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CREATING A CSR MASTER NARRATIVE THROUGH ARCHETYPES AND THE SPECTACLE: THE CASE OF A SOUTH AFRICAN CORPORATE ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN

ABSTRACT

This research follows the constitutive approach to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and examines the discursive dimension of CSR communication through visual culture studies. It analyses communication from the South African Sun International CEO SleepOut™ campaign (2015-2018) within a phenomenological paradigm to explore its overarching CSR discourse. Three types of texts (visual, verbal, and physical space) formed the data corpus, analysed through a hermeneutical reading and thematic analysis. The findings reveal that the campaign used archetypes to construct a master narrative signalling the organisation's humanistic values. This narrative featured five distinctive stages of emplotment, incorporating visual spectacles. The CEO SleepOut events were portrayed as visually appealing, offering Sun International a platform to perform its corporate identity. The campaign's visuality was enhanced through social media content, while themes like resilience, unity, and self-sacrifice dominated the verbal discourse. By executing events in historically and symbolically significant locations, a strong CSR discourse was created. This study underscores how archetypes, spectacles, and symbolic spaces contribute to crafting unique CSR narratives. Practitioners could integrate these elements, especially the spectacle, as a feature of hypermodern communication to design CSR campaigns that are narrative-driven, immersive, and visually expressive.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility, strategic communication, archetypes, spectacle, master narratives, communication management, SDG 10, SDG 16

INTRODUCTION

This research aims to contribute to the growing body of literature that examines the constitutive approach to corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication by examining the South African CEO SleepOut™ corporate advocacy campaign. While a number of studies have paid attention to the role language plays in the creation of CSR messages, along with its role in facilitating stakeholder interaction, the discursive practices inherent to CSR communication remain under-explored (Chaudhri, 2016; Morsing & Schultz, 2006). The aim of this article is to unpack CSR as a multifaceted construct imbued with layers of meaning (Crane & Glozer, 2016).

The constitutive approach is significant as it shifts the focus – and discourse – from hierarchical, one-way communication models where communication is merely “applied” to CSR activities (Morsing & Schultz, 2006) to models of communication that are more participatory, democratic, and reflexive (Haack *et al.*, 2012). This approach not only enables researchers to frame CSR communication and practices as co-constructed phenomena (Crane & Glozer, 2016: 1237) but also offers adequate scope to arrive at an “understanding of the complex dynamics around CSR” (Schultz *et al.*, 2013: 691).

This research specifically investigates the communication and practice of CSR at geographic locations/physical sites of symbolic and historical significance. This is achieved by examining the discursive dimension of the CSR communication produced throughout the South African CEO SleepOut corporate advocacy campaign. Following an interdisciplinary approach, the author utilises theories from visual culture studies that do not typically appear in the current body of knowledge on CSR to theorise elements of narration such as archetypal characters, visual spectacles, and space. It is argued that seminal texts that investigate symbolic acts, spectacles, and archetypes can provide an additional lens through which CSR communication can be studied (Jung, 1959; MacAloon, 1984; Turner, 1975).

THE CEO SLEEPOUT AND ITS SUBSEQUENT ‘FALLOUT’

In 2006 Bernard Fehon, an Australian business leader, founded the CEO SleepOut initiative and subsequently organised the first CEO SleepOuts in Sydney, Australia (Macnamara, 2018). Various successful annual CEO SleepOuts have been held around the world – in Canada, New Zealand, the United States of America, and the United Kingdom – to raise awareness and alleviate homelessness. Six years after the first SleepOut event in Australia, Ali Gregg, the founder of The Philanthropic Collection, approached Fehon and brought the initiative to South Africa (Macnamara, 2018). According to its website, The Philanthropic Collection is a social enterprise that partners with brands and organisations to establish CSR projects and events for the benefit of charity and non-profit organisations. Although The Philanthropic Collection generates revenue, it reinvests and donates approximately “75% of earnings to beneficiaries” (The Philanthropic Collection, 2020).

The CEO SleepOut and its affiliated events – the Student SleepOut, the Sympathy SleepOut, and the School SleepOut – aim to raise funds for vulnerable, at-risk communities such as orphaned children and the homeless. This is achieved by

challenging entrepreneurs, social influencers, and captains of industry to spend a winter's night on the street (Macnamara, 2018). The main title partner of the South African CEO SleepOut during its four-year tenure (2015-2018) was Sun International, a South African-based international hotel group with interests in the entertainment, gaming and hospitality sectors.

The South African version of the event propagated the thought that five pillars, namely shelter, nutrition, healthcare, education, and community, could alleviate poverty and homelessness (Hogg, 2018). Its success resulted from the collaboration of high-profile individuals, organisations, influencers, stakeholder partners, and contributing sponsors to raise funds for charities. The first three events (2015, 2016 and 2017) were well-received and resulted in the donation of more than R38 million (approximately €2.26 million) to beneficiaries. In the 2015 launch event, 98 percent of the participant target was reached (i.e., 247 out of 250 CEOs and business leaders participated) (Macnamara, 2018: 315). Although the campaign was successful, the 2018 event was marred by negative publicity (Pijoo, 2018). According to a media release that was later removed from the CEO SleepOut's website, erroneous accusations of maladministration and "unfounded negative publicity" impacted the 2018 event resulting in only 12 CEOs and their teams participating (CEO SleepOut, 2018). Subsequently, in March 2019 the CEO SleepOut Trust formally announced the cancellation of all future South African SleepOuts through a video posted on Facebook and YouTube.

The South African CEO SleepOut event was included as a case study in Macnamara's (2018) academic textbook on the evaluation of public communication to illustrate its effectiveness and initial successful approach. However, having followed the South African events closely, the author's interest was piqued by its abrupt ending. This research is, therefore, an investigation into the rise and fall of this philanthropy campaign, which was well-received initially but failed to realise longevity in terms of stakeholder support and loyalty (Sindhu *et al.*, 2017). While only one South African case is used, retrospective and historical data of the campaign's tenure (2015-2018) are included in the analysis.

THE USE OF ARCHETYPES IN CSR COMMUNICATION

Employing theories from visual culture studies and literary studies to investigate corporate communication is advocated by a number of theorists within the public relations and communication management disciplines (Bechter *et al.*, 2016; Belk, 2017; Kent, 2015). This is because corporate advocacy campaigns have become more visually oriented, immersive, and reliant on digital platforms to tell convincing narratives that resonate with audiences. Narrative storytelling with easily identifiable master plots, such as the hero's journey, are potent techniques employed by communication professionals in social cause or activist campaigns (Kent, 2015).

Not only do master plots evoke universal themes (i.e., archetypal story patterns), these plots are performed by archetypal characters (Roesler, 2006). For Jung (1959: 5), the collective unconscious is universal and the elements that constitute it are termed archetypes, which are "archaic or [...] primordial types [...] that have existed since the remotest times". Archetypes are regarded as universal themes expressed through

myths, fables and other communicative products (Jung, 1959; Lloyd & Woodside, 2016; McPeck, 2008). The archetype “represents or personifies certain instinctive data of the dark, primitive psyche, the real but invisible roots of consciousness” (Jung, 1959: 160). Moreover, archetypes and the motifs inherent to myths represent “image[s] belonging to the whole human race” and represent “aspect[s] of the collective psyche” (Jung, 1959: 161). In this regard, motifs such as good/evil and light/dark along with various archetypal figures such as the Mother, Father, Child, Sage, Hero, and Trickster come to the fore when stories are told.

Following this line of reasoning, archetypal narratives can be interpreted as stories in which “homologous [...] behaviour patterns” are exhibited and they call out to innate characteristics that are evident in human beings (Stevens, 2002: 8). Examples of behavioural patterns – that are typified as archetypal and are displayed in all cultures – include “the care and protection of children, sharing and storing food, seeking shelter, co-operating [and] reciprocal altruism” (Stevens, 2002: 95).

There are various applications of archetypal theory. For example, the Pearson-Marr Archetype Indicator was developed as an assessment instrument to assist individuals who wished to explore their innate archetypal characteristics. According to Pearson (2020), the indicator measures to which extent individuals function as archetypes in their daily lives. Grounded in Jungian psychology, the 12-archetype categorisation attributes universal traits to individuals and explores the functioning thereof in one’s lived world. The list comprises of the following 12 archetypes: the Innocent, Orphan, Warrior, Caregiver, Seeker, Lover, Destroyer, Creator, Ruler, Magician, Sage, and Jester (Pearson & Marr, 2002: 9).

These archetypal characters and references to fables are techniques employed to strengthen the narrative qualities of communicative products. The purpose of archetypes and fable-like elements in corporate communication is to dispel fears and to reflect dominant movements and discourses in society (Belk, 2017). It is here that the importance of corporate storytelling comes to the fore. Researchers and communication professionals are continuously seeking for ways to engage stakeholder groupings, which are becoming increasingly fragmented and disengaged. When in-depth qualitative research in the field of advertising and corporate communication employs semiotic analyses and “ethnographic analytics”, researchers and professionals could gain valuable insights (Belk, 2017: 43). Belk (*ibid.*) argues that one could ascertain “what people think, feel, and value within a particular culture at a particular time” when the aforementioned methods are used.

Similarly, Bechter *et al.* (2016: 4) state that archetypes are used to engage and “connect deeper” with stakeholders. They (*ibid.*) propose that organisations employ narratives in corporate communication in which certain social roles are enacted. For example, should an organisation wish to signal their commitment to being a responsible corporate citizen, the Caregiver archetype may be evoked. In corporate narratives the organisation would, in theory, enact the Caregiver role and embody specific personality traits associated with it. The narrative would then focus on emphasising traits such as care, support, protection, compassion, selflessness, and being an entity that nurtures (Bechter *et al.*, 2016).

THE SPECTACLE AND SPACE

As mentioned in the introductory remarks, elements theorised in visual culture studies, such as the spectacle and space (i.e., physical sites/locations), provide a unique entry point through which CSR communication can be studied. The discipline of visual culture studies is particularly nuanced, and this article does not purport to provide an extensive review thereof nor of the two constructs utilised in the analysis. However, these constructs are briefly delineated as the background to the study.

More than two decades ago influential visual culture theorist Nicolas Mirzoeff (1998: 4) stated, “Human experience is now more visual and visualised than ever before”. As visual culture is predominantly concerned with the interplay between consumer(s) and visual technology, Mirzoeff proposed “new means of interpretation” to “study the genealogy, definition and functions of postmodern everyday life” (Mirzoeff, 1998: 3). Within visual culture studies the emphasis was – and still is – on ways of interpreting or decoding visual texts (Mitchell, 1994). Since Mirzoeff’s initial exploration into what visual culture entails, the so-called cult of the visual and communication technologies, such as social networking sites (SNSs), have permeated all facets of everyday life. Not only have SNSs changed how organisations communicate, but it has also given rise to “visually acculturated publics” (Dhanesh & Rahman, 2021: 1) and “hypermodern individuals” who respond – and expect – information to be presented in the form of “hyperspectacles” (Dhanesh, 2020: 588).

The spectacle has a history rooted in ancient rites of passage such as birth, marriage, and burial ceremonies (Meyerhoff, 1984; Schechner, 2002). Its tenets can be traced to gladiator duels in ancient Rome (Dunkle, 2013), theatrical art performances (Kowzan, 1968) and festivals (Fiske, 1997), as well as world exhibitions and museums (Mitchell, 1998). The circus, as a direct product of seventeenth century European fairs, is believed to be an origin of the modern spectacle. According to Darley (2000: 39), Philip Astley’s first circus, the *Cirque Olimpique*, was opened in Paris in 1782, combining various acts and performers to create a visual extravaganza. Spectacles function as performances designed to create “intense and instantaneous visual pleasure” and produce images that “excite, astound and astonish the audience” (Darley, 2000: 40). In essence, spectacles “give primacy to visual sensory and symbolic codes; they are things to be seen” (MacAloon, 1984: 243). These representations foreground the sheer “scale and intensity” of what is being portrayed visually (MacAloon, 1984: 245). The spectacle itself becomes an “arena for appearing” – the very medium used to exhibit that which is visual (Meyerhoff, 1984: 156).

In the simplest sense, the spectacle draws crowds and unifies spectators in the act of viewing visual phenomena. In the communication management context, the spectacle itself (i.e., a “hyperbolic” version of a special event) becomes a communication tactic through which stakeholders can be engaged. Seen as a multipurpose tool, the spectacle itself attracts stakeholders, provides collectivist interaction with a “willing audience” (Meyerhoff, 1984: 156), presents content that is enjoyable to watch (Cartwright, 1998), and affords the executor a platform to demonstrate accomplishments (Meyerhoff,

1984). The latter refers to organisations that perform their corporate identity and commitments to social or organisational targets through corporate communication (Benecke & Oksitucz, 2015: 822).

The actual execution of the spectacle has two layers. The first is the physical space(s) where the spectacle is executed and the other the technological interface(s) through which the spectacle is mediated. The spectacle's ideal companions are SNSs because these sites amplify messages, especially when content goes viral (Borges-Tiago *et al.*, 2019). This, in turn, results in wide audience exposure and deep reach. In as much as spectacles can be performed on SNSs, they are also executed at physical places. In this research, the sites where CSR is practiced and/or CSR campaigns are executed, that is, geographical locations, are subjected to a deconstructive reading. Physical spaces are seen as representational texts imbued with historical elements and discursive practices (Fiske, 1997; Prosser, 2007). Whether it be domestic or public spaces, space is negotiated and connotes symbolic meaning which can influence people's perception thereof (Douglas, 1972; Schmid, 1995).

Tracing the history and uncovering the political and socioeconomic influences on geographical areas remain the frontline method with which the meanings of spaces are uncovered (Bremmer, 2004). This research does not aim to provide an in-depth semiotic analysis of the sites where CSR is practised but rather refers to the history of the specific places where the CEO SleepOut campaign was executed. The four sites where the CEO SleepOut were held are of historical importance to South Africans as they are associated with the liberation struggle (Bremmer, 2004). Yeoh (2001: 458) states, "Urban forms and architecture, in particular, have been treated as a social and political means of representation in which a postcolonial nation forms a dialogue with its colonial past". The meaning of space is always negotiated, and culturally/historically sensitive sites could evoke associations with sensitive histories or events.

Combined with the lack of research on the functioning of archetypes and spectacles in CSR communication, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- ◆ RQ1: Which narrative elements (overarching plots, archetypes and visuals) were included in the CEO SleepOut corporate philanthropy campaign?
- ◆ RQ2: What form of symbolism was created through the space (physical sites) where the CEO SleepOut campaign was executed and what impact did it have on the CSR communication?

METHODOLOGY

A phenomenological paradigm was followed to examine the communication used in the South African CEO SleepOut campaign. Purposive sampling was employed, as only one philanthropic campaign was used as a case to identify the themes inherent to the communication. This particular campaign was sampled because it was highly visible and well publicised in South Africa throughout its tenure.

The data was collected from a number of corporate communication platforms. The campaign was primarily communicated via the following platforms: a dedicated CEO SleepOut website and blog (both became defunct in October 2020); a Facebook account (@TheSleepOutMovement); an Instagram account (@SleepOutZA); a YouTube channel (The SleepOut™ Movement); a Twitter (now X) account (@CEOSleepOutZA); and Sun International's official website. From these platforms, the four sampling units were selected. Sun International's official website along with the CEO SleepOut website (now defunct) were included for background information on the campaign. The campaign's Facebook account was included as the bulk of the communication was disseminated on this platform. In 2019 all historical content posted since the inception of the CEO SleepOut was removed from its Instagram account. In its place retrospective posts were created that chronicled the event's four-year existence. As these posts created a snapshot of what might be considered major highlights, the posts were included as an additional dataset.

The units of analysis encompassed the communication that was disseminated via the four branded and owned media channels. The bulk of the content was communicated on Facebook. Content produced from the campaign's commencement in March 2015 until its final video entry, uploaded to Facebook in March 2019, was included. The Instagram account consisted of archived posts that were created during June 2019. In total, 381 Instagram posts and 1231 Facebook posts, consisting of 1160 timeline photographs and 71 videos, were included. Two types of texts, visual (photographs and videos) and verbal (words accompanying visual posts), were used to identify items related to archetypes and archetypal plots. A third type of text, namely the four spaces (i.e., geographical locations) where the primary CEO SleepOuts took place, was included in the research. Historical information about the physical spaces were gathered by searching online databases.

With regard to data analysis, the researcher acknowledges that her background in visual studies influenced the manner in which visual artefacts, such as photographs and audio-visual content, were analysed. While semiotic elements (i.e., identifying signs, brand names, categories of participants) were used in the coding process to identify the main themes, the entire data corpus was initially subjected to a hermeneutical reading. This was aimed at formulating a general understanding of the CEO SleepOut as the primary phenomenon under investigation (McCaffrey *et al.*, 2012). Throughout the process, theoretical and reflective notes were made (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). After completing the hermeneutical reading, a more structured thematic analysis was initiated. This entailed generating initial codes, searching for themes, and establishing themes (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). The themes were guided by the theory

that archetypal archetypes are embedded in corporate philanthropy campaigns. The Pearson-Marr Archetype Indicator was used to identify themes that relate to the 12 archetypal characters in the datasets.

The epistemological position of the study, namely constructivism, purports that meaning is constructed and, thus, a diversity of interpretations concerning phenomena exist (Feast & Melles, 2010). Therefore, should other researchers examine the same datasets, differing readings or interpretations of the data might be generated. The limitation regarding generalisability is recognised as only one case was used. Sun International was approached for interviews but declined to participate in the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Hero

Four entities that embodied and displayed characteristics of the archetypal Hero were identified in the surveyed communication. These include the CEOs who participated in the events, the CEO SleepOut brand and by extension its title sponsor, Sun International, and other SleepOut event participants such as school children at Sympathy SleepOuts.

A hero is defined as someone who is a “distinguished person, admired for their ability, bravery or noble qualities and worthy of emulation” (Shuart, 2007: 13). Additional qualities ascribed to heroes include generosity, helpfulness, wisdom, honesty, and courage (Stever, 1991). Throughout the campaign’s four-year duration, high profile CEOs and business leaders were approached to participate. In Facebook posts (captions/text), CEOs participating in the event were framed as “remarkable”; they were consistently referred to as “champions” and described as people “lending a helping hand to others” (The SleepOut Movement Facebook, 2018). The CEOs were typified as working for organisations with a “social conscience” who supported the initiative with “generous sponsorship[s]” (The SleepOut Movement Facebook, 2018).

Visuals on Facebook and Instagram depicted the CEOs and business leaders in two primary ways: firstly, as a sole individual who aspires to lead and wishes to share a vision with others through oral communication (i.e., being interviewed by media partners or making a speech) (Greenleaf, in Spears, 2010); and secondly, as a servant leader who becomes one with others (a team) through relational activities such as being huddled together around fires, gathering at tables to dispense food, or standing arm-in-arm with participants at the SleepOut while posing for photographs. The visual depictions exemplify values that have been associated with heroes and leaders. The former shows how the hero/leader rallies “troops” at important events to share his/her vision and inspiration, while the latter depicts the hero/leader as someone who instils camaraderie and exhibits values such as empathy, stewardship, and building community (Spears, 2010).

The CEO SleepOut brand and by extension its title sponsor, Sun International, embody the archetype of the Hero. It is a paternalistic construct, and the organisation becomes a symbol of corporate benevolence. Paternalistic benevolence, in this context, entails

that the organisation publicly commits to care, protect and invest in those “for whom they accepted responsibility” (Stevens, 2002: 96). This social contract with society obliges organisations to invest in and empower the communities in which they operate (Garriga & Melé, 2004; King IV, 2016; Porter & Kramer, 2006). Congruently, the Ruler/Hero archetype exhibits a sense of responsibility, and it is rooted in the construct of “protective benevolence” (McPeck, 2008: 54-55). The Ruler/Hero acts in the best interests of his/her followers and is primarily concerned with creating a burgeoning family or community (Robbins, 2006: 803). For example, leaders were challenged throughout the campaign:

One commitment from leaders of South Africa can make a world of difference for the children of Door of Hope Children’s Mission [...] Rise to the challenge today and use profits for purpose (The SleepOut Movement Facebook, 2017).

To bolster the claim that the CEO SleepOut brand and Sun International exemplify the Hero archetype, Baker (2008: 239) notes that when organisations embody virtues, they become, to some extent, “ideal types, moral exemplars, or moral heroes”. They teach society by example how to attain the “highest good” and how to take ethical courses of action to eradicate societal ills (Hegel, in Beiser, 2005). The CEO SleepOut brand and Sun International met these criteria by actively recruiting partners to participate in the CEO SleepOut (Macnamara, 2018). This was done to champion the cause and to maximise the value and impact of the contributions that were distributed to various charitable organisations.

A number of virtue-based qualities are inherent in this ideal moral type, namely humility (related to the organisation’s acknowledgement of its moral responsibility to society), respect, care, truth, transparency, authenticity, social responsibility (for the common good), and equity (Baker, 2008). These qualities are related to the “principled advocate” archetype that is narrated by means of corporate advocacy campaigns (Baker, 2008: 241). In this regard, Sun International represented itself as a responsible corporate citizen through its “contributions and commitment to the economy, communities and the environment” (Sun International, 2017). The narrative of a principled organisation was created through memes and quotations on SNSs such as: “Money – what is it good for, if not for doing good” and “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world – Rachelle Campbell” (The SleepOut Movement Facebook, 2017).

The Hero also champions causes and advocates for activities that relate to the higher good. As the organisation embodies the “archetypal parental role”, it is “innately prepared to make sacrifices” (Stevens, 2002: 98-99). In this regard, it is proposed that the Hero becomes a fluid archetype. Not only does it embody the characteristics of the Hero when it cares for members of society (its external stakeholders) and makes “sacrifices” (financial contributions to CSR causes or physical sacrifices such as spending a night on the street), it oscillates between being the Hero and being the Caregiver. In this instance, Sun International, participating CEOs, and other participants took on the fluid Hero/Caregiver archetype. The communication also

framed them as “inspirational” and described them as participating in acts that need to be “salute[d]”. Their philanthropic acts were hailed as “the start of a tradition, and a proud moment in securing Madiba’s [Nelson Mandela’s] legacy” (The SleepOut Movement Facebook, 2018).

The Caregiver/Mother

The CEO SleepOut’s partners, sponsors, and participants (such as students, business leaders and ambassadors) personify the Caregiver/Mother archetype. It is a maternalistic construct that exhibits traits such as kindness, compassion, care, and love. The focus of this archetype’s care-giving activities is outward and, by demonstrating “altruism”, the archetype aims to “make the world a safer and gentler place for everyone” (Pearson & Marr, 2002: 17). In one Facebook post, the ambassadors were described as follows:

It was a cold hard night, which gave all the Ambassadors a renewed sense of the importance of their jobs, knowing that so many people face this hardship on a daily basis. We salute our young Agents Of Change, for they are the Youth and Future of our beautiful country [sic] (The SleepOut Movement Facebook, 2018).

In the context of the CEO SleepOut, the Caretaker archetype moves beyond the notion of monotropy, where the mother figure forms a single bond with one infant, to that of a “nonmaternal caretaker” who provides for a number of individuals with whom she has formed a philanthropic bond (Van Ijzendoorn *et al.*, 1992: 8). As the CEO SleepOut initiative was a public event that invited various stakeholders to alleviate societal ills, the relationship between the recipients of the CSR initiative and the CEO SleepOut participants was altruistic. The stakeholders’ compassionate and generous actions were symbolic of defeating trials and tribulations by caring for others (Robbins, 2006: 802). Generosity was a prominent theme that emanated from the communication. In the official 2015 event video, Mark Levy, the CEO of Blue Label Telecoms, stated: “Too often we as potential donators to charity funds just give without understanding [...] When you are out here and you give and you see, it is an amazing thing.”

The 2017 event was rebranded as the SheEO SleepOut and challenged female CEOs and business leaders to participate. The clear focus on female benefactors and participants strengthens the argument that the initiative evoked the mythical Great Mother archetype who acts as the “dispenser of nourishment” (Stevens, 2002: 108). Moreover, in various Facebook and Instagram posts emphasis was placed on visually depicting female participants while they dispensed food and drinks, such as soup, coffee and home-cooked meals, at affiliated events held at schools and sympathy SleepOut events.

According to Slote (2000: 331-332), an “agent-based ethic of caring is the most promising form of contemporary virtue ethics”. By employing the Caregiver archetype in the CEO SleepOut event, all the participants and Sun International enacted active social roles by means of performing agency-giving actions (i.e. caring for orphaned children and the homeless by raising funds). As active ambassadors for a certain cause,

the Caregiver's depiction in the campaign strengthened its symbolic virtuousness. During the 2017 event, for example, the participants were depicted as involved, active, and engaged in contributing material goods such as milk formula, toys and baby cots to orphanages across South Africa.

The Child/Innocent

The beneficiaries of the CEO SleepOut enact the Child/Innocent archetype, and because of the campaign became a symbol of human suffering, individuals who are in need, and the perpetual vulnerable child that must be protected. The Child/Innocent has "basic trust in others" and displays a hope or desire that other people will come to their aid (Pearson & Marr, 2002: 11). When compared to other archetypes, these traits are indicative of greater passivity and diminished agency (McPeck, 2008: 53).

Although the Child/Innocent is passive, it provides other social agents with a certain type of "optimism" (Robbins, 2006: 803). In the typical archetypal plot (i.e., the hero's journey, the quest or adventure), the Caregiver or Hero is made aware of the Child/Innocent's plight and embarks on a journey to "rescue" the Child/Innocent (Kent, 2015: 485). While this archetype remains passive, it is able to overcome trials by seeking "rescuing" (Robbins, 2006: 803). It thus illustrates that "evil" or difficult circumstances can be "defeated" by doing good.

In the analysed communication, the beneficiaries of the CEO SleepOut campaign were visually depicted in passive roles. This was particularly the case during the SheEO SleepOut in 2017. For example, the photographs posted on the analysed SNSs highlighted the plight of orphaned babies who are unable to fend for themselves. By portraying young children in the presence of the Caregiver archetype (orphanage workers or the involved brand ambassadors), the CEO SleepOut event successfully used archetypes and followed a CSR master narrative; that is, defenceless, vulnerable, at-risk individuals must be supported by virtuous organisations. By including tokenistic and stereotypical elements in SNS posts, such as torn baby clothes on a washing line, a wooden horse in a play-pen, wall art displaying words such as "dream," "hope" and "fairy tale", or small children walking to school in a rural township, a visual narrative was created that aimed to provoke emotive responses in stakeholders.

Drawing on Jung, Lloyd and Woodside (2013: 16) state that archetypal images "are intended to attract, to convince, and to overpower". This is precisely what the CEO SleepOut intended to achieve: appeal to the humanistic core of stakeholders in order to foster awareness regarding a certain cause and to persuade others to actively contribute to the betterment of society. The following excerpt from the 2016 event serves as illustration:

Columba Leadership offers a values-based leadership programme in secondary schools that catalyses a movement of engaged young leaders, transforming learners from economically disadvantaged areas into responsible, socially-conscious leaders and employable, enterprising young people.

The Sage

The final archetype that was identified in the campaign is the Sage. The Sage stands for trust and enlightenment, has wisdom, and is able to provide guidance that transcends human trials (Robbins, 2006: 802). This archetype is closely related to the pursuit of truth and knowledge. The Sage is fair, contemplates issues, and is not quick to judge (McPeck, 2008: 55; Pearson & Marr, 2002: 31). This archetypal character functions as the moral compass for a given society and serves as the ethical consciousness of humanity.

In the CEO SleepOut campaign, certain individuals who occupy perceived privileged positions in society (such as judges, politicians, and social activists) were used to fulfil the Sage archetype. They acted as advisers or spiritual guides who encouraged individuals to participate in the CSR initiative. This was achieved by disseminating thought-provoking quotations in the form of memes to stakeholders on Facebook and Instagram. The 2017 SheEO SleepOut campaign relied on memes quoting high-profile female leaders. For example:

Hope is that little spark that gives you faith in the possibility of a future that seems unattainable – Thuli Madonsela, former Public Protector of South Africa.

Not only were the four identified archetypes part of the visual and textual narratives that were conveyed to stakeholders, the CEO SleepOut event also incorporated physical spaces that resonate with the South African psyche.

Symbolic place-making and CSR

The CEO SleepOut itself became a symbol of both human trials and selflessness. It was portrayed as a campaign where participants could make an offering at the physical and symbolic altar of self-sacrifice. The subsequent postulation is accepted as true to provide a basis for theoretical reasoning: the incorporation of explicit symbols and spaces with their related implicit meaning serve to “activate and connect archetypal associations” in the minds of stakeholders (Lloyd & Woodside, 2013: 16). In this sub-section it is argued that the four physical spaces in Johannesburg where the SleepOuts took place, were selected due to their symbolic significance. In 2015, Gwen Lane in Sandton, also called Millionaire’s Mile, was the site of the CEO SleepOut. The 2016 SleepOut took place at the Nelson Mandela Bridge, while the 2017 event was moved from the Union Buildings in Pretoria to the Women’s Jail museum complex at Constitution Hill at the eleventh hour. The event organisers envisaged holding the 2018 event on Robben Island, but the venue was changed to Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia.

Lloyd and Woodside (2013: 11) state that “visual images [...] [act] as repositories of cultural meaning”. Challenging CEOs to sleep in cardboard boxes on Gwen Lane took CEOs from their high-rise city offices, only a stone’s throw away, and compelled them to experience homelessness first-hand. The site conveniently became the symbol of “capitalism with a conscience” (Sun International, 2021). Conversely, the Nelson Mandela Bridge connotes freedom, unity, reconciliation, and social cohesion. When the event was held there, it became a symbolic space where cultural, racial and deeply

entrenched economic divides could be bridged. For many South Africans, the Union Buildings signify liberation. It is the site where 20 000 women of all races marched to on 9 August 1956 to present a petition against the carrying of passes by women to the then prime minister, J.G. Strijdom (Hassim, 2006). While using the image of the Union Buildings in its social media posts, it became emblematic of the organisation's and society's willingness to accept responsibility for vulnerable and marginalised social groupings.

Although the image of the Women's Jail on the Constitution Hill premises was only used in the CEO SleepOut's communication for the five days preceding the 2017 event, the Women's Jail, which is adjacent to South Africa's Constitutional Court in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, serves as a symbol of redistributive justice as various struggle stalwarts and political activists were jailed at the Constitutional Hill prison complex during apartheid (Segal *et al.*, 2006: 23, 152).

Just as the preceding events skilfully harnessed the strategic value of symbolic spaces, the 2018 SleepOut was organised to coincide with the commemoration of anti-apartheid activist and former president Nelson Mandela's centennial birthday. While initially scheduled to take place on Robben Island, hosting the SleepOut at Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia still tied the event to one of the world's most recognisable individuals who previously stayed at Liliesleaf (Fisher, 2013).

Not only do the selected SleepOut venues symbolise unity, resilience during times of struggle, and self-sacrifice for social causes, these traits were transferred to other entities as well. The author proposes that the entire campaign aimed to utilise the transferred symbolic events and symbols to strengthen Sun International's reputation as a philanthropic agent and, by extension, to signal its corporate morality and ethical stance to stakeholders (King IV, 2016). The elevation of its moral core was achieved through associating itself with inspirational leaders and reputable business leaders; holding the event at locations that elicit emotional responses; and assisting worthy causes and non-profit organisations.

The corporate advocacy campaign, therefore, successfully mythologised the past (Mandela, in Ngcukana, 2016). It drew on stakeholders' shared cultural memory by including references to Nelson Mandela, the Black Sash women's movement, and the imprisonment of political activists in its communicative products (Segal *et al.*, 2006). These references, in turn, evoked images of equality, the fight for freedom, and human rights activism. The communication disseminated throughout the campaign used these symbols and their related meanings to frame the CEO SleepOut, spearheaded by Sun International, as heroic and the organisation as a virtuous entity that acted from a moral stance.

Now that the four archetypes and the symbolic value of the CEO SleepOut venues have been theorised, the attention turns to the central narrative employed in the campaign. The author proposes that the narrative, in which characters perform their archetypal roles, hinges on Joseph Campbell's (2004) "the Hero's journey".

Emplotment structure of the CEO SleepOut: Building towards a master CSR narrative

As a precursory note, the author acknowledges that the identified emplotment structure of the CSR narrative is by no means exhaustive and only aims to provide a succinct synopsis of key theoretical elements. Various characteristics of the CSR master narrative in South Africa are included in the case of the CEO SleepOut campaign. These traits include paternalistic benevolence and mutually beneficial relationships built on trust, credibility and dialogue (Holtzhausen, 2012); celebration of corporate virtue; visualisation and narration of CSR activities based on a historical/mythic past; representation of the organisation as a change agent (Benecke & Oksiutycz, 2015); disclosure and transparency (King IV, 2016; Skinner & Mersham, 2008); and engagement (King IV, 2016). The primary narratives of many CSR campaigns focus on education and leadership initiatives, as well as infrastructure developments (i.e. the eradication of human suffering, environmental harm, poverty, and illiteracy) (Benecke & Oksiutycz, 2015).

Kent (2015) identifies various master narratives that are used in corporate communication. Although some elements of the master narratives identified by Kent (2015: 485-486) such as the quest, adventure, rescue, sacrifice, and underdog are present in the CEO SleepOut narrative, the author argues that the CEO SleepOut campaign is aligned more closely to the Hero's journey structure (Campbell, 2004). While Campbell (2004) proposed 12 stages inherent to the Hero's journey (i.e. Ordinary world; Call to adventure; Refusal of the call; Meeting the mentor; Crossing the threshold; Tests, allies and enemies; Ordeal; Approach to the innermost cave; Rewards; The road back; Resurrection; and Return with the elixir), the author has simplified the narrative components, or the emplotment structure, of this specific corporate advocacy campaign to five categories, namely:

- ♦ *Contextualisation*: The CEO SleepOut and the organisation(s) involved were placed into context. Every year Sun International introduced the beneficiaries of the CEO SleepOut campaign. This was accomplished through a concerted media effort via Sun International's website, the CEO SleepOut's website, the blog, as well as its owned and branded SNSs.
- ♦ *Call to action*: External stakeholders, business leaders and other organisations were then challenged to participate in the CSR initiative. Since 2015, the CEO SleepOut campaign concentrated on the mythic call to action, namely, "Will you rise to the challenge?". It also created hashtags such as #SouthAfricaMustRise and #RiseToTheChallenge, which accompanied SNS posts.
- ♦ *Commitment*: After the call to action, external stakeholders accepted the challenge to act in an ethically conscious manner and purposed to contribute to society's betterment. Borrowing from Stevens (2002: 102), proclaiming one's intentions is analogous to a "public ceremony of commitment". During the CEO SleepOut events the media captured the act of giving, namely the

Hero/Caregiver bestowing goodwill on communities or charity organisations. Additionally, CEOs, business leaders, students, and school children publicly pledged financial contributions. These financial pledges were listed on the CEO SleepOut's website, and the contributions were updated on a regular basis. By agreeing to participate in the event, the stakeholders communicated and signified their commitment.

- ◆ *Execution:* Following the initial commitment stage, the initiative was executed. During each SleepOut event, constant updates were provided to the public by means of live feeds from each venue along with SNSs' posts. The narrative used during the execution of the event emphasised the challenges and/or trials the external stakeholders (the participants) had to overcome to address the societal need.
- ◆ *Reward:* After the execution stage, the tangible rewards of the initiative were relayed to the beneficiaries. The CEO SleepOut made use of Facebook and its website to communicate the amount of money that was raised and how the proceeds were distributed to beneficiaries.

The CEO SleepOut corporate advocacy campaign, like the Hero's journey, consists of "a predictable cast of characters" (Robbins, 2006: 774). The emplotment structure thereof infuses characteristics of the quest and adventure master plots and highlights the Hero's mission to attain a higher good (moral virtue). The Hero along with the Caregiver cannot turn a blind eye to the evils of the world and decide to rise, alleviate poverty and homelessness, and positively contribute to the future of young children, as depicted in the campaign communication. During the journey, the Hero and the Caregiver are attentive to the advice provided by guides or counsellors (the Sage). The journey to improve the lives of others is challenging and the Hero and the Caregiver must show perseverance, face trials, and make the necessary sacrifices (Campbell, 2004; Kent, 2015; Robbins, 2006). This narrative resonates with individuals as they identify with the archetypal characters and the "imagery" employed in the corporate advocacy campaign (Kent, 2015: 483). Here identification is seen as a process during which individuals recognise that they have attributes in common with others (Kent, 2015).

The emplotment is amplified by the fact that the campaign is distributed to diverse stakeholders through multiple channels. This, in turn, not only creates fertile ground to communicate an epic Hero's journey to stakeholders, but it also turns the campaign into a spectacle (especially on SNSs). According to Turner (1984: 21), social visibility is the process of moving from a state of "invisibility" to "visibility" in front of spectators. In the online realm, the beneficiaries of the CEO SleepOut (i.e. charitable organisations) are not completely invisible, but the CEO SleepOut enhances the beneficiaries' visibility by giving them the opportunity to obtain a heightened state of social visibility on its owned and branded channels and SNSs. For example, external stakeholders are introduced to each year's beneficiaries via the CEO SleepOut's SNSs, website, and blog. In this context, the SNSs have become an "arena for appearing" – platforms where the beneficiaries of the SleepOut and the participants can appear (Meyerhoff, 1984: 156).

The CEO SleepOut events were also communicated to stakeholders as spectacles that had to be attended. External stakeholders (business leaders, CEOs, school children, and students) were challenged to participate in the spectacle, not as spectators, but as active contributors and co-producers who could make a difference. According to MacAloon (1984: 246), spectacles create “wonder and awe” in individuals. For instance, the CEO SleepOut was communicated as a heroic journey that sees the Hero overcome various obstacles. The aforementioned elements, along with the showcasing of the charitable work the beneficiaries are involved in on YouTube and Instagram, contribute to a narrative that centres on perceived social victories (the alleviation of homelessness) and the valorisation of the participants who are heralded as a new generation of “agents of change” (The SleepOut Movement Facebook, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The research provided four key insights. Firstly, as identified in the CEO SleepOut campaign, archetypes are employed in corporate communication to signal humanistic qualities and to produce positive sentiments in stakeholders. In hypermodern times where greater disengagement exists organisations need to explore novel ways of communicating with stakeholders to enhance engagement (Verhoeven *et al.*, 2018). The inclusion of archetypes in campaigns could be used to achieve this purpose. Archetypes such as the Hero/Heroine, the Caregiver and the Innocent are embodied in narratives centred on historic heroes and cultural myths. These Jungian archetypes and corresponding traits, such as paternalistic responsibility, resurface in overarching master narratives which are adopted and integrated by organisations to signal CSR commitment.

Secondly, the corporate advocacy campaign was enacted as a spectacle. Framing the four-year campaign as a spectacle resulted in the following outcomes: it attracted stakeholders to the annual event; it provided a means for collectivist interactions with various external stakeholders (Meyerhoff, 1984); it packaged the CSR initiative as an event that resulted in viewing pleasure (Cartwright, 1998); and it gave Sun International a way to perform its corporate identity (Benecke & Oksiutycz, 2015). The fact that the campaign was primarily communicated to stakeholders via SNSs such as Facebook and Instagram by means of visual content (videos, memes and photographs) amplified the visuality of each SleepOut event.

Thirdly, space featured prominently in the South African version of the SleepOut campaign. Three of the historical sites where the SleepOuts were held are associated with Nelson Mandela’s fight for freedom, equality, and access to education. By holding the SleepOuts at symbolic places, the so-called Mandelisation of places and events occurred (Mandela, in Ngcukana, 2016). It is postulated that stakeholders would easily have associated these places with Mandela’s struggle for basic rights and “applied” these collective memories to the CSR narrative that was presented by the CEO SleepOut. Themes such as unity, resilience and self-sacrifice featured prominently in the analysed communication creating a parallel discourse with the chosen sites. This “double” or parallel discourse speaks to the fact that both the CSR communication and the spatial elements signify similar themes and/or intrinsic values to stakeholders.

Lastly, the CEO SleepOut's CSR communication was patterned after a master narrative with five distinct employment stages. The identified employment structure is regarded as a shortened and revised version of the 12 stages inherent to the Hero's journey (Campbell, 2004). In this case, it serves as a template or master structure for CSR communication. The five stages are the following: the contextualisation of the campaign/project, call to action, public commitment to the cause, execution of the campaign/project, and finally, the relaying of the reward to beneficiaries. In the execution of the communication, the campaign integrated tokenistic visuals/master symbols of poverty and homelessness such as informal housing structures, food dispensing centres, and tattered clothing. These master symbols provide visual cues that elicit emotions in stakeholders and serve to evoke archetypes (Fiske, 1997; Lloyd & Woodside, 2013).

This research did not probe the reasons for the CEO SleepOut's abrupt end, nor the perceived negative stakeholder sentiment the final instalment created. Rather, the study aimed to apply theoretical constructs, namely archetypes, the spectacle, and space to the CSR communication produced throughout the campaign. By investigating CSR communication through the lens of visual culture studies, nuanced insights into the archetypal character structure and spatial elements of a CSR campaign discourse were provided.

The practical implication of the research is that it draws attention to the execution of CSR communication in the hypervisual communication age. It serves as a reminder that organisations need to investigate ways in which to meaningfully engage with stakeholders who expect "hyperspectacles" (Dhanesh, 2020: 588). Here practitioners could look to findings on archetypes, space and the spectacle to compose compelling, consistent, and authentic CSR narratives. Future studies could further explore hypermodern communication strategies and how it could be applied in the crafting of CSR communication. The call to investigate what constitutes "authentic CSR communication" could be explored through empirical studies (Crane & Glozer, 2016: 1243).

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