

The Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility Communications on Firms' Social Capital Development. A Literature Review

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Abstract. *Firms are using social networking websites to take care of relationships with stakeholders by providing information related to their activities. Therefore, they communicate the actions taken to be socially responsible not only to reach high levels of social, legal, and ethical performance, or for the competitive and financial advantages that they could provide, but also because the stakeholders reward the company through increased and continuous support. It is believed that the communication of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives can create identifiable and measurable benefits through building and reinforcing the links with stakeholders. There is evidence that CSR communications promote Social Capital benefits to the company. In a narrow sense, this encompasses the growth and economic development based on the construction of mutually satisfying relationships. Hence, the analysis of CSR communication elements in social networks that promote interaction, trust and reciprocity becomes a matter of academic and business interest. The purpose of this contribution is provide a review of the academic literature focused on how CSR communication influences company's Social Capital in order to identify the state of the art and current trends, providing a clear and complete picture of the main issues that have been researched. To achieve these goals this work is structured in two parts. First, a bibliometric analysis of publications focused on the field of CSR communication, identifying authors, journals, research institutions and those countries most relevant and influential in this academic field. And, the second part, an analysis -in terms of state of the art- of the literature related to the evolution of CSR communication and its impact on Social Capital. This work includes in the review the most prestigious journals in CSR communication by selecting the research indexed in the Web of Science database (WoS). Communicating CSR is not a recent practice; however, it is true that communicating CSR in social networking websites implies managing a relatively novel channel where innovations apply often. This work provides researchers and practitioners with an explicit scheme that relates the discussions of existing literature, which could be useful to identify new objectives and research questions for further studies.*

Keywords: *CSR Communication; Social Capital; Social Networking Sites; Literature Review; Bibliometric Analysis; SNS.*

Introduction

More and more companies around the world, in addition to implementing social responsibility policies and action programs within their strategies, consider it appropriate to communicate them with the aim of reaching a greater number of people (KPMG, 2017; Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). Some of them seek to persuade in order to make a good impression and positively influence on the satisfaction of their stakeholders (Chun, 2005; Su, Swanson, Chinchachokchai, Hsu, & Chen, 2016) and others seek to achieve an active and continuous participation in their actions based on interaction, commitment and mutual trust (Keh & Xie, 2009).

The literature has pointed to the benefits of communicating responsible activities through traditional and digital media (Dutot, Lacalle Galvez, & Versailles, 2016; Maignan & Ferrell, 2001; Morsing & Schultz, 2006; Morsing, Schultz, & Nielsen, 2008). Judging by the number of publications in academic literature, one can believe that there is a growing interest in communicating CSR actions. However, despite the recognition of the importance of social capital in CSR communication (Suh, 2016), it is clear that this topic has been little researched yet. Thus, in most cases, the focus has been on isolated or specific factors such as characteristics of publications, the communication approach, processes and channels which influence on users' reactions, the level of genuine commitment, cooperation, awareness and effectiveness.

In recent years, several articles have been published that address the review of CSR communication literature from a different point of view. Thus, for example Ellerup & Thomsen (2018) identify four categories of study articulated with the perspective of legitimacy of communicative practices in issues of stakeholder knowledge search, community value creation and development of CSR models and concepts. Moreover, Crane and Glozer (2016) propose the 4Is of CSR communication research (integration, interpretation, identity and image) as a process that organizes the central issues, opportunities and challenges for the development of CSR communication theory. To date, there are no review articles on the role of social capital in CSR communication research.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify in academic literature elements or characteristics of social capital in the domain of CSR communications on social networking sites (hereinafter SNS). Applying methods derived from bibliometrics and content analysis to arrive at a more or less objective and quantifiable assessment of the state of the art of the current literature on CSR communication in SNS without making a priori assumptions about which theoretical and methodological approaches to CSR communication are suitable or not.

Methodology

In order a comprehensive view of how the topic of research is conceptualized in the literature, an systematic review was conducted (Peloza & Shang, 2011). According to Briner, Denyer, & Rousseau (2009) it "explicitly summarizes what is known and what is not known about a specific question". A literature selection criteria combined with a content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was used, which also made it possible to identify central themes in the literature. Therefore, the following selection criteria were adopted:

Bibliographic database

This study is based on articles published in indexed journals linked to the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection database. This database contains the most prestigious and influential journals and is therefore recognized as the most authoritative source of data for the study of publications on most subjects (Zhao, Zuo, Wu, & Huang, 2019). In addition, it contains publications not only in engineering and science, but also in management, social sciences and humanities.

Exclusion criteria

According to the recommendations for bibliographic bibliometry (e.g., Short, 2009; Ponomarev, Lawton, Williams, & Schnell, 2014), the search has been restricted to English-language publications in peer-reviewed, full-text academic journals with available references. Specific types of publications such as brief communications and commentaries, editorial notes, symposia, congresses and book reviews are excluded. Although it is not an area of special attention in scoping reviews (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), only those articles with a "scientific structure" (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016); that is, those with a method and results section.

Inclusion criteria

The high level of heterogeneity in CSR communication research does not allow us to easily determine the precise limits of what should or should not be included in a review of the literature in this field of knowledge (Crane & Glozer, 2016). For this purpose, the time period and search terms were taken into account as inclusion criteria (Lee, 2008; Short, 2009).

Period of time. The study focused on research published over a period of 15 years (2005-2019). Although there are previous references to CSR communication (e.g., Esrock & Leichty, 1998; Reeves & Ferguson-DeThorne, 1980), the WoS database search found no peer-reviewed publication concerning CSR communication on SNS before 2005, except for the work of Seifert, et al. (2003). Which has been discarded because a review of its content found that it does not provide significant input to the goal pursued in this study.

Search terms. To collect articles from authors who have mentioned the topic of study, keywords were selected from fields and disciplines considered particularly relevant in the perspective of CSR communication, SNS and social capital (Ellerup Nielsen & Thomsen, 2018). Therefore, we searched for publications in English in peer-reviewed academic journals that mentioned in their title, abstract or keywords the terms (see Figure 1):

- *Search 1.* "CSR" combined with "communication", "communication strategies", "communication management", "advertising", "marketing communication", "corporate communication", "business communication", "organizational communication", "dialogue" and "message" and combined with "SNS", "social media site", "social community", "corporate websites" and "online communities".
- *Search 2.* "CSR communication" and "CSR communication" combined with "strategies", "management", "advertising", "marketing", "organizational", "dialogue" and "message" and combined with "SNS", "social media site", "social community", "corporate websites" and "online communities"
- *Search 3.* Search 1 and Search 2 combined with "social capital"

A preliminary analysis was then performed on the WoS database to find out how many of the found documents meet the criteria of being articles and being written in English, as shown in Figure 1. This procedure generated 45 and 128 articles for search condition 1 and 2, respectively. By correlating these studies, 41 articles overlap. This results in a list of 132 documents, all published between 2005 and June 2019 (the date on which the data collection procedure was closed).

In revising the latter group, 16 articles that do not have a "scientific structure" were excluded. Finally, it was decided not to analyze 29 articles because they are not useful for research. The reason why, because even when they mention the term "CSR", "CSR communication", they only do it once or twice and without further input since they focus mainly in another subject. For example, financial reporting of corporate philanthropy, financial performance, cause-related marketing, accountability framework, online harassment crimes, investment for security controls in interactive spaces, among others. Or because in reality they do not make use of online media.

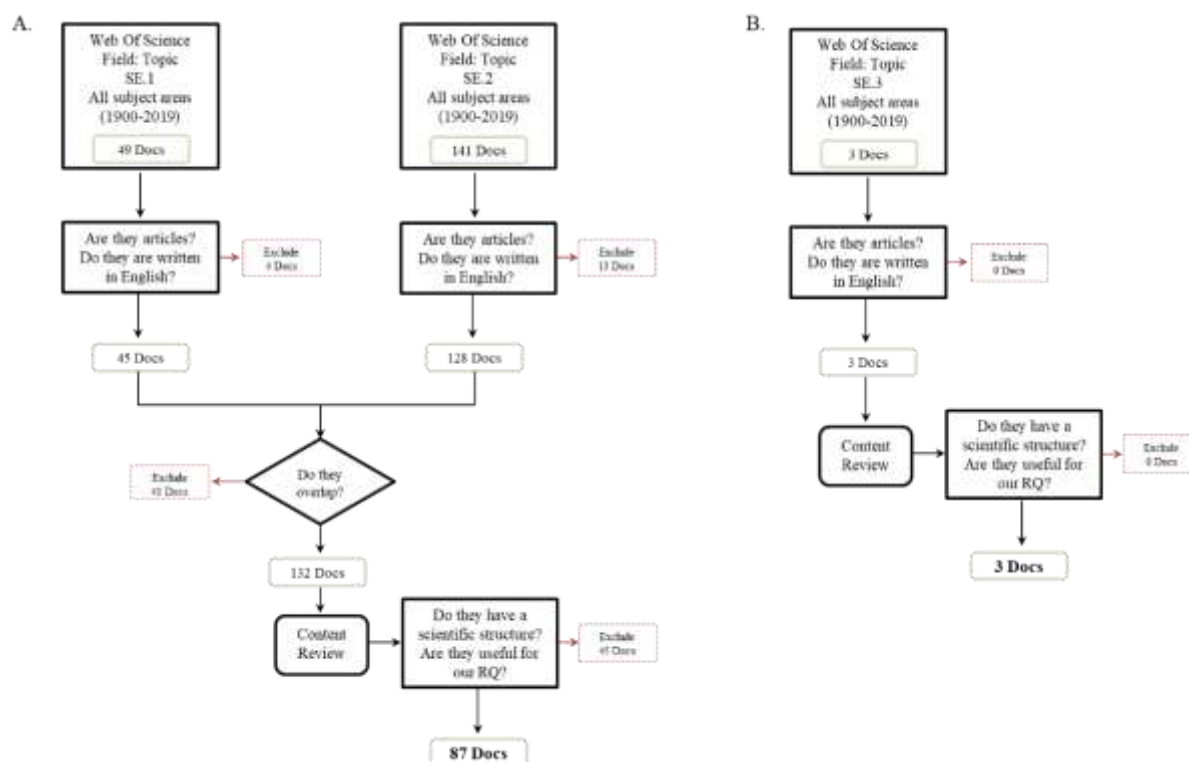


Figure 1. Steps for selecting relevant studies in literature (Adapted from Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016)

As can be seen in part B of figure 1, when searching with the terms "communication", "CSR communication", "SNS", "social capital" and similar terms (in a single equation), only 3 articles have analyzed the field of study. In total, the final database for this study was 87 articles written in English and in full-text format published between 2005 and 2019. The data, including title, authors, institutions, year of publication, journal name, abstracts, keywords, topics, disciplines and references, etc., for each article were organized in Excel for further processing and analysis.

Bibliometric analysis

There are different ways of classifying the material in a bibliometric analysis. In this study, the one chosen is focused on the revision of the:

Evolution of publications

The evolution of the 87 articles selected for the study is shown in Figure 2. 86.2% of them (75 articles) were published in 2015 and subsequent years. It is equivalent to 6.25 times the number of articles published between 2005-14 (see Figure 2). It can be observed that until 2012 CSR communication research on SNS was very low. In the year 2013, a slight increase over 2012 and even 2014 is observed, possibly due to the special December edition "on Responsible Business in Social Media" of the *Journal of Business Ethics* with more than half of the publications in that year. It was from 2015 onwards that the number of articles published in the field of study increased considerably, implying that the academic interest in the subject is relatively recent.

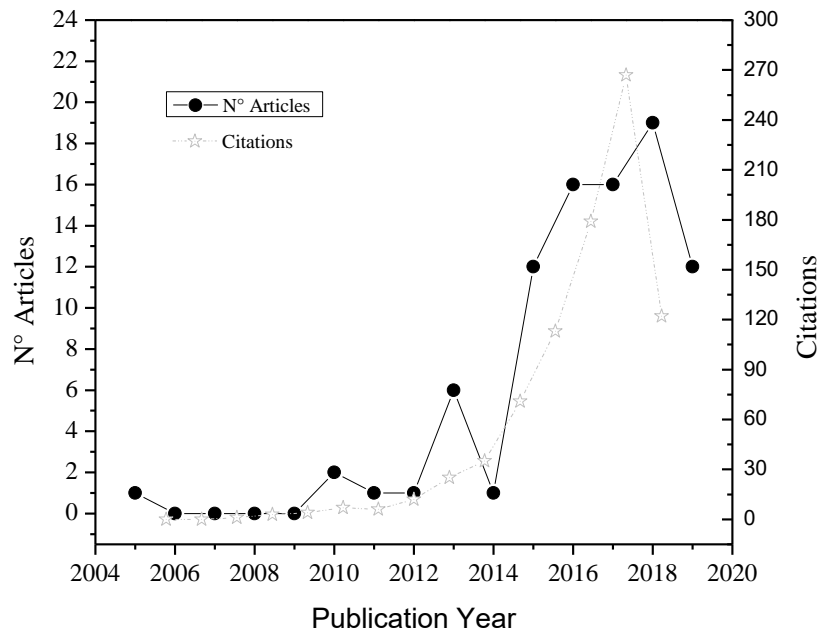


Figure 2. Evolution of publications in CSR communication research in SNS (Own elaboration)

Leading research journals

As there has been greater interest in researching CSR communication on SNS, there has also been an increase in the number of journals published on the subject (see Table 1). Thus, during the first ten years (2005-14) 9 journals published articles referring to the field of study. In this period, the *Journal of Business Ethics* stands out with 7 publications of the total. In contrast, in the last five years (2015-19), 66 journals have published about CSR communication in SNS, among them *Public Relations Review* (9 articles), *Corporate Communications* (5 articles), *Sustainability* (5 articles), *Journal of Business Ethics* (3 articles), and “*Environmental Communication-A Journal of Nature and Culture*” (3 articles). The journals with the highest number of articles in this field of study, published between 2005-19, are *Journal of Business Ethics* and *Public Relations Review* each having 10 articles, although the selected 87 articles are disaggregated into 56 different journals, denoting a high dispersion and a lack of maturity of the field of study (von Krogh, Rossi-Lamastra, & Haefliger, 2012).

Table 1. Characterization of CSR Communication Publications in SNS (Own elaboration)

	2005-2009	2010-2014	2015-2019	Total
N° Articles	1	11	75	87
N° Authors	1	24	190	215
N° Journals	1	8	66	75
N° Authors per articles	1,0	2,18	2,53	2,47
N° Articles per journals	1,0	1,38	1,14	1,16

According to WoS, the main publication categories were *Business* (19 journals [33.9%] and 42 articles), *Communication* (15 journals [26.8%] and 28 articles), *Management* (10 journals [17.9%] and 10 articles) and *Ethics* (2 journals [3.6%] and 11 articles). On the one hand, 85.7% of all journals published only one article, while on the other hand, the two journals (*Public Relations Review* and *Journal Business Ethics*) with the most articles (10 each one) constitute only 3.6% of the total. This shows a high degree of dispersion and the journals that can be considered as reference.

As shown in Figure 3, since 2015 the number of journals where the topic of study has been published has grown significantly over time, which is equivalent to 7.3 times the number of journals from 2005-14 (see Table 1).

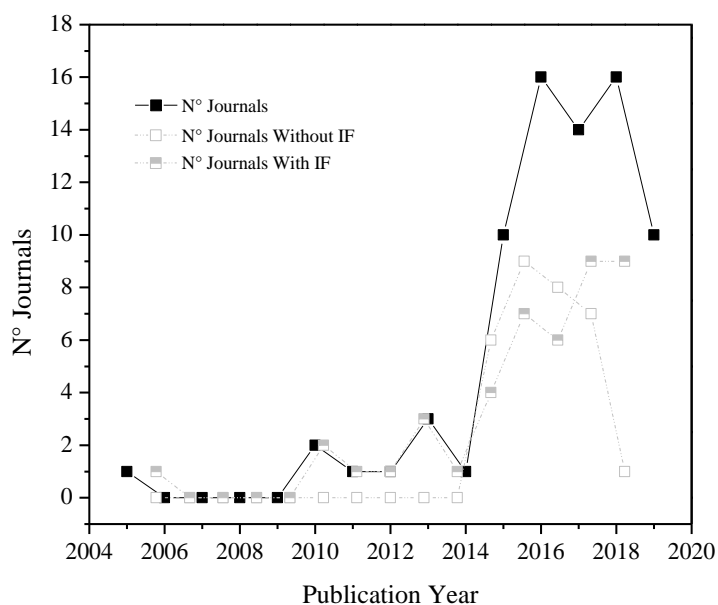


Figure 3. Evolution of CSR communication research journals in SNS (Own elaboration)

Visibility indicator of the journal

We will use the Impact Factor (IF) as an indicator to assess the relative importance of the journal compared to others (Ponomarev, Lawton, Williams, & Schnell, 2014). Of the total number of journals identified in topics referring to CSR communication in social networks, 55.4% have IF. Observing its trend over time (2005-14), it can be observed that the publications were made in journals with IF. It is from 2015 that publication began in journals without IF, although there is still a higher ratio of publication in journals with IF than without (1.2 times). This is seen as a confirmation of academic interest in CSR communication research on SNS.

Table 2. Most cited journals classified by cumulative impact (Own elaboration)

Journal	Subject Categories ¹	N° Articles	Cumulative IF ²	Citations ³
Journal of Business Ethics	Business; Ethics	10	12,528	395 (49,9)
Public Relations Review	Business; Communication	10	7,449	63 (12,9)
Internet Research	Business; Computer Science Information Systems; Telecommunications	2	7,676	9 (3,7)
Accounting Auditing & Accountability Journal	Business; Finance	1	2,732	14 (3,5)
Business Horizons	Business	1	2,588	31 (5,2)
Business & Society	Business	1	3,214	13 (6,5)
Information Processing & Management	Computer Science; Information Systems	1	1,673	7 (0,7)
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	Hospitality; Leisure; Sport & Tourism; Management	1	0,929	23 (2,6)
International Journal of Production Economics	Engineering; Industrial; Manufacturing; Operations Research & Management Science	1	2,782	90 (18,0)
Journal of Communication	Communication	1	3,914	14 (3,5)
Online Information Review	Computer Science; Information Systems	1	1,443	64 (9,1)

¹ Subject categories are from the WoS database;

² journal impact factor (IF) data were retrieved through the WoS Journal Citation Reports function, taking into account the year in which the relevant articles were published; cumulative IF was calculated by adding the IFs of all TM articles published in the journal of interest up until 2019;

³ Citation information refers to the total number of citations received by a journal in reference to its articles on CSR communication in SNS. The data in parentheses indicates the average number of citations per published article.

Table 2 shows that most journals with IFs belong to the Business category, although from 2015 onwards other areas as Telecommunications, Information Sciences, Production, etc., can be found. Thus, the information presented reveals that the field of study is useful for different disciplines and that it is a subject that can be published in journals with a high scientific impact. These trends, taken with moderation, provide an indication of the possible recognition or growing legitimacy of CSR communication on SNS as a viable research topic.

Structure of citations and authors in research

In addition to the IF that a journal may have, it is important to consider the citations that articles published in it receive, as they are an indicator of their popularity and influence (Gallardo-Gallardo, Nijs, Dries, & Gallo, 2015; Garrigos-Simon, Botella-Carrubi, & Gonzalez-Cruz, 2018). As can be seen in Table 3, the article by Du and Vieira (2012) has the highest number of citations (130) and the second in the average number of citations per year (16.25), presenting itself as the most influential article to date.

This article analyzes the characteristics of CSR communication strategies on corporate websites that allow to overcome the skepticism and perceptions of its stakeholders. The results highlight that increasing the credibility of CSR actions by companies is a great challenge in CSR communication issues. However, they consider that effective CSR communication should include, among others, factual arguments on central aspects of the company's commitment to CSR, with two-way messages of participation with the community and with affective stories of processing from empathy (Du & Vieira, 2012).

Table 3. Top 10 authors in the area of study (Own elaboration)

Author	Nº Articles	Citation ¹	Citation/ Article	Index <i>h</i> ²
Du, Shuili	1	130 (16,25)	130,0	8
Vieira, Edward	1	130 (16,25)	130,0	4
Meckel, Miriam	1	68 (6,8)	68,0	6
Ratkai, Melinda	1	64 (9,14)	64,0	2
Fieseler, Christian	2	92 (10,23)	46,0	6
Fleck, Matthes	2	92 (10,23)	46,0	3
Chae, Bounsug	2	91 (18,5)	45,5	13
Bonsón, Enrique	2	71 (10,54)	35,5	4
Etter, Michael	3	53 (13,93)	17,7	5
Rim, Hyejoon	3	16 (4,17)	5,3	3

¹ Citation information refers to the total number of citations received in the author's publications on CSR communication in SNS. The data in parentheses indicates the number of average citations per year;

² The index *h* has been consulted from the WoS database.

The other documents with more citations are Chae (2015), with 90 citations (and the first in the average number of citations per year) Fieseler, Fleck, and Meckel (2010) with 68 citations, and Bonsón and Ratkai (2013) with 64 citations. Chae (2015) develops an analytical framework for extracting information from Twitter in order to analyze communication patterns and their general characteristics. The study highlights the importance of identifying the roles and potential uses of social networks, as well as the proper use of the data that can be collected from them. Fieseler, Fleck, and Meckel (2010) analyzes the structural integration of a blog in a virtual community and highlights the importance of having interactive means of communication where there is an exchange of opinions, promotion of participation, commitment and joint work. And Bonsón & Ratkai (2013) develop a set of metrics validated from theories capable of measuring, among others, reactivity and dialogical communication with stakeholders and the degree of participation. The document highlights the relevance for companies to evaluate social legitimacy through the voluntary disclosure of CSR on corporate Facebook waiting for the so-called "follower effect". The rest of the documents are very diverse in terms of authorship and content.

While Du and Vieira lead the group of researchers in the field of study according to the number of citations obtained (see Table 3), Etter and Rim are the ones who have published the most

articles on CSR communication in SNS (each with three articles). 85.1% of the articles were co-authored. A total of 198 different authors from around the world contributed to the 87 articles in this review. In terms of productivity, 92% of the authors only published one article, while 7% published two articles and 1% published three. This denotes a great diversity of authors in a field of recent interest.

Country Productivity. The location was determined from the institutional affiliation of the principal investigator who has participated in a publication. Thus, CSR communication research in SNS has been published on five continents around 29 different countries. The most productive continents in the field of study are Europe and America, with 42 and 36 articles respectively. In Europe the most productive countries are Spain (8 articles) and England (5 articles). In America, high productivity is concentrated in the United States (33 articles) being the highest number of record of all geographical distribution. In Latin America, academic interest in the subject of study has been shown since 2018 with a publication in which a Colombian researcher participates as principal author. Therefore, although the data show that the institutions of the countries whose official language is English dominate the field of study, it should be mentioned that countries such as Spain, Italy and the Netherlands are among the most productive in terms of CSR communication research in SNS.

Content Analysis

Co-Occurrence Analysis of Keywords. In scientific research, authors generally use keywords to concisely describe their approaches and core areas (Hood & Wilson, 2001). These are analyzed in terms of patterns of occurrence and interrelationships (van Eck & Waltman, 2014). Therefore, the co-occurrence analysis technique has been chosen to identify terms related to social capital that researchers correlate with CSR communication in SNS. It should be noted that key words were combined if they had the same connotation and that generic terms such as country names, continents, cities, type of companies, etc. were omitted. The organized data was imported into VOSviewer, in which the fractional counting method was selected and the minimum number of incidents was set to 2 to cover as many keywords as possible. Using VOSviewer, a keyword match map was produced as shown in Figure 4.

The analysis indicates that the authors used 509 keywords. Among them, 397 were used only once and 112 were used twice. According to Chuang, Huang, and Ho (2007), the large number of one-time keywords probably indicates a lack of continuity in research and a large disparity in research focus. The most frequently used words are shown in Table 4. Excluding the keywords used to search for the documents, the concepts of legitimacy, commitment, reputation, perception, credibility, trust and collaboration would stand out, the latter with few occurrences.

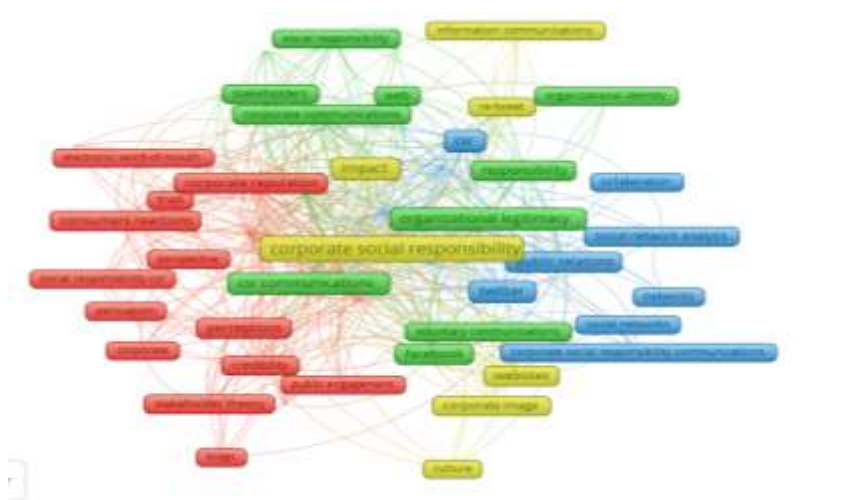


Figure 4. Co-occurrence map of keywords (Own elaboration)

In the bibliometric map (Figure 4), the size of the clusters is determined by different factors, such as the number of keywords, the frequency of occurrences and their weight or similarity index. Each cluster is differentiated by a color. Clusters located in the center of the map indicate a high interrelation of the keywords that formed them, while clusters located in the margins or edges of the map indicated a lower interrelation. Four keyword clusters are obtained from this analysis, allowing the identification of topics of high interest in the study of CSR communication in SNS, between 2005 and 2019.

Table 4. Top keywords. source

Keyword	Occurrence	Keyword	Occurrence
Corporate Social Responsibility	62	Corporate Reputation	14
Social Media	45	Perceptions	9
Communication	24	Consumers Reactions	8
Organizational Legitimacy	16	Credibility	5
CSR Communications	16	Collaboration	5
CSR	15	Corporate Image	4
Engagement	14	Trust	3

(Own preparation)

Cluster 1: Refers to the perspectives of persuasion when companies communicate their social responsibility actions. This group focuses on communication mechanisms, companies' skills in digital communication issues, the results of persuasion such as credibility, reputation, trust and public commitment.

Cluster 2: Refers to the impact of the CSR message on the corporate image. It focuses on the information transmitted, strategies, and the stakeholders' response.

Cluster 3: Refers to the perception of the responsible behaviour of a company the perspective of a system of norms, values and beliefs. This cluster focuses on corporate legitimacy, philanthropy, behaviour and stakeholder engagement and response.

Cluster 4: Refers to the analysis of the relationships between the different types of social networks of the company with its stakeholders. It focuses on the analysis of social networks, interactivity, cooperation and collaboration, among others.

Some articles that make up these clusters have attempted to identify how the characteristics of CSR publications affect the popularity of the brand and have provided empirical evidence on the relationship between this condition and reputation, the corporate image and the relational dimension of social capital (Keh & Xie, 2009; Suh, 2016; Yang & Li, 2016). Some others have explored how users' behaviour towards publications on social networks contributes to trust, commitment and reciprocity (Cho, Furey, & Mohr, 2017; Kollat & Farache, 2017).

Furthermore, a number of them consider that there is still little understanding of the effects of communicating social responsibility initiatives on users' reactions and that the level of genuine commitment, cooperation and awareness of responsible actions among network members remains low (Jones, Comfort, & Hillier, 2007; Pelozo & Shang, 2011; Pomeroy & Dolnicar, 2009). However, most of these studies do not provide guidelines that allows CSR communications to be managed on social network platforms in order to generate added value to the entity, nor mechanisms that promote commitment and cooperation beyond purchasing behavior (Vivek, Beatty, & Morgan, 2012).

Clusters, although not directly focused on the issue of social capital, have elements and characteristics that are the basis for evaluating social capital. Thus, analyzing network conditions as a set of measures could help companies integrate into the market, adapt to the social, economic, political, and legal conditions of a specific context, and access knowledge through network capital (Wu et al., 2018).

Conclusions

This work applies methods derived from bibliometric and the content review of literature of the field of study, in order to identify the elements of social capital in the domain of CSR communications in SNS. Although the study of the subject of research at the academic level is recent, it has been noted that: 1) There has been an increase in publications in recent years and in the number of journals that publish on the subject. That suggest that the trend will continue in the future. 2) The main area of research interest

addressed is "corporate image" followed by "perspectives of persuasion" and, "Responses from stakeholders", among others. 3) There is still no consensus among researchers on the effects of CSR communications on audience reactions. 4) There is no evidence of guidelines for proper management of CSR communications on SNS to generate social capital for the organization. 5) There is no clear understanding of appropriate CSR communication elements that promote commitment and cooperation beyond purchasing behaviour. 6) And, it is not clear why levels of genuine commitment, cooperation and stakeholder awareness are low when companies communicate CSR on SNS.

Limitations and future research

This review of the influence of CSR communication on Social Capital is based on a sample of research articles analyzing the phenomena in the NHS. It does not consider the articles that examined the traditional media, due to the interest of the authors to analyze these relationships in two-way, flexible and dynamic communications. Such as when communicating through SNS.

The content analysis provided has been performed with the aid of bibliometric software, but it would be interesting to go beyond this software-assisted analysis. A manual synthesis and evaluation of the content of the selected documents will be performed by the authors to go deeper into the knowledge provided by them. This analysis will support the identification of the different variables and relations to propose several conceptual models for the study of the subject.

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