

Climate Claims in Test: Examination of The Climate Communication of Swiss Companies

Meier Claude

HWZ University of Applied Sciences in Business Administration Zurich, Switzerland
Claude.meier@fh-hwz.ch

Wüest, Bruno

HWZ University of Applied Sciences in Business Administration Zurich, Switzerland
Bruno.wueest@fh-hwz.ch

Wirz, Ronja

HWZ University of Applied Sciences in Business Administration Zurich, Switzerland
Ronja.wirz@fh-hwz.ch

Krell, Roland

HWZ University of Applied Sciences in Business Administration Zurich, Switzerland
Roland.krell@fh-hwz.ch

Abstract

The Paris Climate Agreement from 2015 was ratified by Switzerland in 2017, and followingly, the Swiss Energy Strategy 2050 was formulated. Since then, the expectation towards private companies concerning the reduction of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions has increased strongly. To receive an idea of what companies are doing concerning GHG, one has to consider their communication. But how valid is the communication about their climate actions or, in other words, the risk of “Greenwashing”? In the present study, we examined this question. To assess communication, the following four theoretical elements were focussed: traceability, credibility, materiality, and abundance of information. In terms of content, we focussed on the following four theoretical elements: transparent accounting & disclosure of GHG emissions, reduction of value chain emissions, financial commitment for remaining value chain emissions, public engagement and advocacy for ambitious climate policy. Methodologically, we combined text mining with a qualitative content analysis. As data basis served the direct communication in annual, sustainability, and similar company reports as well as in most relevant social media. The sample consisted of 46 companies out of a total of 50 listed in the “Swiss Reputation Ranking”. Overall, the results show a generally very poor classification of climate communication on social media. In the companies’ reports, the picture is different. Here about 25% have a rather good or good communication, another 50% have a moderate one. Furthermore, the results show, among others, that the validity of climate communication does not correlate with the reputation of a company.

Keywords: climate communication, greenwashing, reputation index, company reports, text mining, content analysis