

Building Environmentally Sustainable Corporate Identity on the Internet

A Multimodal Case Study of the Corporate Social Responsibility Discourse on the Corporate
Websites of Finnair and VR

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Master's Thesis

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The aim of this thesis is to analyse and compare how two Finnish transport industry companies, Finnair and VR, multimodally create environmentally sustainable corporate identity on their corporate website sections focusing on Corporate Social Responsibility through text and image. The analysis of the text is completed by examining locutionary and illocutionary acts present in the text of the websites following the methodologies of Speech Act Theory presented by Austin (1962) and the further division of the illocutionary acts presented by Searle (1976). The study of the images, then, is done through a proposed new methodology that is inspired by Kjørup's (1974, 1978) theory of image acts and utilises Unsworth and Cléirigh's (2008) methodology of analysing image-text relationships to reveal the illocutionary points of images according to Searle's classification.

The results of this thesis indicate that both companies discuss environmental sustainability in great detail on their websites to build environmentally sustainable corporate identity, but the contents of the locutionary acts differ as Finnair focuses more on future environmental actions whereas VR focuses more on the current greenness of the company. What comes to illocutionary acts, in both cases assertive acts were the most common, but Finnair also used more commissive acts in comparison to VR. The visual analysis, then, revealed that both companies use images to illustrate their environmental doings explained in the text. As the images relate to the assertive speech acts, I argue that the images also have assertive illocutionary points.

Key words: Speech Act Theory, Corporate Social Responsibility, corporate identity, corporate communications, corporate website

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List of abbreviations

CSR Corporate Social Responsibility

1 Introduction

In order to gain a competitive advantage over others, a company must communicate a clear and positive corporate identity. Achieving this makes customers and other stakeholders remember the company better and sets it apart from other, competing players within the same industry. One direction towards which a company can build corporate identity is environmental sustainability, a topic area which has gained a rising amount of attention from customers in the recent years (Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas 2011, 26). Addressing environmental sustainability and having environmentally sustainable corporate identity is especially important to those companies that cause negative effects to the environment due to the nature of their operations. Corporate identity can be built in plethora of ways, but perhaps one of the most common tools is the corporate website, as nowadays nearly all larger companies have one in one form or another. Environmental sustainability is often addressed by companies in their corporate websites' sections dedicated to Corporate Social Responsibility (henceforth referred to as CSR).

In this thesis, I am going to explore how companies that operate in an industry in which the emissions of the operations are generally high build environmentally sustainable corporate identity through multimodal means of language and images on their corporate websites. The industry analysed in this thesis is transport industry, and two Finnish companies, the airline company Finnair and the train company VR, were chosen to conduct a case study on the topic. The websites of the two companies are analysed through the lens of Speech Act Theory. To be more specific, I aim to answer the following questions:

1. What kind of locutionary and illocutionary acts are used by Finnair and VR to build environmentally sustainable corporate identities on their corporate website sections discussing CSR and what do they aim to achieve?
2. What kind of images are used by Finnair and VR to build environmentally sustainable corporate identity on their corporate website sections discussing CSR and what their relationship with the speech acts in the text reveal about their illocutionary points?
3. What are the main differences in the use of locutionary and illocutionary acts and images of the two companies?

Regarding the first question, I hypothesise that the locutionary acts used by Finnair and VR are descriptive and informative in nature. I theorize that the two companies describe their

environmental sustainability values and inform the publics about what they are doing to act in accordance with these values. Concerning the use of illocutionary acts, I believe assertive (illocutionary act type that conveys information) and commissive (illocutionary act type that commits the speaker to a future action) acts will be the most common. This is the case because they would convey the companies' informative statements about environmental sustainability and commit the companies to act in an environmentally sustainable way, respectively. As for the second question, I hypothesize that the images visualize the information conveyed in the text and vice versa, thus supporting each other's messages, causing the images to have assertive illocutionary points. Finally, in relation to the third question, I believe that the use of locutionary and illocutionary acts as well as images will be mostly similar between Finnair and VR. After all, the two companies operate in the same area of industry and discuss the same subject, environmental sustainability. However, some differences might arise from the fact that, as individual companies, Finnair and VR are more than likely to have unique corporate identities and thus communicate it in their own unique ways. Additionally, differences could possibly arise due to the inherent dissimilarities in the nature of transportation conducted by plane and train.

This study aims to fill a gap in the research of corporate identity building. Corporate identity is quite a popular topic of research in the academic fields centred on business and marketing, but the subject is less studied from a purely linguistic perspective. Studies that approach corporate identity construction especially through the approach of Speech Act Theory are quite rare, and thus, this thesis offers novelty value and new insights in the field. As far as Finnair and VR as companies are concerned, research onto their speech acts of corporate identity building has not yet been done. Additionally, this thesis has the aim to develop multimodal aspects of Speech Act Theory further by proposing a new method for analysing images as speech acts through the relationship between images and the speech acts present in the adjacent text.

Following the introduction, I will explain the context of the primary materials analysed and discuss the concepts of the Finnish transport industry and corporate communication in Section 2. Next, in Section 3, I am going to discuss the theoretical background of the study, exploring the Speech Act Theory and its multimodal aspects. Subsequently in Section 4, I will introduce the material analysed in this thesis and explain the methods of analysis used in conducting the research. In Section 5, I am going to go through the results of the analysis, and, consequently, in Section 6, I will discuss the results more in

depth with the aim of considering the possible larger phenomena behind them. In Section 6, I will also reflect on the limitations of the study and the possibilities for further research on the topic. Finally, in Section 7, I will conclude the thesis by briefly summarizing the results of the analysis and reviewing the final conclusions that can be made based on the data collected.

2 Background

In this section of the thesis, I will discuss the background behind the CSR and environmental sustainability discourse present on corporate websites and explain the relevant concepts of the study. I will first discuss the transport industry in Finland in brief in Section 2.1, additionally giving relevant background information on the companies analysed, Finnair and VR. Then, I am going to discuss the corporate communications and corporate website phenomena as well as CSR, environmental sustainability discourse and corporate identity in Section 2.2.

2.1 Transport industry and the Finnish context

Most transport and travel conducted with vehicles of different types cause carbon emissions, and thus, also cause negative effects on the environment. However, different modes of travel have varying levels of emissions produced, some modes producing notably more emissions than others. For example, travelling between Bordeaux, France and Stockholm, Sweden, a passenger opting for airplane as the mode of travel would produce approximately 181.3 kgs of CO₂ emissions, whereas a passenger opting for train travel would produce approximately 27.5 kgs of CO₂ emissions (Otero and Ringertz 2022, 170-171). From this example, it can be noticed that air travel is noticeably worse for the nature and the environment than train travel as it produces approximately 6.5 times more carbon emissions on the same route in comparison. Companies focusing on air and train travel were chosen to be analysed in this thesis as it is interesting to see whether the current number of emissions produced by the two ways of transport result in differences in the speech act and image usage of corporate identity building.

In the context of transport companies operating in Finland, Finnair Plc is a Finnish flag carrier airline founded in 1923. The company operates domestic and international passenger flights in Finland. The majority of the company is owned by the Republic of Finland, as the Finnish Prime Minister's Office owns 55.7% of the shares of Finnair (Finnair 2025). VR-Group Plc, then, is a Finnish railway company founded in 1862 and owned in its entirety by the Republic of Finland. The main service provided by VR is intercity passenger railway operations, but the company also operates freight railway services. The majority of the operations of VR take place domestically in Finland, but since the year 2022 the company has had some more minor scale operations in Sweden as well (VR 2025, 7). These two companies were chosen to be analysed because they focus on passenger traffic and are majorly owned by

the Republic of Finland. As the company purposes and the ownership structure are quite similar between both Finnair and VR, it can be expected that differences in environmentally sustainable corporate image building do not arise from these aspects, but rather from the differences in the environmental impact of transport conducted by train and airplane. This way, the comparisons between the speech act usage and image-speech act relationships are clearer and more accurate, as they can possibly be attributed to one aspect instead of multiple.

2.2 Corporate communication and corporate websites

Corporate communication as an umbrella term refers, in general, to the synchronization of different aspects of communication conducted by an entity, and to the integration of messages the same entity sends to its different audiences (Podnar 2015, 4-5). Corporate communication can be internal, taking place within the organization, or external, aimed at audiences outside the organization, and the framework of corporate communication consists of five different fields: organizational, business, market and management communication, as well as public relations (Podnar 2015, 6). Organizational communication signifies the internal communication conducted by companies, and the analysis of organizational communication focuses on how information flows within an organization (Podnar 2015, 6). Business communication, then, is the internal communication of an entity, and the study of the field analyses the communication that accompanies the profit-oriented activities of a company and the communication between the participants of different business processes (Podnar 2015, 6).

Market communication, subsequently, refers to the external communication, more specifically focusing on the communication aimed at consumers and how the said consumers are persuaded to join an exchange relationship with the company conducting the communication (Podnar 2015, 6-7). Management communication, for its part, falls somewhere between the external and internal corporate communication (Podnar 2015, 6). Management communication concerns the communication handled and produced by the managers of a company (Podnar 2015, 7). Finally, the term public relations refers to the external communication which purpose is to establish and manage mutually beneficial relationship between a company and its stakeholders (Podnar 2015, 6-7).

The main roles of corporate owned media, including corporate websites, are to build relationships between the organizations and their stakeholders, as well as to create interest in the organization and the services it provides (Cornelissen 2020, 43). Therefore, in the five-fold framework of corporate communication introduced above, corporate websites can be

seen as tools of both public relations and market communication. Typically, corporate websites contain information content about the company itself, the contact details of the company, information about how often the corporate website is updated, financial information aimed at the investors of the company, information about the current open job opportunities within the company as well as discussion related to social issues such as CSR (Robbins and Stylianou 2003, 207). Design-wise, corporate websites commonly contain different visual features, such as graphics and animation, navigation features, such as a site index, features providing a secure and quick access to the website as well as cookies tracking the behaviour of the people visiting the website (ibid.).

2.2.1 CSR and environmentally sustainable corporate identity

As a concept, CSR has existed for a long time, but it has gained status as a widespread concept in the 21st century (Hopkins 2017, 5). The main goal of CSR is to create higher and higher standards of sustainable living, while also protecting the integrity and the profitability of corporates, for both internal and external stakeholders of these entities (Hopkins 2017, 14). Corporates, that include private sector corporations, non-governmental organisations, associations and governments in the point of view of CSR, must treat their stakeholders responsibly (ibid.). All the stakeholders that may be affected by a corporate form the notion of society, that encompasses not only people, communities, states, nations and the world, but also other living organisms and the natural environment (Carroll and Brown 2018, 43). These stakeholders, or the society at large, hold corporates accountable, which forms the concept of responsibility (ibid.).

The term CSR is closely linked with the term sustainability, as both concepts include the aim of achieving sustainable development (Hopkins 2017, 14), and both the terms are often used interchangeably by businesses and people alike (Carroll and Brown 2018, 50). According to Talan, Pathak and Tyagi (2020, 21), the concept of sustainability is formed by environmental, social and economic aspects. Environmental sustainability focuses on providing a green future, and its major components are reducing waste, emissions and effluents, eliminating toxic substances, reducing the impact environment has on human and animal health, and increasing the use of renewable resources (Talan, Pathak and Tyagi 2020, 25). Social sustainability, then, focuses on maintaining the basic life necessities without negatively impacting quality of life (Talan, Pathak and Tyagi 2020, 24). The major features of socially sustainable development include education, awareness of social equity and ensuring

the safety and security of people through legislature (ibid.). Finally, economically sustainable development focuses on ensuring the society's ability to support economic growth while also taking into account the other two aspects of sustainability (Talan, Pathak and Tyagi 2020, 23). The key components of economic sustainability are developing new markets, minimizing the utilization of energy and inputs of raw materials, as well as reducing costs through efficiency and improvements (ibid.). In this thesis, the analysis of the creation of sustainable corporate identity in CSR sections of the corporate websites of Finnair and VR is conducted with this three-fold definition of sustainability in mind, focusing on the aspect of environmental sustainability. As stakeholders will punish companies that act indifferently towards environmental sustainability matters and the topic increasingly drives the concept of CSR (Chandler 2023, 28), it is natural to focus purely on the environmental aspect of CSR to limit the scope of analysis of this study.

Corporate identity refers to the strategically planned and implemented mix of the characteristics of the company that makes it unique and different from other companies (Podnar 2015, 18). Corporate identity is formed by three main components: concrete characteristics, such as organizational structure and company size, modes of actions, such as communications and clarity of the company's goal, as well as consistency between employees and the organization that is expressed through, for example, employee commitment and team spirit (ibid.). The identity of a company should not be completely unchangeable, but rather adaptive to the changes in the environment and the perceptions of the stakeholders (Podnar 2015, 27). Corporate identity can be actual, meaning what the company is, perceived, meaning how different publics perceive the company's identity, ideal, meaning the optimal identity the company can have in its market, desired, meaning the identity the company wish to have, or communicated, meaning how the company communicates its identity (Podnar 2015, 25). In this thesis, I will focus on the communicated corporate identity, since I am researching how Finnair and VR communicate and multimodally create environmentally sustainable corporate identity on their corporate websites.

In the 21st century, the public discourse on travel and the transport industry as a whole, in general, tends to concern environmental sustainability, and many passengers appreciate environmentally friendlier ways of travelling. Communicating environmentally sustainable corporate identity through various marketing efforts is related to a higher level of green brand equity, that is, the customers' validation of the brand compared to other brands based on its advertised greenness (Chen 2010, 315). For instance, a company with higher level of green

brand equity would be preferred over other brands, even in the case that their environmental commitments were the same (Chen 2010, 313). Having customers perceive the brand green and environmentally sustainable is especially important for companies that are underneath strict international environmental regulations and under the rise of prevalent environmental consciousness of customers (Chen 2010, 309), like companies within the transport industry such as VR and Finnair.

3 Theoretical background

In this section, I will focus on the linguistic side of this study, explaining the theoretical background utilized in analysing the linguistic and multimodal features of the CSR discourse present on the corporate websites of Finnair and VR. In Section 3.1, I will explain the main theory used in the analysis, Speech Act Theory. After this, I will explain how Speech Act Theory can be utilized in a multimodal study by focusing on the image-language relationship, or the image-speech act relationship to be more specific.

3.1 Speech Act Theory

Contemporary Speech Act Theory was first introduced by J. L. Austin, who established the theory in its modern form and introduced the threefold distinction of speech acts (Lamarque 1997, 505). According to Austin (1962, 5-6), an act of doing something with words is a performative utterance. These performative utterances, or speech acts as they are perhaps more commonly known as, then, can be divided into three categories: the locutionary act, the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act. The locutionary act can be simply described as an act of saying something (Austin 1962, 94). For example, by saying “I wish I had some coffee”, the speaker of the utterance commits a locutionary speech act. The illocutionary act, consequently, can be defined as the effect the speaker intends to have on the listener of the locutionary act (Austin 1962, 99-100). Continuing with the previous example, the speaker might be trying to get the hearer to suggest that they go get some coffee together. Finally, the perlocutionary act can be described as the actual effect the locutionary act has on the listener (Austin 1962, 101). For instance, in the case of the example above, the hearer might suggest that they get some coffee together with the speaker as was the intention of the speaker, or, alternatively, not understand the implications and simply agree without actually doing anything about the situation.

J. R. Searle is another fundamental researcher in the field of Speech Act Theory who further expanded the theory on the basis of Austin’s work (Allan 1997, 458). Searle’s work on Speech Act Theory focuses on the concept of the illocutionary act, and he introduced the term illocutionary point (also sometimes referred to as illocutionary purpose) as a feature that defines illocutionary acts (Searle 1976, 1-3). For instance, a request has the illocutionary point of getting the hearer to do something (Searle 1976, 3). The illocutionary point can be considered as the most notable feature classifying illocutionary speech acts, as an

illocutionary act, to be considered an illocutionary act, must have an illocutionary point (Siebel 2002, 2). On the basis of the illocutionary point, that forms the taxonomy of Searle's classification (Siebel 2002, 1), Searle (1976, 10-13) further divided the illocutionary act into five categories of their own: assertives (also known as representatives), directives, commissives, expressives and declarations. The assertive act commits the speaker to the truthfulness of the proposition expressed (Searle 1976, 10), meanwhile the directive act is the speaker's attempt to direct the hearer to do something (Searle 1976, 11). The expressive act, then, expresses the speaker's psychological state in regard to the proposition (Searle 1976, 12). Finally, the commissive act commits the speaker to do an action in the future (Searle 1976, 11), and the declarative act alters, in one way or another, the status of the referred object, for example by declaring someone as a chairman or declaring a couple to be married (Searle 1976, 13-14).

In this thesis, I will focus on the locutionary and illocutionary acts of environmentally sustainable corporate identity building present on the corporate websites of Finnair and VR. The analysis of perlocutionary acts will be left out of this study, as, according to Allan (1997, 445), the study of the perlocutionary act is not exactly a part of the linguistic field of studies. Additionally, the study of the perlocutionary act would require an interview or a questionnaire-based study, which, then, would not fit in the current scope of the thesis.

3.1.1 Multimodal aspects of Speech Act Theory and images as speech acts

Although Austin and Searle's frameworks of speech acts still hold a great influence on the Speech Act Theory of today, the notion of speech acts has, nonetheless, evolved with time (Jucker 2024, 1-2). Initially, Speech Act Theory focused on individual utterances and on how words are used in performing actions, but current research on Speech Act Theory is beginning to take into account the multimodal aspects of speech acts (Jucker 2024, 2). After all, communication does not solely rely on words, as non-verbal features of interaction, such as different gestures and tone of voice can carry a communicative message (Jucker 2024, 35). For example, a simple nod can communicate agreement to something, thus being an expressive illocutionary act, whereas raising a finger in front of one's own lips can signify that the speaker wants the hearer to be silent, consequently being a directive illocutionary act.

Similarly to a conversation taking place in real life, communication conducted online, for example, via a corporate website, is inherently multimodal in the 21st century. Although language has been widely thought to be the most noteworthy mode of communication, it is

only one mode among the other modes of communication that interact with each other and should be studied together in their context (Jewitt 2016, 70). Modern-day websites, more often than not, contain more features than just text: many sites on the internet include different pictures, graphs and other visual elements that interact with what is being said in the text. Visual corporate identity is an integral part of corporate self-representation, as it is a tool companies use when visually communicating what and who the company is to the environment (Podnar 2015, 120-121). Therefore, when analysing how companies build environmentally sustainable corporate identity on their corporate websites, it is important to also consider how visual elements are utilized by the companies. As there are plenty of multimodal modes of communication usually present on websites and other digital media, such as visuals, typographical features, colour, writing and layout (Jewitt 2016, 79), it is impossible to analyse all of them in the limits of the current scope of this thesis. Although all the multimodal modes are relevant for building environmentally sustainable corporate identity on the internet, I will only focus on images and how they are used with the text on the corporate websites of Finnair and VR to keep the amount of the material analysed manageable.

It is difficult to identify discrete units of multimodal speech acts, and the previous studies on the topic are rather few in number (Jucker 2024, 35-36). That is not to say that the nature of multimodal speech acts is a completely novel idea. Anthropologist Liza Bakewell concludes her article on the active communicative roles of images, or image acts, noting that “a proper theory of speech acts should incorporate images, in the same way that a proper theory of image acts should incorporate language” (Bakewell 1998, 30). However, Bakewell does not offer a methodological approach for the analysis of these image acts. One of the first ventures into defining the methodology of image acts on the basis of the Speech Act Theory of Austin was conducted in 1974 and continued in 1978 by philosopher Søren Kjørup, who essentially replaced the word “words” with “images” in Austin’s theory to form his own. According to Kjørup (1978, 61), who calls image acts pictorial acts, a locutionary act in the case of images is the act of showing the image. The illocutionary act, when it comes to images, then, could be defined as acts of depicting, illustrating or warning, understood through situational context and the audience’s previous knowledge (Kjørup 1978, 65-68).

Inspired by Kjørup’s theory of pictorial acts, I aim to develop the concept of illocutionary notion of image acts further. Taking into account the context-dependant nature of the illocutionary point of image acts introduced by Kjørup and Searle’s categorization of

illocutionary acts of speech and text, I propose the illocutionary point of an image can be found through examining its relationship with the speech acts present in the text adjacent to the image. To my best knowledge, a study that combines the analysis of illocutionary image acts categorizing them strictly according to the illocutionary act taxonomy presented by Searle through examining the relationship between the images and the speech acts present in the adjacent text has not yet been conducted, at least in the English language. I will use the methodology of analysing text-image relationships presented by Unsworth and Cléirigh as a basis for the analysis of speech act-text relationships.

According to Unsworth and Cléirigh (2008, 159) the relationship between images and language is based on mutual identification. Although the way the meanings of image and text are experienced is rather different, the manner in which their meanings are constructed has a synergistic relationship (Unsworth and Cléirigh 2008, 154). In the multimodal image-language relationship, the language functions always as the value, that has a higher order of abstract meaning of content, and the image always has the function of the token, that has a lower order of abstract meaning of expression (Unsworth and Cléirigh 2008, 155-156). Both the value and the token can identify each other, that is, either the language or the image can serve as the starting point to identify the other (Unsworth and Cléirigh 2008, 156).

If the image is the starting point of identification, it visualizes the language (Unsworth and Cléirigh 2008, 156). Although the image and the language elements of the adjacent text refer to the same phenomenon, the image elaborates the features, possibly un verbalized in the text, of the identified participant due to the inherent nature of the visual mode; the image can visualize the qualities, for example, the colour or the shape, of the identified participant (ibid.). The image can, as well, visualize the location of the components that form the identified participant or other components that form the identified participant not explicit in the language elements (ibid.). Additionally, the image can visualize the locations of language configurations, that is, semantic relations of circumstances, processes and participants realized by noun groups, adverbial phrases and verbs, encoding circumstantial meanings of manner and cause-condition that are not constructed by either image or language alone (Unsworth and Cléirigh 2008, 156-157). When the language is the starting point of identification, it glosses the image (Unsworth and Cléirigh 2008, 159). Language configurations can gloss the spatial arrangement of image participant, and language elements can gloss, for example, participants of the image by labelling them (ibid.). In this thesis, rather than describing the relationship

between text and image, I will focus on the speech acts present in the text and their relationship with the adjacent images.

4 Materials and methods

In this section, I will explain the materials and methods of this study more in detail. First, in Section 4.1, I will clarify when and where the materials were collected and how the materials are stored. Then, I will go through the methods of this study more in detail, first explaining the methodology of close reading and how it will be utilized in the analysis of the speech acts and image-speech act relations in Section 4.2. Finally, also in Section 4.2, I will explain the order of the study and the methods of referencing in the text.

4.1 Materials

The primary materials analysed in this study were collected from the corporate websites of Finnair and VR. Finnair and VR are both large companies in the Finnish transport industry, and the corporate websites of the two companies are intended for all the stakeholders of the companies, both public and private, to access freely and easily on the internet. Therefore, it can be argued that there are not any major ethical problems in using the material for the basis of analysis in this study. The materials were collected from the English language versions of the websites of the two companies, but it is important to note that both Finnair and VR also have other language versions of their corporate websites. Finnair provides a Finnish version in addition to the English one, whereas VR has Finnish and Swedish options along with the English version. The contents of the different language versions of the corporate websites might vary, and the linguistic contents and the multimodal aspects present on the websites might not be translated straight from the original versions. Additionally, it is not known when exactly the websites were published or last updated, or which of the language versions of the corporate websites of Finnair and VR is the original one, and which language option pages were made later. The English language versions of the corporate websites were chosen to be the material analysed in this study, as this study is conducted in the English language.

Although environmental sustainability is a topic discussed in one form or another throughout the entirety of the corporate websites of the two companies, this study focuses on the sections specifically aimed at discussing the topic. This choice was made both to limit the scope of the study, as well as make comparing the CSR and environmental sustainability discourse on the website easier. Since both the corporate websites analysed have a section that specifically focuses on sustainability, section “Sustainability” on Finnair’s website and section “Responsibility” on VR’s website, it is logical to limit the comparison between these

two sections. Additionally, the CSR sections of the corporate websites of Finnair and VR have their own subsections, which are divided differently by the two companies. Finnair divides its CSR section into six different subsections: “Our sustainability commitments and metrics”, “Environmental sustainability”, “Social sustainability”, “Governance and management in sustainability”, “Sustainability library” and “SpeakUp reporting channel”. VR, then, categorizes its corporate website’s CSR section into “Environment”, “Safety”, “Code of conduct” and “Human Rights Policy”, the first of which also has a subsection of its own, “Environmental policy”. These corporate website CSR section structures are clarified in the appendices of this thesis, where Finnair’s structure is illustrated in Appendix 2 and that of VR’s in Appendix 4.

The analysis was limited purely to the material discussing environmental sustainability issues present in the CSR sections of Finnair and VR’s corporate websites, and any links present in the material that led out of the CSR section domain were ignored. This exclusion was made as the goal of this study was to analyse how environmentally sustainable corporate identity is built through language and images on corporate website CSR sections specifically. Because websites can be updated at any moment without a notice to the general public, the material analysed was uploaded to Wayback Machine on June 25th, 2025. Wayback Machine, founded by an American non-profit organization Internet Archive in 2001, is a digital archive where websites can be uploaded and old versions of websites can be accessed freely by anyone. By archiving the corporate website sections discussing CSR and environmental issues created by Finnair and VR, it can be made sure that the data does not change during the time period it is analysed. This way the results of the study are more accurate and comparing the practices of the two companies is easier, as the materials were all gathered to Wayback Machine on the same day. The analysis will be made on the basis of the June 25th, 2025 versions of the corporate websites uploaded to Wayback Machine, and the data can be accessed by anyone reading this thesis through the archive.

4.2 Methods

The method of close reading was used to analyse the corporate website sections discussing CSR produced by Finnair and VR. Close reading is a disciplined approach to analysing different materials and their deeper meanings, also taking into account their contexts and audiences’ perspectives (Brummet 2019, 23). The method has two different approaches: the deductive approach and the inductive approach. In deductive close reading, a specific theory

and its principles are applied in the analysis of the material, whereas in inductive close reading a theory is formed on the basis of the material analysed (Brummet 2019, 27). In this thesis, I will be utilizing the method of deductive close reading to be more specific. I will analyse the language of corporate websites discussing CSR using Speech Act Theory, which is discussed more in detail in Section 3.1 above, as the theory of approach. In the analysis of the images adjacent to the language and their relation to the speech acts present in the text, the method of deductive close reading will be utilized again, this time with the image-language relationship framework discussed more in detail in Section 3.1.1 above.

The data analysis in Section 5 was done according to the following process. First, based on the first careful read-through of the CSR corporate website sections of Finnair and VR, the materials were scanned for locutionary acts relating solely to environmental sustainability discourse. In the case of Finnair, the company discusses the topic on its corporate website's CSR main section "Sustainability" and its subsections "Our sustainability commitments and metrics", "Environmental sustainability", "Social sustainability" and "Governance and management in sustainability". VR, then, focuses on the matter on the main page of its CSR section of its corporate website called "Responsibility" and on the CSR section subsections "Environment" and "Code of conduct". The websites of the two companies are all analysed individually under each of the subsections under Section 5: first, CSR discourse of Finnair is studied under Subsection 5.1 and then that of VR in Subsection 5.2. These subsections are further divided into subsections of their own, where the analysis of the speech acts and multimodal image-speech act relationship is conducted according to the website structure of the CSR sections of the two companies. That is, each section of the CSR sections is discussed under their own subsections of this thesis in order to clarify the analysis structure for the reader.

Next, the locutionary acts present in the materials were analysed following this subsection structure. The study of the locutionary acts was conducted following the order in which they appear in the CSR website section analysed. In this study, the locutionary acts were analysed according to topic content of the text, instead of analysing the locutionary content of each sentence. For example, all sentences relating to the environmental targets and goals the companies present under one CSR website section were considered as one speech act, as they share same topic content, and thus, the illocutionary point of all the sentences is rather similar. This topic content is showcased in the analysis through examples, which illustrate and were selected based on the content's typical features. Then, the possible

intended effects of the locutions, that is, illocutionary acts, were analysed in similar fashion to the analysis process of the locutionary acts. In addition, the illocutionary acts were also categorised following Searle's classification presented in Section 3.1. Finally, the images present in the websites of Finnair and VR were studied, and their relation to the locutionary and illocutionary acts present in the texts was analysed. Based on the analysis of the image-speech act relationship, the possible illocutionary points of the images were considered.

In Section 6, the results of the study presented in Section 5 are discussed more in detail. Additionally, the differences in the locutionary and illocutionary acts present on the corporate websites of Finnair and VR and their relationship with the adjacent images will be compared. I aim to explain the possible reasons and wider phenomena behind the results of the analysis and the possible differences in the environmentally sustainable corporate identity building by reflecting them with previous studies on similar topics. First, I will explain and compare how the companies build environmentally sustainable corporate identity through language, focusing on the content of the locutionary acts present on the corporate website CSR sections. Then, I aim to describe and compare the intended meaning of the locutionary acts used by the companies, that is, the illocutionary acts. After this, the image-speech act relationship and the illocutionary point of the images are discussed and compared more in detail.

To clarify the referencing for the reader, the CSR sections of the corporate websites of Finnair and VR are referenced under the primary sources section of this thesis whereas the subsections are referenced in the appendices. Each subsection has a code of its own (i.e. F1 for Finnair and VR1 for VR) to simplify the references in the text. Appendix 1 lists the codes and sources referencing to the subsections of Finnair whereas Appendix 3 references to the subsections of VR. The references link to the original corporate website CSR sections and their subsections of Finnair and VR as they are technically the original sources for the material analysed, but the versions used in this study can be accessed by the readers by searching the links in Wayback Machine and choosing June 25th, 2025 as the version date.

5 Analysis

In this section, I am going to analyse the locutionary and illocutionary acts of environmentally sustainable corporate identity building conducted on the CSR sections of Finnair and VR's corporate websites. Additionally, I will examine the relationship between the speech acts and their adjacent images with the aim to learn what this relationship can reveal about the illocutionary nature of the images. The multimodal environmental sustainability discourse of Finnair will be analysed under Section 5.1 whereas that of VR will be analysed in Section 5.2.

5.1 Finnair

Finnair discusses matters related to environmental sustainability on its corporate website's CSR main section "Sustainability" (n.d. a) and its subsections "Our sustainability commitments and metrics" (F1), "Environmental sustainability" (F2), "Social sustainability" (F3) and "Governance and management in sustainability" (F4).

5.1.1 Sustainability

On the "Sustainability" section of the corporate website of Finnair, the issue of environmental sustainability is introduced and discussed in mostly general terms. For example, at the beginning of the site, Finnair (n.d. a) states the following in regard to its operations and the environment:

- (1) In order to continue to benefit from the social and economic good flying brings to our lives, we are committed to reducing the fossil carbon emissions of flying.

The locutionary act of making this statement has a commissive illocutionary point, making it a commissive illocutionary act, as it commits Finnair to a future course of action of reducing its own emissions. This statement helps to build environmentally sustainable corporate identity as it portrays Finnair as a company that is ready to commit itself to be friendlier to the environment in order to continue benefiting the society socially and economically. To further support this corporate identity, Finnair (n.d. a) does also explain on the same site that it has set science-based climate targets to better its emissions efficiency by 2033 and has a goal of having net-zero emissions by 2050. This locutionary act also has a commissive illocutionary point because it commits Finnair to reduce emissions by the target years. By making this statement, the company shows it has actual targets it aims to achieve to be more

environmentally friendly in the future, enforcing the corporate identity of a company committed to being greener both short and long term.

On the “Sustainability” site, Finnair does also briefly discuss how it will achieve its environmental goals. For example, Finnair (n.d. a) gives the following example as to what actions it is taking to fulfil the goals mentioned earlier on the site:

- (2) Our commitment to reducing CO2 emissions includes various tools such as investing in sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) beyond regulatory requirements, further improving operational efficiency, optimising our network and eventually updating our fleet renewal plan.

Additionally, the company (Finnair n.d. a) mentions efficient management of materials as a tool of conserving resources and reducing food waste since the airline carries millions of passengers on a yearly basis. The locutionary act of listing examples of the acts the company does in order to reduce emissions has an assertive illocutionary point as it contains information that can be expected to be factual. By exemplifying its own environmental actions, Finnair builds corporate identity of an environmentally sustainable company that does actual deeds to fulfil its environmental goals.

Finnair does also involve the customer on the “Sustainability” CSR section of its corporate website, noting that small things are important for decreasing the impact flying has on the environment (Finnair n.d. a). The company tells its customers they can join its efforts to make flying more sustainable, prompting the customer to read tips by stating “[p]lease read more on sustainable travel [here]” (Finnair n.d. a). However, as the tips themselves are behind a link that directs to a website outside the domain of Finnair’s corporate website, they will not be analysed in this study. Nonetheless, suggesting that customers should read tips on how to travel more sustainably has a directive illocutionary point, as the customer is requested to do something. This speech act can be said to build Finnair’s corporate identity in a way that it is an environmentally sustainable company that helps its customers to know what they can do for the environment.

Multimodally, Finnair’s “Sustainability” page has one image related to environmental sustainability (Figure 1): a photograph of a Finnair plane being fuelled with sustainable aviation fuel (Finnair n.d. a). The image visualizes the assertive speech acts of the page that exemplify what the company is already doing for the environment and explain Finnair’s commitment to reduce emissions by showing one of the ways the company acts in an

environmentally sustainable way: by investing in sustainable aviation fuel. The speech acts, then, gloss the image by explaining that the action taking place in the image is related to Finnair's environmental actions and investment in sustainable aviation fuel. The relationship between the image and the speech acts in the text suggests that the illocutionary point of the image is assertive, as it can be viewed as a visual proof of the assertive speech acts of the texts, providing visual information that can be expected to be factual. The image of a plane being fuelled with sustainable fuel especially supports the identity of a company that is actually doing deeds for the better of the environment already, thus supporting the corporate identity of an environmentally sustainable company Finnair is building.



Figure 1 Image of a Finnair plane being fuelled by sustainable aviation fuel on the “Sustainability” section of Finnair’s corporate website (n.d. a). Image: Finnair.

5.1.2 Our sustainability commitments and metrics

On the “Our sustainability commitments and metrics” subsection of its corporate website’s CSR section, then, Finnair focuses on its commitments for sustainability and sustainable development, as well as how the fulfilment of these commitments is measured. The area of environmental sustainability is divided into three focus areas: climate, biodiversity and circular economy (F1). Each of these focus areas have their own main challenges, commitments and metrics. For example, when discussing circular economy, Finnair (F1) mentions that “[h]alf of total global greenhouse gas emissions and more than 90% of biodiversity loss and water stress come from resource extraction and processing” and that

“[they] are committed to UN’s SDG #12 by incorporating circular economy principles into all [their] operations”. Additionally, when discussing how the achievement of this commitment is measured, the company (F1) lists material management percentage and recycling rate percentage as the metrics.

The locutionary act of offering information on the main challenges of the environmental sustainability focus areas and the measurement of achieving the commitments has an assertive illocutionary point as it commits Finnair to the truthfulness of the statements. By explaining the environmental commitments Finnair has for itself, the company commits a commissive illocutionary act as the reader of the website now expects Finnair to act according to its words in the future. These speech acts build an identity of a company that has a clear understanding of environmental issues and possesses a clear set of goals regarding how these issues can be addressed sustainably. This page does not contain images related to environmental sustainability, and, therefore, the corporate identity of environmentally sustainable company Finnair is building is not supported visually on the page.

5.1.3 Environmental sustainability

Out of the subsections of the CSR section of the corporate website of Finnair, the section “Environmental sustainability” is the section that discusses the issue of environmental sustainability and environmentally sustainable development the most in depth. On this site, Finnair delves deeper into the environmental topics introduced in the other CSR section subsections discussed in the paragraphs above, as well as introduces new topics related to the matter of environmental sustainability. At the very beginning of the site, Finnair (F2) states that carbon emissions are the greatest issue for any airline, and the company is committed to reducing the emissions caused by flying in order to continue to offer the social and economic benefits flying has on society, a statement already made by Finnair on the “Sustainability” section of its corporate website. Similarly to the “Sustainability” section, on the “Environmental sustainability” subsection, Finnair (F2) explains it has a science-based target to reduce carbon emissions intensity by 2033 and a goal to become carbon neutral by 2050. However, on the “Environmental sustainability” subsection the statement contains more information, as Finnair (F2) claims the following in regard to the 2033 emission target:

- (3) We have set a science-based target to reduce our carbon emissions intensity (CO₂e/RTK) by 34.5% by 2033 from a 2023 baseline. The target has been validated by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi).

These locutionary speech acts all have a commissive illocutionary point, as Finnair commits itself to reduce its emissions by a certain amount by 2033 and to become a carbon neutral company by 2050. These statements build environmentally sustainable corporate identity, as they portray Finnair as a company that is ready to commit itself to be more sustainable in benefit for the environment and the society as a whole in the future. By giving concrete information on the 2033 target, as seen in the example above, Finnair creates corporate identity of an ambitious company that has numerical targets for its commitments, and that is not simply stating things without any actual targets behind the claims.

Finnair also explains the meaning of the term “science-based target” on the “Environmental sustainability” section of the CSR section of its corporate website. According to the company (F2), the Science Based Targets initiative, an outside organization, independently assesses the climate targets of different companies, Finnair included, making sure the targets are aligned with the latest climate-related science. The validated targets guide companies in reducing their emissions to meet the goal of the Paris Agreement of restricting global warming to 1.5°C above the levels of the pre-industrial era (F2). Additionally, Finnair goes into more detail on what it means by its science-based target of lowering its carbon emissions intensity by 2033 already introduced at the beginning of the “Environmental sustainability” subsection. Finnair (F2) explains that carbon emissions intensity means “the amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂e) emissions per revenue tonne kilometre (RTK), which is a measure of passenger and cargo payload carried by Finnair”. According to the company (F2), its carbon emissions intensity was 976 CO₂e/RTK in 2023. Finnair (F2) explains the emissions included in the target are so called well-to-wake emissions that account for the complete lifecycle emissions of the jet fuel used by the company. The company monitors the and annually reports the progress of achieving the target to the Science Based Targets initiative and to the public in its sustainability report (F2).

The act of explaining the meaning of the science-based target of reducing emissions by 2033 has an assertive illocutionary point, as Finnair is making informative statements to which truthfulness it is committed. By uttering these propositions, Finnair further builds corporate identity of a company that has clear targets to achieve its environmental goals and actively works with outside organisations to become a greener company in the future. This type of corporate identity is additionally built on the “Environmental sustainability” site, as Finnair does also discuss what its key actions are to reduce its CO₂ emissions and achieve the

science-based target. For example, Finnair (F2) writes the following regarding its aim to reduce CO₂ emissions by increasing its use of sustainable aviation fuel:

- (4) We aim to increase the use of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) together with the oneworld alliance, which has set a common aspirational goal of achieving a 10 per cent level in SAF uptake by 2030. Our biofuel partner is Finland-based Neste, the world's largest producer of SAF refined from waste.

Additionally, the company (F2) also introduces reducing aircraft weight to reduce the amount of fuel used, taking fuel efficiency into account when planning flights and participating in research to develop new, sustainable technology as tools to reduce its CO₂ emissions. By uttering this information, Finnair commits an assertive illocutionary act as the information can be expected to be factual. Finnair continues portraying itself as an environmentally aware company that has clear plan and goals to reduce its negative environmental impact by discussing its key actions to reduce emissions in detail, further building corporate identity of an environmentally sustainable corporation.

Finnair does also discuss sustainable aviation fuel more in detail below on the “Environmental sustainability” subsection of the CSR section of its corporate website, further building corporate image of an environmentally sustainable company. Finnair (F2) explains that sustainable aviation fuel has emerged as a key driver for emissions reduction for flying, especially for long-haul flights, as it is more mature for the current aviation infrastructure in comparison with other new technologies and can reduce CO₂ emissions by up to 80%. According to Finnair (F2), sustainable aviation fuel accounted for 0.24% of the fuel usage of the company in 2023, but the company will increase its sustainable aviation fuel usage in the coming years due to regulations and voluntary actions. Finnair (F2) states the following in regard to sustainable aviation fuel regulations:

- (5) For example, starting from 2025 intra-EU traffic will include a 2% SAF mandate which will rise to 6% in 2030.

About voluntary measures, then, the company (F2) states the following:

- (6) [...] we will need to increase the voluntary SAF volumes. To achieve this, we need not only the support of our customers, but also the global ramp up of SAF production, as currently the price and availability of SAF hinders its large-scale use.

Finally, Finnair (F2) does also shortly list the key benefits of sustainable aviation fuel: it can be used in existing aircraft without any modifications in engines and infrastructure, it can be

mixed with conventional jet fuel and, as already stated by the company, sustainable aviation fuel is estimated to be the key technology driver for reducing flying emissions and it can reduce CO₂ emissions by up to 80% in comparison with fossil-based fuels. By explaining information about sustainable aviation fuel, Finnair commits an assertive speech act, as the information is expected to be factual. This assertive speech act portrays the company as a business that is knowledgeable of the matter and is ready to invest in sustainable fuel when outside circumstances make it possible.

In addition to discussing sustainable aviation fuel in detail, Finnair also explains two other ways it will reduce its emissions on the “Environmental sustainability” site: the company will also focus on improving circular economy and biodiversity. The company (F2) explains it has a circular economy-related commitment to achieve 100% material management of sectors that use the most resources and have a high potential of circularity, which include, for example, packaging, food and electronics. Finnair (F2) also lists its key actions for achieving its material management commitment: including the principles of circular economy design in all its operations and focusing on reducing waste and using waste of one sector as material of another, for example, by improving the sorting of electric waste and donating excess in-flight meals to charity. Finnair (F2) also notes the following in relation to recycling and circular economy:

- (7) Although some parts of our waste management flows are not allowed for material recycling or biogas production due to regulation, we ensure that all waste from inflight ending at our Helsinki hub is re-used [...] with zero waste ending up in landfills.

By explaining the company has a goal of achieving 100% material management on certain sectors, Finnair commits a commissive illocutionary act, as by stating this information it is now committed to certain actions. By explaining how this goal is achieved, then, the company commits an assertive illocutionary act, as the information can be expected to be factual. The same can be said to be the case for the locution in which Finnair ensures all inflight waste of flights ending in Helsinki is recycled, as the company is committed to the truthfulness of the proposition. These speech acts build corporate identity of an environmentally sustainable company that is committed to do better for the environment and has a plan how to achieve the commitment.

This type of corporate identity is, again, further built by Finnair when it discusses biodiversity on the “Environmental sustainability” page. The company (F2) explains that

biodiversity is essential for human wellbeing, but unfortunately criminals abuse air transport to smuggle illegal flora and fauna, harming biodiversity. Finnair (F2) states it is committed to raise awareness of the issue as a signatory of the Buckingham Palace Declaration and as an IATA IWT Registered airline. The company (F2) lists its key actions for conserving biodiversity, which include, for example, the placement of embargo on hunting trophies and training for employees possibly encountering illegal wildlife trade. Additionally, Finnair (F2) also explains it is committed to only using sustainable aviation fuel produced in accordance with the sustainability criteria of EU RED II and CORSIA, thus ensuring that, for example, arable land is not used to produce raw materials for biofuel, therefore protecting biodiversity. By stating its commitments to raising awareness of illegal wildlife trade and using only biodiversity-friendly produced sustainable aviation fuel, Finnair commits a commissive illocutionary act, as the company verbally commits itself into doing something. The locutionary act of listing the key actions for protecting biodiversity, then, has an assertive illocutionary point, as the locution contains information that can be expected to be factual.

In regard to the multimodal aspects of the “Environmental sustainability” section of the CSR section of Finnair’s corporate website, the page contains one image (F2): a picture of a Finnair plane being fuelled with sustainable aviation fuel (Figure 2). Although the image is the same as on the “Sustainability” page analysed above, it can be argued that the image-text relations are slightly different on the two pages as the contents of the locutions in the text differ. The image visualizes especially the assertive speech act related to sustainable aviation fuel present on the “Environmental sustainability” site, providing visual proof Finnair already uses it in its operations. These speech acts gloss the image, then, by explaining that the action in the image is related to Finnair’s usage of sustainable aviation fuel. It can be argued that the relationship between the image and its adjacent speech acts indicates that the illocutionary point of the image is assertive. The image, in a way, contains evidence proving the assertive speech acts explaining the company uses sustainable aviation fuel being truthful and factual. The image of the airplane being fuelled with sustainable aviation fuel aids Finnair in building environmentally sustainable corporate image of a company that is already doing good for the environment by using and actively investing in the usage of sustainable aviation fuel.



Figure 2 Image of a Finnair plane being fuelled by sustainable aviation fuel on the “Environmental sustainability” section of Finnair’s corporate website (F2). Image: Finnair.

5.1.4 Social sustainability

On the “Social sustainability” section of the CSR page of Finnair’s corporate website, the company focuses mostly on social sustainability, but environmental sustainability is shortly discussed when Finnair explains how it acts in a sustainable way with its stakeholders. The company (F3) states the following regarding the matter:

- (8) [...] we continuously evaluate our operations to identify opportunities for improvement in environmental sustainability. From investing in fuel-efficient aircraft to optimising flight routes and reducing carbon emissions, we prioritise the implementation of sustainable practices across our operations.

This locution has an assertive illocutionary point, as it contains information on how Finnair evaluates its operations to be more environmentally sustainable. By locuting this utterance, Finnair creates corporate identity of an environmentally sustainable company that is continuously working for the better of the environment throughout its operations. As this page does not contain images related to environmental sustainability, the corporate identity of environmentally sustainable company Finnair is building is not supported visually on the page.

5.1.5 Governance and management in sustainability

On the “Governance and management in sustainability” section of the CSR section of Finnair’s corporate website, in regard to environmental sustainability, the company focuses on environment as a part of its sustainability strategy and risks related to the climate that might cause concerns for its operations. Finnair (F4) explains it has implemented a risk management process to consider all risk and opportunities, including those related to climate change, related to its operations in order to reduce environmental impacts of aviation and return societal and economic value to the society. Furthermore, the company (F4) explains it has an individual management system for environmental sustainability related matters:

- (9) All environmental objectives, targets, impacts, and promotion are managed through Finnair’s Environmental Management System (EMS), which complies with the IATA Environmental Assessment Program (IEnvA) standard.

By explaining that it has a risk management process and a management system for the environment, Finnair commits an assertive speech act as the locutions contain information to which truthfulness the company is committed to. This assertive act aids Finnair in building a corporate image of a sustainable company that takes environment into account in its operations through different management processes and systems.

Finnair also delves deeper into the climate related risks the company may face first mentioned when discussing the company’s risk management system on the “Governance and management in sustainability” page. The company (F4) summarises that according to a climate-related scenario analysis, there are risks that could have an impact on Finnair’s operations. For example, climate change could increase the operational costs of the company by causing extreme weather conditions that result in flight delays and cancellations and chronic changes in climate that could affect people’s travel behaviour (F4). Finnair (F4) explains that according to IEA’s NetZero 2050 scenario, for example, governments should invest in ways to increase the usage of low-carbon fuels, and the growth of long-haul air traffic should be curbed. Additionally, the company (F4) states that according to the NetZero 2050 scenario, international co-operation would be necessary to define a common direction and actions to achieve environmental sustainability, and measures should be targeted where quick results are achievable by, for example funding infrastructure projects that reduce the number of short haul flights. Based on the scenario analysis, the company (F4) states the following:

- (10) Finnair sees an opportunity to stand out as a sustainable airline among its competitors. A more attractive sustainable option and a positive service experience can lead to increased customer loyalty and bring new customers to Finnair.

By summarizing the scenario analysis related to climate, Finnair commits a locutionary act with an assertive illocutionary point as the summary can be expected to be factual in nature. The locutionary act of Finnair explaining the opportunity it believes it has, then, too, contains an assertive illocutionary point as the statement is based on what the company thinks could happen in the future. These speech acts help Finnair in building corporate identity of an environmentally sustainable company that is aware of climate risks and how they can be fought against, and that is ambitious to be one of the sustainability leaders of the aviation industry.

Multimodally, the “Governance and management in sustainability” subsection of the CSR section of Finnair’s corporate website contains one image (F4), and it is connected to environmental sustainability (Figure 3). The image is, again, the same image of a Finnair airplane being fuelled with sustainable aviation fuel already seen on the “Sustainability” and the “Environmental sustainability” pages analysed above, but since the speech act contents of the three pages vary, it can be expected that the image-text relationships will also differ. The image can be argued to visualize the assertive act of Finnair explaining it has the chance to stand out from its competitors as a more sustainable option by showing visual proof of the actions taken towards achieving this opportunity. The speech act, then, glosses the image by clarifying that the action in the image is related to Finnair’s opportunity to be one of the most sustainable airlines among the aviation field. The relationship between the speech acts of the text and the image of the page could be understood to be suggesting that the image has, similarly to the locutionary acts, an assertive illocutionary point. It can be argued that the image visually proves the factual content of the speech acts concerning Finnair doing actual deeds for the better of the environment. The image of Finnair airplane being fuelled with sustainable aviation fuel builds environmentally sustainable corporate identity of a company that sees a chance to be one of the sustainability leaders within the aviation industry and is taking action to achieve the opportunity.



Figure 3 Image of a Finnair plane being fuelled by sustainable aviation fuel on the “Governance and management in sustainability” section of Finnair’s corporate website (F4). Image: Finnair.

5.2 VR

VR discusses environmental sustainability on the main page of its CSR section of its corporate website called “Responsibility” (VR n.d. a) and on the CSR section subsections “Environment” (VR1) and “Code of conduct” (VR3).

5.2.1 Responsibility

In the “Responsibility” section, environmental sustainability is discussed more in general terms. For example, the company (n.d. a) states the following at the start of the page:

- (11) The climate also benefits when our customers favour trains. Together, we decrease the emissions from traffic and hasten the journey towards a carbon neutral Finland.

This locutionary act has an assertive illocutionary point, as VR claims that train travel is beneficial to the climate and that the company decreases carbon emissions in Finland as facts. This assertive speech act builds environmentally sustainable corporate identity, portraying the company as an organization that creates a greener future for the environment. This aspect of environmentally sustainable corporate identity is supported also further on the “Responsibility” section of the corporate website of VR (n.d. a), where the company briefly discusses how rail transport is environmentally friendlier than other modes of transportation,

and thus has an important role in fighting climate change. In addition to this the company (n.d. a) states the following:

- (12) Even though travelling by train is environmentally friendly and VR trains already are the greenest option, we are committed to doing even more for the environment.

As by stating this VR commits itself to do more to be even friendlier for the environment, this locutionary act has a commissive illocutionary point. VR further supports the identity of a company that works for a greener future by promising to do even more for the environment than it currently does in the upcoming times.

The building of environmentally sustainable corporate identity continues in the further down the “Responsibility” section of the company’s corporate website, as VR (n.d. a) claims environmental responsibility is one of the key areas of responsibility the company pays attention to. Additionally, according to VR (n.d. a), sustainability, including environmental sustainability, is a topic present in the everyday actions of the company:

- (13) [...] we examine all of our day-to-day choices and decisions consistently from the perspective of responsibility. Every day, every VR employee makes responsibility a reality within their own role.

This locutionary speech act has an assertive illocutionary point, as the company is now committed to the truthfulness of the proposition. The claim creates an environmentally sustainable corporate identity for VR, as it helps to portray that the company cares for the environment every day, even in the smallest actions committed by a single employee.

VR also builds environmentally sustainable corporate identity in the “Responsibility” section of its website by discussing its collaboration with other companies and organizations. For example, VR (n.d. a) tells the reader of the “Responsibility” section that it is collaborating with UPM Plywood, a subsidiary company of the Finnish forest industry company UPM, to reduce emissions produced by traffic:

- (14) [...] VR commits to using as much renewable diesel in its rail traffic as is consumed by UPM Plywood’s transport of plywood from the Pellos plant to Kouvola and Kotka.

By telling this, VR commits itself to a future action of using as much renewable fuel as the company it collaborates with uses. Therefore, VR commits a commissive illocutionary act that helps to build environmentally sustainable corporate identity by showing that the company does not only do environmental actions alone but is willing to do more by

collaborating with others. This collaborative identity is further built by VR later on the page, as the company (n.d. a) states its responsibility efforts, including acts related to environmental sustainability, are in accordance with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

When it comes to the visual elements of the type analysed in this thesis, the “Responsibility” section of the corporate website of VR, has six images, out of which four are related to the environment (VR n.d. a). Out of these four pictures, two are an image of a VR train travelling through Nordic, presumably Finnish, nature (Figure 4 and Figure 5), whereas the other two are images of simply train tracks in nature (Figure 6 and Figure 7). The two images of VR trains visualize the environmental sustainability related speech acts of the page by visually tying the company and its environmental actions to nature. The images visualize the assertive illocutionary acts claiming the company is already environmentally friendly, as the images show the nature through which the trains are passing is green and healthy. Additionally, the assertive illocutionary act of VR caring about environmental sustainability every day, even in the slightest of its actions, is visualized in the two images by showing VR conducting its operations in a well-being environment; after all, train traffic is a major part of VR’s daily operations. It can be argued that the other two images portraying the train tracks in nature visualize the speech acts of the “Responsibility” page in a similar fashion as the pictures portraying VR trains passing through nature, since it is more than likely the train tracks in the images are used by VR trains, and the pictures are otherwise very similar in nature.

Alternatively, when it is considered how the speech acts of the page gloss the images adjacent, it can be said that the assertive acts of VR being an environmentally sustainable company throughout its everyday actions explain what happens in the images: the daily sustainable operations of the company. The relationship between the images of the “Responsibility” section of VR’s corporate website and the speech acts committed within the adjacent text can be said to reveal the assertive illocutionary nature of the images. They, in a way, visually support and prove the information content of the assertive acts that explain that VR is an environmentally friendly company by showing the nature is in good condition even though VR operates in it. The images of the trains and train tracks passing through Finnish nature further aid in creating the identity of an already green company willing to do even more for nature even through its smallest, everyday actions.

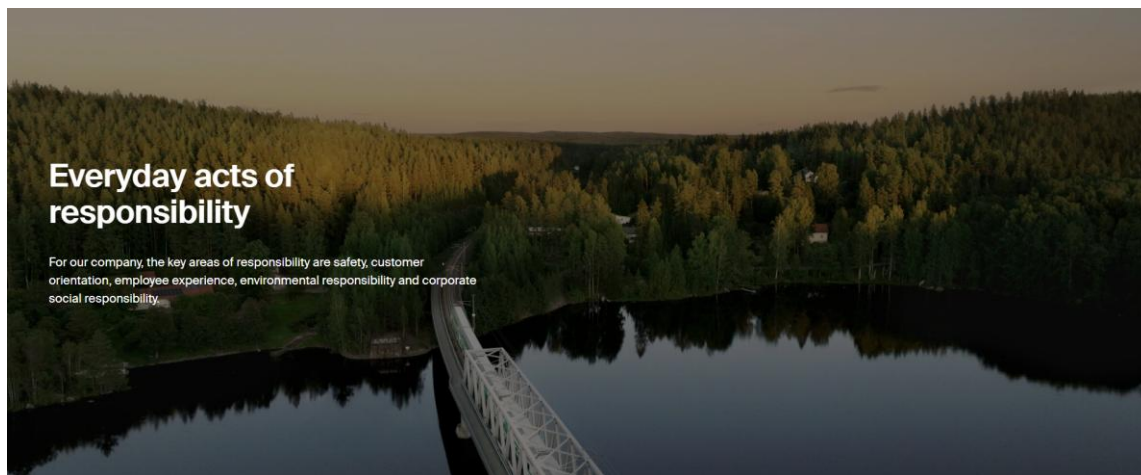


Figure 4 Image of a VR train passing through Nordic nature on the “Responsibility” section of VR’s corporate website (n.d. a). Image: VR.



Figure 5 Image of a VR train passing through Nordic nature on the “Responsibility” section of VR’s corporate website (n.d. a). Image: VR.



Figure 6 Image of train tracks passing through Nordic nature on the “Responsibility” section of VR’s corporate website (n.d. a). Image: VR.



Figure 7 Image of train tracks passing through Nordic nature on the “Responsibility” section of VR’s corporate website (n.d. a). Image: VR.

5.2.2 Environment

Although some matters are talked in a similar manner on both sites, in the “Environment” subsection the environmental matters introduced in the “Responsibility” section of the corporate website of VR are generally discussed more in detail. The themes of train travel being environmentally friendly and a greener option in comparison to other modes of transportation as well as VR wanting to do even more in the future are repeated, but the company goes into more detail how this is possible. When discussing the current situation between the company and the environment, VR (VR1) gives examples of what it already has done and why it is the greenest transportation choice:

- (15) For instance, we have added more electric transportation, adopted more energy-efficient tractive stock, and increased the size of our trains.

This locution has an assertive illocutionary point, as VR introduces the reader information to which truthfulness the company is committed. By uttering this assertive act, VR continues to build the corporate identity of an environmentally sustainable and green company it already started building in the “Responsibility” section of its corporate website. This corporate identity is further supported when the company (VR1) informs the reader the following in regard to its effect to the carbon footprint of Finland:

- (16) [...] Finland’s emissions have decreased by the amount two cities the size of Vaasa would produce—thanks to us!

This utterance, equally to the one above, has an assertive illocutionary point as VR introduces information in it. The company gives the reader an easily comparable and understandable example of how its actions affect the carbon footprint of the entire country of Finland, thus helping to create a corporate identity of an environmentally sustainable company.

When VR discusses the fact that it wants to do more for the environment in the future, the company gives more details on its plans of how it will achieve its goals on the “Environment” subsection of its corporate website’s CSR section. More specifically, the company (VR1) mentions four environmental goals it has for the time period between the years 2021 and 2025: reducing emissions, increasing energy efficiency, increasing material efficiency and ensuring chemical safety. VR does also go in more detail into what they mean by these goals. For example, the company (VR1) explains its goal of ensuring chemical safety followingly:

- (17) [...] the aim is to avoid major chemical leakages in the transport of dangerous goods and in handling chemicals.

As these propositions are informative in nature, they have an assertive illocutionary point that commits VR to the truthfulness of the proposition. The act of explaining the company's environmental goals and their meanings helps to build environmentally sustainable corporate identity as it portrays VR as a company that has a clear set of goals that it aims to achieve to be an even greener in the future.

The "Environment" subsection of the CSR section of the corporate website of VR has five images, out of which three can be said to especially support speech acts creating corporate image of an environmentally sustainable corporate identity. The site (VR1) has two photographs of a VR train passing through Nordic nature (Figure 8 and Figure 10) and one drawn picture portraying a person holding a dog in nature with a VR train visible in the background (Figure 9). The two images of VR trains in nature, very similar to the two images of VR trains in the "Responsibility" section analysed above, visualize the speech acts concerning environmental sustainability of the page by visually tying the company and its actions for the environment to nature. The images visualize the assertive illocutionary acts claiming that VR is already an environmentally sustainable company as the images visualize the nature surrounding the trains to be in a good, healthy condition. The same can be argued to be the case for the drawn image as there is a VR train passing through nature in the background, a visual theme very similar in nature to the other two images related to environmental sustainability on the "Environment" page.

Considering how the environment-related speech acts of the page gloss the three images, the assertive speech acts explaining VR is a company with green operations identify what is happening in the images as the daily operations of the company. The relationship between the images and their adjacent speech acts can be argued to show that the images have an assertive illocutionary point. Similarly to the images in the "Responsibility" section analysed above, the images provide visual proof, that can be expected to be factual, of VR being an environmentally friendly company by showing nature does well even if VR trains pass through it. The images showing trains passing through the Finnish nature and the illustration with a train passing in the background further support the corporate identity of VR being a green choice in the transport industry created in the text.



Figure 8 Image of a VR train passing through Nordic nature on the “Environment” section of VR’s corporate website (VR1). Image: VR.

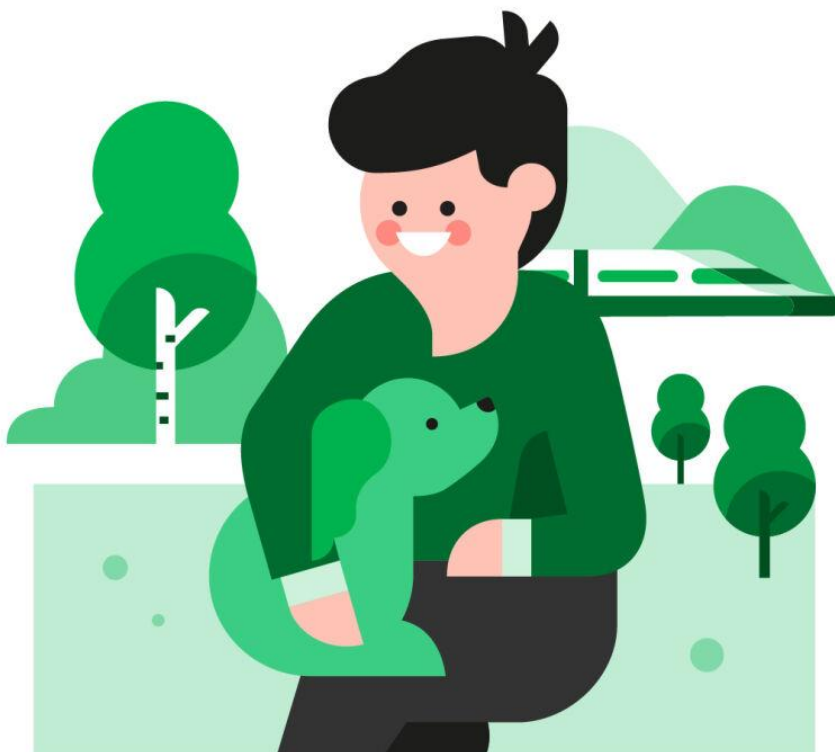


Figure 9 Image of a person holding a dog with a VR train passing through Nordic nature in the background on the “Environment” section of VR’s corporate website (VR1). Image: VR.



Figure 10 Image of a VR train passing through Nordic nature on the “Environment” section of VR’s corporate website (VR1). Image: VR.

5.2.3 Environmental policy

The “Environment” subsection of VR’s corporate website section aimed at discussing CSR issues has its own subsection called “Environmental policy”. On this site, as the name suggests, VR explains its environmental policy that, according to the company (VR4) itself, is followed throughout all its operations. Again, VR covers similar topics related to the environment on the site “Environmental policy” as it does on the sites “Environment” and “Responsibility”, but on the site “Environmental policy”, VR focuses on discussing how environmental sustainability as a value shows in the company’s operations. For example, VR (VR4) comments the following in regard to its environmental values at the beginning of the “Environmental policy” page:

- (18) Together towards a better world – this is our vision and the purpose of our operations. At VR, we are at the forefront of creating the future of sustainable mobility for the benefit of society as a whole.

As VR is giving information about its vision and where it stands in creating a greener future in the utterance above, it has an assertive illocutionary point. VR continues building the environmentally sustainable corporate identity of a company that works hard to create a better future for the environment it already started building in the previous sections “Responsibility” and “Environment”.

Although VR (VR4) also states that train travel is the greenest transport option there currently is on the site “Environmental policy”, a statement the company has also made on the other sections discussed above, it does also admit its operations have their impact on the environment while it discusses its environmental goals:

- (19) We understand the environmental impacts of our operations, and our environmental ambitions are aligned with our significant environmental impacts. We are committed to near-term and long-term net zero Science-Based Targets.

By stating it understands its operations’ environmental impact, VR commits an expressive illocutionary speech act, as the company expresses its understanding attitude towards its own actions’ effect on the environment. Additionally, VR also commits a commissive illocutionary act by stating the company is committed to achieve the goals of net zero Science-Based Targets because the company commits itself to a future course of action. These speech acts help VR in building corporate identity of being an environmentally sustainable company. By stating that it understands its impact on the environment and that it is committed to a set of environmental targets, VR portrays itself as a company that is willing to work to be even greener in the future although it is already greener than other companies in the transport industry.

Again, similarly to the other CSR section subsections present in VR’s corporate website analysed above, VR does also explain how it will be greener in the future on the site “Environmental policy”. For example, VR (VR4) lists focusing on improving energy efficiency, increasing the usage of fossil free energy, investing in technology that has lower emissions and promoting circular economy as actions it does to reduce emissions and contribute to the fight against climate change. Additionally, the company (VR4) also mentions partnering with other businesses and organisations as a way of conducting its operations in an environmentally sustainable fashion, noting the following:

- (20) In line with our environmental commitments, we also require responsible actions from partners in our value chain [...].

These locutionary speech acts both have an assertive illocutionary point, making them assertive illocutionary acts, because they give the reader information on how VR conducts its business in a way that contributes to an environmentally friendlier future. By stating this information, VR continues to build the corporate identity of a company that is prepared to fight climate change now and in the future through its actions.

On the “Environmental policy” subsection of VR’s corporate website section discussing CSR, VR also continues to explain how environmental sustainability is a key factor in the decision making and all the daily operations of the company, topic first introduced in the “Responsibility” section of its corporate website. For example, VR (VR4) states the following in relation to the topic:

- (21) Our environmental goals guide our daily operations, and each of us is responsible for taking environmental aspects into account in our own actions and work duties.

This locutionary act has, again, an assertive illocutionary point as it states information to which truthfulness VR is committed to. This assertive speech act builds corporate identity of being an environmentally sustainable company as VR linguistically poses itself as an organization that cares for the environment in all its actions, no matter how big or small they are. This corporate identity is further supported by the fact that VR (VR4) also describes how it follows ISO 14001 requirements and guidelines in its environmental management. The informative speech act of explaining this contains an assertive illocutionary point. It helps to support the abovementioned corporate identity because it portrays VR as a company that follows environmental guidelines introduced by external authorities in its everyday operations.

On the “Environmental policy” subsection of VR’s corporate website section discussing CSR, there is one image (Figure 11): a close-up image of healthy birch tree (VR4). As the photograph represents a rather common species of a tree in the Nordic nature, it can be said that it is in accordance with the concept of environmental sustainability and environmentally sustainable development. The image can be argued to visualize the adjacent speech acts: the nature does well due to the fact that VR is a green company that is committed to be even better for the environment in the future. On the other hand, the speech acts gloss the image by identifying that it is related to results of the green operations of the company. It could be understood that the image-speech act relationship implies the image has an assertive illocutionary point, as the image relates to the assertive speech acts in the adjacent text. The image of the tree could be argued to be showing visual proof of VR being an environmentally friendly company that is green in its everyday operations, as the tree in the image is in a good condition. However, although having a visual theme relating to environmental sustainability, the image does not have any visual ties to VR as a company unlike the other images analysed

in the above paragraphs. Therefore, it can be argued that the corporate identity of VR being an environmentally friendly company is not fully conveyed through it.



Figure 11 Image of a birch tree on the “Environmental policy” section of VR’s corporate website (VR4). Image: VR.

5.2.4 Code of conduct

Finally, on the “Code of conduct” subsection of the CSR section of the corporate website of VR, the company discusses its values in general terms, focusing more on the social and economic factors of sustainability and sustainable development. However, VR does also mention environmental sustainability, but the topic is discussed shortly and in similar manner as in the other sections analysed above in this thesis. For example, VR (V3) mentions it is “leading the way in more sustainable transport” and “developing [their] operations to affect the vitality of our environment in a positive way”. These statements, informative in nature, have an assertive illocutionary point. They continue VR’s trend of building environmentally sustainable corporate identity of a company that is already the greenest option in transport industry but is nonetheless ready to do even more to achieve a greener future. The “Code of conduct” page of VR’s corporate website’s CSR section does not contain any visual elements of the type analysed in this study. Therefore, the speech acts of VR building corporate image of an environmentally sustainable company are not supported in any way via the use of images.

6 Discussion

In this section of the thesis, I will focus on discussing the results of the study more in detail. I will compare how Finnair and VR build environmentally sustainable corporate identity through language and image use, all while explaining the possible reasons and the larger phenomena behind the results. First, in Section 6.1, I will discuss the usage of speech acts, more specifically, locutionary and illocutionary acts, of the two companies. After this, in Section 6.2, I am going to discuss the relationship between the speech acts and the images used by Finnair and VR to build environmentally sustainable corporate image. Finally, in Section 6.3, I am going to reflect on the limitations of the study and possibilities for further research on the topic.

6.1 Speech acts

This section focuses on analysing the locutionary and illocutionary acts of environmentally sustainable corporate identity building present in the text on Finnair and VR's corporate websites.

6.1.1 Locutionary acts

Both Finnair and VR discuss environmental sustainability in their corporate websites' CSR sections in a detailed way, explaining how environmental sustainability is an important part of their operations. It is rather reasonable for both the companies focus deeply on the topic on their websites, since both aviation and train transport cause carbon emissions, as discussed in Section 2.1 above. Additionally, stakeholders, in general, do not have favourable views on companies that act indifferently on environmental sustainability issues, as discussed in Section 2.2.1 above. As Finnair and VR are representatives of the transport industry, that is often associated with negative effects on the environment, the potential customers and other stakeholders of the two companies might have higher expectations for their environmental sustainability related actions, and thus, the corporate identities as well. After all, the way an organization manages different issues shapes the way the stakeholders perceive the organization, and the stakeholders' belief systems and attitudes should be taken into account in the corporate CSR communications conducted in an online setting (Rolland and O'Keefe Bazzoni 2009, 255).

There is, however, one major difference in the content of the locutions used to build environmentally sustainable corporate image produced by the two companies. Whereas VR

focuses on how it already is a green company that is willing to do even more for the environment in the future, Finnair is more concerned about explaining what it is planning to do in order to be more environmentally sustainable. It can be argued that this difference arises from the fact that the companies represent different sectors of the transport industry and have notably different effects on the environment as, again, discussed in the Section 2.1 above. Because aviation causes more emissions than the train travel, it seems logical to argue that Finnair and VR have to build environmentally sustainable corporate identity through corporate communications conducted on corporate websites differently. Stakeholders might have higher expectations of Finnair's environmental actions since it has larger negative effects on the environment than VR. This causes Finnair to have to focus more on communicating its future actions for the environment more in detail to have an environmentally sustainable corporate identity. Meanwhile, VR, producing less emissions, can focus more on the current situation of its operations when building environmentally sustainable corporate identity due to possibly having lower stakeholder expectations relating to the matter.

6.1.2 Illocutionary acts

When it comes to the illocutionary acts of environmentally sustainable corporate identity building, the most common type is the assertive act on both corporate website CSR sections, Finnair using assertive acts eleven times and VR twelve times. The other types of illocutionary acts are less common: Finnair commits six speech acts with a commissive illocutionary point and one with a directive illocutionary point, whereas VR uses three illocutionary acts of the commissive type and one illocutionary of the expressive type. Speech acts with a declarative illocutionary point are not present in either of the corporate website CSR sections.

Assertive acts being the most common tool of building environmentally sustainable corporate identity can be explained by the fact that assertion can be considered an instinctive way of conveying information (Labinaz and Sbisà 2014, 32). Since the role of corporate websites is to be informative in nature, as discussed in the Section 2.2 of this thesis, it can be argued that it is quite logical for assertive illocutionary acts to be the most common. The presence of expressive and directive acts, then, can be explained by the fact that they, in addition to assertive acts, are typical in an advertising context (Huang and Liu 2022, 145). As discussed in Section 2.2 of this thesis, one of the roles of corporate websites is also to raise the stakeholders' interest in the products and services of a company as, similarly to

advertising. Therefore, it can be argued that it is logical for the illocutionary acts of expressive and directive type to be present in the Finnair and VR's corporate websites and their CSR sections.

Although commissive acts are generally quite rare in brand generated communication materials in the online setting (Ordenes et al. 2019, 990), the results of this study seem to indicate that this is not the case for companies in the transport industry. After all, commissive acts were the second most common after assertives in the materials analysed. Based on this, it can be hypothesised that companies that currently are not friendly for the environment, like a lot of the companies within the transport industry, as noted in Section 2.1, need to promise they will do better in the future in order to build environmentally sustainable corporate identity. This hypothesis is also supported by the fact that Finnair, that produces more carbon emissions as an aviation company in comparison to VR as a train company on the same route, uses more commissive acts than VR. Finally, the lack of declarative illocutionary acts is arguably rather logical. Since declarative acts are associated with altering the status of referred objects, as discussed in the Section 3.1, marketers do not have the necessary power to perform such acts on consumers with brand messages (Ordenes et al. 2019, 990). Therefore, it is quite natural they are completely absent from the corporate website CSR sections of Finnair and VR that focus more on conveying factual information about the companies and their environmentally sustainable actions.

6.2 Images and image-speech act relations

Both Finnair and VR use images to build environmentally sustainable corporate identity, but the contents of the images differ slightly between the companies. Whereas Finnair focuses more on showing itself doing actual actions for the environment by using an image of a Finnair airplane being fuelled by sustainable aviation fuel, VR focuses more on showing how the local environment is doing well even though the company's trains pass through it. In fact, Finnair uses only one image related to environmental sustainability three times throughout its corporate website section, and other images related to the topic are not used. VR, on the other hand, uses more varying images of either train tracks or actual VR trains in nature, and images are not repeated throughout the site except for once. VR also uses one image of a tree on its corporate website CSR section that does not exactly tie the company to nature visually but otherwise relates to the topic of environmental sustainability. According to Wang and Liu (2024, 9), the motifs of unspoiled nature and high-tech industry were reoccurring in a case study of sustainability reports of energy corporations, which matches the results of this study.

After all, Finnair uses images that can be understood to be of type of high tech, whereas VR uses images of unspoiled nature. Based on this, it can be understood that this type of imagery is common when building environmentally sustainable corporate image through corporate communications within industries with higher emissions produced, such as the transport industry.

The notable aspect of the companies being visually tied to the surrounding environment or environmentally friendly actions being shown is the connecting factor in the use of images to build environmentally sustainable corporate identity. Both Finnair and VR use images on their corporate website CSR sections to, in a way, visually proof that they are environmentally sustainable. The analysis of the image-speech act relationship reveals that the images used by the two companies have assertive illocutionary points. The images visualize the adjacent assertive speech acts by showing the contents of the speech acts taking place in real life, whereas the assertive speech acts gloss the images by explaining that they relate to the operations of the companies. Based on this, it can be said the relationship between the images and their adjacent speech acts used to create environmentally sustainable corporate identity by VR and Finnair is rather similar and does not contain any major differences.

6.3 Limitations of the study

It is important to note that this study analyses only two companies and their practises of building sustainable corporate identity multimodally. To gain more insight into the general practises of corporate identity building on corporate websites within the transport industry, more companies should be studied. For example, a more quantitative study on the topic could reveal wider tendencies in the speech act usage and image-speech act relations through statistical analysis. A questionnaire-based study, then, could reveal how the locutionary acts of sustainable corporate identity building are perceived by the readers of the websites, giving insight into the perlocutionary acts and the actual level success of the CSR communications of various companies. The method of analysing the illocutionary point of images according to the classification of Searle through analysing their relationship with the speech acts in the adjacent text, additionally, requires more studies, as it is a rather novel method and only briefly discussed in this thesis. This method is, furthermore, not without its flaws: for instance, the methodology cannot be used to analyse the illocutionary point of images that do not have any text adjacent to them.

7 Conclusion

This thesis examined how companies build environmentally sustainable corporate identities on the CSR sections of their corporate websites via the use of language and images.

Companies analysed in the study, the airline Finnair and the train company VR, were chosen from the transport industry due to the importance of environmental sustainability and having an environmentally sustainable corporate identity within the field. Research was conducted utilizing the methodology of close reading and applying the Speech Act Theory and its multimodal aspects to the material gathered from the websites. The aim of the study was to answer the following questions:

1. What kind of locutionary and illocutionary acts are used by Finnair and VR to build environmentally sustainable corporate identities on their corporate website sections discussing CSR and what do they aim to achieve?
2. What kind of images are used by Finnair and VR to build environmentally sustainable corporate identity on their corporate website sections discussing CSR and what their relationship with the speech acts in the text reveal about their illocutionary points?
3. What are the main differences in the use of locutionary and illocutionary acts and images of the two companies?

All in all, there are differences in the locutionary and illocutionary contents of the environmentally sustainable corporate image building on the corporate website CSR sections of Finnair and VR. Both companies explain that environmental sustainability is an important part of their operations. However, taking into account the content of the locutionary acts, Finnair focuses on explaining the future actions it is taking to be more environmentally friendly, whereas VR explains how it is already a green company. What comes to the illocutionary points of the locutionary acts, then, locutions with an assertive point appear to be most common on both companies' corporate website CSR sections. However, Finnair uses more commissive acts in comparison to VR, which can be explained by the underlying differences of the content of the locutionary acts.

What comes to the images used to build environmentally sustainable corporate identity by Finnair and VR on their corporate website CSR sections, similarly to locutionary acts, the contents of the images vary between the companies. Whereas Finnair focuses on showing its current actions for the environment, VR's imagery is concentrating at showing the

actual nature doing well despite the company's operations. These images relate to the assertive illocutionary acts present in their adjacent text, functioning as visual proof of sorts to make the claims in the text more credible. This image-speech act relationship suggests that the images themselves, too, have assertive illocutionary points.

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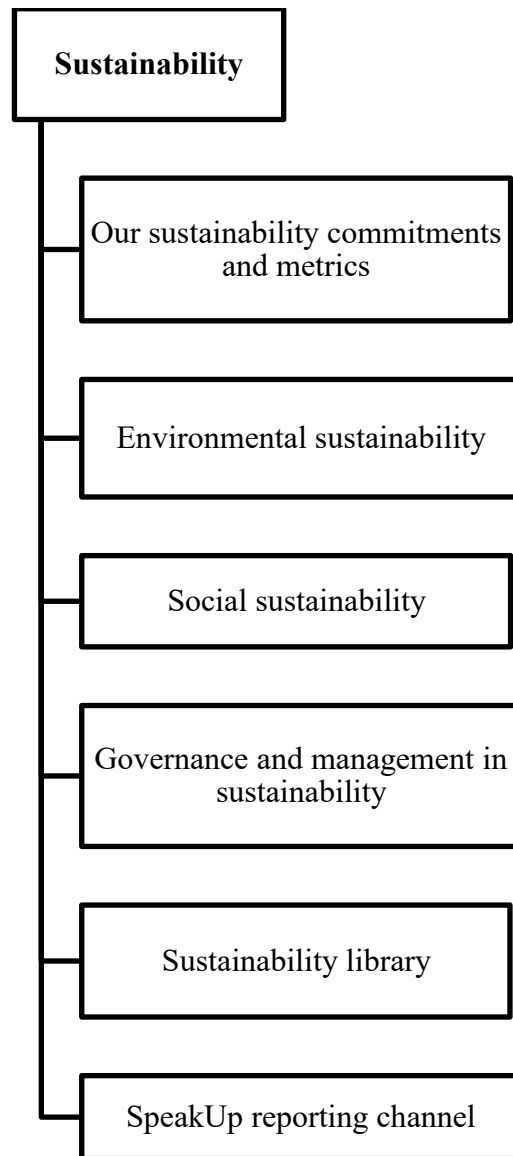
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Appendices

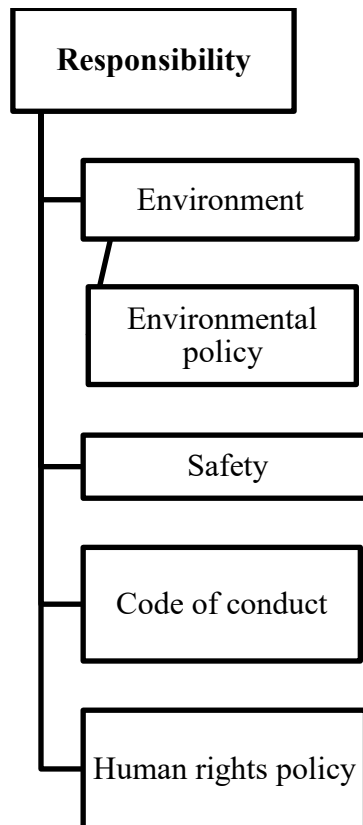
Appendix 1 References of the subsections of the CSR section of Finnair's corporate website

Reference within the text	Reference
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F2	———. n.d. c. "Environmental sustainability." <i>Finnair Company</i> . Accessed 25 June 2025. https://company.finnair.com/en/sustainability/environmental-sustainability
F3	———. n.d. d. "Social sustainability." <i>Finnair Company</i> . Accessed 25 June 2025. https://company.finnair.com/en/sustainability/social-sustainability
F4	———. n.d. e. "Governance and management in sustainability." <i>Finnair Company</i> . Accessed 25 June 2025. https://company.finnair.com/en/sustainability/governance-and-management-in-sustainability

Appendix 2 Website structure of Finnair's corporate website's CSR section

Appendix 3 References of the subsections of the CSR section of VR's corporate website

Reference within the text	Reference
VR1	VR. n.d. b. "Environment." <i>VR Group</i> . Accessed 25 June 2025. https://www.vrgroup.fi/en/vrgroup/responsibility/environment/
VR2	———. n.d. c. "Safety." <i>VR Group</i> . Accessed 25 June 2025. https://www.vrgroup.fi/en/vrgroup/responsibility/safety/
VR3	———. n.d. d. "Code of conduct." <i>VR Group</i> . Accessed 25 June 2025. https://www.vrgroup.fi/en/vrgroup/responsibility/code-of-conduct/
VR4	———. n.d. e. "Environmental Policy." <i>VR Group</i> . Accessed 25 June 2025. https://www.vrgroup.fi/en/vrgroup/responsibility/environment/environmental-policy/

Appendix 4 Website structure of VR's corporate website's CSR section

Appendix 5 Finnish summary

Johdanto

Tässä pro gradu -tutkielmassa selvitetään, miten yritykset, jotka toimivat ympäristön kannalta haitallisella alalla, rakentavat ympäristön kestävyuden mukaista yritysidentiteettiä multimodaalisesti nettisivuillaan. Tutkittavaksi alaksi valittiin kuljetusala, ja kaksi suomalaista yritystä, lentoyhtiö Finnair ja junayhtiö VR, valittiin tapaustutkimuksen kohteeksi. Finnairin ja VR:n nettisivut analysoidaan hyödyntäen puheaktiteoriaa multimodaalisesti, ja tutkielma pyrkii vastaamaan seuraaviin kysymyksiin:

1. Millaisia lokutiivisia ja illokutiivisia akteja Finnair ja VR käyttävät ympäristön kestävyuden mukaisen yritysidentiteetin rakentamisessa nettisivujensa yhteiskuntavastuuta käsittelevissä osioissa, ja mitä yritykset pyrkivät saamaan aikaiseksi puheaktien avulla?
2. Millaisia kuvia Finnair ja VR käyttävät ympäristön kestävyuden mukaisen yritysidentiteetin rakentamisessa nettisivujensa yhteiskuntavastuuta käsittelevissä osioissa, ja mitä kuvien ja puheaktien välinen suhde paljastaa kuvien illokutiivisesta luonteesta?
3. Mitkä ovat pääerot Finnairin ja VR:n lokutiivisten ja illokutiivisten aktien sekä kuvien käytössä?

Tutkielman tarkoituksena on täyttää aukko ympäristön kestävyuden mukaisen yritysidentiteetin tutkimuksessa. Aihetta ei ole tutkittu paljoa kielitieteellisestä näkökulmasta, eikä Finnairin ja VR:n yritysidentiteetin rakentumista ole aikaisemmin tutkittu puheaktiteorian avulla. Lisäksi tutkielmassa pyritään kehittämään uusi multimodaalisen puheaktiteorian tutkimuksen metodi, jonka avulla kuvia voidaan analysoida puheakteina kuvien ja niiden yhteydessä olevissa teksteissä esiintyvien puheaktien välistä suhdetta tutkimalla.

Tausta

Suuri osa erilaisilla kulkuneuvoilla toteutetusta liikenteestä tuottaa hiilidioksidipäästöjä. Eri kulkuneuvojen päästöissä on kuitenkin eroja, ja esimerkiksi lentokone tuottaa samalla matkalla noin 6,5 kertaa enemmän päästöjä kuin juna (Otero and Ringertz 2022, 170–171). Nykyaikana julkinen keskustelu kuljetusalan ympärillä liittyy vahvasti ympäristön

kestävyyteen, ja moni matkustaja arvostaa ympäristöystävällisiä matkustusvaihtoehtoja. Yrityksille, jotka ovat tiukan kansainvälisen lainsäädännön ja asiakkaiden ympäristöllisen tietoisuuden kohteina, on tärkeää, että asiakkaat mieltävät ne ympäristöllisesti kestäviksi (Chen 2010, 309). Ympäristön kestävyys on kestävyiden osa-alue, joka keskittyy vihreän tulevaisuuden turvaamiseen. Sen pääosa-alueita ovat jätteen, päästöjen ja jäteveden vähentäminen, myrkyllisten aineiden hävittäminen, ympäristön ihmisten ja eläimien terveyteen aiheuttamien haittavaikutusten vähentäminen ja uusiutuvien resurssien käytön lisääminen (Talan, Pathak and Tyagi 2020, 25).

Kestävyys on terminä läheisessä suhteessa yhteiskuntavastuun termin kanssa, sillä niistä molempien tarkoituksena on saavuttaa kestävä kehitys (Hopkins 2017, 14), ja ihmiset sekä yritykset käyttävät niitä sekaisin (Carroll and Brown 2018, 50). Yhteiskuntavastuun päätavoitteena on luoda korkeammat kestävänsä asumisen standardit yrityksiensä ulkoisille ja sisäisille sidosryhmille sekä samalla suojella yrityksiensä yhtenäisyyttä ja tuottavuutta (Hopkins 2017, 14). Yhteiskuntavastuu on aihe, jota yritykset usein käsittelevät nettisivuillaan (Robbins and Stylianou 2003, 207). Yrityssivujen, kuten muunkin yrityksiensä omistaman median, päätehtävänä on rakentaa suhteita yrityksiensä ja niiden sidosryhmien välille, sekä herättää sidosryhmien mielenkiinto yrityksiä ja niiden tarjoamia palveluita kohtaan (Cornelissen 2020, 43), joten yrityssivujen voidaan katsoa olevan sekä suhdetoiminnan että markkinaviestinnän välineitä. Yritykset viestivät yritysidentiteetistään, eli niistä strategisesti suunnitelluista ja toteutetuista piirteistä, jotka erottavat ne muista yrityksistä (Podnar 2015, 18), useasti yrityssivujensa kautta.

Nykyaikaisen puheaktiteorian kehittäjänä voidaan pitää J. L. Austinia (Lamarque 1997, 505), jonka mukaan puheaktit voidaan jakaa kolmeen kategoriaan: lokutiivisiin, illokutiivisiin ja perlokutiivisiin akteihin (Austin 1962, 5–6). Lokutiivinen akti voidaan määritellä jonkin asian sanomiseksi (Austin 1962, 94). Illokutiivisella aktilla puolestaan viitataan, siihen, mitä puhuja pyrkii lokutiivisella aktilla saamaan kuulijassa aikaiseksi (Austin 1962, 99–100). Perlokutiivinen akti taas viittaa siihen, millaisen vaikutuksen lokutiivinen akti saa kuulijassa aikaiseksi (Austin 1962, 101). J. R. Searle, joka on toinen puheaktiteorian tunnetuimmista tutkijoista, jakoi Austinin teorian perusteella illokutiiviset aktit viiteen pienempään kategoriaan: assertatiiveihin, direktiiveihin, komissiiveihin, ekspressiiveihin ja deklaratiiiveihin (Searle 1976, 10–13). Assertatiivinen akti sitoo puhujan lokuutiivisen aktin totuusarvoon (Searle 1976, 10), kun direktiivinen akti viittaa puhujan yritykseen saada kuulija tekemään jotain (Searle 1976, 11). Komissiivinen akti sitoo puhujan

tekemään jotain tulevaisuudessa (Searle 1976, 11), ekspressiivinen akti ilmaisee puhujan mielentilan lokuutiiviseen aktiin liittyen (Searle 1976, 12), ja deklaratiiivinen akti vaikuttaa jonkin asian tai esineen tilaan (Searle 1976, 13–14).

Puheaktien määritelmä on kehittynyt ajan saatossa, ja tämänhetkinen puheaktiteorian tutkimus on ottamassa huomioon puheaktien multimodaalisen puolen enenevissä määrin (Jucker 2024, 1–2). Nettisivujen kautta toteutettu viestintä on nykyaikana luonnostaan multimodaalista, sillä useimmat sivustot sisältävät multimodaalisia elementtejä, kuten kuvia. Multimodaalisia puheaktiyksiköitä on kuitenkin vaikea tunnistaa, ja aiheesta ei ole paljoa aikaisempaa tutkimusta (Jucker 2024, 35–36). Yksi aihetta tutkinut on Søren Kjörup, joka kehitti teorian kuvista puheakteina vuosina 1974 ja 1978 Austinin teorian pohjalta. Kjörupin (1978, 61) mukaan lokuutiivinen akti kuvien tapauksessa on kuvan näyttäminen. Illokutiivinen akti voitaisiin puolestaan määritellä kuvaamisen, havainnollistamisen tai varoittamisen akteina, jotka ymmärrettäisiin kontekstin ja yleisön aikaisemman tiedon perusteella (Kjörup 1978, 65–68). Tässä tutkielmassa pyritään kehittämään kuvien illokutiivisen luonteen konseptia pidemmälle Kjörupin teoriasta inspiroituneena. Pohjaten Kjörupin huomioon illokutiivisten kuvien kontekstiriippuvuudesta ja Searlen esittämään illokutiivisten aktien jakoon, tutkielmassa esitetään, että kuvien illokutiivinen luonne voidaan selvittämään tutkimalla kuvien ja niiden yhteydessä olevien puheaktien avulla.

Kuvien ja kielen välinen suhde perustuu Unsworthin ja Cléirighin (2008, 159) mukaan molemminpuoliseen tunnistamiseen. Kun kuva on tunnistamisen lähtökohta, se visualisoi kieltä (Unsworth and Cléirigh 2008, 156). Vaikka kuva ja teksti viittaavat samaan ilmiöön, kuva tarkoittaa tunnistettavan asian piirteitä, jotka mahdollisesti eivät tule ilmi tekstistä itsestään (Unsworth and Cléirigh 2008, 156). Kun teksti toimii tunnistamisen lähtökohtana, se selittää kuvaa esimerkiksi kertomalla, mitä kuvassa on (Unsworth and Cléirigh 2008, 159). Tässä tutkielmassa keskitytään erityisesti puheaktien ja kuvien väliseen suhteeseen pelkän tekstin ja kuvien välisen suhteen tutkimisen sijasta.

Aineisto ja menetelmät

Tutkimuksessa analysoitu aineisto kerättiin Finnairin ja VR:n englanninkielisiltä yrityssivuilta. Vaikka ympäristön kestävyttä käsitellään tavalla tai toisella molempien sivujen kaikissa osioissa, tässä tutkimuksessa keskitytään Finnairin ja VR:n yrityssivujen yhteiskuntavastuuta käsitteleviin osioihin. Näin voitiin rajata tutkimuksen laajuus ja helpottaa nettisivuilla olevan ympäristön kestävyteen liittyvän diskurssin vertailua. Analysoitava

aineisto ladattiin internetarkisto Wayback Machineen 25.6.2025, ja analyysi tehtiin arkistoon ladattujen nettisivuversioiden perusteella. Arkistoimalla voitiin varmistua siitä, etteivät mahdolliset muutokset Finnairin ja VR:n yrityssivuihin vaikuta analyysiprosessiin, ja että tutkimusaineisto on saatavilla myös jälkikäteen arkiston kautta.

Tutkimuksen päämenetelmänä käytettiin deduktiivista lähilukua. Lähiluvun menetelmä perustuu aineistojen ja niiden merkityksien tarkkaan analyysiin, ja siinä otetaan huomioon aineistojen kontekstit ja yleisöjen näkökulmat (Brummet 2019, 23). Deduktiivisessa lähiluvussa aineistoa lähestytään etukäteen valitun teorian avulla (Brummet 2019, 27). Tässä tutkimuksessa Finnairin ja VR:n yrityssivujen yhteiskuntavastuuta käsittelevien osioiden tekstit analysoitiin puheaktiteorian avulla, ja tekstien yhteydessä olevat kuvat analysoitiin käyttämällä kuvan ja kielen välisen suhteen analyysikehyksen ja puheaktiteorian yhdistelmää. Aluksi tutkimusaineisto luettiin tarkasti läpi, ja analysoitavaksi valittiin lokutiiviset aktit, jotka liittyivät ympäristön kestävyyttä käsittelevään diskurssiin. Seuraavaksi lokutiivisten aktien illokutiivinen luonne selvitettiin, ja illokutiiviset aktit jaoteltiin Searlen luokittelun mukaisesti. Lopuksi aineiston kuvat tarkasteltiin, ja kuvien suhde niiden yhteydessä esiintyviin lokutiivisiin ja illokutiivisiin akteihin analysoitiin. Kuvien illokutiivinen luonne pääteltiin kuvien ja puheaktien välisen suhteen perusteella.

Tulokset

Sekä Finnair että VR käsittelevät ympäristön kestävyyttä yksityiskohtaisesti yrityssivujensa yhteiskuntavastuuta käsittelevissä osioissa. Koska molemmat yhtiöt edustavat ympäristölle haitalliseksi miellettyä kuljetusalaa, on mahdollista, että yhtiöiden asiakkailta ja muilla sidosryhmillä on odotuksia niiden ympäristötekoja sekä -viestintää, ja näin ollen myös yritysidentiteettiä, kohtaan. Finnairin ja VR:n käyttämien lokutiivisten aktien sisällöissä on kuitenkin yksi huomattava ero: Finnair keskittyy enemmän siihen, mitä se aikoo tulevaisuudessa tehdä ollakseen ympäristöllisesti kestävämpi, kun taas VR kertoo, kuinka se toimii jo nykyhetkenä kestävästi ympäristön kannalta. Koska Finnairin lentokoneet tuottavat enemmän päästöjä kuin VR:n junat, on loogista, että yritykset joutuvat rakentamaan ympäristön kestävyuden mukaista yritysidentiteettiä yrityssivuillaan eri tavoin.

Illokutiivisten aktien tapauksessa sekä Finnair että VR käyttävät eniten assertatiiveja: Finnairin yrityssivuilla on 11 assertatiivista ja VR:n 12. Muita illokutiivisiä akteja esiintyy vähemmän: Finnair käyttää kuutta komissiivista ja yhtä direktiivistä, kun taas VR käyttää kolmea komissiivista ja yhtä ekspressiivistä. Deklaratiiveja ei esiinny kummankaan yhtiön yrityssivuilla.

Assertatiivien yleisyys selittyy sillä, että ne ovat luonnostaan tiedon vliityksen keino (Labinaz and Sbisà 2014, 32). Ekspressiivit ja direktiivit ovat yleisiä mainoskontekstissa (Huang and Liu 2022, 145), joten on luonnollista, että myös niitä esiintyy aineistossa. Deklaratiivien puute selittyy puolestaan sillä, että markkinoijilla ei ole tarvittavaa voimaa muuttaa jonkin asian tilaa viestinnän keinoin (Ordenes et al. 2019, 990). Vaikka komissiivit ovat yleisesti harvinaisia yritysten verkkoviestinnässä (Ordenes et al. 2019, 990), aikaisemmasta tutkimuksesta poiketen tämän tutkielman tulokset viittaavat, että ympäristölle tällä hetkellä haittaa aiheuttavat yritykset joutuvat tekemään ympäristölupauksia rakentaakseen ympäristön kestävyuden mukaista yritysidentiteettiä.

Finnair ja VR käyttävät myös kuvia rakentaakseen ympäristön kestävyuden mukaista yritysidentiteettiä, mutta yhtiöiden käyttämien kuvien sisällöissä esiintyy eroja. Finnair näyttää käyttämässään kuvissa yhtiön nykyisiä ilmastotekoja, kun taas VR:n kuvissa näkyy, että luonto voi hyvin yhtiön toiminnasta huolimatta. Pilaamaton luonto ja huipputeknologia ovat yleisiä kuvien aiheita energiayhtiöiden kestävyysraporteissa (Wang ja Liu 2024, 9), mikä viittaa yhdessä tämän tutkielman tuloksien kanssa, että nämä aiheet ovat yleisiä ympäristön kestävyuden mukaisen yritysidentiteetin rakentamisessa yleisesti ympäristölle haitallisilla aloilla. Finnairin ja VR:n kuvien käyttöä yhdistää puolestaan se, että yhtiöt yhdistyvät kuvissa visuaalisesti ympäristötekoihin ja luontoon. Kuvat toimivat visuaalisena todisteena niiden yhteydessä olevissa teksteissä esiintyvälle assertatiiveille, mikä viittaa siihen, että myös kuvilla on assertatiivinen luonne.

Yhteenveto

Kaiken kaikkiaan voidaan huomata, että Finnairin ja VR:n ympäristöllisesti kestävä yritysidentiteetin rakentamiseen käytettyjen lokutiivisten ja illokutiivisten aktien sekä kuvien käytössä esiintyy eroja yritysten nettisivujen yhteiskuntavastuuta käsittelevissä osioissa. Molemmat yhtiöt kertovat ympäristön kestävyuden olevan tärkeä osa niiden toimintoja, mutta lokuutioiden sisällöt eroavat toisistaan: Finnair keskittyy enemmän tulevaisuuteen ja tekoihin, joita se tekee ollakseen ympäristöllisesti kestävämpi tulevaisuudessa, kun VR keskittyy pääasiassa kertomaan, kuinka se toimii jo ympäristön kannalta kestävästi. Illokutiivisista akteista yleisin on molempien yhtiöiden tapauksissa assertatiiviset aktit, mutta Finnair käyttää VR:ään verrattuna enemmän komissiiveja. Myös kuvien käytössä yhtiöiden nettisivujen yhteiskuntavastuuosioissa on eroja: Finnair näyttää kuvissa ympäristötekoja, kun VR:n kuvissa keskitytään hyvinvoivaan luontoon. Molemmat yhtiöt käyttävät kuvia visualisoimaan

niiden yhteydessä esiintyvissä teksteissä olevia assertatiiveja, mikä todistaa myös kuvilla olevan assertatiivinen luonne.