

Managing communication on synchronous social networks for corporate social responsibility

Gestión de la comunicación en redes sociales sincrónicas para la responsabilidad social corporativa

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Abstract

This article presents research that aimed to analyze the management of communication on synchronous social networks for corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the Venezuelan petrochemical industry. The study employed a mixed-methods or complementary epistemological approach, under a descriptive, analytical, field, non-experimental, and cross-sectional design. The population consisted of nine corporate managers of Public Affairs and Social Development, who were administered two instruments: a 16-question Likert-type questionnaire and a structured interview with three open-ended questions, both validated by five content experts. The results indicate that YouTube is the least used synchronous social network by managers to comment on communication products and gather employee feedback. Regarding CSR, its external dimensions are based on organizational values and principles such as inclusion, a sense of belonging, identity, and commitment, with industrial production and the sustainability of quality standards as its central focus. In conclusion, the management of synchronous social media communication in the Venezuelan petrochemical industry reflects the priority that Public Affairs and Social Development managers place on interacting with audiences and disseminating relevant information, with a clear preference for audio-based social media platforms.

Keywords: management, social media, corporate social responsibility

Resumen

Este artículo presenta una investigación cuyo objetivo fue analizar la gestión de la comunicación en redes sociales sincrónicas para la responsabilidad social corporativa (RSC) en la Industria Petroquímica de Venezuela. El estudio utilizó un enfoque epistemológico mixto o complementario, bajo un diseño descriptivo, analítico, de campo, no experimental y transeccional. La población estuvo conformada por nueve gerentes corporativos de Asuntos Públicos y Desarrollo Social, a quienes se aplicaron dos instrumentos: un cuestionario de 16 preguntas tipo Likert y una entrevista estructurada con tres preguntas abiertas, ambos validados por cinco expertos en contenido. Los resultados indican que YouTube es la red social sincrónica menos utilizada por los gerentes para comentar productos comunicacionales y conocer opiniones de los trabajadores. En cuanto a la RSC, sus dimensiones externas se fundamentan en valores y principios organizacionales como la inclusión, el sentido de pertenencia, la identidad y el compromiso, cuyo eje central es la producción industrial y la sostenibilidad de los estándares de calidad. Como conclusión principal, se establece que la gestión de la comunicación en redes sociales sincrónicas en la Industria Petroquímica de Venezuela refleja la prioridad que los gerentes de Asuntos Públicos y Desarrollo

Social otorgan a la interacción con públicos y la difusión de información relevante, con una preferencia clara por las redes sociales de audio.

Palabras clave: gestión, redes sociales, responsabilidad social corporativa

Introduction

In Latin America, there exists a significant differentiation between the application and understanding of the extent to which social media can disseminate social responsibility and its connection to the communication of such practices. Consequently, large corporations face the challenge of adopting an emerging communication policy that ensures an accurate situational analysis of their environment while implementing effective communication tools to inform both internal and external stakeholders about the rollout of corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, projects, and actions. This is essential for stakeholders to evaluate and assess the social, environmental, and economic impacts generated by the messages received.

Today, the conventionality that companies display in using communicative tools to interact with their audiences reveals a lack of effectiveness in message delivery, particularly in conveying the social benefits they create in their environments, beyond mere economic interests (Moreno et al., 2021). In this context, Acosta et al. (2018) assert that CSR communication necessitates a stronger competitive position, and thus, a more robust communication strategy is required to foster and develop reciprocal commitments between the corporation and society.

Uranga and Vargas (2020) underscore that many simultaneous media channels are underutilized to promote CSR programs. Complementarily, Gamboa and Álvarez (2023) note that platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are still being used at a nascent stage by companies to communicate and gauge public opinion regarding their responsible actions. Pizarro (2018) attributes these shortcomings to the ineffective implementation of social media to communicate CSR outcomes.

An intriguing insight comes from the Corporate Reputation Center in Santiago (CRCS, 2020), which states that while social media can provide a valuable synchronous platform for monitoring and promptly responding to the shifting expectations of stakeholders, its implementation for communicating CSR results remains rudimentary. This diagnosis aligns with that of the Centro de Trabajo y Familia de la Universidad de Los Andes (2021), which emphasizes that, although a good reputation can be built through these platforms, strategies for immediate response to notifications and timely message feedback are often neglected, leading to uncertainty among recipients.

In this regard, Sánchez (2019) highlights that one of the fundamental issues is that companies are more interested in using social media to identify brand or image problems than in ensuring their audiences feel valued and understood through their messages or in creating opportunities for interaction grounded in social projection. Villavicencio (2020) points out that social media represent a dynamic form of social interaction among users, facilitating communication between groups and institutions with common interests and needs, thereby fostering the construction of virtual societies. Within these interactions, physical presence between sender and receiver is unnecessary, but responsible synchronous communication is promoted.

This same author notes that technological communicative tools are indispensable for digital communication. In this sense, platforms like Facebook, Twitter/X, and Instagram facilitate Internet communication, enabling users to interact, express opinions, share multimedia content, collaborate on digital projects, and create and edit files.

Hudgson and Hoy (2018) emphasize the importance of communication through networks such as videoconferencing for meetings and presentations where participants are located in different places. Flórez et al. (2016) further assert that social media technology fosters open communication. Lizcano and Lombana (2019) examine CSR from a technological perspective, highlighting that it relies on empathetic interaction and trust with stakeholders; this interaction can be managed efficiently, stably, and sustainably, projecting an image of social coherence and genuine commitment.

Complementarily, Da Costa et al. (2022) attribute significant importance to CSR communication through the mass and transparent dissemination of practices; likewise, Guevara and Piedra (2020) identify this communication as a key factor in creating value and ensuring corporate longevity. However, González (2024) argues that, in the digital context, corporate communication has undergone drastic transformations due to the influence of social media; nonetheless, managers tend to prioritize the enhancement of reputational image over genuine social commitment.

Within this digital landscape, notable challenges emerge, such as managing the privacy and security of user data related to CSR, in order to prevent unethical practices and mitigate negative social impacts (Quinaluisa et al., 2023). A clear example of this is that, although companies utilize Facebook as a channel to communicate their CSR activities, a more interactive and dialogic approach is necessary (Capriotti & Zeller, 2020). The alignment

between CSR processes and communication management is essential, yet its significance is often downplayed (Durán et al., 2021).

Therefore, one of the most evident errors in managing CSR communication is the lack of public consumer awareness (Reyes & Rodríguez, 2018), which hinders different audiences from understanding CSR initiatives (Díez et al., 2021). This limitation reduces the role organizations should play in informing and fostering knowledge about their activities among stakeholders (García, 2017). Few companies master the art of effectively communicating their social responsibility, leading to constant critical scrutiny from society (Treviño & Abreu, 2019; Beltramo, 2018).

In light of the above, the review and association of content regarding the management of communication in synchronous social media for CSR led to the central inquiry: How is communication managed in synchronous social media for corporate social responsibility in the petrochemical industry of Venezuela? Based on this question, the study aims to analyze this communicative management within this strategic sector.

Methodology

This research adopted a mixed or complementary epistemological approach, as proposed by Hernández-Sampieri and Mendoza (2018). This approach combines the quantification of numerical data, characteristic of the quantitative paradigm, with the collection of descriptive and subjective data typical of the qualitative paradigm. Both types of data were initially analyzed independently before being integrated to enrich the final results, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

A descriptive research design was employed (Arias, 2012), focusing on analyzing and detailing the specific characteristics of the processes and phenomena being investigated. The analytical level allowed for the examination of relationships among variables without direct intervention. The study was conducted using a field design that was non-experimental and cross-sectional (Palella & Martins, 2012), as data were collected at a specific moment without deliberate manipulation of any variables, ensuring the natural observation of events.

The study population comprised nine corporate managers responsible for Public Affairs and Social Development, affiliated with various strategic locations: the José Antonio Anzoátegui Petrochemical Complex in Barcelona (Anzoátegui State), the Hugo Chávez Complex in Morón (Carabobo State), the Corporate Headquarters in Valencia (Carabobo State), and the Ana María Campos Complex in the Miranda Municipality (Zulia State). This population was selected because the subjects possess central knowledge and responsibilities concerning the studied variables, thereby ensuring the relevance of the collected information.

Since all members of the population were located in geographically accessible areas for the researchers, there was no need for probabilistic or non-probabilistic sampling. A census of the population was conducted, ensuring the total inclusion of the study units and the representativeness of the results at the population level (Arias, 2012).

Data collection involved two complementary instruments: a structured questionnaire featuring a guide with 16 items designed with a five-option Likert scale — Always (A), Almost Always (AA), Sometimes (S), Rarely (R), and Never (N) — aimed at the variable "Management of communication in synchronous social media"; and a structured interview guided by three open-ended questions, focusing on the variable "Corporate Social Responsibility." Both instruments underwent a rigorous content validation process, consulting the opinions and judgments of five experts in the field to ensure the reliability and relevance of the items for measuring the studied variables.

For the quantitative data analysis obtained from the questionnaire, a measurement scale was established through categories and ranges, facilitating the quantification and comparison of responses to identify trends and levels of management in digital communication. For the qualitative analysis of the interviews, an in-depth analysis strategy was employed, which involved synthesizing the collected information and organizing it into thematic categories. This technique allowed for an interpretive and integrative analysis, favoring a detailed understanding of the perceptions and experiences that provide a complementary view to the quantitative data (Borda et al., 2017).

With this methodological design, the research successfully integrated the quantitative and qualitative approaches, leveraging the strengths of both to holistically address the variables under study without sacrificing precision or depth in the analysis.

Results and discussion

Table 1

Statistical results for the variable management of communication in synchronous social media

Indicators	% Range	Category
Facebook	44%	Weak
Twitter/X	58%	Good
Instagram	56%	Good
YouTube	39%	Good
Online Conferencing	76%	Very Good
Audio	78%	Very Good
Videoconferencing	77%	Very Good

Source: Authors' own elaboration (2025)

Analysis of quantitative data

Table 1 reveals that a significant majority of the surveyed managers attribute a weak utilization rating to Facebook, with 44% of responses indicating infrequent or ineffective use. This suggests that this synchronous social media platform seldom achieves effectiveness within the Public Affairs and Social Development Departments in reaching excellence in communication management. In contrast, the indicator for Twitter/X indicates that, with 58% of responses categorized as "sometimes," this platform is moderately employed as a synchronous tool for managing both internal and external communication.

Regarding Instagram, the frequency of 56% suggests certain weaknesses, particularly in its ability to cultivate active communities or user groups that promote effective relationships and allow for continuous real-time information exchange. This highlights limitations in implementing Instagram as a synchronous tool for commenting on communication products and actively gauging employee opinions. YouTube, with the lowest frequency at 39%, indicates that this digital medium is rarely considered a viable option for real-time communication or the immediate transmission and reception of relevant organizational information.

In contrast to these platforms, the indicators related to audio, online conferences, and videoconferencing demonstrate high percentages of preference, achieving 78%, 76%, and 77%, respectively. These results reflect a clear inclination among corporate managers towards using tools that facilitate direct and multifunctional synchronous communication. First, audio is emphasized as an essential synchronous medium, widely utilized within the internal communication management expectations of the industry. Second, videoconferencing emerges as the preferred tool for enabling immediate real-time information exchange, further supported by the availability of hardware that enhances live connectivity for meetings, training, or activity coordination.

These findings suggest that, although more traditional or popular platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube are recognized, within the specific corporate context of the petrochemical sector, there is a preference for media that facilitate direct, fluid, and real-time interaction, thus contributing to a more efficient and effective communication management strategy.

Interpretation of qualitative data

Regarding the variable "Corporate Social Responsibility" (CSR), the indicators of image, reputation, and differentiation allowed for the identification of perceptions and evaluations that managers assign to the organization's projection in these areas. The collected opinions reveal that the image of the Petrochemical Industry is founded on key concepts such as inclusion, a sense of belonging, corporate identity, and social commitment, pillars that management seeks to strengthen to consolidate positive identification with communities and external stakeholders.

Managers regard corporate image as a vital element for the social positioning of the organization; thus, they emphasize that all employees must take responsibility for the accurate representation of the company. They believe that this image should be reinforced through strategic advertising campaigns that expand visibility and recognition. The value that various digital platforms and social media contribute to keeping all stakeholders informed about the active presence and national scope of Venezuela's Petrochemical Industry is also highlighted.

From a strategic perspective, managers agree that, as a state-owned company, it is essential to promote and execute social responsibility at the national level as part of corporate planning. Over the past four years, the company has significantly improved both its internal and external projection through organizational consolidation and the enhancement of industrial production, positively impacting its image and reputation.

Concerning social responsibility, while the managers acknowledge important advancements, they also identify ongoing challenges in standardizing a communication management model that is fully aligned with CSR philosophy. They consider that the company's favorable reputation is best reflected through its human capital, particularly due to the discipline and commitment demonstrated by employees towards national objectives. Respondents emphasize the importance of fostering and encouraging collective and social practices within the organization to contribute to an excellent work environment and establish effective social policies toward the community.

There is also a noted need to intensify social initiatives and bolster foundations that highlight the essential role played by Pequiven, continuously showcasing each labor effort, social action, or project implemented in the areas of influence. The ongoing dissemination of these activities through various media and platforms is considered key to building trust both at the corporate level and within the community, thus reinforcing the values, objectives, and quality standards inherent to the petrochemical industry.

The distinct reputation of the Petrochemical Industry arises from its productive outcomes, social commitment, and the efficient policies it implements to address the needs of the population, especially through the mass distribution of products and values education for its workers. The strategic role of social media and corporate digital platforms is also emphasized as tools to strengthen the institutional brand.

Finally, there is a clear necessity to increase investment in corporate social responsibility to further enhance the company's positioning impact and consolidate the quality of its processes and products.

These results align with the ideas of Lizcano and Lombana (2017), who argue that the responsibilities of business leaders should be directed toward formulating policies, making decisions, and monitoring actions that are consistent with social values and objectives. In this regard, CSR approaches encompass aspects such as institutional maturity, organizational reputation and performance, talent management, relevant strategy design, and responsible financial administration.

However, weaknesses related to corporate image were also identified, with managers agreeing on the need for all employees to safeguard the company's image and for it to be constantly reinforced through advertising campaigns. The importance of promoting and executing CSR within the framework of national strategic planning is emphasized, and it is acknowledged that further progress is needed to standardize a comprehensive management model that is encompassed within CSR to maintain positioning and uphold high standards of corporate quality.

Conclusions

In the Petrochemical Industry of Venezuela, the management of communication in synchronous social media clearly reflects the privilege and preference that Public Affairs and Social Development managers assign to audio-based social networks. This preference is grounded in the frequent use of this tool to interact with diverse stakeholders, facilitate immediate communication, and promptly inform about events. Audio, as a synchronous medium, thus becomes an effective channel, primarily because it enables meetings and idea exchange through mobile devices, providing flexibility and dynamism to communication management.

Secondly, the prevalence of videoconferencing is noted, which effectively facilitates the real-time flow of information. The widespread availability of suitable hardware and live connectivity contribute to this modality being valued as an indispensable tool for corporate exchange, enhancing both internal and external communication within the organization.

Conversely, the synchronous social media platform least utilized by these managers is YouTube, which was predominantly described as a platform that is "rarely" employed for commenting on communication products or gathering employee opinions. This low utilization reflects an underexploitation of a network that, due to its audiovisual characteristics, could significantly enhance content dissemination and feedback. Additionally, Facebook exhibited weaknesses in its use, indicating disagreements or limitations in interactions with specific audiences and the ability to foster effective social ties.

Regarding the corporate social responsibility (CSR) of the Petrochemical Industry of Venezuela, it was concluded that key indicators—image, reputation, and differentiation—are solidly based on organizational values and principles such as inclusion, a sense of belonging, corporate identity, and social commitment. These values, closely linked to industrial productive activity and the sustainability of quality standards, form the fundamental basis upon which the company projects and differentiates itself in its environment.

Overall, it is concluded that the management of communication in synchronous social media presents significant weaknesses, particularly concerning the lack of unified criteria and clear strategies for CSR within the national petrochemical sector. This diagnosis reveals a considerable challenge: to design and standardize a comprehensive model for communication management in social media that addresses the demands and particularities of CSR, thereby optimizing coherence, effectiveness, and the impact of corporate actions in this area.

The results also encourage the recommendation to implement business strategies aimed at enhancing technological investment. Such investments must ensure optimal capacity for timely and reliable message transmission and reception, enabling communication to become a transferable and strategic resource for the positioning of the Petrochemical Industry. It is essential that this process involve individuals with influence and decision-making power within the organization, so they can actively contribute to achieving corporate goals, thereby strengthening communicational leadership and its impact on reputation and business performance.

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