figure 2: Example screenshot of how detailed the Leave-Russia.org list is on 20 January 2023. Captured by the author.

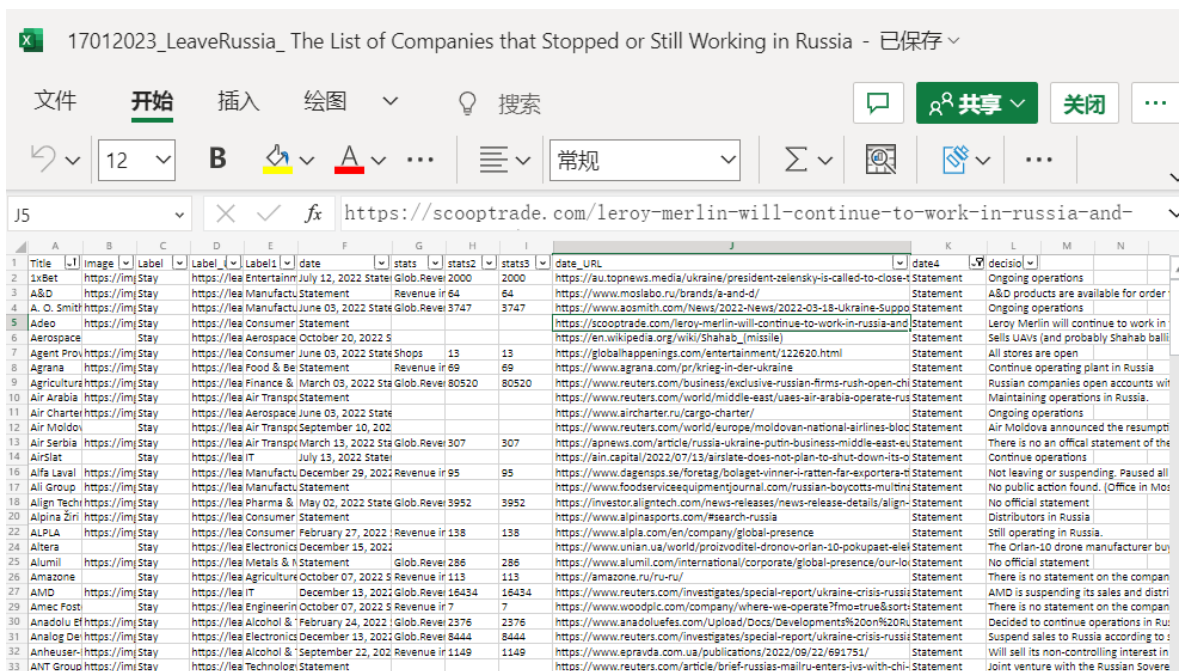


Figure 3: After web scraping with Octoparse tool, the list also included the links to statements automatically. Screenshot taken by the author.

Then a copy of this list was made, and from the copy all the orange and red ones were removed. This made it easier to focus on the valid statements. ZoteroBib (2024) was used to aid for referencing the collected internal and external statements, however manual work was still needed.

3.3 Research data

Yale list is managed by Yale School of Management (Yale Chief Executive Leadership Institute 2022), and on the list they have been tracking over 1200 companies and their status if they are still operating in Russia or if they have exited Russia. On the Yale list, there is a grading system from A to F used, and this thesis will focus on the brands with grade F meaning they are still operating in Russia. Many brands have suspended marketing activities, some have completely exited Russian market, but there are still over 1200 brands that remain in Russia. These brands show a dilemma: although it seems they are involved in corporate irresponsibility, some of them still claim responsible behaviour is indeed remaining in the Russian market. The employees would become unemployed if the brands left Russia and, in some cases, there might be even more serious issues for example in the energy sector, where many households might be left without heating if the company exited Russia suddenly.

Comparing the final sample from Yale List (only 53 of 224 companies had direct statements), the final sample from Leave-Russia.org (244 of 1200 companies had statements), it was worth the effort. It is much better to have a larger sample and be able to find more varied reasons for brands to stay in Russia. Some of the brands that were operating in Russia up until May 9, 2022, when Yale list was first extracted for this study, have later left Russia. The statements in this study were from the start of the war until 17 January 2023.

Including all this new data from Leave-Russia.org (2023) meant that there was a lot of time needed for checking the relevance of each one, saving the statements or news, and making notes for each brand. There was some overlapping between the two lists, but not that much and the list from Leave-Russia.org had also considered some other than English-language news.

**YALE LIST
DISTRIBUTION OF STATEMENT TYPE**

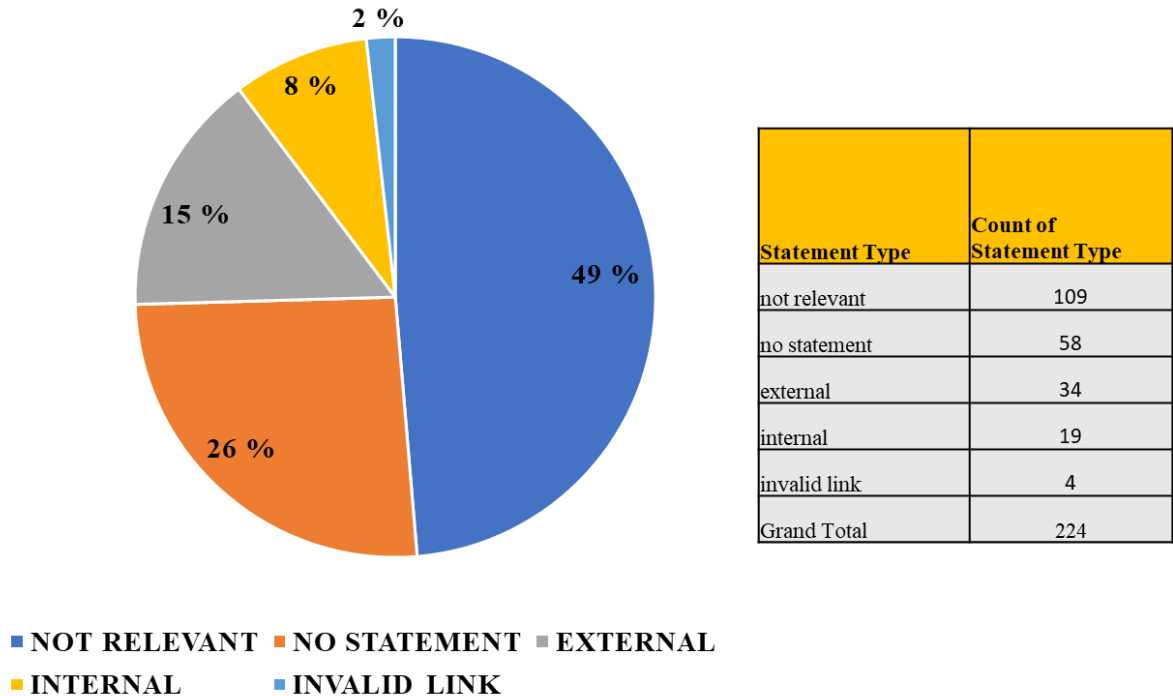
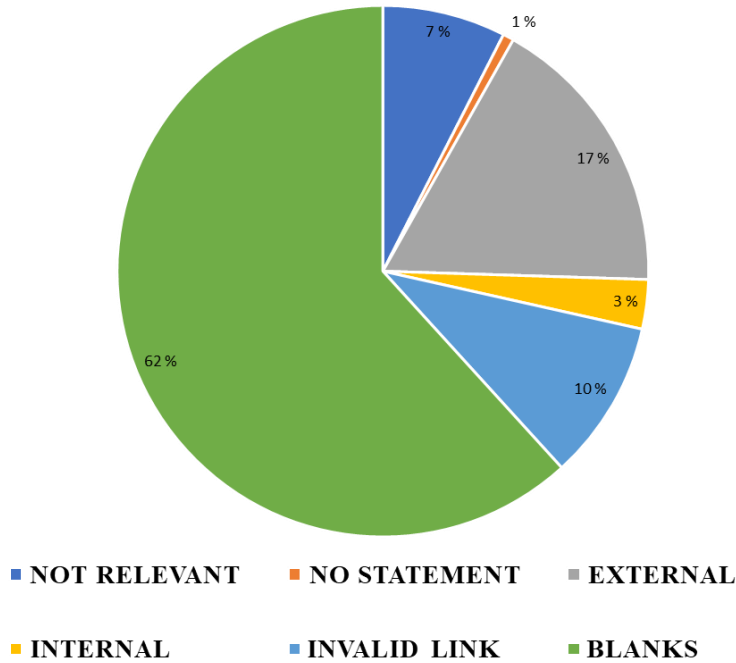


Figure 5: Yale List Distribution of Statement Type. Illustration created by author on 5.5.2024.

The Yale List was exported with the selection F, and thus it did not include all the companies that are listed on the website. In the category F (as in staying in Russia on the Yale list), there were a total of 224 brands. Out of these 224, there were 34 external statements (15%), 19 internal statements (8%), 58 brands with no statements (26%), 109 not relevant links (49%) and 4 invalid links (2%) (Figure 5). Basically, from the Yale list that was downloaded on January 17, 2023, 76.4% (171) was unusable data, and only 23.6% (53) was valid data that could be used for further analysis.

**LEAVE-RUSSIA.ORG LIST
COUNT OF STATEMENT TYPE**



Statement Type	Count of Statement Type
not relevant	90
no statement	8
external	208
internal	36
invalid link	117
blanks	741
Grand Total	1200

Figure 6: Overall Distribution of Statement Type in Leave-Russia List. Illustration created by author on 5.5.2024.

In Leave-Russia list, there were 1200 brands listed, of which only 459 had an URL mentioned that are considered statements by the list (38%) and 741 were blanks (62%) (Figure 6). The blanks are removed in Figure 3: Out of the 459 links from Leave-Russia list (Figure 7), 117 were invalid links (25.4%), 90 were not relevant (19.6%), 8 had no statements (1.7%), and then 208 were external statements (45.3%) and 36 were internal statements (8%). Nevertheless, the usable data was 244 statements (53.8%) out of 459 given links from Leave-Russia list, which is still better than from Yale list.

In Yale list there were 34 statements that were not mentioned on the Leave-Russia list, but other than those the statements were overlapping on the two lists. The Leave-Russia list had many statements that were not on the Yale list, and this gave a wider research data that helped in understanding the differences between brands better.

**LEAVE-RUSSIA.ORG LIST
COUNT OF STATEMENT TYPE
*BLANKS REMOVED**

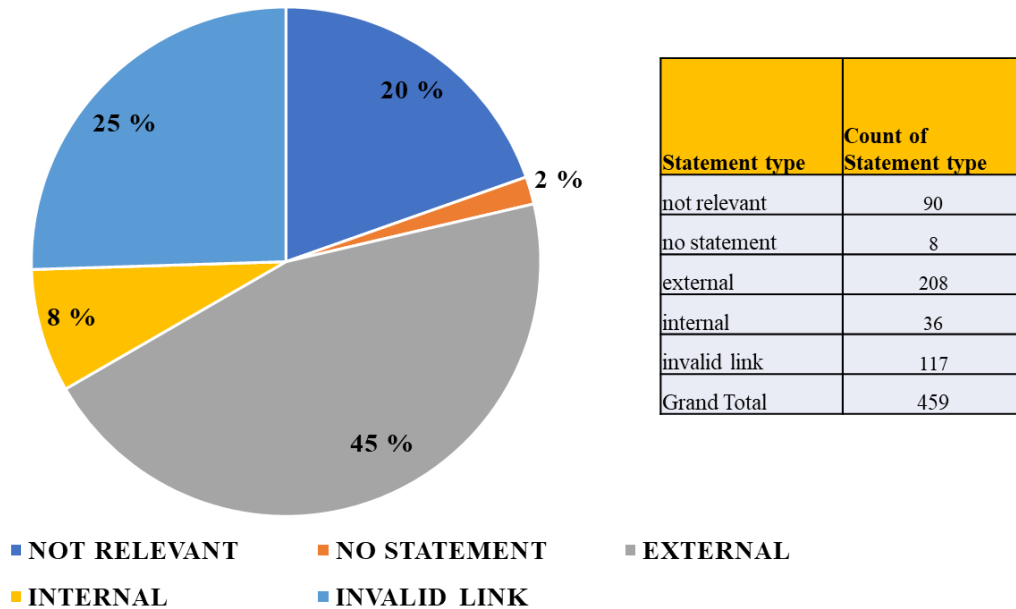


Figure 7: Distribution of Statement Type in Leave-Russia list, where blanks are removed. Illustration created by author on 5.5.2024.

As a small sidenote, there were 3 statements for Mitsui, and 2 statements for Dr. Reddy's Labs, so the total statements were 257 in the author's combined list. There was some variation in the names and the statements were considered all separately. However, the actual total of distinct brands was 253. This did not have profound impact on the findings.

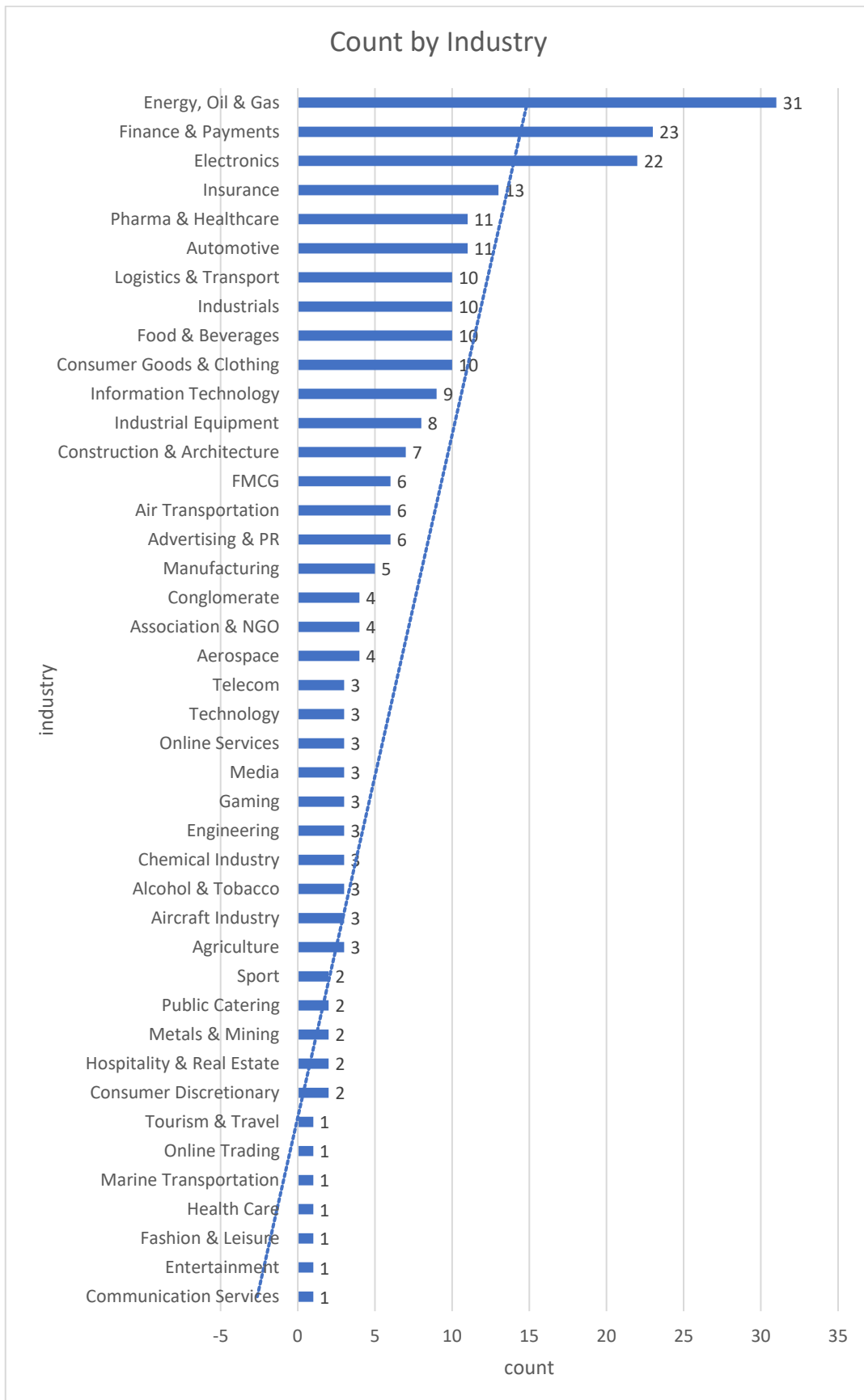


Figure 8: Distribution of Industry by number of brands. This includes the brands from both Yale and Leave-Russia.org list that were combined to a single document by writer. Figure updated 3.5.2024.

In total, there were 257 statements involved in this study. There were brands from 42 different industries. Out of the 253 distinct brands, the top 10 industries that were observed in the statements were (Figure 8):

1. Energy, Oil & Gas (31),
2. Finance & Payments (23),
3. Electronics (22),
4. Pharma & Healthcare (11),
5. Automotive (11),
6. Logistics & Transport (10)
7. Industrials (10),
8. Food & Beverages (10),
9. Consumer Goods & Clothing (10),
10. Information Technology (9),
11. Industrial Equipment (8).

The industries that have been impacted by the war can be seen also in these brands. The industry of brand has some influence on their discourses - for instance gas, energy and oil reliance have been very present in the statements. The sanctions have targeted different payment methods to limit trade in Russia and this was also visible in the data. The pharmaceuticals industry related to benefiting from the war, as the market demand for bandages and other wounding related products has increased as result of the war. The industrials and industrial equipment were related to corporate irresponsibility with Western technology being used for military purposes in the war. The automotive industry and transport industry were benefiting from the exodus of Western brands.

3.4 Data analysis methods

The data analysis consisted of two parts: qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis. The steps were crafted following the process by Jalkanen & Suomela (2010). The data analysis process of this study had stages that each had an outcome (Figure 9). An overview of the steps is offered here - since each research process is different (Pietikäinen & Mäntynen (2019, 207).

The qualitative content analysis began with reading all data, and then there were three coding rounds: first round identified 3-4 categories per each statement, second round identified the main themes of each statement, third round identified complimentary and/or related themes (Figure 9). When the study began, there were not many publications and the research started clear of any presumptions in inductive approach.

The discourse analysis followed a structured process, similarly, beginning with reading all the data again, and continuing with three rounds of analysis: the first analysis resulted in final themes, second analysis identified the gist for each statement, and third analysis concluded the final discourses (Figure 9). Then the distribution of discourses by industry (Figure 8) and country (Appendix 2) were counted.

As this study followed an inductive approach, the initial categories were formed from words that were mentioned in the statements. For example, the brand Illy (2022) had initially these three categories that were directly words in the statement: corporate responsibility, fundraising, donation, and in later rounds these categories were summarised as the humanitarian gist, which then resulted in humanitarian discourse. The discourses originate from the research data, and some statements could have both donation and corporate irresponsibility, these cases are explained more in findings chapter.

Thus, the final discourses were the end results of the two analysis methods used. The final discourses raised from the research data through qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis that was systematically executed - influenced by the Gioia methodology (Magnani & Gioia 2023). This study did not receive any external funding, and there was no conflict of interest.

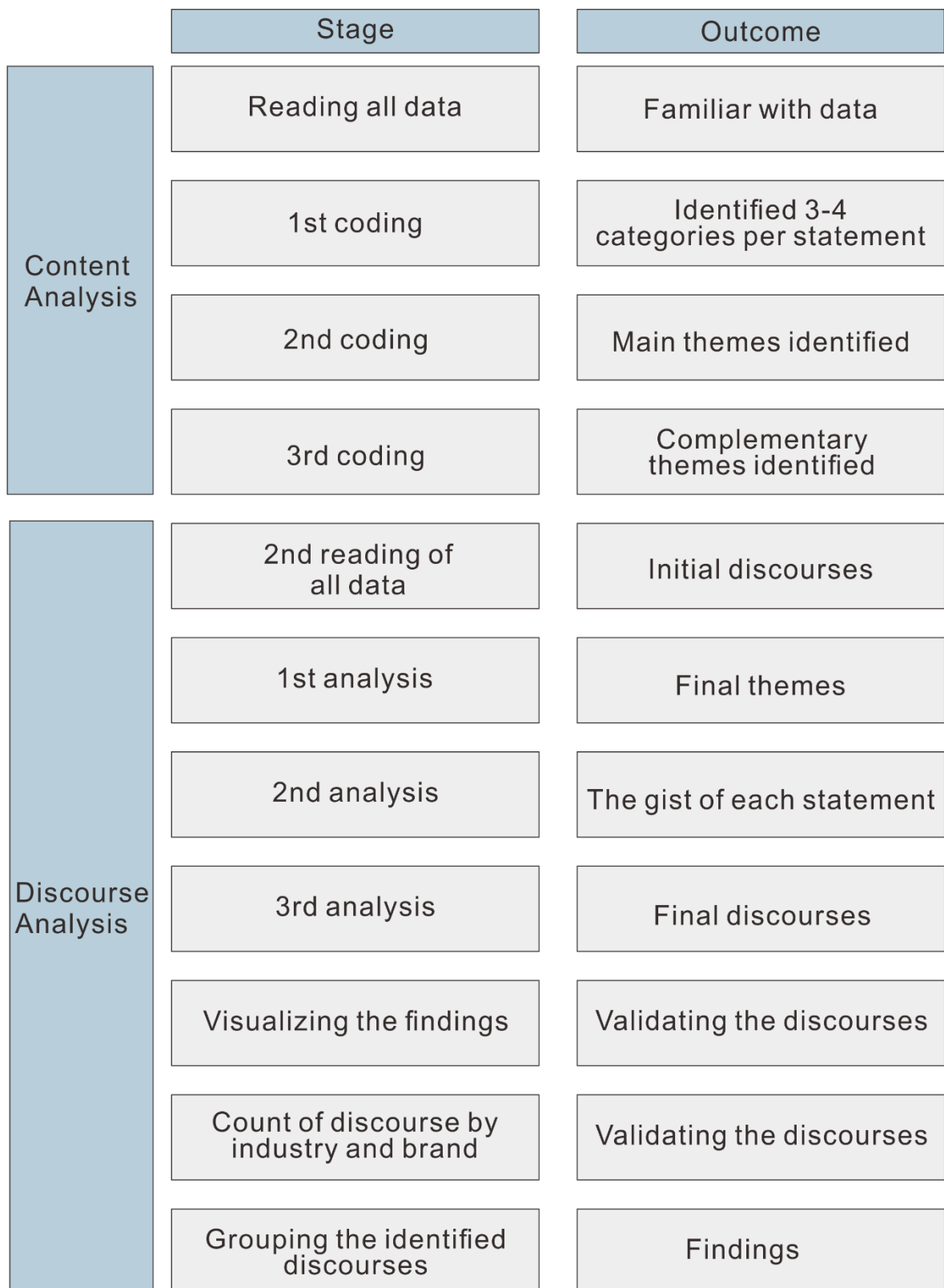


Figure 9: The data analysis process of this study. Visualized by the author on 3.5.2024 with CorelDraw, following Jalkala & Salminen (2010, 829).

3.4.1 Qualitative content analysis

The qualitative content analysis was conducted with systematic and analytical approach, following Jalkanen & Suomela (2010): the first round of coding created 3-4 categories per statement directly using words from the research data without a priori hypothesis, and the second & third round of coding were refining the categories considering the lenses of CSI and CSR.

The first round of coding had at first very many categories that were narrowed down as the rounds progressed - but this is normal phenomenon in the first round of coding (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton 2013). The first round of coding can be also described with “In Vivo Coding” (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña 2014, 74), where the wording from statement is directly used for categories. The second round of coding included some “descriptive coding” (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña 2014, 74), where the too many initial categories with only small difference of wording that needed a summary, then another term was used for summarising. The second round of coding was mostly “pattern coding” (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña 2014, 88), where the initial categories were organised under themes or patterns. In the third round of coding, there was already some more structure on the general themes of CSR and CSI.

The Gioia methodology used in business research (Magnani & Gioia 2023) influenced some of the coding process, as it can be used as more of a “systematic approach” than limiting framework if findings can be backed with evidence (Gioia et al. 2022, 235). As a result, the writing style of this study involves many examples with direct quotes, and in the Appendix 1 the research data is listed for further research possibilities.

The research data combined from Leave-Russia list and Yale list was in an Excel sheet that became the “data accounting log” - which helped to keep the data in one place. The systematic recordkeeping is good research practise, because it can serve as explanations for the findings and help managing research data rigorously (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña 2014, 123-124). The systematic recordkeeping enabled re-visiting the categories, and themes in iterative manner, and ensured research ethics were maintained.

The qualitative content analysis served as a detailed way to analyse the data directly, and the main themes could be identified with it. However, discourse analysis was still needed to delve deeper and to be able to identify the discourses from the brand statements.

3.4.2 Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis helps to identify discourses, which are guiding the thinking of readers without their knowledge (Koskinen, Alasuutari & Peltonen 2005). The discourse analysis in this study followed the tradition of analytic discourse analysis, which requires the research starting point to not be influenced by previous knowledge, and presumptions on the topic can be avoided (Jokinen & Juhila 2016, 301). Language, context & practise form the "triangle of discourse analysis" (Angermuller, Maingueneau & Wodak 2014). Analytical discourse analysis aims for detailed analysis of social reality (Jokinen & Juhila 2016, 302) - in this study the aim was to analyse the Ukraine war context.

Discourse analysis in business research has two key types: microlevel discourse analysis and macrolevel discourse analysis (Koskinen, Alasuutari & Peltonen 2005). The "economist code" is an example of microlevel discourse analysis where there were three discourses – entrepreneurship discourse, professional discourse, and traditional discourse (Koskinen, Alasuutari & Peltonen 2005, 212). The macrolevel discourse analysis is often used with news articles to look at a specific phenomenon such as response to corporate fusion (Koskinen, Alasuutari & Peltonen 2005, 210).

Wijaya (2020) presented the "brand discourse analysis" (BDA) which specifically focuses on brands communications. Although this study does not follow the BDA theory, it is worth mentioning since the study also looked at how brands justify. The discourse analysis in this study has been influenced by both micro-and macrolevel analysis types, and the identified discourses were connected to the original words in the statements.

Discourse analysis of this study followed the "hermeneutical circle" (Pietikäinen & Mäntynen 2019, 216), where the research data was visited time and again until the final discourses were reached. The research process was iterative and included going through all the research data several times. In this study, since theory was no hypothesis, CSI and CSR were kept as the themes that helped in keeping a focus.

Following Jupp (2006, 279) the discourses have a hierarchy when there were many overlapping discourses raising from one statement. This is especially visible with a few discourses, such as corporate irresponsibility (Figure 10). Corporate irresponsibility and corporate responsibility were two main themes of this study, and they were occurring in

relation or at the same time with other discourses. For example, donations were mentioned both as CSR and CSI in the research data and denial discourse and benefiting from the war discourse were practically described as corporate irresponsibility.

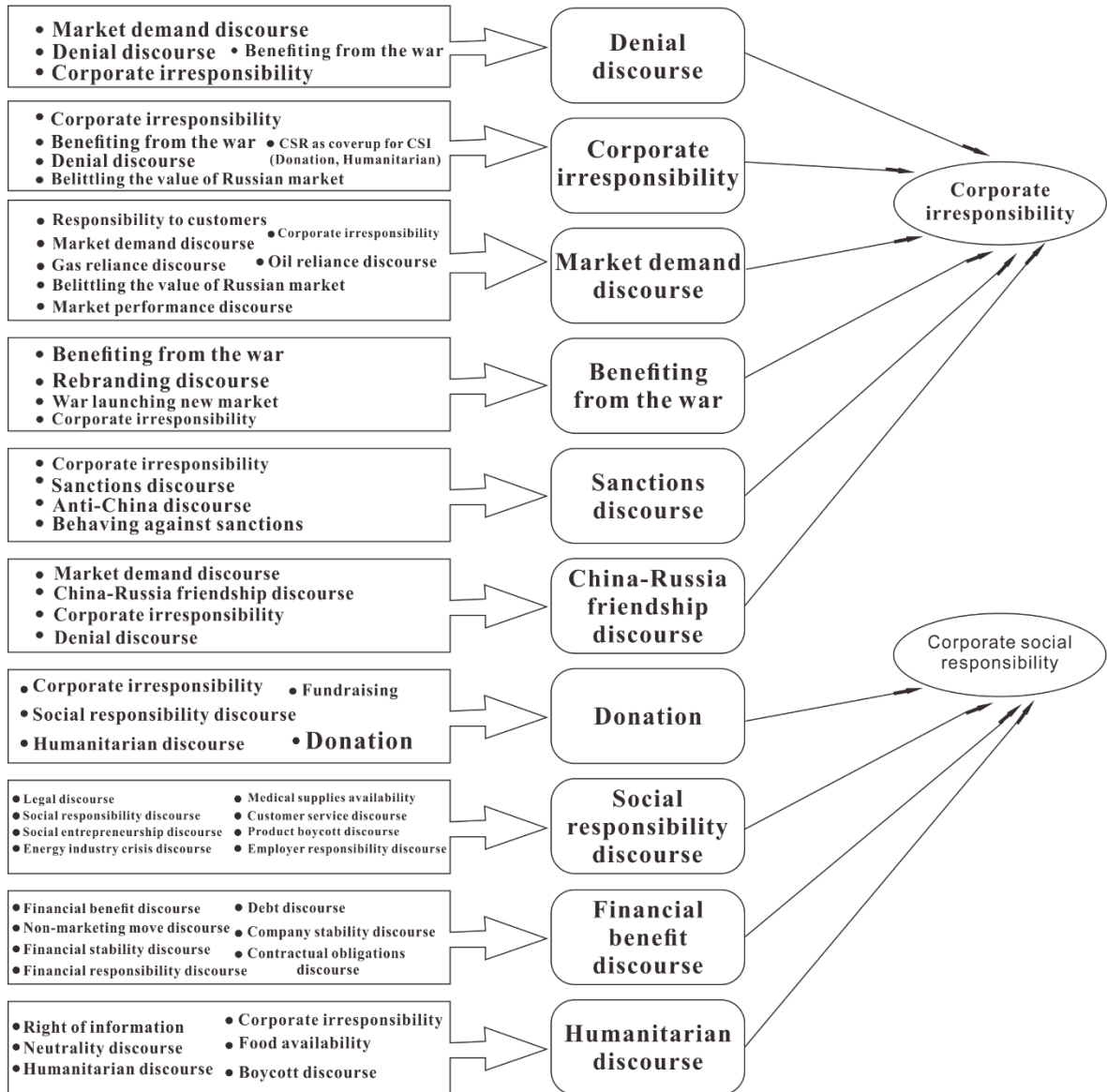


Figure 10: The final discourses. Visualized by the author on 5.5.2024 with CorelDraw.

However, since the approach was inductive, splitting all the discourses right away to corporate irresponsibility would have increased the “observer bias”. Therefore, it was crucial to not analyse too much outside of the statements and maintain on a few rules in this study: there should be the brand name in the statement, the statement should mention war in Ukraine, and the direct quotes from statements were collected to an Excel sheet to record the

exact wording and not rely on human memory. Some of the statements did not include the brand name that was supposed to be discussed, and that meant some news articles had to be marked as irrelevant even if they discussed the war in general.

3.5 Reliability and validity

Reliability can be most threatened by “subject error”, “subject bias”, “observer error”, “observer bias” (Robson 2002), and validity by the “history, testing, instrumentation, mortality, and maturation” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 157). In this study, these issues were combated by an inductive and exploratory research strategy that helped to avoid or at least lessen the “observer bias” and “observer error” mentioned by Robson (2002).

The number of internal statements was too low to be able to reliably analyse the justifications, and discourses, without significant overly positive bias from the brands own wording. The issue with using only brands’ direct statement has already been pointed out by Evenett & Pisani (2023) who have recommended usage of ORBIS database.

As this study was inductive, the findings would have been directly influenced by the internal statements too much. The external statements helped to offer more perspectives and information on many brands that have not used their own voice to express their reasons to stay in Russia despite the war in Ukraine. The inductive approach of this study allowed more neutral stance, and the absence of prior hypothesis on this topic reduced biases from the researcher.

The biases in practise were the researcher originating from the West, and corporate irresponsibility being largely a Western perspective and mostly in literature from UK and USA. The ORBIS database was not used, meaning the findings are from the statements, and not from the information which brands operate in the Russian market. This bias was handled by using both Leave-Russia list and Yale list, because the Leave-Russia list includes statements in other languages than English, and the Leave-Russia list also considered other sources than the direct statements. The researcher being from Finland meant there were not strong connections with Yale or KSE Institute, and the research was independent. The researcher was also able to read and translate statements from many languages, including Russian, Chinese, Spanish and German, and not relying on English literature only.

The war between Russia and Ukraine can be researched from various perspectives with discourse analysis, but in marketing point of view, the brands' communications in wartime was a new perspective. The public availability of statements directly from brands or in news articles helped to maintain transparency. Using the ORBIS database was not considered, because the research started already with qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis and in marketing field.

The consistent and transparent content analysis methods used verify the reliability and validity of the research findings (Zhang & Wildemuth 2005), since the entire process has been recorded in Excel files and it would be theoretically possible for other researchers to come into same conclusions from the existing data.

In order to avoid any bias, deductive approach was not used, and instead an inductive approach was used. Inductive approach to coding means that there was no prior hypothesis, but all the observations and interpretation in this project comes from the data itself (Zhang & Wildemuth 2005, 3). In the inductive approach, the theory comes from the data and there is no a priori theoretical framework, and connections are derived between facts from the data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2009, 490). This turned out to be remarkably effective way because the initial expectations from the author were proved completely wrong by the data. Thus, for this project it was much better to look first at the data.

4 Findings

In this chapter, the findings are explained, and connections are drawn between theory and the findings of this study. There needed to be some focus, and that is why the most frequently appeared discourses are looked at in more detail, and some of the minor discourses are given less explanation. Since the research approach was inductive, the theory is complemented in this chapter, because it was not possible to cover all the theories that were discovered only in later phase of the research. This chapter will show the differences and/or similarities with the findings of this study.

In total there were 35 different discourses (Figure 11) identified from the research data (Appendix 1) that was a combined list of brands compiled by the author from Yale list and Leave-Russia.org list. It is possible to notice that there are some discourses that are pretty similar to each other and overlapping (e.g. boycott discourse & product boycott discourse), and perhaps those could be combined. From the distribution of discourse for each country (Appendix 2), it was possible to notice some were clear patterns. For example, for China-Russia friendship discourse, the brands that were involved were all originating from China.

There were main ten discourses that stood out when counting the brands per discourse (Figure 11):

1. Denial discourse (42),
2. Corporate irresponsibility discourse (32),
3. Market demand discourse (21),
4. Benefiting from the war (18),
5. Sanctions discourse (16),
6. China-Russia friendship discourse (16),
7. Donation discourse (15),
8. Social responsibility discourse (13), and
9. Financial benefit discourse (12),
10. Humanitarian discourse (11).

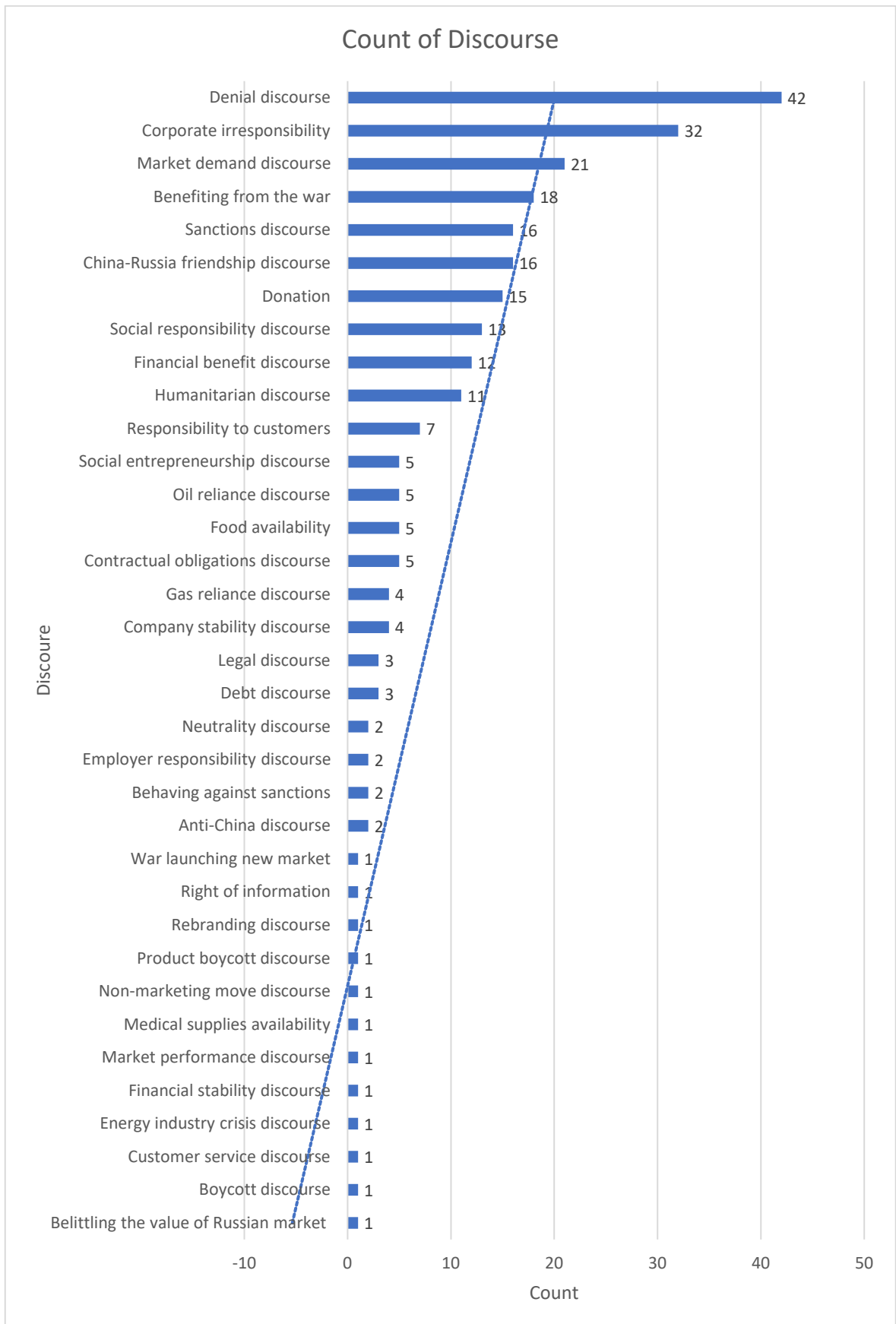


Figure 11: Count of Discourse. This includes the brands from both Yale and Leave-Russia list combined. Figure updated 3.5.2024.

This chapter will give context for the brands' justifications, like social, political, and economic discourses to stay in Russia with examples. This chapter will also explain the overlappings, as some discourses might in fact belong within the same area or be otherwise somehow connected. The top ten most frequent discourses are presented with examples.

4.1 Denial discourse

One of the largest discourses was the denial discourse (Figure 11)- with 42 brands. It was possible to identify certain patterns in the denial discourse, which are related to other discourses such as financial benefit discourse and market demand discourse. There are also brands from certain countries, such as China, that are more prominently represented within the denial discourse.

There are 6 brands from China in denial discourse: Alibaba (Business Today 2022), Baidu (Kharpal 2022), BBK Electronics (Lau 2022), China Investment Corporation (Financial Times 2022a), DJI (Unian.ua 2022) and Great Wall Motor (Kawase 2022). When it comes to Chinese brands, using the momentum of Western brands exit from Russia to grow business operations in Russia at the same time can be seen as recurring theme in the external statements. The Chinese brands within denial discourse were more reserved on commenting on the war in Ukraine, although for example Great Wall Motor (Kawase 2022) was still proud about the strong growth in the Russian market. The subsidiaries Oppo and RealMe of BBK Electronics conglomerate from China have been reluctant to explain their reasons for staying while Chinese brands claimed most of the Russian market (Lau 2022). However, China quietly cut Belt and Road investments in Russia since the war began (Financial Times 2022a). Despite quietly laying-off almost half of its Russian employees, Alibaba preferred to avoid discussing its Russian operations with media (Business Today 2022).

The denial discourse is not only a Chinese phenomenon, since also many other brands have remained in the Russian market quietly. These brands consist of Chapman Taylor,

SimpsonHaugh & partners and Tony Fretton Architects from UK (Ing 2022), Electricite de France (Atomic Energy.ru 2022) from France, and USI Holdings from USA (Yudin 2022), and they have been present in the Russian market, but not willing to elaborate on the reasons. SIS Pitches from UK had tried to hide its Russian operations from its website, but also did not want to explain its justifications for remaining in the Russian market (Pavlysh 2022b). In May 2022, several brands from USA – such as IQVIA, Huntsman, Fleetcor, and Forever Living – were remaining in the Russian market but did not issue any statements related to the war (Gibson 2022). Food related brands such as Starbucks, Carpigiani, and McDonald's did not comment on the war in the early 2022 (Seymour 2022) - and Carpigiani has not in any way explained remaining in the Russian market up to two years later.

Seven brands from India – MRPL (Verma 2022a), HLC Technologies (Dobberstein 2022), Bharat Petroleum (Tan & Verma 2023), Sun Pharma (Dunleavy 2022a), ONGC (Verma 2022b), UCO Bank (Finam.ru 2022), Canara Bank and HDFC Bank (Reuters 2022a) – all denied to give any statement related to war between Ukraine and Russia. Bharat Petroleum (Tan & Verma 2023) has been caught transporting Russian oil, but still refused to justify it. The three Indian banks were among others discovered to have created special “accounts to help facilitate trade in rupees with Russia” (Reuters 2022a; Finam.ru 2022) - basically creating a workaround on payment restrictions on Russia.

The denial discourse is still spread out between countries and industries. Also, Bion Group from Turkey (Stecklow, Gauthier-Villars & Tamman 2022), Habanos from Cuba (Mimouni, Morra & Cruz Gil 2022) and FESCO from USA (Sokolov 2022) all denied to explain their reasons for remaining in Russia. The clothing brand New Yorker launched new store in Moscow in March despite the competitors exiting from Russia at the same time but refused to explain (Spötter 2022). Travel brand MakeMyTrip from India did not stop Russian operations, but did not explain it either (Schaal 2022). Hiroshima Gas from Japan continued in Sakhalin-2, but has not given statement to justify (ANGI.ru 2022). Samsung Heavy Industries from South Korea did not issue statements, although it was reported the brand would deliver 3 ice-breakers to Russia for supporting gas trade (Hine 2022).

There is a relation between denial discourse and corporate irresponsibility: for example, the management of Thomson Reuters Corporation kept quiet about the cooperation with Tass upsetting its own employees over the spread of Russian state-controlled information (Tani

2022). Whereas AMD denied any irresponsibility, and explained it “strictly complies” (Stecklow, Gauthier-Villars & Tamman 2022).

Denial discourse was evident with advertising industry, for example Mercury Public Affairs, BGR Group, and Teneo axed their projects Russian market to avoid any sanctions despite having initially advocated on behalf of Russian oligarchs (Czarnecki & Coffee 2022). The industries that have been in controversy due to their products’ use for military purposes, such as Danieli Group from Italy (Grottolo 2022) and Altera from USA (Steporuk 2022), have also been denying their involvement in the Russian market.

Other brands have been more direct in their denial discourse. TDZ Turn (2022) from Czech Republic directly criticized the Yale list as spreading false information about its behaviour in Russia and for not verifying the information from the brand. Evenett & Pisani (2023) have also questioned the reliability of the Yale list, as the list tracks the press releases and communications statements instead of the financial statements and the list of registered brands in Russia. Slovenian brand Riko (2022) directly denied remaining in Russia was only for financial benefits, but rather for the social, humanitarian, and cultural justifications, accentuating on Czech-Russian friendship.

Some brands staying in Russia have tried to downplay the importance of the Russian market and their existing activities there. Associated British Foods (ABF) denied the importance of the Russian market and claimed the brand had “very minimal exposure” there (Amani 2022). CFL Multimodal from Luxembourg denied offering any numbers but claimed it was “not very exposed” to the Russian market (Obert 2022). HLC Technologies from India denied the war’s “impact on client operations” by the brand’s absence from Russia (Dobberstein 2022), although it has not been proven. The toy brand Spin Master from Canada also denied the importance of the market and mentioned it had “minimal exposure” in the Russian market (Bundale 2022).

4.2 Corporate irresponsibility discourse

There were 32 brands that have corporate irresponsibility discourse, and there are some other smaller discourses that have similarities with this one. The corporate irresponsibility discourse consists primarily of external statements. The explanation for this is that brands

would not consider their own behaviour irresponsible in the Western understanding of corporate irresponsibility and would not issue statements with CSI discourse themselves.

The corporate irresponsibility discourse is closely connected with the denial discourse. For example, despite the fact that majority of the components from a captured Shahed-136 drone fighting against Ukraine have been clearly identified to originate from Western brands, including Analog Devices (USA), Onsemi (USA), Texas Instruments (USA), NXP USA (USA), Hemisphere GNSS (Canada), U-Blox (Switzerland), the brands all did not take accountability, rather denounced the military use of their products and accentuated their compliance with sanctions (Bertrand 2023). With Orlan-drones captured in Ukraine, the part supplier brands consisted of the likes of Saito Seisakusho and Renesas Electronics from Japan, and “all of them answered that they strictly follow the sanctions and do not have information about the supply of their products in Russia” (Steporuk 2022).

Two years from the beginning of the war, Skuld, Steamship Mutual, Japan P&I Club, The Standard Club, West of England Ship Owners, Sveriges Ångfartygs Assurans Förening, London P&I Club, Gard P&I, UK P&I Club, and Britannia P&I were still all part of the International Group of P&I (IGP&I 2024), and despite the war in Ukraine continued insuring Russian cargo ships (Stanley 2022) despite the pleas from Ukraine government (Robertson 2022). Skuld (2022) reported on a “war risk insurance”, recommended safe routes to avoid mines and gave tips for social media behaviour while in Russia, and found itself a creative solution for benefiting from the war. Japan P&I Club (2022) reported the ships passing through Ukrainian ports would be more likely to face violence than Russian ports – nevertheless, mentioning that the standard insurance would not cover war-related damage was subtly advertising the more expensive insurance. However, as the war has continued, the sanctions have been strengthened and have begun somewhat limiting trade with Russia (Paulson 2024) – but still not stopping the operations of West of England Ship Owners in Russia. Also, the North of England P&I initially removed Russian Sovcomflot tankers from its homepage in March 2022 and then quietly allowed them back in April 2022 (Osler 2022).

In other cases, corporate irresponsibility is even more obvious and intentional. The UltraTech Cement from India purposefully used the Chinese currency (RMB) to purchase Russian coal and have a workaround around the sanctions (Business Standard 2022). Domino’s Pizza did not shut down stores in Russia despite the war in Ukraine when its competitors exited (Reuters 2022b). The case of Emirates Airlines, owned by UAE state,

highlights the difference in attitudes towards sanctions from non-Western countries and the refusal to stop operations in Russia with humanitarian and diplomatic justifications allowing the airline to behave as “enabler, facilitator, without taking a political position on this for the time being” (Reuters 2022c) as President of Emirates Tim Clark described it.

Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industrial Company from Iran has deliberately been manufacturing drones for Russian military use in Ukraine (Bertrand 2023). IK Tech (USA) had gone against the law already before the war in 2020-2021 and evidence from the Ukrainian war has been tied to the brand again (Grey, Tamman & Zholobova 2022) - accentuating the brand’s intentional corporate irresponsibility. Many of IK Tech’s part suppliers such as Saito Seisakusho from Japan have kept quiet about their involvement with Russian drones used in the war (Grey, Tamman & Zholobova 2022). The Russian military has been documented using drones DJI from China (Robeiko 2022). Tea brand Greenfield had lacked transparency of its operations and management in Russia and was punished for its irresponsible behaviour by Antimonopoly Committee of Ukraine (AMCU) (Finance.ua 2022).

The continued cooperation between Roscosmos and NASA has fuelled criticism (Howell 2023), as NASA has stayed in Russia despite the war in Ukraine (US Embassies in Russia 2024), while at the same time expressing support for Ukraine and space co-operation (NASA 2024). At the same time another department of the US government, US Department of Treasury (2022) has sanctioned Safiran Airport Services for supporting Russian military with shipments of drones and organizing flights between Russia and Iran. Without Western help, Russian military is only able to receive assistance from non-western countries like Iran (Flatley 2022).

The contradictory behaviour from European brands that publicly resist the war and comply with sanctions yet have supported Russian military through shipments by neutral Galika (Inform Napalm 2023) that has remained in Russia despite the war in Ukraine for already over two years. In its statement, NXP (2024) has denied the business with Iran, Russia and Belarus and focused on humanitarian discourse such offering donation for Ukraine. However, it has already been proven that the majority of components in Russian military equipment originates from European and US brands (Grey, Tamman & Zholobova 2022; Nardelli 2024).

Riol Chemie from Germany is among the most controversial brands with its blatant corporate irresponsibility, as it has delivered chemicals that included also the ingredient for Novichok poison that was used possibly for elimination of ex-agent Sergei Skripal and carried on for more than thirty times “without obtaining the necessary permits” in 2019-2022 (Felke, Strunz & Flade 2022) - even despite the war between Russia and Ukraine and the high likelihood of its products going for military usage.

OSTC and Unilever from UK have been criticized by Embassy of Ukraine to the UK (2022) on Twitter for benefiting from the war and behaving irresponsibly (Figure 12).



Figure 12: Twitter post by Embassy of Ukraine to UK (2022) on 15.6.2022 addressing the corporate irresponsibility of brands such as Unilever and OSTC still staying in Russia despite the war in Ukraine. Screenshot taken 11.2.2024 by author.

4.3 Market demand discourse

In the market demand discourse, there were 21 brands identified (Figure 11). The market demand discourse was more in general about brands having growing market demand in Russia, without specifically crediting the war in Ukraine as the underlying cause for it. The market demand discourse has some similarities with the financial benefit discourse, because again the Indian brands taking advantage of the new situation in Russia without serious competitors comes into light.

For Lisec’s CEO everything should be done in order “not to withdraw ourselves from the market,” since there is market demand and contractual obligations in Russia, but sanctions

might stop the operations in the end (Industriemagazin 2022a). The great market demand in Russia brought back the tyre brand Continental in August 2022 “to meet needs of car market” = after it had initially exited in March 2022 (AIF.ru 2022). FM Logistic (France) noticed the war did not cut market demand enough for it to consider exiting (Lennane 2022).

The joint-venture AB InBev Efes of Anadolu Efes (Turkey) and Anheuser-Busch InBev (Belgium) did not slow down business in the Russian market (Denkov 2022), but the latter wanted to exit from Russian market in April 2022 (Anheuser-Busch InBev 2022). Anadolu Efes (2022) closed its business in Ukraine right away when the war began, but on the same statement on 22 February 2022 stated:

*“In our Russia operation, our production and sales activities continue.”
(Anadolu Efes 2022)*

The exodus of Western payment methods like Mastercard and Visa encouraged Samsung to continue with its Samsung Pay operations in the Russian market: Samsung Russia (Figure 13) discreetly informed its clients on Telegram post: “Good news: Samsung Pay service continues its work in the Russian Federation” (Samsung Russia 2022).

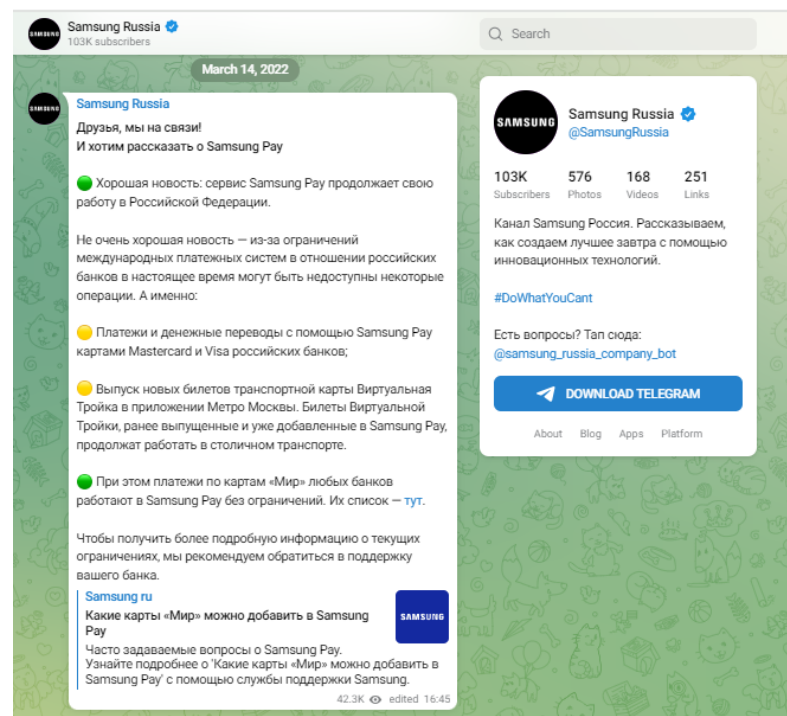


Figure 13: Telegram post on 14 March 2022 by Samsung Russia (2022). Screenshot taken by author on 28.4.2024.

Jazeera Airways (Casey 2022) benefited from the increased market demand after Western brands' left and began flying to Russia in early 2023:

"We expect high demand for this route from day one, as our service comes at a time of a scarcity of flights serving Moscow". (Casey 2022)

There was also a smaller discourse related to the main discourse: the war launching new market discourse. There the war in Ukraine was seen as a direct starting point for a new market, which was more specific.

The market demand for home electronics "more than doubled" in Russia due to the war, and brands like Ariston and Phillips all quietly manufactured in Russia still in April 2022 (Sergienko 2022). Hi-tech provider Azu International from Turkey has also been documented benefiting from increased market demand, but has been quiet on its justifications (Stecklow, Gauthier-Villars, & Tamman 2022). South Korean ATM-maker Hyosung was a key organiser of "Online & Offline 2022" conference and expressed desire in expanding to Russian market in 2022 (Retail-Loyalty.org 2022).

Yamaha Music justified remaining in the Russian market by responding to market demand (Westbrook 2022):

"Our goal is to provide consumers with high-quality musical instruments and audio equipment in all regions of our presence". (Westbrook 2022)

Before the war started, Zeppelin had steep growth in the Russian market making it convinced the market demand was there, and making the brand stay despite the war (Pollok 2022):

"Depending on the duration of the war, we are currently able to maintain business in parts of Ukraine and in Russia, at least to a limited extent. But the more likely scenario for Zeppelin is that we will be forced to exit: either there will be nationalisation or an inability to do business." (Pollok 2022)

Komatsu from Japan downplayed the influence of Russian market on its "75% jump in net profit for the first half of the current business year thanks to strong heavy machinery demand and a softer yen" (Reuters 2022d) – but it was still benefiting from the increased demand related to the war in Ukraine. The oil and gas reliance on Russia also influenced Japanese brands: JERA from Japan justified staying in Russia "to maintain long-term deliveries of liquefied natural gas (LNG)" (Obayashi 2022), whereas Toho Gas stayed in Sakhalin-2 "for stable energy supply" (The Japan Times 2022). In connection with Sakhalin-2, Mitsui OSK Lines CEO justified staying in Russia with the market demand (Park 2022):

“Because Japanese companies want LNG from Sakhalin 2, Mitsui OSK will do its best to supply gas regardless of Russia's national policy” (Park 2022).

Iran’s importance as an importer from Russia has grown since the war started, especially in oil & gas industry, and as result Gas Engineering and Development Company (IGEDC) sold “gas turbines to Russia”(Alahed News 2023). Formosa Petrochemical (Taiwan) also carried Russian oil (Focus Taiwan 2022), as the brand had contractual obligations to meet. Thus, the market demand is sometimes closely related to gas reliance discourse.

China National Petroleum Corporation found a solution for gas payment issues with the use of half Chinese and half Russian currencies (Xu 2022). Indian brands had stayed silent on their business with Russia, apart from JSPL that had also wondered whether a similar arrangement with Indian and Russian currencies could help circumventing sanctions (Varadhan 2022) – and Hindustan Petroleum Corp (HPCL) that purchased Russian oil due to cheaper prices than pre-war (Reuters 2022e). Slovak Gas Industry (SPP) had dependency on Russian oil, and the war led the brand into “diversification of gas supplies” path (SITA 2022), although it was a slow process.

4.4 Benefiting from the war

The benefiting from the war discourse accentuates the war as catalyst for financial benefits. There were 18 brands that have statements that mentioned both the Ukraine war and the following gained profits (Figure 11). This is the case especially with Indian companies entering the Russian market after Western companies exited, and they knowingly used the momentum.

Air Serbia has been “busting a European Union-wide ban on flights to Russia and profiting from the war in Ukraine” (APNews 2022), and it went against the sanctions by continuing operations in the Russian market despite the war, but slightly decreased after heavy backlash about corporate irresponsibility.

The oil industry has been greatly benefiting from the war with skyrocketing prices. For example, Aramco from Saudi Arabia proudly stated to Wall Street Journal (Said 2022):

“that its net income rose more than 80% to record highs in the first quarter of the year, a surge that shows how some of the world’s biggest state-owned energy producers are benefitting from a price boom accelerated by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.” (Said 2022)

Some brands – such as ST MicroElectronics from Switzerland, and Xilinx and Microchip Technology from USA – have been benefiting from the war and involved in corporate irresponsibility perhaps unintentionally, bringing attention to the importance of transparent supply chains (Grey, Tamman & Zhobolova 2022).

Since the exodus of Western brands from the Russian market, Indian brands benefited from the war greatly: VA Tech Wabag negotiated deal “for a water treatment package for the EuroChem Methanol Production facility in Kingisepp, Russia” (Raj 2022) in June 2022, and Indian Oil Corporation was able to purchase oil from Russia at much cheaper price than the global market level thanks to Russia-India governmental cooperation in March 2022 (NDTV Profit 2022). Indian Dr.Reddy’s Labs has benefited from the war as the sales for pharmaceuticals have seen strong growth in the Russian market since the war began (Dunleavy 2022b). Also, Japanese state has been active, as with its blessings Mitsui & Co and Mitsubishi continued their partnership with Gazprom in Sakhalin-2 to import majority of the produce into Japan (Nikkei Asia 2022). In the earlier part of 2022, Li-Ning (China) and Vilhelm Parfumerie (France) were among the few global brands deciding to launch new stores in Russia despite the war (Pavlysh 2022a).

In the food industry, there were also cases of brands benefiting from the war. For instance, Grupo Fuertes was growing its operations in Russia in the beginning of 2022 and was hoping the war in Ukraine “would end as soon as possible” (Cocero 2022) to avoid trouble for its business – the brand did not show sympathy and was more focused on its profits. Grupo Fuertes readily accentuated “not any greater than other companies with interests in the country” (Cocero 2022).

The brands Minsk Automobile Plant from Belarus, KAMA Tyre Service from Slovakia, and Rotax from Austria have been benefiting from the war by delivering products for Russian military usage through Iran, but only Rotax was quick to deny deliberate involvement (Kern 2022). Iran has increased its trade with Russia during the war: National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and Gazprom “agreed to strengthen cooperation” in May 2022 (Al Hashem 2022).

Responsible Jewellery Council (RJC) has chosen silence on the war, because a large portion of diamonds have Russia origins – causing an exodus of its member brands like Richemont unwilling to participate in “supporting conflicts and wars” like RJC (Porterfield 2022).

4.5 Sanctions discourse

In the sanctions discourse, there were 16 brands. Some of the brands were considering exiting Russian market and/or brands that mentioned the increased difficulty of continuing business operations in Russia. The brands that exited at early stage had an easier time and changes in regulations have made it more challenging to exit the Russian market as they would lose ownership of their assets and IP in Russia (Aarup 2023).

In the South Korean car brand Kia’s case, the “rising volatility in Russia” (Autonews 2022) might end of the business according to executive reached by Autonews. At the time, other carmakers such as Toyota, Renault, Mazda, and Nissan had already exited from the Russian market (Autonews 2022). Based on information QuotedData had, JP Morgan was not sure how long the “current sanctions regime” might last and was planning a merger for its Russian subsidiary and the larger group back in October 2022 (Carthew 2022).

Based on the research data, the sanctions discourse is often connected with other discourses. For example, in its statement Barloworld (2022) mentioned the employer responsibility, gained financial benefit, responsibility to shareholders, financial stability, but the gist was in sanctions. Barloworld (2022) benefited from almost 12% growth in the Russian market in 2022, however started to face the reality of the sanctions:

“Trading in Russia is becoming increasingly difficult as the full effect of sanctions are beginning to be felt and while Barloworld remains focussed on compliance with emerging regulatory changes, managing costs and working capital requirements, as well as supporting our employees and customers remains key. The constrained outlook has resulted in impairment of \$68.5 million (R1.0 billion) being recorded at 31 March 2022, based on lower estimated cash flows together with higher discount rates.” (Barloworld 2022).

The Icelandic fishing equipment brand Hampidjan (2022) played down the impact of the Russian market in their statement and mentioned that certain regions such as Faroe Islands were exempt from sanctions and could still offer services to Russian customers at the time. However, Hampidjan (2022) still announced their compliance with sanctions in July 2022:

“Hampidjan has systematically withdrawn from doing business with Russian fishing companies, has already ended the majority of such activities, exports no products to Russia, and is in this way contributing to efforts to influence the policies of the Russian authorities.” (Hampidjan 2022)

Some of the brands were less fortunate than others and faced the full effect of the sanctions. There were stricter rules in United Kingdom and the United States. Based on the research data, the mining industry was especially affected by the sanctions. For example, Petropavlovsk felt the sanctions directly as it went to the High Court in UK and was forced into selling its Russian subsidiaries (Garcia Perez 2022). Compass Mining was facing consequences for violating the sanctions in the United States and driven to hastily sell its business in Russia to get out of the situation (Malik 2022). Eutelsat was also operating in the Russian market for the almost entire 2022 but exited the market once sanctions tightened (Clover 2022).

Especially the advertising & PR industry used to be heavily involved in the Russian market, and Business Insider noticed 13 advertising & PR agencies still helping Russian oligarchs despite the war in Ukraine and the sanctions (Czarnecki & Coffee 2022). Roberti Global helped with Nordstream 2 project from 2017 to February 2022, and cut the cooperation when Gasprom and Nord Stream 2 got sanctioned in the United States (Czarnecki & Coffee 2022).

The corporate irresponsibility peaks in the sanctions discourse at times. For example, during the year 2022 there were still major food and beverages corporations such as KFC, McDonald’s, Starbucks, and Burger King still staying in Russia despite the war in Ukraine and without exit plans at the time (Seymour 2022). This study only looks at the data collected from Yale list and Leave-Russia.org list, and in that there was no information on the later developments such as the brands exiting at later stage.

The energy industry has faced sanctions, which led to TotalEnergies from France and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) from Japan freezing any new investments in the project “Arctic LNG 2” by Novatek, but China could continue, and the larger part of financing is Chinese- and Russian-backed (Interfax.ru 2022). On 25 March 2002, Mitsui & Co from Japan and JOGMEC that hold 10% stake in the project were not planning to exit the project (Interfax.ru 2022). Out of the total 9.5 billion investment in “Arctic LNG 2”, around 2.5 billion EUR comes from Chinese banks (inc. Export Import Bank of China and

Bank of China), and 4.5 billion from Russian banks (inc. Sberbank and Gazprombank) (Interfax.ru 2022).

The statement from Ipsen (2022) touched on few topics: humanitarian support for Ukraine, employer responsibility and responsibility to customers, and standing with Ukraine, and compliance to sanctions. Ipsen (2022) did not completely announce exit from Russia on 29 March 2022, but announced partial exit:

“We support global sanctions, and we will take all the precautionary measures to comply with them. We have suspended several promotional activities in Russia, including advertising and participation to non-scientific congresses. Additionally, we will not initiate any new clinical trials.”

Mitsui & Co (2022) from Japan saw the contractual obligations and responsibility to stakeholders influencing their stay in Russia strongly and included a list of the total loans and investments of around 8.7 trillion JPY. The stakeholder theory from CSR theory (Phillips 2003; Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar & de Colle 2010) seems to have very practical and real-life applications based on these observations from the research data. There seems to be connections between CSR theory and CSI theory, based on the research data, because the brands seem to be very fluent in the right terminology and careful with their choices of words in their direct statements to avoid giving the air of corporate irresponsibility.

The aviation industry has been impacted by the war in Ukraine significantly, for example Air Moldova was planning to open air traffic to Moscow in October 2022, but the attempt was cut by the Moldovan civil aviation authority (Reuters 2022f). Other industries that have been impacted by the war in Ukraine significantly, for example in Slovenia, are the mechanical and electrical, and pharmaceutical industries that all were relying on exports to Russia heavily (Vecernij List 2022). The home electronics brand Gorenje that has focused sales in Eastern Europe and is owned by Chinese giant Hisense would especially be affected by the sanctions (Vecernij List 2022). There has been an increasingly strong dislike for Chinese brands still in the Russian market, but there have not really been similar sanctions implemented towards Chinese-owned brands yet. The sanctions have had an impact on many brands all over Europe, especially those that had built their business in the Russian market. The sanctions impact Slovenia negatively, because of its heavy reliance on the Russian market (Vecernij List 2022).

Kyushu Electric Power from Japan announced the decision of cutting Russian coal imports completely in response to the sanctions that impact Western countries and Japan (NHK 2022). The sanctions have forced many brands to behave more responsibly, and perhaps some brands would have still stayed in Russian market without the external pressures from sanctions and reputation harm. Based on the research data, there is visibly both responsible and irresponsible behaviour within the sanctions discourse.

The United States government increased sanctions and banned the sales of hi-tech equipment to Russia and the sales for military users in March 2022, but this did not stop the Orlans drone to be in strong demand due to the war in Ukraine and the drone manufacturers refused to comment on the sales to Russia (Grey, Tamman & Zhobolova 2022). The drones that have been used against Ukraine forces had been manufactured by iLogic with parts from Asia Pacific, Saito Seisakusho, Xilinx and Texas Instruments – however, the brands either declined to have known about the use or refused to reply to the Reuters journalists (Grey, Tamman & Zhobolova 2022). The drones' case could be also seen as part of corporate irresponsibility discourse and denial discourse.

The financials industry was visibly impacted by the sanctions that cut the Russia from the rest of the world's economic system and led to many Russian brands to desire opening accounts in Chinese banks to be able to continue business as usual despite the war in Ukraine (Shen & Galbraith 2022). There are quite a few banks operating in Russia, such as Construction bank of China, Bank of China, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), and Agricultural Bank of China, and they have not issued their own statements on staying in Russia (Shen & Galbraith 2022). The brands' exodus from Russia and the sanctions on Russia have changed the structure of Russian economy: the Western brands' market share has been replaced by Indian and Chinese brands (Korhonen 2023) - and this has been proved right with the research data of this study.

4.6 China-Russia friendship discourse

For the China-Russia friendship discourse there were 16 brands. The China-Russia friendship discourse is mentioned in news articles by both Russian and Western media in the research data. It would have been better had there been more internal statements.

Based on the research data, Chinese brands deciding to stay in Russia could be partly, because the good China-Russia relations since Soviet times, and partly because there is huge demand in Russia after the Western brands have left. However, the China-Russia friendship discourse is a part of a larger picture. The other Chinese brands fit other discourses such as denial discourse, financial benefit discourse, market demand discourse, responsibility to customers, sanctions discourse, and social responsibility discourse.

Within the responsibility to customers discourse, some of the brands wish to maintain business operations in Russia and continue offering services to Russian customers: an example of such case is the Didi platform that posted their decision to stay in Russia (Figure 14) already the same day war started (Didi 2022) (translated from Chinese by author) :

“Didi operations in Russia will not close, and operations will continue to serve drivers and passengers in Russia well.” (Didi 2022)



Figure 14: Post on the war in Ukraine on company Weibo Account by Didi (2022) in Chinese on February 22, 2022. Screenshot taken 11.2.2024 by author. Content translated by the author who is fluent in Chinese.

Despite the very strong desire to stay in Russia at first, Didi tried to exit Russia quietly, but in the end decided to remain in the Russian due to online resistance Tabeta (2022), and not wanting to behave against the Chinese government (Zhou 2022). Even if the brand wanted to behave according to corporate social responsibility principles, as a business headquartered in China it needed to conform with the domestic politics in China. This is important point to remember about corporate irresponsibility in the Chinese context – the brands are not free to behave in any way they want but need to consider the stability of their country. Car brand Geely expressed hesitation about staying in the Russian market despite the market potential

after Western brands left, whereas other Chinese car brands SAIC Motors, Chery and Great Wall have refused commenting their expansion in Russian market (Cambell & White 2022).

Chinese brands have not taken any stance on the effects of the sanctions, apart from Haier that saw “no impact” (Tabete 2022). In March 2022, many Chinese brands including Lovol, Chery, Zoomlion, Sokon and China Communication Construction Company (CCCC) - from industries such as infrastructure, technology, machinery – stated wanting to expand their business in Russia (Shadrina 2022). The war in Ukraine has not slowed down infrastructure projects in Russia, with China Railway Construction Corporation prepared for “constructions projects of railroads and roads in Crimean region” (The Moscow Times 2023) and building ring road in Vladivostok (Regnum 2022).

Russia is especially reliant on China for its imports, such as passenger vehicles from China, and reliant on oil exports to China and India (Korhonen 2023, 22-23). Without Western countries’ trade, the war in Ukraine has visibly increased Russia’s dependency on China (Ihanainen-Alanko 2023, 17). To accommodate the increased coal transport during the war in Ukraine, China State Railway Group added new cargo trains (TV BRICS 2022). Similarly, Unipeac from China expanded its fleet with ten ships to carry Russian oil (Walid 2022).

The China Coal Transportation and Distribution Association and Oasis were interested in expanding in the Russian market without more explanations than the desire to cooperate with Russians, whereas drone brand DJI directly expressed their strong desire to keep outside of politics (Financial Times 2022b). The war in Ukraine did not slow down the China-Russia gas projects, for instance Xibao Metallurgy Materials Group increased investment in 2022 (Financial Times 2022b), and the China Russia Gas Pipeline that began constructions in 2020 (China Railway Group Limited 2020) has been sped up with the agreement for so-called Power of Siberia line in early 2022 (Chen 2022).

In the aviation industry, Hainan Airlines is an example of China-Russia discourse. The airline had been away from the Russian market since the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic, and only restarted in July 2022 despite the ongoing war in Ukraine. Hainan Airlines explained its return to Russia to FlightGlobal (Chua 2022):

“The resumption of the Beijing-Moscow route will once again build an air bridge for friendly exchanges between China and Russia, bringing convenient, efficient and high-quality travel experience to Chinese and Russian passengers”
(FlightGlobal 2022).

Based on the research data, the technology industry in Russia has also seen an increased reliance on China. For example, Russia's move from exiting Western brands AMD and Intel into Chinese microchip manufacturers such as Zhaoxin that has benefited from the increased market demand (Zafar 2022). This phenomenon has partly triggered the USA to blacklist Yangtze Memory Technologies (Ekonomichna Pravda 2022). The exodus of Western brands has increased sales of Chinese brands such as Xiaomi and Oppo (Strumpf 2022), and POCO and Xiaomi brands took over most of the Russian market share in 2022 (Udin 2022). Brands including Oppo and Xiaomi that had limited their marketing activities in Russia have brought their spending to a higher level than before the war starting from 2023 (Kommersant 2024).

The difference between China-Russia friendship discourse and denial discourse is that although both keep silence about the justifications to stay in Russia, the denial discourse focuses more on the war in Ukraine, whereas China-Russia friendship discourse looks past the war and emphasizes the friendly relations over else. The denial discourse is still closely related to Chinese brands, and there were not many internal statements. The reporters from CNBC received only one reply from Realme - and eight out of nine Chinese brands refused to discuss the war in Ukraine including the brands NetEase, Oppo, Honor, Baidu, Alibaba, Huawei, Tencent, Xiaomi (Kharpal 2022). This is not surprising considering the outrage the Chinese brand Didi received when it attempted to exit the Russian market.

Staying in Russia firstly shows the Chinese brands' obedience to the Chinese government and secondly emphasizes the China-Russia friendship narrative. During the war in Ukraine, Chinese banks have been active in Russia and attracted Russian firms to open accounts to avoid Western sanctions and continue international transfers, but China Construction Bank, Agricultural Bank of China, Bank of China and Industrial & Commercial Bank (ICBC) (PlusWorld.ru 2022) all have not issued direct statements on the war in Ukraine - as China has time and time again expressed opposition towards sanctions and continuing friendly relations with Russia (Shen & Galbraith 2022).

In the past, China has expressed the desire to maintain friendly relations with Russia. Especially within the China-Russia friendship discourse there are many other industries with Chinese brands that similarly have not exited Russia, but quite the opposite, benefited from the war and increased market demand. Most recently in 2024, China and Russia have justified their strong cooperation by "industrial supply chain stability" (Leahy, Ding &

Stognei 2024). The terminology keeps changing, but the gist of friendly relations is still the same.

The friendship is strong, because China and Russia have the mutual interest of weakening the position of United States (Ihanainen-Alanko 2023, 17). Russia and China share the same enemies and have been partners for many years. China has shown itself a more reliable partner for Russia than the Central Asian countries due to the geographical situation and vibrant economy of China (Silvan 2023, 31). Russia has even referred to China as “friends without limits” at the start of the war in Ukraine (Huhtala, Koskimies & Pekonen 2023, 30). Due to this friendship, China has not found the war in Ukraine unacceptable (Airaksinen 2023, 64) – at least officially.

4.7 Donation discourse

Based on the analysed research data, the donation discourse involved 15 brands. The speciality of the donation discourse is that most of the statements within this discourse are internal (11), and only a few (3) are external. The donation discourse is relatively significant, but there were different approaches to it in the data, some closer to CSR and some closer to CSI. The difference can be partly explained by the brands presenting themselves in positive light to outsiders, whereas news articles look at the brands behaviour more objectively and analysing the reality behind what the brands say.

There were different ways for brands to offer support for Ukraine, ranging from free services like “unlimited calls to Ukraine” by AT&T (2022), to monetary aid to Ukraine by Avia Solutions Group (ASG 2022). The donation discourse is quite closely related to the humanitarian discourse, however in this discourse there is the aspect of good PR for the brands that offered support for Ukraine.

Telecom provider AT&T (2022) from USA offered free calls to Ukraine and helped in fundraising for Ukraine but did not mention anything about still staying in Russia despite the war. This raises thoughts on corporate irresponsibility, because despite seemingly genuine and innocent, the donation seems like a distraction from the fact the brand was still benefiting from the war. Thus, the donation discourse is a bit problematic, as it could be in

some cases used as coverup for corporate irresponsibility. For example, Roark Capital Group gave donations to Ukraine through its subsidiary Focus Brands, and the brand escaped accountability with this statement:

“while the company has put all investments and expansion plans in Russia on hold, all of their locations in the country are independently owned and operated” (Fung 2022).

Telecom provider Verizon (2022) gave more generous offer than AT & T (2022) by offering free calls in most of Eastern Europe since the refugees from Ukraine hurried to the surrounding areas. The offer from Verizon showed more understanding of the refugee situation and gave a better image of the brand. Verizon (2022) also arranged a donation campaign where their users were able to donate via SMS. Thus, the border between corporate social responsibility and corporate irresponsibility is not that clearly defined, as the brand is doing seemingly many things right, but still staying in Russia and not addressing the dilemma.

As is visible from the statement below by Avia Solutions Group (2022), the humanitarian discourse and donation discourse are often present at the same, but the donation discourse focuses more on offering detailed numbers of the donation to show a stronger impact:

“Following Russia’s military action against Ukraine, ASG responded immediately by providing €300,000 worth of financial and supplementary aid to both government and NGO’s supporting Ukraine. ASG has also extended financial support in the form of a €100,000 benevolent fund, with the full sum attributed to Ukrainian and Lithuanian organizations who are fully committed to the humanitarian crisis developing in the country as well as the refugees affected.” (Avia Solutions Group 2022)

On the other hand, there are brands such as Lockton that mentioned in their statement their admiration for Ukrainian President Zelenskyy and their dedication for *“reuniting separated families, providing food and household items to those who have been displaced, delivering emergency water supplies to communities, supporting health facilities with additional supplies and equipment, and continuing to provide humanitarian aid to vulnerable populations”* (Lockton 2022). Such statements are more convincing and support the brand image more towards corporate social responsibility because they give more specific details on the help offered instead of just donations.

Similarly to Lockton, Metro AG (2022) mentioned the admiration for the employees for actively providing support to Ukrainian refugees and the donations of water and food to Ukraine, but still staying in Russia despite the war in Ukraine and combining employer responsibility and food availability as justifications for staying in Russia:

“METRO supports food and water deliveries of the UN World Food Programme to Ukraine. METRO employees assist their Ukrainian colleagues with personal donations to our fund and with accommodation for refugees. We are deeply impressed by the great willingness of our colleagues in Ukraine's neighbouring countries to provide food to Ukraine and help refugees directly at the borders.

As already communicated, the Management Board of METRO AG has decided to continue the operation of the Russian subsidiary. The decision was not made easily and after careful internal review. The company also has responsibility for the 10,000 colleagues there, and many people buy their food from us. We are keeping a close eye on further developments and stand by the side of decision-makers in business and politics who are seeking a peaceful solution to the war in Ukraine.” (Metro AG 2022)

In the case of Metro AG, the humanitarian aid and donations seem to be used as a trick to take attention away from the issue of the brand still staying in Russia despite the war and offering justifications for the corporate irresponsibility. The same issue is with Wells Fargo (2022) that donated one million USD of aid for Ukraine, but still did not exit the Russian market and did not provide any explanation.

In the same manner as the other brands within donation discourse, TGI Fridays (2022) first expressed support for Ukraine in their statement. TGI Fridays (2022) put the responsibility of the stores in Russia on the Russian “independent franchisees” and did not take accountability for the stores continuing operations as usual despite the war in Ukraine, but at least offered to donate the profits from Russian stores for supporting Ukrainians.

The fashion brand G-III is another example of brands use CSR terms such “corporate citizenship” in their communications, and offer outerwear and monetary donations for Ukraine, while at the same time staying in Russia despite the war in Ukraine and not explaining it (Clark 2022). Fletcher Hotels (2022) offered free hotel stays for Ukrainian refugees in spring 2022, but also did not mention anything about still staying in Russia. In these cases, the donation discourse is related to denial discourse, where the brands do not mention or try their best to avoid the topic of still staying in Russia despite the war.

The opposite case of denial & donation discourses is for example Fresenius (2022) that directly say “Why we’re still in Russia” as the title of their statement on the war situation. However, the statement starts the same way as the others in donation discourse by explaining the amount of aid offered to Ukraine. Additionally, Fresenius (2022) mentions the social responsibility and responsibility as the explanations for staying in Russia, and shows another example of the interrelatedness of the discourses:

“Our responsibility as a healthcare company also includes not abandoning our patients in Russia but continuing to provide them with medical care. It is a simple matter to just shut down a fast-food restaurant. But not a dialysis clinic. If Fresenius produced consumer goods we would have immediately pulled out of Russia. But we are a healthcare company. Our patients depend on our life-saving products and services – in Russia, as well. There are simply no substitutes available to patients in that country, at least not in the short term. Even though it is Russian soldiers who started shooting and bombing people in the Ukraine, we cannot and must not set human lives against each other.”
(Fresenius 2022)

However, despite in the statement from Fresenius (2022) suggesting food industry could leave much more easily, in fact many of the restaurant chains tried their best to delay their exit from Russia. Fresenius (2022) did accentuate that the human lives of Ukrainians and Russians are the same value, regardless of the party that began the war – and this part can trigger debate whether a brand should take philosophical stance in their corporate communications or would sentence like this be more triggering than anything.

Riot Games (2022) donated one million USD for Ukraine and organised fundraising campaign where part of the revenue from specified games was directed towards humanitarian aid in Ukraine. In the statement, Riot Games (2022) did not mention staying in Russia and unknowing observer might see their generous donations as corporate social responsibility, when the reality is that Russia has been too large market to abandon. This is not fair to the brands that followed their moral compass, and exited the Russian market even before the sanctions took full effect.

In Tesla’s case, the denial discourse and donation discourse were present at the same time. Tesla’s CEO Elon Musk did not decide to exit the Russian market, but offered Starlink service to Ukraine and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was already thankful for the help (Gonzalez 2022). Many Twitter users were suggesting that Elon Musk had the power to potentially shut down all the Teslas in Russia (Gonzalez 2022). However, Teslas were not

shut down and the brand managed to steer clear from trouble despite staying in Russia, and denying to explain the reasons for it.

Wabtec (2022) has made corporate social responsibility a part of its communication strategy, as its charity the Wabtec Foundation donated 100 000 USD for Ukraine in March 2022. The statement focused more on the history of philanthropy than addressing the issue of still staying in Russia despite the war in Ukraine. There was again no explanation offered for staying in Russia, but the donation was taking away the edge of the issue.

However, in the donation discourse there is also an example of a brand that decided to exit Russian market and at the same time donated generously to Ukraine: Recruit Holdings deactivated Indeed jobsite in Russia in March 2022 and was planning the same for Glassdoor website and donated one million USD as aid for Ukraine (Staffing Industry Analysts 2022). The corporate responsibility theme is thus visible also in the donation discourse, despite the tendency of brands using donations for good public relations, instead of behaving in a truly socially responsible way.

4.8 Social responsibility discourse

In the social responsibility discourse, there were 13 brands. However, there are additionally several smaller discourses that could also fit within the social responsibility theme, such as social entrepreneurship discourse (5) and responsibility to customers (7), and employer responsibility (2).

While Expedia decided to exit Russian market in the beginning of March 2022, many travel-related brands including Aviasales, Wego, and Booking Holdings were reluctant to leave and stayed in Russia (Schaal 2022). Aviasales explained staying in Russia with the responsibility to customers and employees in Russia (Schaal 2022). These justifications are referring to the brand's social responsibility, although maybe not that convincing considering the seriousness of the war situation in Ukraine. The war has caused an exodus of Russians, and part of the workforce has joined fighting in Ukraine (Simola 2023, 20) – making the employer responsibility discourse quite complex, since the brands that continued to pay salaries were supporting the war indirectly.

In its press release on 15 April 2022, L'Occitane (2022) announced their partial exit from Russian market by shutting down physical stores and webstores in Russia due to the war in Ukraine. However, L'Occitane was also worried about its employees in Russia and announced the brand would keep paying salaries to the Russian employees regardless. The case of L'Occitane is a bit complex compared to many other brands, as the decision to keep paying salaries would still benefit the Russian economy and assist the Russian government to continue the war. The brand might as well have continued the business operations in Russia because the decision was made without knowing the length of the war. Indeed, later in June 2022, L'Occitane had slowly opened the stores in Russia again with a change of top management and rebranding the logo into Cyrillic script (Aaron 2023). Thus, the initial press release in April 2022, was a response to the bad press and cover up for corporate irresponsibility masked as corporate responsibility.

Social responsibility discourse shows the brands understanding stakeholder theory and CSR theory and using the smaller discourses such as sanctions discourse and responsibility to customers and employees as justifications for staying in Russia. For example, Mitsui O.S.K. Lines from Japan (MOL 2022) mentioned value creation for stakeholders, responsibility to customers and employees, and sanctions in their statement on the Ukraine war situation on March 2022 with CSR as the overarching theme:

"We are developing a variety of social infrastructure businesses, mainly in the shipping industry, with the aim of supporting people's lives around the world and opening up a prosperous future. We aim to deliver new value to all stakeholders, including shareholders, business partners, employees, and local communities, and to become a strong and resilient corporate group that grows on a global scale. It is our company's social responsibility to transport energy resources and other goods that are essential to people's daily lives. While giving priority to ensuring the safety of our crews, cargos, and vessels, we continue our work to provide reliable transportation services.

In compliance with the international community's coordinated sanctions against the Russian Federation, and in accordance with the policy of the Japanese government, we will respond appropriately while continuing our consultations with various parties, including our business partners" (MOL 2022).

Wienerberger (2022) is another example where the brand is very aware of CSR, and announced on 15 June 2022 their exit solution as selling the business to Russians that will continue the operations. This does seem like CSR in practise at first, because the original

owners exited. The justifications for Wienerberger continuing to run the business in Russia were the responsibility to customers and employees, and stability. There was a short sentence at the end of the statement downplaying the importance of the Russian market and suggesting it was worth only one percent of all revenues. However, although the exit was announced back in June 2022, the exit only took place in the end of March 2024 (RBC 2024; Ukrainska Pravda 2024). The delay in the exit from Russia could have been partly with hopefulness of the war possibly ending, although officially the explanation was the unexpected complexity of exiting Russian market. However, considering the fact that despite the troubles, many brands have been able to exit, the justifications for staying in Russia seem a bit weak.

There were some brands that created controversy not only for staying in Russia, but also helping with the war. Autel Robotics (2022) wanted to silence the rumours of their drones being used in military purposes, and emphasized peace and humanity in their statement on 25 February 2022 when the war in Ukraine had just started:

“We have always advocated peaceful and creative uses of drone technology. Autel Robotics endeavors to educate users in safe, respectful, and humane use of all its drone products, in the firm belief that this can help make a better world for all of us. The Autel Robotics website contains numerous accounts of peaceful use of drones in applications as diverse as film-making, falconry, accident reconstruction, and law enforcement” (Autel Robotics 2022).

In a later statement on 11 November 2023, Autel Robotics (2023) emphasized CSR as guide to their business operations and judged the use of their drones for military purposes:

“Autel Robotics strongly opposes the use of drone products for military purposes or any other activities that infringe upon human rights. The company strictly complies with the applicable control requirements related to the selling, transfer, export, re-export, and disposal of hardware, software, and technology, which is not only aiming to gain the trust of partners and the public, but also to reduce corporate operating risks, and bear corporate responsibility as a member of the international market” (Autel Robotics 2022).

However, despite the CSR talk in their statements, Autel Robotics still did not actively stop the sales to Russia and has stayed in the Russian market for over two years despite the war in Ukraine. Autel Robotics created even more controversy when it promoted drones carrying explosives and sparked the sarcasm from netizens pointing out the issue of claiming to be a socially responsible brand while still reaping profits from the war in Ukraine and intentionally attempting to boost sales of drones for military purposes on eBay shop (Biddle

2024). Then in March 2024, there has been “H.R.2684 – Countering CCP drones” bill introduced in the White House that aims to ban Chinese drones in USA for threatening the national security (Congress.gov 2024), and if the law would be passed it would influence DJI for sure, and possibly also Autel Robotics. Initially, Autel Robotics controversy was mentioned as the reason for the bill in November 2023 (Shepardson 2023), however in the bill there was only DJI named, this might change in later stages. In any case, Autel Robotics has become a truly clear case of demonstrating how brands talk CSR, but still behave in irresponsible way in the Ukraine war context.

Based on the research data, the social responsibility discourse is full of dilemmas, and the line between what is CSR and what is CSI is quite blurred. In the case of Krka (2022), from Slovenia, the brand has stayed in both Ukraine and Russia markets despite the war in Ukraine and explained this by social responsibility:

*“We have undertaken all actions in consideration of our social responsibility to keep our employees safe and ensure business continuity and uninterrupted supplies of our medicines, many of which are of vital importance for patients”
(Krka 2022).*

However, in the same report by Krka (2022), the Russian market experienced growth and the Ukraine market was estimated to grow even more during 2022, which for a pharmaceuticals brand is good for the company stability and responsibility to shareholders and employees, but the ethical issues are not considered: the war boosts the need of pharmaceuticals. A year later in March 2023, Krka released their 2022 results, and they showed Russia and Ukraine as the key areas of growth, and overall revenues grew for the whole group. The war in Ukraine seems a good business opportunity for Krka, and the brand has not attempted to obscure that.

However, the ESG policy of Krka (2024) does not show conflicts as the focus is on offering good products to customers, being environmentally friendly (E) and responsible employer (S) and focusing on business stability (G). Thus, the ESG theory can be used to justify corporate irresponsibility, because it is easy to cherry-pick the goals that do not conflict with business growth in Ukraine and Russia. Krka is an excellent case that demonstrated the inability of ESG theory to explain corporate irresponsibility, because it does not necessarily take into account the financial, ethical and political aspects of brands behaviour. Ibrahim

(2022) from PRWeek has also noticed the “collision of politics, business and ethics” for brands staying in Russia. Especially for PR firms staying in Russia is very questionable and a risk for reputation damage. Thus, it is not surprising the UK-based Hudson Sandler announced its exit from Russia due to ethical concerns (Czarnecki & Coffee 2022). Their exit also follows the general pattern of UK brands exiting from Russia with faster pace.

Another pharmaceutical brand, Teva from Israel, has stayed in Russia and maintained business as usual, while claiming the social responsibility of the company including stability and responsibility towards existing “obligations” (GxP 2022). This again shows that especially the governance part of ESG theory is repeatedly used by brands to justify staying in Russia despite the war in Ukraine.

Similarly to pharmaceuticals, the food industry also benefited greatly from staying in Russia despite the war in Ukraine. DP Eurasia that operates Domino’s Pizza restaurants experienced immense growth of 58.3% in web sales in Russian market in 2022, and the explanation for staying in Russia was that “the safety and welfare of all the group's employees and customers remains our primary priority” (DP Eurasia 2022). Thus, DP Eurasia also mentioned the responsibility to customers and employees, with social responsibility from ESG theory as their main justification. In April 2023, DP Eurasia announced it would “file for DPRussia’s bankruptcy” and exit the Russian market, as the sanctions had tightened their grip (DP Eurasia 2023). The grocery shop chains Globus and Metro AG also continued in the Russian market due to responsibility to clients and employees (The Economist 2022), and to ensure food availability in Russia (Ukrainska Pravda 2023).

The statement from Gedeon Richter (2022) combined humanitarian discourse and donation discourse with social responsibility as the overarching theme. Gedeon Richter made medicine and monetary donations for Ukraine and claimed, “treating its social responsibility as a priority” (Gedeon Richter 2022). However, in the same statement on 1 March 2022, the brand pointed out their long experience in the Russian market and claimed that it could not leave the Russian patients in trouble. Mentioning the “key player” status in Russian market (Gedeon Richter 2022), however, makes the brand’s good deeds seem like PR stunts, and suggests that the real reason for staying in Russia could be the refusal to give up a lucrative market even in the light of sanctions. Thus, the theme of corporate irresponsibility also lurks its head in the case of Gedeon Richter.

Despite the United Kingdom being stricter on corporate irresponsibility, and showing exemplary behaviour in many situations, the tennis field did not do that well in comparison. Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) in the UK wanted to show support for Ukraine and banned Belarusian and Russian players from Wimbledon following the recommendations from British government, however the ATP fined and issued warning to LTA to avoid any more bans (ESPN 2022). The lack of sympathy for Ukraine from ATP was criticized heavily in UK by the Michelle Donelan (Culture Secretary) (ESPN 2022). The pressure on ATP did not have any effect, and ATP (2022) statement on 31 March 2023 confirmed the Belarusian and Russian players would be back in summer 2023.

In the aviation industry, Air Arabia used the responsibility to customers discourse in its statement:

“We as an airline operate to whichever airport that’s open for business and (where) people are traveling. Our job is to connect people and as long as it is open we will do that, within the law. The moment legally we can’t fly to somewhere, we stop flying” (Reuters 2022g).

The music industry has been surprisingly controversial, as both Believe Music and Warner Music Group (WMG) have stayed in the Russian market despite the war. Warner Music Group announced its exit from Russian market already on 10 March 2022 (WMG 2022), but the business has continued quietly. Believe Music (2024) has continued operations from the beginning of the war all the way until April 2024 with Russian staff and has benefited from the war and the increased market demand after many competitors have exited the Russian market. These brands used corporate social responsibility as cover-up from bad press when it was convenient for them, and CEO of Believe Music has defended their corporate irresponsibility by shared value instead of financial benefits. The comment from Believe Music to Billboard was that Believe Music was “maintaining all its operations in Russia in order to support its artists, labels and protect its people’s safety as well as ensure access to music production and distribution” (Smirke 2022).

4.9 Financial benefit discourse

There is another quite similar discourse that focuses only on the financial benefits and did not acknowledge the impact of the war. There were twelve brands that fit this financial

benefit discourse. There was usually no mention that the war helped in growing profits, but the Russian market was experiencing intense growth.

Schoeller Bleckmann claimed its operations in Russia were “in the single-digit million-euro range” (EQS News 2022), but despite the downplaying of the revenue, the brand still continued in the market. KION Group (2022) grew revenues in 2022 but planned for exit from the Russian market.

Global Fashion Group (2022) was a brand that combined financial benefit discourse with sanctions discourse in its statement:

“Our business in CIS is exposed to any potential second-order impact of sanctions and currency exchange rate changes on future demand from Russian customers and changes in the sanctions and regulation regimes. We are unable to provide certainty that continued developments will not have a material impact on our business” (Global Fashion Group 2022).

The Chinese brands such as RealMe, Honor, and Xiaomi have strongly benefited from the exodus of Western brands in the Russian market (Strumpf 2022). The gas industry in Russia saw Tokyo Gas making new contracts for Sakhalin-2, whereas Osaka Gas was not sure yet, both Japan's companies were still in Russia in 2022 (OilCapital.ru 2022).

BitRiver from Switzerland has notorious history of behaving against US sanctions, and in 2022 it planned new bitcoin mines in Russia together with Gasprom, which would be “helping support Putin’s brutal war of choice” in the words of US Treasury Department (Amick 2022). Luka Koper from Slovenia justified their stay in Russian market by “negligible” size of the business, and the brand did “not expect negative impacts” due to the war (Regional Obala 2022).

In May 2022, Align Technology (2022) did not directly comment on Russia or Ukraine, but mentioned good financial prospects in its statement:

“We're pleased to announce a \$200 million accelerated stock repurchase program, which reflects the strength of our balance sheet and cash flow generation, as well as management's and the Board's continued confidence in our ability to capitalize on the large market opportunities. Returning capital to our shareholders through stock repurchase programs while simultaneously investing in our strategic growth drivers, is consistent with our capital allocation strategy and commitment to increasing shareholder value” (Align Technology 2022).

The exit of McDonalds and HAVI brands' initial owners from Russia, gave the opportunity for financial benefits to the new Russian owner that continued the brands' operations with only a small rebranding (Reuters 2022h). Forbes has remained in the Russian market regardless of the war and has maintained its publishing license when the licenses from Western competitors were revoked – making it financially viable to remain even with cutting advertising revenues (Korzhova 2022).

Nayara from India justified its operations in Russia with financial benefit and stability (Verma 2022b):

“Like any other refinery, Nayara Energy has ongoing crude sourcing agreements to optimise its crude basket with an aim to achieve the best option for our refinery” (Verma 2022b).

There were also other brands that have smaller discourses that are related to this discourse: company stability discourse (4), and financial stability discourse (1). These discourses accentuate the importance of staying in Russian market for the company stability or financial stability more in general. These discourses were more defensive, and seemed to have the aim to explain the world of business rotates over finances and it is not possible for a brand to be political.

4.10 Humanitarian discourse

The humanitarian discourse included eleven brands, of which 7 had internal statements and 4 external statements. There were also smaller discourses that are related to the humanitarian and social responsibility discourses, such as medical supplies availability (1), and food availability (5) that are typically part of humanitarian aid but focusing on the brands staying in Russia that mentioned these as justifications for staying in Russia. It might be surprising, but these brands were not concerned with medical supplies and food availability in Ukraine, rather than in Russia, despite the war taking place mostly in Ukrainian territories. American Chamber of Commerce Ukraine (2022) has similar findings to this study as they have focused on the humanitarian discourses in their “#BIZ4UKRAINE” project.

Industrials brand AVL from Austria had not commented on their justifications for staying in Russia during 2022, but in their statement on 1 January 2023 explained their exit for Russia had been in the works and greatly influenced by the sanctions, but the brand was dedicated to humanitarian efforts for Ukraine including equipment and monetary donations and participation in humanitarian programmes, and “aware of its responsibility in these difficult times” (AVL 2023). The case of AVL shows that donation discourse, social responsibility discourse and humanitarian discourse are all closely connected in the Ukraine war context.

The food & beverages brand Agrana from Germany explained staying in Russia despite the war in Ukraine by their employer responsibility and that “a closure would have no impact on those who are responsible for the war” (Agrana 2022b). However, the main gist of their statement was the humanitarian support for Ukraine, for example offering housing to Ukrainian refugees and donations, and condemning the war. Both the original German statement (Agrana 2022a) and the English version (Agrana 2022b) were compared, and there was no difference between them – the message was the same. Other brands in the food industry have had similar focus on the humanitarian aspects for example CLAAS that felt its employer responsibility towards employees in both Russia and Ukraine (Gray 2022).

In its statement F&B brand Bonduelle from France justified staying in Russia by potential “food uncertainty” if they exited and declared it would use the profits from Russia to support humanitarian efforts in Ukraine (Bonduelle 2022). Five other brands stated specifically food availability as their reason for staying in Russia. For example, Auchan was concerned about their customers’s daily needs (Sadler 2022). Auchan’s CEO has also said that leaving Russia would leave their employees unemployed (Reuters 2022i), thus avoiding unemployment is another reason for staying in Russia. AGCO was concerned about potential “hunger crisis” due to the war situation (Gray 2022). Korean food brands Paldo, Lotte and Orion already experienced food availability issues in Russia, as the sanctions affected availability of ingredients and demand was higher than production in March 2022 (Kim 2022). The agriculture in Russia is not as high-tech as US brands like Big Dutchman, and there have been concerns about food availability on the Russian Moskovskaya Gazeta (Nefedova 2022). In February 2022, Monster Beverages was also worried of the safety of its employees in both Russia and Ukraine, and how the crisis would affect the food industry (Shoup 2022).

In 2022, Cargill (USA) and Viterra (Canada) were planning to stay in Russia as the food items were not affected by the sanctions due to fears of food availability (Devitt 2022) –

however in March 2023, Viterra decided to exit from Russia because “its activities in Russia no longer fit the long-term direction of the company” (Viterra 2023).

Unilever (2022) initially focused on humanitarian discourse, and offered five million euros donation for Ukraine, and decided to cut marketing in Russia. However, in the same statement, Unilever (2022) also did not exit from Russian market but decided it would “continue to supply our everyday essential food and hygiene products made in Russia to people in the country”. In December 2022, Unilever refused to respond to the accusations it was selling non-essential foods like ice-cream in Russia (Mitchell 2022). Thus, the humanitarian discourse can also be linked with denial discourse and corporate irresponsibility.

The humanitarian discourse is closely tied with donation discourse, for example International Union of Architects (2022) and Liebherr (2022) both offered monetary aid to Ukraine and encouraged helping refugees from Ukraine and others affected by the war. Liebherr (2022) did mention it was still staying in Russia but understood sanctions might have an impact on the Russian market. Thus, in their statements, both Liebherr and International Union of Architects tried to shift attention from staying in Russia to “standing with Ukraine.” Liebherr has stayed in the Russian market proudly up to April 2024, and the “Moscow company has grown strongly in the recent years” (Liebherr 2024).

The Finnish IT house Cinia stayed in Russia due to “humanitarian reasons,” and the Russian citizens’ right to information from other than Russian state-approved sources (Kauneela-Finley 2022). The justifications were that those trying to escape from Russia would have internet access to arrange their exit, and those staying in Russia would not be cut off from access to the outside world (Kauneela-Finley 2022). In the initial statement on 28 February 2022, Cinia (2022) did not give justifications yet, but mentioned compliance to sanctions if needed. Notably about half a year before the war in Ukraine started, Russian partner Megafon exited the Arctic Connect plan and Cinia had started to investigate installing the cable to Japan from western direction across Canada and USA instead of the Russian territories due to “geopolitical climate” (Mäntylä 2022).

Illy (2022) from Italy took the humanitarian and donations discourses to the next level with showing the employees with packages ready for Ukraine and encouraged its LinkedIn followers to “join in supporting the Fondazione Francesca Rava”. The post (Figure 15)

included hashtags such as “corporate responsibility” and “fundraising” (Illy 2022). According to Foreign Intelligence Service of Ukraine (2022), Illy exited from the Russian market in March 2022 as the sanctions tightened.

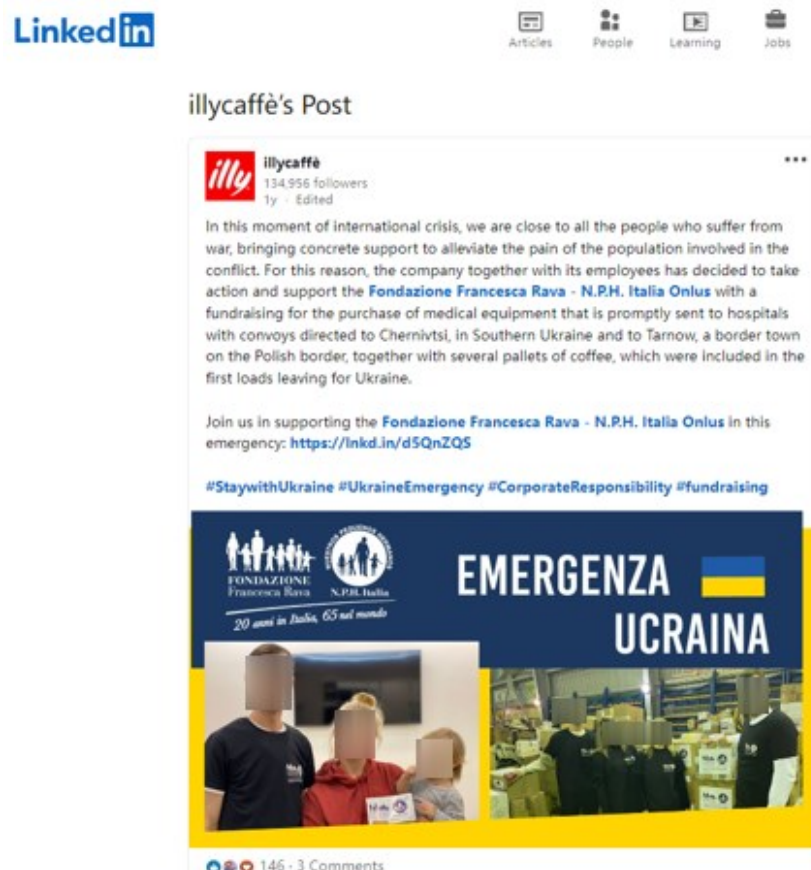


Figure 15: Post on the war in Ukraine on the company LinkedIn account by Illy (2022). Note the hashtags, especially “#CorporateResponsibility” and “fundraising.” Screenshot taken 11.2.2024 by author. Faces blurred 14.5.2024 by the author for thesis use.

In the initial statement, Philips (2022a) focused on humanitarian discourse, and announced plans for “hospital relief, support for acute and emergency care, financial support, and supplies for displaced Ukrainian citizens, plus a dedicated employee donation programme”. The electronics brand Philips (2022b) had cut a part of their operations in Russia including shipping, marketing and sales beginning from 2022. However, it seems that in April 2024, Philips has become active again in Russia by organizing multiple training webinars in Russian (Philips 2024). Thus, even the humanitarian discourse can have signs of corporate irresponsibility.

While Italian fashion brands their support for Ukraine during the Milan fashion week in 2022, such as the lack of music in Giorgio Armani Fall/Winter show “as a sign of respect” (Armani 2022), not all brands were as empathetic. The Italian brand Missoni offered humanitarian aid for Ukraine and compliance to sanctions if necessary (NSS Magazine 2022). In November 2023, Missoni family was considering selling the company (Reuters 2023), however, it was not clear whether or not that was related to Russia.

4.11 Other smaller discourses

There were still twenty-six other smaller discourses identified, but not all of them can be covered in detail within this study. There are a few that are worth mentioning, such as food availability and energy crisis discourse as these have been quite visible on the news. These smaller discourses could be investigated even more in future research, as the research data is listed in Appendix 1.

ONGC Videsh from India continued in Sakhalin-1 (Mathur 2022) but did not explain the reasons (Verma 2022b). Whereas VNG from Germany justified Russian oil purchases with gas reliance discourse (Euronews 2022):

“it was taking all necessary measures, in line with existing sanctions law, to continue to ensure supply and therefore economic stability in Germany” (VNG 2022).

Due to Russia's large contribution to the worldwide supply of natural gas and fertilizers as well as both countries' substantial contributions to the sale of grains and oilseeds to foreign markets, the war in Ukraine has had a huge impact on both the food and energy systems (Shams Esfandabadi, Ranjbari & Scagnelli 2022). Therefore, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia has led to a shortage of grains and cereals on the food market, particularly in Europe (Shams Esfandabadi, Ranjbari & Scagnelli 2022). In light of these developing events, it is important to evaluate the crisis' effects on the food and biofuel markets as a whole to understand the situation and make sustainable plans (Shams Esfandabadi, Ranjbari & Scagnelli 2022).

As explained in methodologies Chapter 3, many of the smaller discourses are a subcategory within a bigger theme. For example, Patreon could fit in both sanctions discourse and corporate irresponsibility discourse, but the inductive approach put it in its own discourse of behaving against sanctions. Patreon behaved against the sanctions by allowing Russian users and its justification was the brand “did not want to punish creators for a political decision they had no say in” (Dotan 2022). Bybit from United Arab Emirates made similar decision to behave against sanctions and justified it by “we do not discriminate against crypto users based on their location and passport” (Tassev 2022).

5 Discussion

This chapter ties the findings of this study with existing research on the Ukraine war and explains the contributions of this study. This chapter also analyses the findings of the study further and., based on the findings, gives answers to the initial research questions.

5.1 RQ1: How do brands justify staying in Russia despite the war in Ukraine?

The findings showed that there is a connection to the existing corporate social responsibility theory, for example employer responsibility and stakeholder responsibility were among the identified discourses from the research data. The word cloud analysis with Nvivo (Figure 16) shows the most frequently used words in the research data consisting of brands’ own direct statements and news articles. These brands were all remaining in the Russian market at the time of list collection 17 January 2023.

Majority of the brands did not give any statements, and even then, the denial discourse was still very evident in the findings. Benefiting from the war, increased market demand and financial benefits seem to be among the drivers for remaining in the Russian market. The minority of the brands gave direct press releases or statements, and then a larger number of brands commented on their justifications to the press. It seems that corporate irresponsibility in Ukraine war context is linked with either A) more passive direct brand communications, or B) sugarcoating the irresponsible behaviour.

news articles, for example there were brands benefiting from the war, and increased market demand mentioned in the statements in news articles.

5.2 RQ2: Which patterns of justifications do brands use?

Based on the research data, this study identified thirty-five discourses and focused on the ten most frequent discourses with examples. This study gives an overview of all the discourses used by brands remaining in Russia despite the war situation.

It was also possible to identify a few visible patterns from the research data. The first pattern was the denial discourse that was clearly visible in the data, but it would have even greater influence had all those brands that did not appear in news or release a statement on the war in Ukraine situation. The second pattern was the Chinese and Indian brands using momentum of exiting European brands for their business growth in the Russian market and openly using market demand discourse and China-Russia friendship discourse. The third pattern was that brands used donation and humanitarian discourses to distract consumers from their corporate irresponsibility.

The fourth pattern was that environmental aspects did not really appear in the data at all, which made it hard to see any connection with ESG theory. In corporate irresponsibility and Ukraine war context, it seems that financial and legal, social, humanitarian, and ethical aspects are more talked about. Contrary to the external stance in the media, brands do not necessarily see their behaviour as reckless and irresponsible, but rather quite the opposite. From the data, the view that brands staying in Russia would be the responsible in their actions comes out very strong if we specifically focus on the brand direct statements. Thus, using external statements helped to provide a balanced view between CSR and CSI.

5.3 RQ3: Do the justifications differ between industries?

The justifications differed between industries, but there were two over compassing themes of corporate irresponsibility and responsibility. The brands that were staying in Russian market in 2022 despite the war were mostly energy, oil & gas, electronics, consumer goods

& clothing and finance & payments. From the research data there were some justifications given, such as contractual obligations, shareholder responsibility, debt in Russia, which suggest that corporate irresponsibility is highly connected with financial interests and benefits. The industries that have more irresponsible behaviour are benefiting from the war by filling the market demand that has been created after many European and US brands exited from Russia. Especially Indian and Chinese brands that are not affected by the sanctions have seized the opportunities in Russia, but during the summer 2022 also European brands that had initially exited slowly made their way back to Russian market (eg. L'Occitane). Indian brands have not yet invested in CSR extensively in the finance industry, although the theme has entered other fields slowly (Nagaraja 2022, 516).

Based on research data, corporate irresponsibility is sometimes fuelled by the government policies. The industries that were most fragile to the war were not willing to sacrifice their profits by exiting from the Russian market. The corporate irresponsibility was explained mostly by the brands financial responsibility to its customers, employees and stakeholders and justified with market demand discourse and financial benefit discourse. The Indian brands in energy, oil and gas were more vocal about their justifications, and the collaboration with Russia was encouraged by Indian government: resulting in many Indian brands not seeing their behaviour as corporate irresponsibility, but merely a way to contribute to Indian economy and act financially responsible in the Indian context that was not affected by sanctions or Western ideology. The Japanese government was not willing to sacrifice its involvement in Sakhalin-2 for CSR but maintained the access to Russian resources to ensure the interests of Japan in the future (Nikkei Asia 2022).

5.4 Staying in Russia: Corporate social responsibility vs corporate irresponsibility

The discourses identified in this study have been analysed and grouped into firstly under the two main themes of corporate social responsibility and corporate irresponsibility (Figure 17). During this process, it was noticed that there are usually always two sides of the story: for example, on the other hand brands might consider staying in Russia might be as long as the sanctions allow it, but some brands are willing to risk punishments more openly.

Corporate irresponsibility	Corporate social responsibility
Denial discourse (42)	Donation discourse (15)
Benefiting from the war (18)	Social responsibility discourse (13)
Market demand discourse (21)	Humanitarian discourse (11)
Financial benefit discourse (12)	Sanctions discourse (16)
China-Russia friendship discourse (16)	Employer responsibility discourse (2)
Corporate irresponsibility discourse (32)	Legal discourse (3)
Anti-China discourse (2)	Responsibility to customers (7)
Behaving against sanctions (2)	Gas reliance discourse (4)
Belittling the value of Russian market (1)	Social entrepreneurship discourse (5)
War launching new market (1)	Debt discourse (3)
Rebranding discourse (1)	Neutrality discourse (2)
Market performance discourse (1)	Medical supplies availability (1)
	Non-marketing move discourse (1)
	Boycott discourse (1)
	Energy industry crisis discourse (1)
	Oil reliance discourse(5)
	Company stability discourse(4)
	Contractual obligations discourse(5)
	Food availability(5)
	Product boycott discourse(1)
	Financial stability discourse(1)
	Right of information(1)
	Customer service discourse(1)

Figure 17: All the thirty-five discourses divided into corporate irresponsibility and corporate social responsibility that are the overarching themes guiding this study. Visualisation created with CorelDraw by the author on 3.5.2024.

The findings of this study give justifications for staying in Russia for both corporate social responsibility and corporate irresponsibility. From judging by the numbers, corporate irresponsibility seems to be the more prevalent theme on the brands staying in Russia despite the war in Ukraine.

Based on the research data, when the brands talked about themselves, they were less likely to talk negatively. That is the explanation for the phenomenon of social responsibility being a more prevalent theme within the internal statements. This brings up the question of potential “woke-washing” in the direct statements by brands. “Woke-washing” is using the recent social injustices for marketing and PR that are deceiving customers with beautiful (Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry & Kemper 2020). In the Ukraine context, “woke-washing” can be understood as brands benefiting from the war and at the same time for example presenting donations to Ukraine in their statements on staying in Russia.

However, there is another notable revelation: the findings from internal statements suggest that there is tendency for brands to view their behaviour as corporate social responsibility. Whereas, in the external statements, there is more emphasis on staying in Russia described more towards corporate irresponsibility. It needs to be kept in mind that the perception of CSR or CSI is not necessarily “objective” (Lange & Wilde 2012), explaining that there are variances in the comprehension of these terms, and individuals such CEOs can play a part in CSI meaning creation (Riera & Iborra 2023).

5.5 FEP – financial, ethical political – as the key in wartime CSI

Based on this study, corporate social responsibility in war context seems to have different accentuations than normally. The author has identified a different pattern from the findings, which is presented as the FEP, where FEP stands for financial, ethical, and political aspects (Figure 18). Corporate irresponsibility in Ukraine war context revolves around the three aspects of financial, ethical, and political, because these were the three principal areas of

focus in the statements. These three were identified from the research data and they are irresponsibility justifications. Environmental justifications were not mentioned at all in research data, whereas in corporate social responsibility theory they are an important part of CSR.

In financial theme, the brands acknowledge the increased market demand, but might not want to publicly admit it, and use other financial justification, such as stability, sanctions, debt. There are brands that embraced the improved market performance in Russia. There were also brands that credited the war for their increased profits and saw the war as business opportunity rather than a human crisis.

In the ethical theme, brands that remained in the Russian market faced with boycotts and pressure in their home countries and abroad, resulting some brands exiting at a later stage. The brands that were able to avoid the ethical pressures were able to benefit from the war and gain significant business growth and profits in the Russian market. The ethical pressure was increased by media reports, and initiatives including Leave-Russia list and Yale list. The brands could justify remaining in Russia with political, socio-ethical, and financial explanations, but not environmental. The environmental theme is completely absent in the Ukraine war context based on this study.

In the political theme, the government plays an important part. For example, since Indian government supported trade with Russia, there was no incentive for brands to refrain from or reducing operations in the Russian market, and quite the opposite. The Anti-China discourse justified Japan staying in Russia to avoid China taking over the gas projects and benefiting from Japanese investments (Battersby & Afanasiev 2022).

The findings of this study align with “economic, ethical and bureaucratic factors” that were in main stage in brands’ exits from the Russian market (Onopriienko, Shapoval, Ribakova, Hrybanovskyi, Rybalko, Hilgenstock, Pavytska & Bilousova 2023). The same aspects also emerged from the statements and discourses of the brands remaining in the Russian market despite the war between Russia and Ukraine.

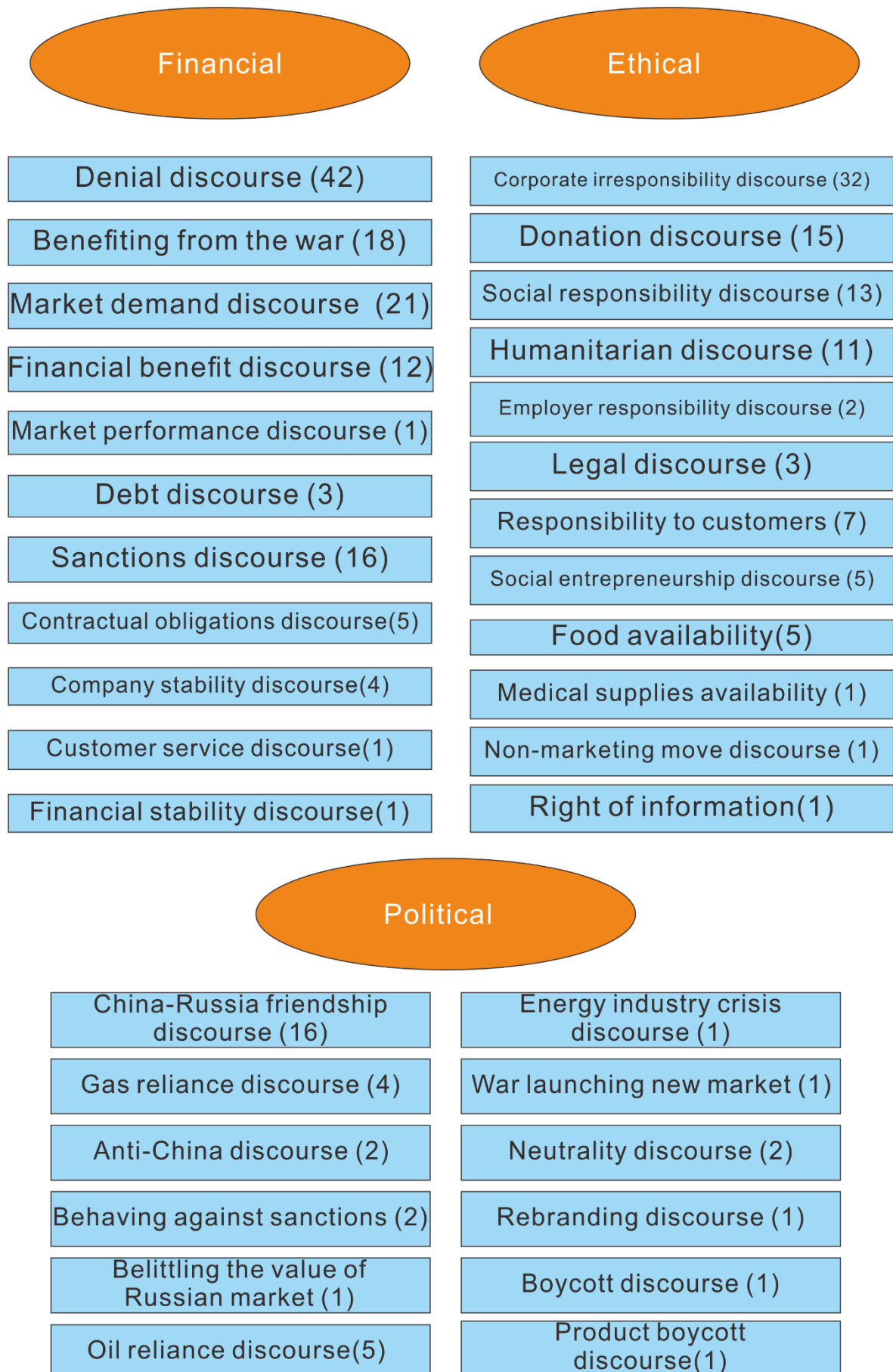


Figure 18: Illustration of the authors FEP theory, including financial, ethical, and political aspects and the discourses within each one. Created with CorelDraw by author on 3.5.2024.

5.6 Contributions of this study

This study provides new insights into firstly the brands staying in Russia, and secondly, corporate responsibility and corporate irresponsibility. The scientific contributions of this study are discussed in the following subchapters.

5.6.1 C1: New insights on Ukraine war from marketing perspective

The justifications of brands staying in Russia despite the war in Ukraine have not been researched that much yet, as the key focus has been on the brands exiting Russia. Much of pre-existing research on Ukraine war has focused on geopolitics, economics, and information wars. There are still possibilities for marketing research regarding the war and on wartime brand communications in general.

5.6.2 C2: New insights on the justifications of brands staying in Russia despite the war in Ukraine

This study is breaking new ground by examining both internal and external statements collected from Yale list and Leave-Russia.org list and using qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis. The other similar studies that have used Yale list only used the Yale list (Sologood 2022), but not the more extensive Leave-Russia.org list. These provided brand new insights specifically on the brands staying in Russia, which had not been examined as thoroughly before this study. Using both Leave-Russia list and Yale list helped to tackle some biases that had been noticed with Yale list by Evenett & Pisani (2023).

5.6.3 C3: Challenging the corporate responsibility theory

This study suggests that based on the Ukraine war context, brands are willing to use an armed conflict to grow their sales and market share in Russia. The study has identified the willingness of brands to use the war in Ukraine as a part of their communications and building a more positive image of the brand. This study noticed that governments play a key role in irresponsibility and there is not necessarily a “subjective” acceptance of what is CSI like Iborra & Riera (2023) suggested, but actually the perceptions can be collective and validated by government leadership. At least wartime CSI is much more political than perhaps in other contexts based on the findings of this study.

5.6.4 C4: Contributing to corporate irresponsibility theory

This study is a rare take on the corporate irresponsibility theme that has not been studied much in comparison to corporate social responsibility. There were more opportunities for scientific contribution in the field of corporate irresponsibility to begin with, and the study’s findings supporting the topic choice. This study discovered that corporate irresponsibility is a noticeably big theme in the war in Ukraine context. This study introduced the author’s FEP theory: financial, ethical, and political, which explains the three key aspects of corporate irresponsibility in a similar fashion that ESG has been used in corporate social responsibility theory. The FEP theory offers a new framework for corporate irresponsibility research that can be used for research questions that try to understand corporate irresponsibility better.

6 Conclusions

This study has demonstrated that the war in Ukraine has caused a battle of contradicting discourses. There was an identified research gap for comprehending CSI with a qualitative approach, as well as researching the “how” instead of “what” (Iborra & Riera 2023) – this is

the background for this study. The corporate irresponsibility functions with a different mechanism than corporate responsibility and there is need to further research.

6.1 Summary and Theoretical Contributions

This study aimed to bring insights on the justifications of brands remaining in the Russian market despite the war in Ukraine. In this study, altogether 257 statements were analysed from Leave-Russia list and Yale list within the timeframe of 22 February 2022 until 17 January 2023. The research strategies were exploratory and inductive – the findings rose from the data and there was no a priori hypothesis. The research methods included systematic qualitative content analysis and analytical discourse analysis, and the approach was influenced by brand discourse analysis and Gioia methodology.

The findings of this study were 35 discourses, of which the top ten discourses were explained in detail with examples. This study had several contributions, including new insights on the Ukraine war from marketing perspective, on justifications of brands staying in Russia, and introducing the FEP – financial, ethical, political – justifications for CSI. This study challenged the existing theory and contributed to CSI theory by suggesting a new framework for explaining corporate irresponsibility.

6.2 Practical implications

This thesis contains a few practical suggestions for managers. Brands need to pay more attention to their wartime communications, because they come across irresponsible and ignorant of human costs of conflict. The brands need to consider ethical issues of their behaviour, and face consequences instead of finding escape from responsibility. Managers should consider the culpability of the brand from ethical perspective, and not only justify irresponsibility with financial stability and political ideology. In the research data there was plenty of cases where brands excused themselves with blaming middlemen in supply chains.

The responsibility for a safe media landscape is shared between everyone, including the brands, PR and advertising agencies, platforms, and government (Pantti 2023, 194). Apart from a media landscape, there are also financial consequences of trade with Russia resulting

in the war continuing for over two years already. Despite marketing focusing showing the brand in positive light, the “woke washing” should be avoided. Using donations as a marketing move is unethical – especially when it is meant to cover up the truth of brand staying in the Russian market despite the war.

The sanctions discourse showed that restricting brands’ behaviour with sanctions can be enough to scare at least a portion of the brands into behaving responsibly. The sanctions would need to especially stop the flow of Western technology to Russia for military use (Tynkkynen 2023, 158) – this study also noticed there is a serious issue of corporate irresponsibility in this regard that has been allowed to continue for too long.

6.3 Limitations

The focus on brands that have stayed in Russia helped to cut down the data needed. At the same time, this focus has not been the easiest. When comparing the brands that have stayed in Russia and those that have left Russia, there is not the same amount of information available. The brands that have left Russia usually have published a statement that explains the reasons of their departure. However, the brands that have stayed in Russia have been generally quieter about it.

The number of statements was a limitation of this study. Although there are some statements explaining the reasons to stay, for about half of the companies there were no statements whatsoever. There has been the pattern that most of the Chinese brands have not issued any statements but have still decided to stay in Russia despite the war in Ukraine. It would have been more informative to have some more direct statements from Chinese companies.

There are limitations with qualitative methods, for instance the ORBIS database was not included in this study and the statements were from primary and secondary sources. It would have been remarkable to interview some of the brands’ managers for this study, and that would be something to try in future research, if possible, although it can be challenging due to negative connotations of CSI. The research data consisting of statements and news articles had also limitations, because as Evenett & Pisani (2023) noted there was differences between the brands’ own words and the reality – for example some brands might downplay their involvement in the Russian market and without checking the company registration

information it was hard to determine for certain which brands were indeed remaining in the Russian market.

The methods used – qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis – had their own limitations, because there was large amount of text to be analysed and in retrospect there could be more efficient ways such as interviews and surveys. The collected research data could be more focused on a few discourses with those approaches, because now there were a bit too many different topics identified and not enough time to explain all the 35 discourses in full detail. The possible criticism from brands could be tackled by directly contacting them for comments but was beyond the scope of this study. Also, other quantitative analysis such as sentiment analysis and using machine learning to train and test model on recognising CSI and CSR could be helpful in the future.

6.4 Possibilities for future research

Corporate irresponsibility is still much less researched than CSR, and there are many opportunities for research. The justification for irresponsibility could be looked into more and theory developed further. Despite the strong connection between CSI and CSR, there seems to quite different dynamics in their justifications. It would be fascinating to see if the FEP – financial, ethical, and political aspects- presented in this study would be applicable to other situations than the war in Ukraine context.

In the research data of this study, the environmental issues were not present. However, there are still various possibilities for researching the war in Ukraine in the future, such as focusing ESG (environmental, social, governance), or on other types of corporate irresponsibility, and the war as an opportunity for innovation (Cumming 2022). This study explained 10 of 35 identified discourses in more detail, and there would be still space to dive deeper into the smaller discourses identified in this study. It would be possible to continue with concepts of wartime CSI and CSR – and how they differ from the more discussed cases such as poor working conditions in developing countries. The war in Ukraine has brought CSI much closer to West than before, and it is hard to close eyes from it.

Further research topics could include the legality and illegality of staying in Russia despite the war, because it was not covered in this study. There have been changes in the sanctions

and some brands have been punished for staying in Russia. Using data from these sanctions and other legal challenges with brands could offer new insights. Another topic could be the customer perspective on the war, since in the research data of this study brands mentioned their responsibility to customers as justification and serving customers in Russia, but it was not within the scope of this study to consider customers' social media posts or interviews.

Because the conflict in Ukraine is still quite recent and there isn't a plethora of literature on the subject, there still exists research gaps. It is vital to do empirical research and not just a literature review because there hasn't been much study done on these topics yet. However, the researchers should remember that certain topics might contribute to the continuation of the war, for instance reporting of irresponsibility not having reputational damage might further encourage irresponsible behaviour.

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Appendix 1. The research data.

List of all the brands whose statements were analysed as a part of this study and discourse they belong to. Relevant internal and external statements were collected from both Yale list and Leave-Russia.org list and combined and analysed into one table by the author 14.5.2024.

Company name	Country	Statement type	Discourse	Industry	Source
Wienerberger	Austria	internal	Social responsibility discourse	Industrials	Wienerberger (2022)
Autel Robotics	China	internal	Social responsibility discourse	Electronics	Autel Robotics (2022)
L'Occitane	France	internal	Social responsibility discourse	FMCG	L'Occitane (2022)
Gedeon Richter	Hungary	internal	Social responsibility discourse	Pharma & Healthcare	Gedeon Richter (2022)
MOL Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, Ltd.	Japan	internal	Social responsibility discourse	Industrials	MOL (2022)
Krka	Slovenia	internal	Social responsibility discourse	Pharma & Healthcare	Krka (2022)
DP Eurasia	Turkey	internal	Social responsibility discourse	Public Catering	DP Eurasia (2022)
OpenWay Group	Belgium	internal	Social entrepreneurship discourse	Finance & Payments	OpenWay (2022)
A. O. Smith	United States	internal	Social entrepreneurship discourse	Manufacturing	A.O.Smith (2022)
Avon Products (Natura & Co)	United States	internal	Social entrepreneurship discourse	Consumer Goods & Clothing	Natura & Co (2022)
Silicon Valley Bank	United States	internal	Social entrepreneurship discourse	Finance & Payments	SVB (2022)
Ipsen	France	internal	Sanctions discourse	Pharma & Healthcare	Ipsen (2022)
Hampidjan	Iceland	internal	Sanctions discourse	Industrials	Hampidjan (2022)

Mitsui & Co	Japan	internal	Sanctions discourse	Conglomerate	Mitsui & Co (2022)
Barloworld	United States	internal	Sanctions discourse	Conglomerate	Barloworld (2022)
Cloudflare	United States	internal	Right of information	Online Services	Cloudflare (2022)
Raiffeisen Bank	Austria	internal	Responsibility to customers	Finance & Payments	Raiffeisen Bank (2022)
Didi	China	internal	Responsibility to customers	Online Services	Didi (2022)
Anadolu Efes	Turkey	internal	Market demand discourse	Alcohol & Tobacco	Anadolu Efes (2022)
Agrana	Austria	internal	Humanitarian discourse	Food & Beverages	Agrana (2022)
AVL	Austria	internal	Humanitarian discourse	Industrials	AVL (2023)
Bonduelle	France	internal	Humanitarian discourse	Food & Beverages	Bonduelle (2022)
International Union of Architects	France	internal	Humanitarian discourse	Association & NGO	International Union of Architects (2022)
Illy	Italy	internal	Humanitarian discourse	Food & Beverages	Illy (2022)
Philips	Netherlands	internal	Humanitarian discourse	Consumer Discretionary	Philips (2022)
TAPON FRANCE / Canpack	France	internal	Financial stability discourse	Consumer Goods & Clothing	Canpack (2022)
Samsung Pay	South Korea	internal	Market demand discourse	Finance & Payments	Samsung Russia (2022)
KION Group	Germany	internal	Financial benefit discourse	Industrials	KION (2022)
Global Fashion Group	Luxembourg	internal	Financial benefit discourse	Consumer Discretionary	Global Fashion Group (2022)
Align Technology	United States	internal	Financial benefit discourse	Pharma & Healthcare	Align (2022)

Fortum	Finland	internal	Energy industry crisis discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Fortum (2022)
Rockwool	Denmark	internal	Employer responsibility discourse	Construction & Architecture	Rockwool (2022)
Fresenius	Germany	internal	Donation	Pharma & Healthcare	Fresenius (2022)
Metro AG	Germany	internal	Donation	FMCG	Metro (2022)
Avia Solutions Group	Lithuania	internal	Donation	Aircraft Industry	Avia Solutions Group (2022)
Fletcher Hotels	Netherlands	internal	Donation	Hospitality & Real Estate	Fletcher Hotels (2022)
AT&T	United States	internal	Donation	Telecom	AT&T (2022)
Lockton	United States	internal	Donation	Insurance	Lockton (2022)
Riot Games	United States	internal	Donation	Gaming	Riot Games (2022)
Verizon	United States	internal	Donation	Telecom	Verizon (2022)
TDZ Turn	Czech Republic	internal	Denial discourse	Industrials	TDZ Turn (2022)
Riko	Slovenia	internal	Denial discourse	Engineering	Riko (2022)
Frigoglass	Greece	internal	Debt discourse	Electronics	Frigoglass (2022)
Geoplin	Slovenia	internal	Contractual obligations discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Geoplin (2022)
Mizuho Financial Group	Japan	internal	Company stability discourse	Finance & Payments	Mizuho (2022)
Liebherr	Switzerland	internal	Humanitarian discourse	Industrial Equipment	Liebherr (2022)
TGI Fridays	United States	internal	Donation	Consumer Goods & Clothing	TGI Fridays (2022)
Wabtec	United States	internal	Donation	Logistics & Transport	Wabtec (2022)

Wells Fargo	United States	internal	Donation	Finance & Payments	Wells Fargo (2022)
Tennis Australia	Australia	external	Neutrality discourse	Association & NGO	Graham (2023)
Kotanyi	Austria	external	Legal discourse	Food & Beverages	RetailReport (2022)
Lisec	Austria	external	Market demand discourse	Industrial Equipment	Industriemagazin (2022a)
Rail Cargo Group	Austria	external	War launching new market	Logistics & Transport	Papatolios (2022)
Rotax	Austria	external	Benefiting from the war	Aircraft Industry	Kern (2022)
Russia Fachspedition Dr. Lassmann	Austria	external	Company stability discourse	Logistics & Transport	Industriemagazin (2022b)
Schoeller Bleckmann	Austria	external	Financial benefit discourse	Industrials	EQS News (2022)
Minsk Automobile Plant (MAZ)	Belarus	external	Benefiting from the war	Automotive	Kern (2022)
Anheuser-Busch InBev	Belgium	external	Market demand discourse	Alcohol & Tobacco	Denkov (2022)
Canara Bank	India	external	Denial discourse	Finance & Payments	Reuters (2022a)
Hemisphere GNSS, Inc.	Canada	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Aerospace	Bertrand (2022)
Spin Master	Canada	external	Denial discourse	Gaming	Bundale (2022)
Thomson Reuters Corporation	Canada	external	Denial discourse	Media	Tani (2022)
Agricultural Bank of China	China	external	China-Russia friendship discourse	Finance & Payments	Shen, Samuel & Gaibraith (2022)
Alibaba	China	external	Denial discourse	Online Trading	Business Today (2022\)
Baidu	China	external	Denial discourse	Technology	Kharpal (2022)
BBK Electronics	China	external	Denial discourse	Electronics	Lau (2022)

China Communications Construction Company	China	external	China-Russia friendship discourse	Construction & Architecture	Shadrina (2022)
China Construction Bank	China	external	Sanctions discourse	Finance & Payments	Shen & Gaibraith (2022)
China Investment Corporation	China	external	Denial discourse	Finance & Payments	Financial Times (2022a)
China National Petroleum Corporation	China	external	Market demand discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Xu (2022)
China Railway Construction Corporation	China	external	China-Russia friendship discourse	Industrials	Regnum (2022)
China State Railway Group Company	China	external	China-Russia friendship discourse	Industrials	TV BRICS (2022)
DJI	China	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Technology	Robeiko (2022)
Great Wall Motor Co.	China	external	Denial discourse	Automotive	Kawase (2022)
Haier	China	external	China-Russia friendship discourse	Electronics	Tabeta (2022)
Hainan Airlines	China	external	China-Russia friendship discourse	Air Transportation	Chua (2022)
Honor	China	external	Financial benefit discourse	Information Technology	Strumpf (2022)
Huobi Global	China	external	Responsibility to customers	Finance & Payments	iXBT (2022)
Industrial Bank (China)	China	external	Denial discourse	Finance & Payments	PlusWorld.ru (2022)
Li-Ning	China	external	Market demand discourse	Consumer Goods & Clothing	Pavlysh (2022a)
NetEase	China	external	China-Russia friendship discourse	Technology	Kharpal (2022)
Oasis Logistics Corp	China	external	China-Russia friendship discourse	Logistics & Transport	Financial Times (2022b)

Oppo	China	external	China-Russia friendship discourse	Information Technology	Strumpf (2022)
SAIC Motor	China	external	China-Russia friendship discourse	Automotive	Cambell & White (2022)
The China Coal Transportation and Distribution Association	China	external	China-Russia friendship discourse	Logistics & Transport	Financial Times (2022b)
Unipecc	China	external	China-Russia friendship discourse	Logistics & Transport	Walid (2022)
Xiaomi	China	external	China-Russia friendship discourse	Electronics	Udin (2022)
Xibao Metallurgy Materials Group	China	external	China-Russia friendship discourse	Manufacturing	Financial Times (2022b)
Yangtze Memory Technologies Corp (YMTC)	China	external	China-Russia friendship discourse	Electronics	Ekonomichna Pravda (2022)
Zhaoxin	China	external	China-Russia friendship discourse	Electronics	Zafar (2022)
Habanos	Cuba	external	Denial discourse	Alcohol & Tobacco	Mimouni, Morra & Cruz Gil (2022)
Safiran Airport Services	Denmark	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Aircraft Industry	Flatley (2022)
Cinia	Finland	external	Humanitarian discourse	Telecom	Kauneela-Finley (2022)
Raute Corporation	Finland	external	Contractual obligations discourse	Construction & Architecture	Cision (2022)
ATP Tour	France	external	Social responsibility discourse	Association & NGO	ESPN (2022)
HDFC Bank	India	external	Denial discourse	Finance & Payments	Reuters (2022a)
Believe Music	France	external	Social responsibility discourse	Entertainment	Smith (2022)
Carrefour	France	external	Product boycott discourse	FMCG	Van Rompaey (2022)
Electricite de France	France	external	Denial discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Atomic Energy.ru (2022)

Eutelsat	France	external	Sanctions discourse	Communication Services	Clover (2022)
FM Logistic	France	external	Market demand discourse	Logistics & Transport	Lennane (2022)
LACTALIS	France	external	Company stability discourse	Food & Beverages	Best (2022)
HAVI	United States	external	Financial benefit discourse	Logistics & Transport	Reuters (2022c)
Vilhelm Parfumerie	France	external	Benefiting from the war	FMCG	Pavlysh (2022a)
Big Dutchman	Germany	external	Food availability	Industrial Equipment	Nefedova (2022)
Claas Group	Germany	external	Humanitarian discourse	Automotive	Gray (2022)
Continental	Germany	external	Market demand discourse	Automotive	AIF.ru (2022)
Globus Hypermarket	Germany	external	Social responsibility discourse	FMCG	The Economist (2022)
Komatsu	Japan	external	Market demand discourse	Automotive	Reuters (2022d)
Hindustan Petroleum	India	external	Market demand discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Reuters (2022e)
New Yorker Marketing & Media GmbH	Germany	external	Denial discourse	Media	Spötter (2022)
Riol Chemie GmbH	Germany	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Chemical Industry	Felke, Strunz & Flade (2022)
Siemens Healthineers	Germany	external	Medical supplies availability	Pharma & Healthcare	MedTech Dive (2022)
VNG – Verbundnetz Gas	Germany	external	Gas reliance discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Euronews (2022)
Zeppelin	Germany	external	Market demand discourse	Engineering	Pollok (2022)
Raba	Hungary	external	Belittling the value of Russian market	Automotive	Renczes (2022)
Bharat Petroleum (BPCL)	India	external	Denial discourse	Energy	Tan & Verma (2023)
Domino's Pizza	United States	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Public Catering	Reuters (2022f)

Dr Reddys Labs	India	external	Benefiting from the war	Health Care	Dunleavy (2022b)
Dr. Reddy's Laboratories	India	external	Company stability discourse	Pharma & Healthcare	Dunleavy (2022a)
HCL Technologies	India	external	Denial discourse	IT	Dobberstein (2022)
Emirates Airlines	United Arab Emirates	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Air Transportation	Reuters (2022g)
Air Moldova	Moldova	external	Sanctions discourse	Air Transportation	Reuters (2022h)
Indian Oil Corporation	India	external	Benefiting from the war	Energy	NDTV Profit (2022)
MakeMyTrip	India	external	Denial discourse	Tourism & Travel	Shaal (2022)
MRPL	India	external	Denial discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Verma (2022a)
Nayara	India	external	Financial benefit discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Verma (2022c)
ONGC	India	external	Denial discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Verma (2022b)
ONGC Videsh Ltd	India	external	Gas reliance discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Mathur (2022)
Sun Pharma	India	external	Denial discourse	Pharma & Healthcare	Dunleavy (2022a)
UCO Bank	India	external	Market demand discourse	Finance & Payments	Finam.ru (2022)
UltraTech Cement	India	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Construction & Architecture	Business Standard (2022)
VA Tech Wabag	India	external	Benefiting from the war	Industrial Equipment	Raj (2022)
Gas Engineering and Development Company (IGEDC)	Iran	external	Market demand discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Alahed News (2023)
Iran Aircraft Manufacturing Industrial Company (HESA)	Iran	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Aerospace	Bertrand (2022)
NIOC	Iran	external	Benefiting from the war	Energy, Oil & Gas	Al Hashem (2022)

Teva	Israel	external	Social responsibility discourse	Pharma & Healthcare	GxP (2022)
Ali Group	Italy	external	Sanctions discourse	Manufacturing	Seymour (2022)
Ariston	Italy	external	Benefiting from the war	Electronics	Sergienko (2022)
Carpigiani	Italy	external	Market demand discourse	Manufacturing	Seymour (2022)
Danieli Group	Italy	external	Denial discourse	Industrial Equipment	Grottolo (2022)
Missoni	Italy	external	Humanitarian discourse	Fashion & Leisure	NSS Magazine (2022)
UniCredit Group	Italy	external	Debt discourse	Finance & Payments	O'Neill (2022)
HIROSHIMA GAS Co.	Japan	external	Denial discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	ANGI.ru(2022)
Japan P&I Club	Japan	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Insurance	Stanley (2022)
JapanArctic LNG B.V.	Japan	external	Sanctions discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Interfax.ru (2022)
JERA	Japan	external	Market demand discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Obayashi (2022)
Air Arabia	United Arab Emirates	external	Responsibility to customers	Air Transportation	Reuters (2022i)
Kyushu Electric Power	Japan	external	Sanctions discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	NHK (2022)
Mitsubishi Corporation	Japan	external	Benefiting from the war	Conglomerate	Nikkei Asia (2022)
Mitsui OSK Lines	Japan	external	Gas reliance discourse	Marine Transportation	Park (2022)
Osaka Gas	Japan	external	Financial benefit discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	OilCapital.ru (2022)
Recruit Holdings	Japan	external	Donation	Advertising & PR	Staffing Industry Analysts (2022)
Renesas Electronics	Japan	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Electronics	Steporuk (2022)

Saibu Gas	Japan	external	Contractual obligations discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Erozek (2022)
Saito Seisakusho	Japan	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Electronics	Grey, Tamman & Zholobova (2022)
TEPCO	Japan	external	Anti-China discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Battersby & Afanasiev (2022)
Toho Gas	Japan	external	Market demand discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	The Japan Times (2022)
Tokyo Gas	Japan	external	Financial benefit discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	OilCapital.ru (2022)
Yamaha Corporation	Japan	external	Market demand discourse	Electronics	Westbrook (2022)
Jazeera Airways	Kuwait	external	Market demand discourse	Air Transportation	Casey (2022)
CFL Multimodal	Luxembourg	external	Denial discourse	Logistics & Transport	Obert (2022)
Auchan	France	external	Responsibility to customers	FMCG	Reuters (2022j)
NXP Semiconductors	Netherlands	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Electronics	Grey, Tamman & Zholobova (2022)
Swinkels Family Brewers/Bavaria	Netherlands	external	Contractual obligations discourse	Food & Beverages	NU.nl (2022)
Viterra	Netherlands	external	Food availability	Agriculture	Devitt (2022)
Assuranceforeningen Skuld	Norway	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Insurance	Stanley (2022)
Gard P&I	Norway	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Insurance	Stanley (2022)
Ideal Molde	Portugal	external	Boycott discourse	Metals & Mining	Ferreira (2022)
Fesco Transport Group	United States	external	Denial discourse	Logistics & Transport	Sokolov (2022)
BitRiver	Switzerland	external	Financial benefit discourse	IT	Amick (2022)
Aramco	Saudi Arabia	external	Benefiting from the war	Energy, Oil & Gas	Said (2022)

Air Serbia	Serbia	external	Benefiting from the war	Air Transportation	APNews (2022)
KAMA Tyre Service	Slovakia	external	Benefiting from the war	Automotive	Kern (2022)
Slovenský plynárenský priemysel (SPP)	Slovakia	external	Gas reliance discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	SITA.sk (2022)
Luka Koper	Slovenia	external	Financial benefit discourse	Industrials	Regional Oblana (2022)
Duol	Slovenia	external	Non-marketing move discourse	Construction & Architecture	Da (2022)
Gorenje	Slovenia	external	Sanctions discourse	Electronics	Vecernij List (2022)
Hyosung	South Korea	external	Market demand discourse	Automotive	Retail-Loyalty.org (2022)
Kia Corporation	South Korea	external	Sanctions discourse	Automotive	Autoworld (2022)
Lotte Confectionery	South Korea	external	Food availability	Food & Beverages	Kim (2022)
Lotte Corporation	South Korea	external	Food availability	Conglomerate	Kim (2022)
Samsung Heavy Industries	South Korea	external	Denial discourse	Industrial Equipment	Hine (2022)
Grupo Fuertes	Spain	external	Benefiting from the war	Agriculture	Cocero (2022)
Alfa Laval	Sweden	external	Legal discourse	Manufacturing	Beeck (2022)
Sveriges Ångfartygs Assurans Förening	Sweden	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Insurance	Stanley (2022)
GALIKA	Switzerland	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Engineering	Inform Napalm (2022)
International Boxing Association	Switzerland	external	Neutrality discourse	Sport	OlympicTalk (2022)
Lukoil Neftohim Burgas	Bulgaria	external	Oil reliance discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Reuters (2022k)
STMicroelectronics	Switzerland	external	Benefiting from the war	Electronics	Grey, Tamman & Zholobova (2022)
U-Blox	Switzerland	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Electronics	Bertrand (2022)

EMS-Chemie	Switzerland	external	Employer responsibility discourse	Chemical Industry	Von Gunten (2022)
Formosa Petrochemical Corp	Taiwan	external	Market demand discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Focus Taiwan (2022)
Aviasales	Thailand	external	Social responsibility discourse	Online Services	Schaal (2022)
Azu International Ltd	Turkey	external	Market demand discourse	IT	Stecklow, Gauthier-Villars, & Tamman (2022)
Bion Group	Turkey	external	Denial discourse	Agriculture	Stecklow, Gauthier-Villars & Tamman (2022)
AirSlate	Ukraine	external	Social entrepreneurship discourse	IT	Karpenko (2022)
Leuna	Germany	external	Oil reliance discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Reuters (2022k)
Bybit	United Arab Emirates	external	Behaving against sanctions	Finance & Payments	Tassev (2022)
PCK	Germany	external	Oil reliance discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Reuters (2022k)
Mashreq Bank	United Arab Emirates	external	Debt discourse	Finance & Payments	GDN Online (2022)
Agent Provocateur	United Kingdom	external	Customer service discourse	Consumer Goods & Clothing	Taylor (2022)
Associated British Foods	United Kingdom	external	Denial discourse	Food & Beverages	Amani (2022)
Britannia P&I	United Kingdom	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Insurance	Stanley (2022)
Chapman Taylor	United Kingdom	external	Denial discourse	Hospitality & Real Estate	Ing (2022)
Greenfield	United Kingdom	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Food & Beverages	Finance.ua (2022)
Hudson Sadler	United Kingdom	external	Social responsibility discourse	Advertising & PR	Czarnecki & Coffee (2022)
JPMorgan Russian Securities	United Kingdom	external	Sanctions discourse	Finance &	Carthew (2022)

				Payments	
North of England P&I	United Kingdom	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Insurance	Osler (2022)
OSTC Group	United Kingdom	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Finance & Payments	Embassy of Ukraine to the UK (2022)
Petropavlovsk plc	United Kingdom	external	Sanctions discourse	Metals & Mining	Garcia Perez (2022)
Responsible Jewellery Council	United Kingdom	external	Benefiting from the war	Association & NGO	Porterfield (2022)
SimpsonHaugh and Partners	United Kingdom	external	Denial discourse	Construction & Architecture	Ing (2022)
SIS Pitches	United Kingdom	external	Benefiting from the war	Sport	Pavlysh (2022b)
Steamship Mutual	United Kingdom	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Insurance	Stanley (2022)
The London P&I Club	United Kingdom	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Insurance	Stanley (2022)
The Standard Club Ltd	United Kingdom	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Insurance	Stanley (2022)
Tony Fretton Architects	United Kingdom	external	Denial discourse	Construction & Architecture	Ing (2022)
UK P&I Club	United Kingdom	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Insurance	Stanley (2022)
West Of England Ship Owners	United Kingdom	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Insurance	Stanley (2022)
Unilever	United Kingdom	external	Humanitarian discourse	Consumer Goods & Clothing	Mitchell (2022)
Altera	United States	external	Denial discourse	Electronics	Steporuk (2022)
AMD	United States	external	Denial discourse	IT	Stecklow, Gauthier-Villars & Tamman (2022)
Analog Devices	United States	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Electronics	Grey, Tamman & Zholobova (2022)
BGR Group	United States	external	Denial discourse	Advertising & PR	Czarnecki & Coffee (2022)

Compass Mining Inc.	United States	external	Sanctions discourse	Finance & Payments	Malik (2022)
Litasco	Switzerland	external	Oil reliance discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Reuters (2021)
Extreme Networks	United States	external	Legal discourse	IT	Roston & Gauthier-Villars (2022)
FleetCor	United States	external	Denial discourse	Finance & Payments	Gibson (2022)
Forbes Media LLC	United States	external	Financial benefit discourse	Media	Korzhova (2022)
Forever Living Products	United States	external	Denial discourse	Consumer Goods & Clothing	Gibson (2022)
G-III Apparel Group	United States	external	Donation	Consumer Goods & Clothing	Clark (2022)
Gillette	United States	external	Responsibility to customers	Consumer Goods & Clothing	Gardizy (2022)
Sephora	France	external	Rebranding discourse	Consumer Goods & Clothing	Reuters (2022m)
Huntsman Corporation	United States	external	Denial discourse	Chemical Industry	Gibson (2022)
Ik Tech	United States	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Aerospace	Grey, Tamman & Zholobova (2022)
Interactive Brokers	United States	external	Anti-China discourse	Finance & Payments	CNBC (2022)
IQVIA	United States	external	Denial discourse	Pharma & Healthcare	Gibson (2022)
Mercury Public Affairs	United States	external	Denial discourse	Advertising & PR	Czarnecki & Coffee (2022)
Microchip Technology	United States	external	Benefiting from the war	Electronics	Grey, Tamman & Zholobova (2022)
Modine Manufacturing	United States	external	Denial discourse	Industrial	Rogan (2022)

				Equipment	
Monster Beverage	United States	external	Food availability	Food & Beverages	Shoup (2022)
NASA	United States	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Aerospace	Howell (2023)
NXP USA, Inc.	United States	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Electronics	Bertrand (2022)
Onsemi	United States	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Electronics	Bertrand (2022)
Patreon	United States	external	Behaving against sanctions	IT	Dotan (2022)
Phillips 66	United States	external	Oil reliance discourse	Energy, Oil & Gas	Eckert (2022)
Roark Capital Group	United States	external	Donation	Finance & Payments	Fung (2022)
Roberti Global	United States	external	Sanctions discourse	Advertising & PR	Czarnecki & Coffee (2022)
Stryker	United States	external	Responsibility to customers	Pharma & Healthcare	MedTech Dive (2022)
Teneo	United States	external	Denial discourse	Advertising & PR	Czarnecki & Coffee (2022)
Tenneco	United States	external	Contractual obligations discourse	Industrial Equipment	Hu (2022)
Tesla	United States	external	Donation	Automotive	Gonzales (2022)
Texas Instruments	United States	external	Corporate irresponsibility	Electronics	Bertrand (2022)
USI Holdings	United States	external	Denial discourse	Insurance	Yudin (2022)
Valve	United States	external	Market performance discourse	Gaming	Gibson (2022)
Xilinx	United States	external	Benefiting from the war	Electronics	Grey, Tamman & Zholobova (2022)

Appendix 2.

Distribution of discourse for each country. Created by author 15. 5.2024.

Discourse	Count of Discourse
Anti-China discourse	2
Japan	1
United States	1
Behaving against sanctions	2
United Arab Emirates	1
United States	1
Belittling the value of Russian market	1
Hungary	1
Benefiting from the war	18
Austria	1
Belarus	1
France	1
India	3
Iran	1
Italy	1
Japan	1
Saudi Arabia	1
Serbia	1
Slovakia	1
Spain	1
Switzerland	1
United Kingdom	2
United States	2
Boycott discourse	1
Portugal	1
China-Russia friendship discourse	16
China	16
Company stability discourse	4
Austria	1
France	1
India	1
Japan	1
Contractual obligations discourse	5
Finland	1
Japan	1
Netherlands	1
Slovenia	1
United States	1
Corporate irresponsibility	32

Canada	1
China	1
Denmark	1
Germany	1
India	1
Iran	1
Japan	3
Netherlands	1
Norway	2
Sweden	1
Switzerland	2
United Arab Emirates	1
United Kingdom	6
United Kingdom	3
United States	7
Customer service discourse	1
United Kingdom	1
Debt discourse	3
Greece	1
Italy	1
United Arab Emirates	1
Denial discourse	42
Canada	2
China	6
Cuba	1
Czech Republic	1
France	1
Germany	1
India	8
Italy	1
Japan	1
Luxembourg	1
Slovenia	1
South Korea	1
Turkey	1
United Kingdom	3
United Kingdom	1
United States	12
Donation	15
Germany	2
Japan	1
Lithuania	1
Netherlands	1
United States	10
Employer responsibility discourse	2
Denmark	1
Switzerland	1

Energy industry crisis discourse	1
Finland	1
Financial benefit discourse	12
Austria	1
China	1
Germany	1
India	1
Japan	2
Luxembourg	1
Slovenia	1
Switzerland	1
United States	3
Financial stability discourse	1
France	1
Food availability	5
Germany	1
Netherlands	1
South Korea	2
United States	1
Gas reliance discourse	4
Germany	1
India	1
Japan	1
Slovakia	1
Humanitarian discourse	11
Austria	2
Finland	1
France	2
Germany	1
Italy	2
Netherlands	1
Switzerland	1
United Kingdom	1
Legal discourse	3
Austria	1
Sweden	1
United States	1
Market demand discourse	21
Austria	1
Belgium	1
China	2
France	1
Germany	2
India	2
Iran	1
Italy	1
Japan	4

Kuwait	1
South Korea	2
Taiwan	1
Turkey	2
Market performance discourse	1
United States	1
Medical supplies availability	1
Germany	1
Neutrality discourse	2
Australia	1
Switzerland	1
Non-marketing move discourse	1
Slovenia	1
Oil reliance discourse	5
Bulgaria	1
Germany	2
Switzerland	1
United States	1
Product boycott discourse	1
France	1
Rebranding discourse	1
France	1
Responsibility to customers	7
Austria	1
China	2
France	1
United Arab Emirates	1
United States	2
Right of information	1
United States	1
Sanctions discourse	16
China	1
France	2
Iceland	1
Italy	1
Japan	3
Moldova	1
Slovenia	1
South Korea	1
United Kingdom	2
United States	3
Social entrepreneurship discourse	5
Belgium	1
Ukraine	1
United States	3
Social responsibility discourse	13
Austria	1

China	1
France	3
Germany	1
Hungary	1
Israel	1
Japan	1
Slovenia	1
Thailand	1
Turkey	1
United Kingdom	1
War launching new market	1
Austria	1
Grand Total	257