

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the way NIKE, INC. Statement on Modern Slavery and Child Labor in Fiscal Year 2024 develops ethical responsibility of forced labor and child labor in a formal corporate disclosure. The paper is based on the opinion that the statements of labor rights can not be regarded as the simple technical compliance documents, but as the strategic PR texts in the course of which corporations interpret the risk, rationalize the responsibility and organize the accountability. The study fills a perceptual void of existing literature, where Nike has been frequently studied through the lens of labor scandal, campaigns or a larger concept of CSR communication, but seldom has a close textual approach been undertaken on a single recent release of labor rights information. The paradigm of this study is constructivist and a qualitative content analysis method. Two key analytical perspectives, communicative legitimacy and CSR communication strategies, are used to analyze the selected document on a paragraph level. Justification of responsibility is looked at on the basis of moral, procedural and authority justification and mode of communication is looked at on the basis of informing, responding and involving. The results indicate that Nike builds ethical responsibility by having a stratified mix of justification and communication mode. The more dominant modes of communication are authority justification and procedural justification whereas the most dominant mode of communication is informing. The paper also finds common patterns of narratives that render the disclosure seem ethically serious, procedurally regulated, responsive to questioning, and institutionally plausible. Moreover, forced labor is presented in the framework of prevention and governance and child labor in the framework of remediation and protection. All in all, this thesis statement suggests that the FY2024 statement by Nike serves as a strategic corporate disclosure that creates an ethical responsibility based on textual design of a pattern, but not a neutral reporting.

Keywords: *Strategic public relations, CSR communication, Ethical branding, Communicative legitimacy, Modern slavery disclosure, Forced labor, Child labor, Qualitative content analysis.*