

Managing Synchronous Social Media Communications for Corporate Social Responsibility

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

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Abstract

The main objective of this article is to analyze the management of communication on synchronous social media within the framework of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the Venezuelan Petrochemical Industry. To this end, a mixed or complementary epistemological approach was employed, oriented toward descriptive, analytical research, with a non-experimental, cross-sectional field design. The study population consisted of nine corporate Public Affairs and Social Development managers, who were administered two data collection instruments: a questionnaire composed of 16 Likert-type questions and a structured interview with three open-ended questions. Among the main findings, it was identified that the synchronous social media least used by managers is YouTube, while managers showed a clear preference for audio social media. Finally, the study concludes that there are weaknesses in the management of communication through synchronous social media, attributable to the lack of unified criteria regarding Corporate Social Responsibility within the Venezuelan petrochemical industry. This situation poses the challenge of designing a social media communication management model that strengthens CSR in this sector.

Keywords: management, social media, corporate social responsibility.

Resumen

El presente artículo tiene como objetivo central analizar la gestión de la comunicación en redes sociales sincrónicas dentro del marco de la Responsabilidad Social Empresarial (RSE) en la Industria Petroquímica de Venezuela. Para ello, se empleó un enfoque epistemológico mixto o complementario, orientado a una investigación descriptiva a nivel analítico, con un diseño de campo no experimental y de corte transversal. La población estudiada estuvo conformada por nueve gerentes corporativos de Asuntos Públicos y Desarrollo Social, a quienes se aplicaron dos instrumentos de recolección de datos: un cuestionario compuesto por 16 preguntas tipo Likert y una entrevista estructurada con tres preguntas abiertas. Entre los principales hallazgos, se identificó que la red social sincrónica menos utilizada por los gerentes es YouTube, mientras que los gestores mostraron una clara preferencia por las redes sociales de audio. Finalmente, el estudio concluye que existen debilidades en la gestión de la comunicación a través de redes sociales sincrónicas, atribuibles a la falta de unificación de criterios en torno a la Responsabilidad Social Empresarial dentro de la Industria Petroquímica venezolana. Esta situación plantea el desafío de diseñar un modelo de gestión de la comunicación en redes sociales que fortalezca la RSE en este sector.

Palabras clave: gestión, redes sociales, responsabilidad social corporativa.

Introduction

In Latin America, there is a significant difference between the application and understanding of the reach of social media for disseminating social responsibility and its connection to communicating corporate practices. For this reason, large corporations face the challenge of adopting an emerging communication policy that ensures an accurate situational analysis of the environment and implements effective communication tools to inform their internal and external audiences about the implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs, projects, and actions. This is fundamental for these audiences to value and judge the social, environmental, and economic impacts generated by the messages they receive.

Currently, the conventional approach companies use to interact with their audiences demonstrates limited effectiveness in message dissemination, especially when it comes to communicating the social benefits they generate in the community, prioritizing these benefits over their economic interests (Moreno et al., 2021). In this regard, Acosta et al. (2018) describe how CSR communication requires a better competitive position and, therefore, a more robust communication policy that allows for generating and developing reciprocal commitments between the corporation and society.

Uranga and Vargas (2020) point out that many simultaneous communication channels are being underutilized for disseminating CSR programs. Similarly, Gamboa and Álvarez (2023) observe that platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are only beginning to be used by companies to communicate and gauge public opinion regarding their responsible actions. According to Pizarro (2018), these shortcomings stem from the lack of effective implementation of social media for communicating corporate social responsibility results.

An interesting finding comes from the Santiago Corporate Reputation Center (CRCS, 2020), which states that, although social media can be a valuable synchronous tool for monitoring and responding promptly to the evolving expectations of stakeholders, its implementation for communicating corporate social responsibility results remains in its early stages. This assessment aligns with that of the Center for Work and Family at the University of Los Andes (2021), which highlights that, while a good reputation can be built through these platforms, strategies for promptly addressing notifications and providing timely feedback are often neglected, generating doubts among recipients.

Regarding this, Sánchez (2019) emphasizes that one of the problems lies in the fact that companies are more interested in using social media to identify brand or image issues than in cultivating audiences that feel valued and understood through their messages or in creating opportunities for interaction based on social engagement. Villavicencio (2020) points out that social networks constitute a dynamic form of social interaction among users, facilitating communication between groups and institutions with shared interests and needs, and giving rise to the construction of virtual societies. In these interactions, physical presence between sender and receiver is not necessary, but responsible synchronous communication is promoted.

This same author also notes that technological communication tools are indispensable for digital communication. In this sense, networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram facilitate online communication, allowing users to interact, express opinions, share multimedia, and collaborate on digital projects, as well as create and edit files.

Hudgson and Hoy (2018) emphasize the relevance of communication in networks such as videoconferencing for meetings and presentations, where participants are in different locations. Flórez et al. (2016), for their part, highlight that social media technology promotes open communication. Lizcano and Lombana (2019) address CSR from a technological perspective, emphasizing that it is based on empathetic interaction and trust with stakeholders; this interaction can be managed efficiently, stably, and sustainably, projecting an image of social coherence and sincere commitment.

Complementarily, Da Costa et al. (2022) attribute great significance to CSR communication through the massive and transparent dissemination of its practices; similarly, Guevara and Piedra (2020) point out that this communication is a key factor for value creation and corporate sustainability. However, González (2024) points out that, in the digital context, corporate communication has undergone drastic transformations due to the influence of social media; nevertheless, managers tend to prioritize improving reputational image over genuine social commitment.

In this digital context, there are significant challenges 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 is that, although companies use Facebook as a channel to communicate their CSR, a more interactive and dialogic approach is needed (Capriotti & Zeller, 2020). Consistency between social responsibility processes and communication management is essential, but its importance is frequently underestimated (Durán et al., 2021).

Therefore, one of the most evident errors in CSR communication management is the lack of awareness among consumers (Reyes & Rodríguez, 2018), which hinders different audiences from understanding social responsibility actions (Díez et al., 2021). This limits the role organizations should play in informing and generating knowledge about their actions among their stakeholders (García, 2017). Few companies master the art of communicating their social responsibility effectively, which generates constant, punitive criticism from society (Treviño & Abreu, 2019; Beltramino, 2018).

Given all of the above, the review and association of content on managing communication on synchronous social networks for CSR led to the central question: How is communication managed on synchronous social networks for corporate social responsibility in the Venezuelan Petrochemical Industry? Based on this question, the objective of the study was defined as analyzing said communicative management in 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 characteristic of the qualitative paradigm. Both types of data were initially analyzed independently and then integrated to enrich the final results, thus allowing for a more complete and profound understanding of the phenomenon under study.

A descriptive research approach was developed (Arias, 2012), focusing on analyzing and detailing the particular characteristics of the processes and phenomena under study. The analytical level allowed for the examination of relationships between variables without direct intervention. The research was implemented using a non-experimental, cross-sectional field design (Palella & Martins, 2012), as data were collected at a specific point in time without deliberate manipulation of any variable, thus ensuring the natural observation of the events.

The study population consisted of nine corporate managers responsible for Public Affairs and Social Development, assigned to different strategic locations: the General Division 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 municipality of Miranda (Zulia State). This population was selected because the participants possess key knowledge and responsibilities related to the variables studied, ensuring the relevance of the information gathered.

Since all members of the population were located in geographically accessible areas for the researchers, probabilistic or non-probabilistic sampling was unnecessary. A population census was conducted, ensuring the complete inclusion of the study unit and the representativeness of the results at the population level (Arias, 2012).

Two complementary instruments were used for data collection: a structured questionnaire with a 16-item guide designed using a five-point Likert scale—Always (A), Almost Always (AS), Sometimes (S), Almost Never (AN), and Never (N)—focused on the variable “Management of communication on synchronous social networks”; and a structured interview with a guide consisting of three open-ended questions, focused 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 variables under study.

Regarding the analysis of the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire, a measurement scale was established using 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 used, which consisted of condensing the collected information and organizing it by thematic categories. This technique allowed for an interpretive and integrative analysis, favoring a detailed understanding of the perceptions and experiences that provide a complementary perspective to the quantitative data (Borda et al., 2017).

Results and discussion

Table 1

Statistical results for the variable: communication management in synchronous social networks

Indicators	Range %	Category
Facebook	44%	Weak
Twitter/X	58%	Good
Instagram	56%	Good

YouTube	39%	Good
Online conference	76%	Very good
Audio	78%	Very good
Videoconference	77%	Very good

Source: Own elaboration (2025)

Quantitative data analysis

Table 1 shows that a significant majority of the surveyed managers attribute weak use to Facebook, with 44% of responses indicating infrequent or ineffective use. This implies that this synchronous social network almost never contributes to the effectiveness of Public Affairs and Social Development Management in achieving excellence in communication management. In contrast, the indicator for Twitter/X reveals that, with 58% of responses in the "sometimes" category, this platform is used moderately as a synchronous tool for managing both internal and external communication.

Regarding the Instagram indicator, the 56% frequency indicates that its use presents certain weaknesses, especially in terms of its ability to create active communities or user groups that promote effective relationships and allow for the continuous exchange of information in real time. This highlights limitations for implementing Instagram as a synchronous tool for commenting on communication products and actively gathering employee opinions. In the case of YouTube, this digital medium had the lowest frequency (39%), suggesting that, in practice, this social network is almost never considered an option for real-time communication or for the immediate transmission and reception of relevant information within an organization.

In contrast to these platforms, indicators related to audio, online conferencing, and videoconferencing stand out with high preference percentages, reaching 78%, 76%, and 77%, respectively. These results reflect a clear inclination among corporate managers toward the use of tools that facilitate direct, synchronous, and multifunctional communication. First, the preference for audio as an essential synchronous medium is emphasized, widely used within the expectations of internal communication management in the industry. Second, videoconferencing is positioned as the preferred tool for enabling the immediate exchange of information in real time, further favored by the availability of hardware that facilitates live connections for meetings, training, or activity coordination.

These findings suggest that, although more traditional or popular platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube are known, in the specific corporate context of the petrochemical sector, the use of media that allow direct, fluid and real-time interaction is preferred, which contributes to more efficient and effective communication management.

Interpretation of qualitative data

Regarding the variable "Corporate Social Responsibility" (CSR), the image, reputation, and differentiation indicators allowed for the identification of the perceptions and assessments that managers attribute to the organization's projection in these areas. The opinions gathered show that the image of the Petrochemical Industry is based 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 consider corporate image a vital element for the organization's social positioning; therefore, they emphasize that all employees must responsibly ensure the company's proper representation. They also believe that this image should be reinforced through strategic advertising campaigns that broaden its visibility and recognition. The value that various digital platforms and social networks contribute to keeping all audiences informed and aware of the active presence and national reach of Petroquímica de Venezuela is also highlighted.

From a strategic perspective, managers agree that, as a state-owned enterprise, it is essential to promote and implement social responsibility at the national level through corporate planning. Over the past four years, the company has significantly enhanced its image both internally and externally through organizational consolidation and the strengthening of industrial production, which has positively impacted its image and reputation.

Regarding social responsibility, while managers acknowledge significant progress, they also identify ongoing challenges in standardizing a communication management model fully aligned with the CSR philosophy. They believe the company's favorable reputation is best reflected in its human capital, particularly through the discipline and commitment employees demonstrate to national objectives. Respondents emphasize the importance of fostering and encouraging collective and social practices within the organization that contribute to an excellent work environment and the consolidation of effective social policies for the community.

Furthermore, the need to intensify social initiatives and strengthen foundations that highlight Pequiven's essential role is emphasized, continuously showcasing each task, social action, or project carried out in the areas of influence. The ongoing dissemination of these activities through various media and platforms is considered key to building trust both within the company and the community, thereby reinforcing the values, objectives, and quality standards inherent to the petrochemical industry.

The distinctive reputation of the petrochemical industry stems from its production results, its social commitment, and the efficient policies it implements to address the needs of the population, especially through the mass production of products and values-based training for its employees. The strategic role of social media and corporate digital platforms as tools for strengthening the institutional brand is also emphasized.

Finally, the advisability of increasing investment in corporate social responsibility is evident, as it further enhances the impact on the company's positioning and consolidates the quality of its processes and products. These results align with the ideas of Lizcano and Lombana (2017), who argue that business responsibilities should focus on policy formulation, decision-making, and monitoring of actions aligned with social values and objectives. In this sense, CSR approaches include aspects such as institutional framework, reputation and organizational performance, human talent management, the design of relevant strategies, and responsible financial management.

However, weaknesses related to corporate image were also identified. Managers agree on the need for all employees to safeguard the company's image and for this image to be constantly reinforced through advertising campaigns. The importance of promoting and implementing CSR from the national strategic planning stage is emphasized, and it is acknowledged that further progress is needed to standardize a comprehensive management model framed within CSR that will allow for consolidating positioning and maintaining high standards of corporate quality.

Conclusions

In Venezuela's petrochemical industry, the management of communication on synchronous social networks clearly reflects the privilege and preference that Public Affairs and Social Development managers give to audio-based social networks. This preference is based on the frequent use of this tool to interact with diverse audiences, facilitate immediate communication, and provide timely information on events. Audio as a synchronous medium thus becomes an effective channel, primarily because it allows for meetings and spaces for exchanging ideas via mobile devices, which provides flexibility and dynamism to communication management.

Secondly, the prevalence of videoconferencing stands out, which facilitates the efficient flow of information in real time. The wide availability of suitable hardware and live connection contribute to this modality being valued as an indispensable tool for corporate exchange, favoring both internal and external communication within the organization.

On the other hand, it was identified that the least used synchronous social network by these managers is YouTube, which was mostly described as a platform that is "almost never" used to comment on communication products or to gather employee opinions. This low usage reflects an underutilization of a network that, due to its audiovisual characteristics, could significantly contribute to content dissemination and feedback. Similarly, Facebook also showed weaknesses in its use, reflecting disagreements or limitations in interaction with specific audiences and in the ability to forge effective social connections.

Regarding the corporate social responsibility (CSR) of the Venezuelan Petrochemical Industry, it was concluded that the 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 production and the sustainability of quality standards, constitute the fundamental basis upon which the company projects itself and differentiates itself within its environment.

In general, it is concluded that the management of communication on synchronous social networks presents significant weaknesses, especially regarding the lack of unified criteria and clear strategies for corporate social responsibility (CSR) within the national petrochemical sector. This diagnosis reveals a significant challenge: to design and standardize a comprehensive social media communication management model that responds to the demands and specificities of CSR, thereby optimizing the coherence, effectiveness, and impact of corporate actions in this area.

The results obtained also support the recommendation to implement business strategies aimed at boosting technological investment. These investments must guarantee the optimal capacity to send and receive messages in a timely and reliable manner, making communication a transferable and strategic resource for the petrochemical industry's positioning. It is essential that this process involves individuals with influence and decision-making power within the organization, so that they can actively contribute to achieving corporate goals, strengthening communication leadership and its impact on reputation and business performance.

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