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Interactive management of the CSR communication of Argentinian companies on Facebook

Gestión interactiva de la comunicación de la RSE de las empresas de Argentina en Facebook

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Abstract

Facebook has become an important tool for CSR communication. Interactive management of CSR communication on Facebook helps increase the levels of trust and transparency between companies and their stakeholders. Consequently, it could positively influence corporate reputation. The objective of this study is to analyze how Argentinian companies communicate CSR activities to their stakeholders on Facebook. The study includes a specific analysis of CSR activity, content, communication resources and interaction. The objectives were achieved by undertaking content analysis of 4 456 posts by Argentinian companies on the social network in 2015 and 2016. The results indicate that companies are using Facebook to communicate their CSR activities. However, communication is more focused on economic issues than on CSR issues. The communication model is not very interactive, which means that companies are missing out on the capabilities offered by the social network for promoting dialogue about CSR with their stakeholders. A review of CSR communication strategies on Facebook is suggested in order to establish effective relationships with stakeholders.

Resumen

Facebook se ha convertido en una herramienta importante para la comunicación de la RSE. Gestionar de forma interactiva la comunicación de la RSE a través de Facebook ayuda a las empresas a aumentar los niveles de confianza y transparencia con sus públicos, y como consecuencia esto puede contribuir positivamente a la reputación corporativa. El objetivo de este estudio es analizar cómo las empresas de Argentina comunican las actividades de RSE a sus públicos en Facebook. El estudio incluye un análisis específico de la actividad de RSE, los contenidos, los recursos de comunicación y la interacción. Los objetivos fueron alcanzados mediante el análisis de contenido de 4456 posts de empresas de Argentina en la red social en 2015 y 2016. Los resultados indican que las empresas están utilizando Facebook para comunicar sus actividades de RSE. Sin embargo, la comunicación está más centrada en los temas económicos que en los temas de RSE. El modelo de comunicación es poco interactivo, lo cual significa que las empresas están desaprovechando las capacidades de la red social para promover el diálogo sobre la RSE con sus públicos. Se sugiere revisar las estrategias de comunicación de la RSE en Facebook para lograr relaciones efectivas con los públicos.

Keywords | palabras clave

Corporate Social Responsibility, corporate communication, Facebook, companies, interaction.
Responsabilidad Social Empresarial, comunicación corporativa, Facebook, empresas, interacción.

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1. Introduction and State of the Art

In the last decades, Argentina has undergone processes for its insertion in the global economic market. The opening of international markets, together with corporate mergers and acquisitions in Latin America, prompted changes in the business management model in Argentina. The relationship of companies with different actors raised the need to increase confidence and transparency levels, not only in terms of economic benefits, but also in terms of social responsibility.

Any initiative that companies take to achieve trust and legitimacy through responsible behavior must include their capacity to respond to the needs of the public and establish contact with them. Bögel (2015) states that one of the challenges that companies face is to make the public believe in their CSR activities. In this sense, CSR communication becomes a key aspect in promoting and strengthening the relationship of companies with their public through dialogue and active participation.

CSR contributes to integration in the social environment, and its communication favors corporate reputation (Kim, 2017; Lee, 2016). But positive reputation only yields when the public actively participates in the communication of the activities (Eisenegger & Schranz, 2011). Therefore, interaction becomes an important element in the strategic management of CSR communication.

Social networks have changed the way in which CSR is communicated. They have become one-to-one key tools for communicating CSR (Capriotti, 2017; Cortado & Chalmeta, 2016), and modified the way companies have established relationships with the public (Kim, Park & Wertz, 2010; Park & Reber, 2008; Taylor & Kent, 2014). The impact of the Internet and the Web 2.0 on corporate communication has generated an evolution of traditional CSR communication towards interactive CSR communication between organizations and the public. The Web 2.0 increased the ability of users to influence and contribute to CSR content (Kilgour, Sasser & Larke, 2015).

Therefore, the aim of this study is to analyze how companies in Argentina communicate their CSR activities to their audiences on Facebook.

Facebook, the social network with the largest number of monthly active followers (Kemp, 2018), aids in the effective communication of CSR activities to the public. This social network allows close and direct dialogue and interaction between companies and users. However, as stated by Losada-Díaz & Capriotti (2015), the fact that companies have profiles on Facebook does not generate greater participation and visibility. For this to happen, it is necessary to understand social networks as communication tools that serve to establish and maintain relationships with the public, through active participation in the social network. Experts and professionals recommend that companies publish between 1 and 2 posts per day (Jordan, 2017; Patel, 2016). However, studies conclude that the activity level of companies in Facebook is generally low (Devaney, 2015; Quintly, 2016). Thus, the first specific objective is to determine the level of the CSR activity that companies have on Facebook.

The public can have two association levels linked to the companies' two basic roles: the economic role and the social role (Berens & Van Riel, 2004; Carroll, 1999; Haigh, Brubaker & Whiteside, 2013). The economic role is related to economic-legal responsibilities for the production of goods and services. The social role is linked to

social responsibility related to environmental issues, human resource management, as well as economic and social contributions to the community.

Companies are using social networks to communicate information about their social and economic roles. But studies indicate that companies are focusing most of their social network communication on the economic role (Cho, Furey & Mohr, 2016; Haigh *et al.*, 2013; Park & Lee, 2016; Torres, 2017), especially commercial issues (Macnamara, 2016), rather than featuring social issues. Researches show that less than 20% of the content disseminated by companies relate to CSR issues (Cho *et al.*, 2016; Kim, Kim & Hoon Sung, 2014). Thus, as a second specific objective, this paper proposes to determine the type of CSR content that companies are handling on Facebook.

Companies have a number of resources: graphic resources (image, text and emoticons), interactive (links, tags to users and hashtags) and audiovisuals (audio-videos and animated images—GIF) to communicate CSR activities on Facebook. The use of these resources helps disseminate content in an attractive manner, generating interaction and dialogue with the public. Among the available resources, audiovisuals stand out, since they are more effective to increase engagement (Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). Despite the strong potential and growth in the use of videos on the Internet and social networks (Fosk, 2017; Smith, 2017; Valentine, 2017), graphic resources are more commonly used to disseminate content on social networks. Thus, as a third specific objective, this paper analyzes the communication resources used by companies to present CSR content on Facebook.

Facebook's ability to generate dialogue between companies and the public allows CSR communication to be interactive as opposed to simply informative. To generate dialogue and interaction on published content, Facebook offers 3 options that can be used simultaneously by users: *likes*, *shares* and *comments*. *Likes* are the passive way of voicing appreciation of the contents without verbal expression, *shares* allow users to become voluntary spokespersons of the messages of other users to their own social groups, and *comments* help to establish direct conversations between users (Abitbol & Lee, 2017).

Despite the interest and willingness of users to interact and discuss the contents of companies (Cho, Schweickart & Haase, 2014), companies mainly disseminate informative content on Facebook (Shin, Pang & Kim, 2015). Thus, as the fourth specific objective, this paper proposes to study the types of interactions generated on CSR contents for these companies on Facebook.

2. Material and methods

The objects of study are the main companies in Argentina. For the sample, those with the best reputation were selected, as they are considered leaders in communication management issues and promoters of innovation in digital communication.

For this purpose, the annual *mercoEmpresas* corporate reputation study prepared by MERCO was taken as a reference, and the companies present in the Argentina ranking were selected. Companies with stability in the market for four consecutive years (from 2013 to 2016) were chosen, to avoid selecting enterprises with recent success. Thus, the final sample included 26 companies: Arcor, Cervecería and Maltería Quilmes,

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Mercedes Benz, Rio de la Plata Mills, Volkswagen, Toyota, Nestlé, Banco Galicia, Kimberly Clark, American Express, Mastellone Hnos. (La Serenissima), Orange Card, Bayer, PSA Citroen, PSA Peugeot, Sony, Samsung, General Motors, SanCor, Santander Rio, Ford, Renault, BBVA French, Techint Group, Bagó, Apple.

To select the profiles of companies on Facebook, the official corporate *fanpages* of this social network were considered at the national level. The *fanpages* were located through direct links to Facebook in the companies' official websites, or through popular Internet search engines. The profiles that could not be verified were discarded. Finally, 23 *fanpages* from Argentina were detected. This indicates that the most of the companies have a Facebook presence (more than 88.5%).

The units of analysis were the posts published in the corporate *fanpages* of the companies in Argentina in 2015 and 2016. Publications were selected during 2 weeks per month for 12 months: from January to June 2015 (posts from odd weeks) and from July to December 2016 (posts from even weeks). The final sample consisted of 4 456 posts.

To achieve the objectives set for this study, four research questions (RQ) were established, based on «activity», «content», «communication resources» and «interaction».

RQ 1: What level of CSR activity do companies have on Facebook? (Activity)

RQ2: What types of CSR content are disseminated by companies on Facebook? (Contents)

RQ3: What kind of resources do companies use to communicate their CSR activities on Facebook? (Communication Resources)

RQ4: Are companies using Facebook to interact and discuss their CSR activities? (Interaction)

Thus, four categories of analysis were defined based on the established research questions (RQ); these were developed and tested in previous studies (*v.gr.* Capriotti, Carretón, & Castillo, 2016; Losada-Díaz & Capriotti, 2015).

For RQ1, the category of «activity» was developed, which enables the determination of CSR activity levels obtained by calculating the average of daily and weekly publications on Facebook.

For RQ2, the «content» category was established, which enables the identification of the main topics discussed by the companies. For this, 3 key dimensions were identified: (a) Business issues: issues related to the business, commercial and corporate activities of companies. For this dimension, four topics were identified: strategies (information related to business policies and strategies), results (information on business, financial, economic and stock market results), supply (information related to the characteristics of products, services and brands) and innovation (information on the key aspects of creative and productive innovation); (b) CSR issues: issues related to the company's daily CSR activities. For this dimension, three topics were identified: integrity (information linked to commitments, strategies, policies and responsible practices at the level of the company's management, commercial and marketing management), work (information on labor aspects and employment of the company, information on the commitments, strategies, policies and responsible practices at the management level of the organization's human resources department), and citizenship (information related to the commitments, strategies, policies, responsible practices for the company

at a social and environmental level); and (c) Context issues: issues related to the general situation of the company. For this dimension, three topics were identified: general context (aspects that do not have to do with the business activity), sectorial context (aspects that have to do with the business activity) and relational context (aspects that have to do with the relationship of the company with the stakeholders).

For RQ3, the category of «communication resources» was developed, which allows determining the resources used for the dissemination of contents. Thus, the following graphical resources (text, image and/or emoticon), interactive resources (links, hashtags and/or tags to users), and audiovisual (animated image and/or audio-video) were defined. In this analysis, more than one possible resource can be included.

For RQ4, the category «interaction» was established, which allows evaluating the tools available on Facebook to promote interaction on the contents published by companies in their corporate *fanpages*. Thus, 3 analysis dimensions were defined: (1) Level of Support: determined by the volume of *likes* obtained in the posts; (2): Viralization level: determined by the volume of *shares* obtained in the posts; and (3) Conversation level: determined by the volume of *comments* from the companies and users in the posts.

The methodology used was the content analysis of *posts*. A monitoring tool available on the Internet called Fanpage Karma® was used to collect data. The approach of the categories of analysis allowed the design of a template on Excel, in which the sample data were overturned and codified.

3. Analysis and results

The results are presented below, based on the research questions (RQ) developed in the methodology. The findings indicate that companies have a very good presence on Facebook. Almost 90% of the companies analyzed are present in the social network studied (88.5%).

3.1. Activity of companies on Facebook

The results regarding activity (RQ1) indicate that the companies have an activity level that is quite high. At least 1 post daily per company from Argentina is published, between 7 and 8 posts per week (see table 1).

Tabla 1. Activity level of companies on Facebook

Activity	Total	Business	CSR	Context
General Total	4 456	3 300	480	669
Daily average	1.1	0.8	0.1	0.2
Weekly average	7.5	5.5	0.8	1.1

From the subjects covered by companies on Facebook (Table 1), it is detected that about 1 CSR post is published per week, compared to an average of 5 and 6 business posts per week. That is, CSR issues are addressed much less frequently than

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commercial issues, and somewhat less than context issues. While publications on CSR issues represent 1 in 7 or 8 posts, business topics represent 5 or 6 of every 7 or 8 posts, so the latter are much closer to the suggested average.

3.2. Content disseminated by companies on Facebook

In relation to the content (RQ2), the results show that most of the posts refer to business topics. That is, companies focus on communicating economic issues. Almost 75% of posts report on business, commercial and corporate activities. The presence of posts related to CSR issues corresponds to a seventh part of business topics. About 10% of posts talk about social and environmental responsibilities. Although the difference is not significant, it should also be noted that companies grant more priority to contextual issues than to the current communication of CSR activities (see table 2).

Tabla 2. Content disseminated by companies on Facebook (%)

Content	%
Business issues	74.1
CSR issues	10.9
Context issues	15.0

Table 3 shows that companies concentrate their communication mainly on citizenship issues, i.e, social and environmental commitments and responsibilities (71%). Sometimes they disseminate messages on labor and employment aspects of the company, as well as commitments, policies and responsible practices at the level of human resources management (18.5%), and virtually never talk about responsible policies and practices at the level of company management or commercial and marketing management of the organization (10.4%).

From the total number of publications related to business issues, around 70% respond to the commercial offer, i.e, to the characteristics of the products, services and brands (Table 3). Business policies and strategies are also dealt with quite frequently (22%). Productive innovation and financial results are rarely addressed.

Tabla 3. CSR and business contents (%)

Content	Dimensions	%
Business	Business strategy	22.0
	Financial results	0.1
	Commercial offer	69.8
	Productive innovation	8.0
CSR	Government and ethics	10,4
	HR and employment	18,5
	Social and environmental commitment	71,0

3.3. Communication resources used by companies on Facebook

Based on the results of communication resources (RQ3), it can be seen that companies mainly use graphic resources to create and communicate their CSR content on Facebook (see table 4). Virtually all publications have text (96.8%), include images (82.3%), and use emoticons very rarely (14.3%). This is a relevant fact as they present information in a friendly and informal way, while helping to transmit emotions and feelings more effectively.

Audiovisual resources are the least used by companies to share information about their CSR activities. The presence of audio-videos and animated images is approximately 15%. The videos found represent around 6 times less the percentage of images, that is, that there is one video per every 6/7 images.

On the other hand, an outstanding percentage of posts contain *hashtags* (46%) and *links* (51%). This indicates that at least half of the posts include one or more interactive resources, promoting the interaction of users on the CSR activities of the companies.

Tabla 4.Communication resources of companies on Facebook (%)

Recursos	Aspectos	%
Gráficos	Texto	96,8
	Imagen fija	82,3
	Emoticones	14,3
Audiovisuales	Imagen animada	7,5
	Audio-video	12,3
Interactivos	Etiqueta a usuarios	22,1
	Hashtags	46,0
	Link	51,7

3.4. Interacción generada en los contenidos de las empresas en Facebook

Finally, the interactions results (RQ4) show that interactions generated in the publications of the companies mainly rely on the high level of support obtained. The volume of *likes* obtained exceeds in a very significant way the volume of *shares* and *comments* obtained on CSR activities (table 5). While the level of support reaches 90% of the interactions generated by users, the level of viralization and conversation as a whole barely reaches 10% of the interactions. In addition, in relation to the total of *comments* (4%), almost all respond to comments from users. This indicates that users have an interest in discussing CSR activities of companies, but companies have very little interest in intervening in the conversations. Practically no comments from the companies are found in their own publications (0.4%).

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Tabla 5. Interaction of companies on Facebook (%)

Interaction Level	%
Level of support (likes)	90,3
Viralization level (shares)	5,3
Conversation level (comments)	4,4
Comments from companies	0,4
Comments from users	4,0

4. Discussion and conclusions

Social networks have changed the communication of CSR. Facebook has become a very important tool for companies by modifying relations with the public. This social network allows companies to communicate their CSR activities, generating dialogue and establishing relationships with their public. The communication of CSR activities on Facebook helps to promote relationships with users and, as a result, helps to consolidate a corporate reputation. However, this is possible if there is an active participation of the companies in the social network.

Companies have a significant presence on Facebook, and the results of their «activity» (RQ1) indicate that they are publishing content on a regular basis. This frequency is minimally adequate according to the average number of publications recommended by professionals and experts (1 and 2 *posts* daily per company), and corresponds to the results of other previous studies (Estudio de Comunicación, 2017).

As for the «contents» (RQ2), it is detected that the CSR issues are very rarely discussed by companies in Argentina. The companies are using Facebook mainly to disseminate information on commercial issues (specifically the communication of products, services and brands offered). These results reaffirm what was stated by Eisenegger and Schranz (2011) and Haigh *et al.* (2013), who pointed out that the contents presented by companies are focused on business. The communication of CSR activities is rarely discussed by the companies, and if it happens the focus is mainly on social and environmental commitments. Issues of integrity and work are limited.

Regarding «communication resources» (RQ3), it is observed that companies continue to have a firm tendency to use graphic resources when creating and disseminating CSR activities. Although Facebook has made available a series of resources that help interacting with users, such as audiovisual and interactive contents (Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013), companies continue to use mainly images and text. This shows that the possibilities offered by Facebook to promote dialogue with users are being largely ignored.

In relation to «interaction» (RQ4), it is clear that there is a strong interest on the part of the stakeholders to interact on the publications of the companies, but very little interest of the companies to keep a dialogue with stakeholders. The level of user support is high; however the level of viralization and conversation is quite low. This may be the result of two possible reasons. On the one hand, companies may not be

promoting enough interaction through the creation of CSR content, including interactive and audiovisual resources, which generate a higher level of commitment by the stakeholder; on the other hand, because they are using the social network as a channel for disseminating information and not for communicating. A study suggests that the conversations and interactions generated by companies in social networks affect the public's attitude towards and confidence in companies (Kim, 2017), and the fact that Argentinian companies practically do not intervene in conversations with users affects relations with the public.

Thus, companies are using Facebook to communicate their CSR activities, but their level of activity in the social network is low. In addition, they are communicating from a business perspective rather than from a CSR scope, with a unidirectional communication model.

When Facebook is included in the communication of CSR strategies, companies should understand it as a key instrument to interact and engage with their stakeholders; thus, maintaining active participation in CSR issues and dialoguing with the public are basic aspects of communication management on Facebook. However, companies are failing to take advantage of Facebook's dialogical capabilities to establish relationships with their public, and to discuss their CSR activities. Their presence in the social network is aimed at achieving greater visibility. Therefore, companies in Argentina should review their communication strategies on Facebook in order to generate dialogue with the public. This allows knowing the opinions, interests and expectations of the clients regarding CSR activities, getting them involved and participating in these issues in order to increase transparency and contribute to corporate reputation.

This study has contributed to the development of an integrative methodology that allows analyzing the dialogic communication of CSR on Facebook. The study was applied to the companies with the best corporate reputation in Argentina and their results show the situation. However, in future research this methodology could be applied to other social networks such as Twitter, Instagram, etc., and/or to other organizations in different countries of the world to see if the results can be replicated with other organizations and social networks.

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