

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.

Key words: 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 marked distinction between practical application and understanding of the scope that social media must have to disseminate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and communicate its associated practices. In this context, large corporations face the challenge of adopting emerging communication policies that allow for a situational analysis of the environment and, in turn, implement effective information tools. These tools should facilitate communication with their internal and external audiences about the implementation of CSR programs, projects, and actions, so that these audiences can evaluate and assess the social, environmental, and economic impacts generated by the messages received.

Currently, the conventional way in which many corporations use communication tools to interact with their audiences is insufficient, especially when it comes to communicating social and environmental benefits over and above their economic interests (Moreno, Mora & Pacheco, 2021). In this regard, Acosta, Lovato & Buñay (2018) point out that CSR communication requires a more robust policy that allows companies to better position themselves competitively and develop reciprocal commitments to society. Uranga & Vargas (2020) emphasize that many companies waste the opportunity to use multiple media simultaneously to communicate about their CSR programs. Likewise, Gamboa & Álvarez (2023) indicate that platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are being used at an early stage to communicate and gather public opinion on companies' responsible actions.

According to Pizarro (2018), these deficiencies are mainly due to the lack of effective implementation of social media as channels for communicating the results of social responsibility. In line with this, the Santiago Corporate Reputation Center (CRCS, 2020) points out that, although social media can be ideal synchronous spaces for monitoring and responding promptly to the changing expectations of stakeholders, their use to communicate social responsibility results is still incipient. This perspective coincides with that of the Center for Work and Family at the University of Los Andes (2021), which emphasizes that a good corporate reputation can be built through social media as effective channels of business communication.

However, the strategies implemented for using these tools to connect with audiences often neglect immediate attention to notifications and timely responses to messages, which generates uncertainty and doubt among recipients. Regarding this aspect, Sánchez (2019) highlights that one of the problems lies in the fact that companies are more interested in using social media to identify problems related to their brand or corporate image, rather than focusing on building audiences that feel valued and understood through their messages, or generating interaction opportunities based on social projection.

In this sense, Villavicencio (2020) points out that social media constitutes a fundamental avenue for social interaction, creating a dynamic relationship between users that contributes to communication between groups and institutions united by common needs and preferences. This gives rise to the creation of a virtual society in which physical presence between senders, messages, and recipients is not necessary, but rather fosters knowledge and responsible synchronous communication.

The same author emphasizes that communication tools are essential for current technologies, given their practically endless applications and uses. Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are the most widely used, facilitating communication over the internet and allowing users to interact, express their opinions, share and download multimedia content, use project applications, upload photographs, create and edit text files, among other functions.

Furthermore, Hudgson & Hoy (2018) highlight the importance of communication management in networks such as videoconferencing, which allows for dissertations or work meetings with the participation of people located in different locations. For their part, Flórez, Rosales & Flórez (2016) emphasize that social media technology promotes open and fluid communication.

For their part, Lizcano & Lombana (2019) approach corporate social responsibility from a technological perspective, highlighting that CSR involves empathetic interaction with stakeholders based on trust. This interaction can be managed efficiently, stably, and sustainably over time, projecting an image of social coherence and a genuine commitment to the needs of these groups.

In a similar vein, Da Costa, Clayson & Goicochea (2022) place great importance on communicating Corporate Social Responsibility through the widespread and transparent dissemination of its practices. This aspect is also highlighted by Guevara & Piedra (2020), who consider it a key factor for corporate success, capable of determining value creation and the company's long-term sustainability. In this regard, González (2024) highlights that corporate communication in the digital context has undergone drastic and unprecedented transformations due to the influence of social media; However, it warns that managers tend to show greater concern for improving their reputation than for strengthening social engagement.

Thus, in the digital age, managing the privacy and security of user data in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) presents significant challenges, especially in avoiding unethical practices that could harm

society (Quinaluisa et al., 2023). A clear example is the use of Facebook as a communication channel for CSR, which highlights the need to adopt a more interactive and dialogic approach (Capriotti & Zeller, 2020). Consistency between CSR processes and communication management practices is essential; however, this importance is often minimized or underestimated (Durán et al., 2021).

Therefore, many companies make mistakes in managing CSR communication, such as a lack of consumer awareness (Reyes & Rodríguez, 2018), which makes it difficult for their audiences to understand what CSR actions truly entail (Díez, Díaz, Robledo & Rodríguez, 2021). This limits the possibility of establishing a role based on information and knowledge about the company's relationship with its audience, within the framework of social responsibility (García, 2017). Indeed, few companies manage to master the art of communicating their social responsibility (Treviño & Abreu, 2019), which generates constant criticism and questioning from society (Beltramino, 2018).

Based on the above, the following central question arises: How is communication managed on synchronous social media for Corporate Social Responsibility in the Venezuelan Petrochemical Industry? Consequently, the objective of this study is to analyze such management in the specific context of this industry, in order to better understand its communication practices and their impact on corporate social responsibility.

Methodology

The epistemological approach adopted was the mixed or complementary approach, as proposed by Hernández-Sampieri & Mendoza (2018). This approach combined the quantification of numerical data with descriptive and subjective information, which were analyzed separately and then integrated into the results. The research was framed within a descriptive analytical framework, following Arias (2012) classification, and was implemented using a field-based, non-experimental, transactional design, as indicated by Palella & Martins (2012), without deliberate manipulation of any variable.

The study population consisted of nine corporate Public Affairs and Social Development managers from the General Petrochemical Complex of the José Antonio Anzoátegui Division (Barcelona, Anzoátegui state), the Hugo Chávez Complex (Morón, Carabobo state), the Corporate Headquarters (Valencia, Carabobo state), and the Ana María Campos Complex (Miranda municipality, Zulia state).

This population was classified as accessible because it was located in a geographic area that the researchers could address directly. Therefore, sampling was not necessary, but rather a population census, as indicated by Arias (2012). Two instruments were used to collect data: a questionnaire with a pre-designed guide of 16 Likert-type questions, with the options Always (A), Almost always (AA), Sometimes (S), Almost never (AN), and Never (N), aimed at measuring the variable "Communication management in synchronous social networks"; and a structured interview with a three-question guide focused on the variable "Corporate Social Responsibility." Both instruments underwent content validation by a panel of five experts.

Regarding data processing and analysis, a measurement scale composed of categories and ranges was established for the quantitative information. The qualitative analysis of the structured interview was carried out using an in-depth analysis strategy, which consisted of condensing the data to facilitate their interpretation and analysis, following the methodology proposed by Borda, Dabenigno, Freidin, & Guelman (2017).

Results and discussion

Table 1
Statistical Results for the Variable Management of Communication in Synchronous Social Networks

Indicators	Rank %	Category
Facebook	44%	Weak
Twitter	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)

Table 2 shows that, for the majority of managers surveyed, Facebook is one of the least effective synchronous social networks, with 44 % of respondents indicating low usage. This implies that this platform is almost never effective in managing public affairs and social development to achieve excellence in communication. On the other hand, Twitter, with 58 % of respondents, was found to be used as a synchronous social network to manage both internal and external communication.

As for Instagram, its usage frequency was 56 %, revealing some weaknesses in the interest in creating user groups that allow for building strong relationships and using this synchronous tool to comment on communication products and learn about employee opinions. YouTube, on the other hand, had the lowest usage frequency, at 39 %, indicating that it is almost never considered an option for sharing and receiving information in real time.

In contrast, audio-based social media, online conferences, and videoconferences achieved the highest percentages, at 78 %, 76 %, and 77 % respectively. This shows that these methods, unlike Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, are preferred by corporate managers for communication management. First, these results reflect respondents' preference for using audio as a synchronous social media platform within the expectations of communication management in the sector. Second, they highlight their preference for videoconferences as a tool to facilitate information exchange and real-time connection.

Regarding the results linked to the Corporate Social Responsibility variable, the indicators related to image, reputation, and differentiation reflect the opinions of the company's projection in these areas. The perceptions revealed that the image of the Petrochemical Industry is based on values such as inclusion, a sense of belonging, identity, and commitment, which management seeks to ensure in order to achieve authentic identification with the communities.

Executives believe that the organization's image is essential for its recognition in society, so all employees must take maximum care of it and reinforce it through increased advertising. They also recognize that the corporate image is very useful through various digital platforms, as it allows everyone to stay informed and raise awareness of Petroquímica de Venezuela's presence throughout the country.

Consequently, corporate executives agree that, as a state-owned company, it is essential to promote and implement social responsibility at the national level through strategic planning. In the last four years, the company has managed to significantly expand its reach abroad, consolidating its organization and strengthening its industrial production.

Regarding social responsibility, executives believe the industry has made firm progress, although they acknowledge that there is still a long way to go to standardize a communications management model framed within Corporate Social Responsibility. When projecting the company's reputation, they emphasize that the best example is its employees, who demonstrate discipline and commitment, especially to the country. This is primarily reflected in the promotion and encouragement of collective practices that generate an excellent internal organizational climate and strengthen social policies aimed at the community at large.

In addition, they highlight the need to increase social events and foundations that highlight Pequiven's important role, showcasing each project and social action carried out in the areas of influence. Through the constant dissemination of these activities through any means of communication, the company seeks to generate trust at both the corporate and community levels, reaffirming the achievement of objectives, petrochemical values, the maintenance of quality standards, and the continuity of production.

The industry has a reputational image that differentiates it from other companies, not only due to its production results and commitment to the country, but also due to the efficient policies it implements to meet the needs of the population. This is reflected in the widespread use of products, the development of values among employees, the consolidation of the brand through specific strategies, and the effective use of the corporation's various platforms and social media platforms. Therefore, it is both appropriate and necessary to increase investment in social responsibility to achieve a greater impact on the company's positioning and maintain quality standards.

These results are consistent with those indicated by Lizcano & Lombana (2017), who stated that business owners' obligations include formulating policies, making decisions, and following action guidelines that are desirable in terms of society's goals and values. Therefore, CSR approaches must encompass institutional frameworks, reputation and performance, human talent, strategies, and finances.

However, the results also revealed certain weaknesses related to the image of the petrochemical industry. Managers agreed that all employees must maintain the corporate image and reinforce it through increased publicity. They also emphasized the importance of promoting and implementing social responsibility at the national level through strategic planning. They acknowledge that there is still a long way to go to standardize an investment management model framed within CSR, which will achieve a greater impact on the company's positioning and ensure the maintenance of quality standards.

Conclusions

In the Venezuelan petrochemical industry, communication management on synchronous social media reflects the preference that Public Affairs and Social Development managers place on audio social media to interact with the public and report on events. This preference for audio is based on the ability to interact with a wide variety of people and the ease of holding brainstorming meetings via mobile phones. There is also a notable prevalence of video conferencing social media use, which facilitates the transmission of information thanks to the availability of appropriate hardware and live connections.

On the other hand, it was found that the synchronous social media platform least used by these corporate managers is YouTube, as the majority of respondents described it as a platform rarely used to comment on communication products or to hear the opinions of employees. Likewise, a weak use of Facebook was identified, reflecting disagreement or a lack of effectiveness in interacting with the public and strengthening social ties through this network. Regarding Corporate Social Responsibility in the Venezuelan Petrochemical Industry, it was concluded that its image, reputation, and differentiation indicators are based on organizational values and principles such as inclusion, a sense of belonging, identity, and commitment. These values are fundamentally based on industrial production and the sustainability of quality standards.

Overall, it was concluded that there are weaknesses in the management of communication on synchronous social media, mainly due to the lack of unified criteria regarding CSR within the country's petrochemical industry. This situation poses the challenge of designing a social media communication management model that responds to the specific needs of CSR.

Finally, these results support the recommendation of implementing business strategies based on technological investments that ensure timely and effective communication, both in sending and receiving messages. Likewise, the importance of these strategies contributing to strengthening the petrochemical company's positioning is emphasized, through the involvement of key individuals who, either through their formal authority or their influence within the organization, can drive the achievement of corporate objectives.

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