**Are companies Coronawashing? Ten pieces of evidence**

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In the current global crisis, companies are carrying out solidarity initiatives: donating masks and medical supplies, putting their operational capacity at the service of health authorities, or financially contributing to research on the SARS-COV-2 coronavirus and its associated disease, COVID-19. As a consequence of these initiatives, several companies have an active presence in mass media, something that has made some skeptics wonder if these companies are behaving symbolically or even opportunistically, that is, they are “coronawashing.”

In the environmental management literature, the greenwashing phenomenon is understood as the selective disclosure of environmental information by a company, highlighting only specific practices that yield a positive environmental performance (and even hiding practices with a negative environmental impact), with the main aim of depicting a positive environmental corporate image. This symbolic behavior can be compared to the current situation, by replacing green initiatives with solidarity initiatives related to COVID-19. Therefore, the coronawashing phenomenon can be defined as the biased disclosure of information on the company’s actions developed to address issues related to COVID-19. The existence of coronawashing is subject to the four assumptions of greenwashing, that is, a disclosure of information which is (1) selected, (2) planned, (3) voluntary and initiated by the company, and (4) with an external accusation, that is, perceived by the general public with a certain degree of suspicion. However, it is essential to note that there is a fundamental difference between both phenomena: greenwashing can indeed involve hiding or manipulating negative information (e.g., lying if the company's ecological impact is negative), while coronawashing focuses on extolling solidarity initiatives with the main objective, among others, of having a significant presence in the media.

At this point, is it possible to spot coronawashing? At first glance, detecting coronawashing is not an easy task for a fundamental reason: during the critical moment of a crisis, society tends to be grateful for any business solidarity initiative, even if it is insignificant. Reputation improvements for the company, as a result of coronawashing, will occur afterwards, once time has passed and the global crisis scenario has expired. Nevertheless, the following table provides a Decalogue of ten signals that help to detect suspicious companies that are coronawashing.

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| Communication (of the company’s initiative) | 1. Does the company communicate its solidarity initiative? If not, it is not coronawashing. If so, it can lead to suspicion. 2. When a general perception exists about whether there is an **overexposure** in the media about the solidarity initiatives that the company is developing. 3. When the general perception is that the company is **striving harder to communicate** the solidarity initiative rather than the development of the initiative itself. |
| Consistency (of the company’s actions) | 1. When the company has not carried out solidarity activities frequently or **throughout its history**; in other words, when it is not a company well-recognized for its responsible behavior. 2. When there are **contradictions** in its social behavior, that is, there is no consistency with other voluntary actions that the company develops. For example, the company is used to paying large fines for polluting. |
| Size (of the company’s initiative) | 1. When the **contribution** percentage of the company’s solidarity initiative is insignificant, **compared to its profitability** for the previous year, or compared to the average income level in the last three years. In such instances, the effort of the contribution is trivial. For example, when a donation of one million euros represents 0.00005% of the annual turnover. 2. When the impact of the company's contribution is little or insignificant **to the aggregate aid** that is needed. |
| Influence (of the company’s stakeholders) | 1. When the company's initiative is not supported or recognized by a **credible third party**. For example, when the aid that the company offers is not guaranteed by a hospital, a public entity, or any other institution clearly involved in the fight against the pandemic. 2. When the company's initiative is focused on helping a **specific audience** that, coincides with the company's usual target. At this point, the key is to determine the intentionality in the selection of the segment on which it is focused. 3. When there is **no coordination, within the sector,** between the voluntary actions being carried out by participants in an industry. The existence of coordinated initiatives from within the sector denotes that the participants are more interested in making significant (larger) efforts to help, and are less interested in earning recognition for these actions. |

Since we are living in unprecedented circumstance, all the aid and support that companies in particular, and society in general could provide are welcome. But it is also necessary to be vigilant to prevent opportunistic behaviors that tarnish the collective effort that is being made to overcome this crisis.