

# Use of corporate podcasting as a SDGs communication tool in the main Spanish banks

Uso del podcast corporativo como herramienta de comunicación de los ODS en las principales entidades financieras españolas

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is the mechanism through which organizations integrate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into their corporate strategies. On the other hand,

the communication of responsibility and commitment initiatives with citizens is an important factor in achieving social legitimacy for the company. Moreover, digital communication tools, including corporate podcast, are powerful allies for disseminating a corporate brand message aligned with sustainability, commitment and social responsibility. Therefore, the main objective of this article is to analyze how the banking sector uses corporate podcast as a tool for communicating content related to the SDGs. **Methodology:** A content analysis of the headlines and explanatory texts of the podcast deliveries issued by the largest financial institutions in Spain during the year 2022 was carried out. **Results:** 36.1% of the podcasts analyzed address the SDGs, with 12 of the 17 SDGs set by the United Nations being represented. **Discussion:** The results show a significant use of corporate podcasts as a SDGs communication tool, which is consistent with companies' growing commitment to a more engaged communication linked to CSR. **Conclusions:** This research represents a further step in understanding how organizations use the communicative possibilities provided by digital platforms, specifically podcasts, to communicate CSR-related issues.

**Keywords:** Corporate communication; Corporate Social Responsibility; 2030 Agenda; Sustainable Development Goals; Podcast; Banking sector.

## RESUMEN

**Introducción:** La responsabilidad social corporativa (RSC) se erige como el mecanismo a través del cual las organizaciones integran los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) en sus estrategias corporativas. Por otra parte, la comunicación de las iniciativas de responsabilidad y compromiso con la ciudadanía representan un factor importante en la consecución de la legitimidad social de la empresa. Además, las herramientas de comunicación digital, entre las que se encuentra el podcast corporativo, se presentan como potentes aliadas para difundir un mensaje de marca corporativa alineada con la sostenibilidad, el compromiso y la responsabilidad social. Por todo ello, el objetivo principal de este artículo es analizar el uso que hace el sector bancario del podcast corporativo como herramienta para comunicar contenido relacionado con los ODS. **Metodología:** Se ha realizado un análisis de contenido de los titulares y textos explicativos de las entregas de podcast emitidas por las entidades financieras de mayor envergadura en España durante el año 2022. **Resultados:** El 36,1% de los podcasts analizados aborda los ODS, concretamente se ha obtenido una representación de 12 de los 17 ODS marcados por las Naciones Unidas. **Discusión:** Los resultados muestran un uso significativo del podcast corporativo como herramienta de comunicación de los ODS, lo cual va en línea con la creciente apuesta de las empresas por una comunicación más comprometida vinculada a la RSC. **Conclusiones:** Esta investigación supone un paso más en el conocimiento del uso que hacen las organizaciones de las posibilidades comunicativas que proporcionan las plataformas digitales, en concreto el podcast, para comunicar temas relacionados con la RSC.

**Palabras clave:** Comunicación corporativa; Responsabilidad Social Corporativa; Agenda 2030; Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible; Podcast; Sector bancario.

## 1. Introduction

The past few years have witnessed the growing importance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Lu et al., 2019), emerging as one of the most significant topics for organizations (Araujo and Kollat, 2018; Barrio-Fraile et al., 2022; Kollat and Farache, 2017; Moyaert et al., 2021) and becoming a global trend that challenges the role of companies (Kwon and Lee, 2021). The development of CSR has been accompanied by a clear increase in the impact that corporations have on society (Kwon and Lee, 2021) and has become a fundamental element in business and academic agendas (Sanclemente-Téllez, 2017). In the academic field, this concept has been approached by various researchers, giving rise to different and disparate definitions (Lassala et al., 2021; Lu et al., 2019; Sanclemente-Téllez, 2017; Villagra,

2015). However, Barrio-Fraile and Enrique-Jiménez (2015) propose a definition that captures the most repeated items by authors and institutions when explaining the term, and define CSR as:

The consequence of a voluntary commitment adopted with all its stakeholders in economic, social, and environmental matters, with the aim of taking responsibility for the consequences and impacts that derive from its actions and maximizing the creation of shared value for the entire set of stakeholders. (Barrio-Fraile and Enrique-Jiménez, 2015, p. 29).

This commitment adopted with the stakeholders of the organization has been linked in recent years to the 2030 Agenda, whose objectives have become the inspiring basis of CSR strategies for companies. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) stand as the basis that guides the integration of social, environmental, and economic sustainability into the corporate strategies of any type of company or institution.

### 1.1. CSR and SDGs

Companies must take responsibility for the impact their actions have on society (Lassala et al., 2021; Lu et al. 2019), taking into account the social, environmental, and economic consequences that arise from their activities. We are dealing with the concept of the Triple Bottom Line that advocates for the pursuit of triple business sustainability (economic, social, and environmental) (Elkington, 1998), an integrative concept that considers the economic, social, and environmental responsibilities of business activities at the same level (Lizcano, 2020) and that is of particular importance in understanding the role of CSR in companies (Lee and Hess, 2022). The sustainability path in business that began in 1982 with the Brundtland Commission, reaches the present day with the promulgation of the SDGs by the United Nations (Ramón-Llorens et al. 2021), which poses a significant challenge for companies in addressing sustainability issues within their business model and strategy (Singh and Rahman, 2021).

In 2015, United Nations Member States approved 17 Goals as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which constitute a global call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and improve people's quality of life worldwide (United Nations, 2022). It is important to note that while previous UN statements on sustainable development have focused on governments, the SDGs explicitly designate a role for businesses through Goal 17 on partnerships (Buhmann et al., 2019), recognizing that large corporations have the ability to innovate and provide solutions that enable global sustainability (Whittingham et al., 2022). Achieving the SDGs requires collaboration between governments, society, the academic world, and businesses (Lassala et al., 2021), so no company is left out of the challenges set out in the SDGs (Singh and Rahman, 2021).

The United Nations' SDGs have helped to place CSR at the core of business management (Estanyol, 2020). In this way, CSR has been maintained and strengthened on the international agenda (Oliveira et al., 2021). According to a study by Barrio-Fraile and Enrique-Jiménez (2021), fulfilling the SDGs is one of the key challenges that CSR managers in companies must face. In the academic world, there are diverse authors who approach this inherent relationship between CSR and the SDGs from different perspectives, whether from a gender perspective (Lucchese et al., 2022), focusing on employee well-being (Gorgenyi-Hegyes et al., 2021), from an environmental approach (Gómez-Trujillo et al., 2021; Naidoo and Gasparatos, 2018; Saha et al., 2021), from a legal and/or financial perspective (Gutiérrez et al., 2022; Matytsin et al., 2022), or taking the SDGs as a basis for measuring the socially responsible performance of the company (Lee and Hess, 2022; Ramón-Llorens et al., 2021; Whittingham et al., 2022). The SDGs are a source of inspiration for exploring new business models (Lu et al. 2019). The SDGs are perfectly aligned with the triple dimension of CSR -economic, social, and environmental- (Lizcano, 2020; Oliveira et al., 2021; Singh and Rahman, 2021). CSR emerges as a way of

implementing the SDGs in companies (Nair et al., 2021), becoming an important lever for achieving the 2030 Agenda (Lizcano, 2020).

## 1.2. Communication of CSR

The socially responsible behavior of a company has a positive impact on corporate reputation (Araujo and Kollat, 2018; Estanyol, 2020; Hetze and Winistörfer, 2016; Kollat and Farache, 2017; Zeler and Capriotti, 2018). Companies that are perceived as socially responsible enjoy greater stakeholder support (Carreras et al., 2013), making communicative management of CSR vital for the company.

The growing social and environmental awareness of society has promoted the socially responsible behavior of companies. However, it is no longer enough just to be socially responsible, organizations must ensure to communicate their CSR initiatives to their audiences, as the public perception of a company's social responsibility is created based on what the public knows about it, making CSR communication critical in the public perception of the company (Martínez et al., 2022). CSR communication allows organizations to disseminate their socially responsible practices (Kwon and Lee, 2021), becoming a strategic tool to strengthen the relationship between the company and its stakeholders (Suárez-Rico et al., 2019; Zeler and Capriotti, 2018) and improve their perception of the company (Amin et al., 2021). Some authors specifically highlight the benefits of CSR disclosure in the relationship between companies and consumers, arguing that the communication of these practices generates positive relationships with users (Kwon and Lee, 2021), leading to higher levels of purchase intention (Araujo and Kollat, 2018; Kollat and Farache, 2017).

Companies are under increasing pressure to communicate their CSR (Kollat and Farache, 2017), and this is reflected in their actions. In the case of Spain, data from the study carried out by the Association of Advertising Agencies of Spain (2021) shows that in recent years, brands have opted for more committed communication, leading to an increase in advertising linked to CSR. In addition, the report by Llorente y Cuenca (2021) highlights that consumers favor brands that make proposals with a positive impact on society.

However, the audience for CSR communication is becoming increasingly geographically dispersed, so traditional paper-based dissemination has become obsolete, leading us to a new paradigm in the field of corporate information disclosure driven by advances in information technologies (Amin et al., 2021). This fact has been addressed by the Academy, increasing research on different channels of CSR communication. Some authors have addressed the dissemination of socially responsible practices through Instagram (Kwon and Lee, 2021); other authors have focused on Twitter (Amin et al., 2021; Araujo and Kollat, 2018; Farache et al., 2018; Kollat et al., 2017; Monfort et al., 2019; Moyaert et al., 2021; Suárez-Rico et al., 2018); some researchers have focused on Facebook (Ju et al., 2021; Martínez et al., 2022; Suárez-Rico et al., 2019; Zeler and Capriotti, 2018); other research has analyzed CSR communication via corporate websites (Georgiadou and Nickerson, 2020; Hetze and Winistörfer, 2016; Rajandram, 2019); some authors address the dissemination of CSR through television (Jin and Chunggun, 2015; Sanjuán et al., 2023); while some academics address the use of radio to communicate socially responsible actions (Barrio-Fraile et al., 2022). However, the use of the corporate podcast, one of the sound formats that has grown exponentially in recent years, has not been studied as a CSR communication channel.

## 1.3. The podcast as a sound communication tool for organizations

From a communicative and corporate perspective, the podcast has been the subject of research such as the study conducted by Barbeito-Veloso and Perona-Páez (2019) on “Blink”, the flagship podcast of

BBVA, which demonstrated a marked correspondence between the messages transmitted by this financial institution through said podcast and the organization's strategic priorities. "The podcast thus becomes an instrument that provides an added value to the strategic-communicative management of corporations and reinforces the emotional value of their intangibles" (Barbeito-Veloso and Perona-Páez, 2019, p. 1). In another previous work on podcasting as a means of corporate identity, Sellas (2018) analyzes the nine episodes of the *Aerolínea momentos* podcast, co-produced by Podium Podcast and Iberia on the occasion of this airline's 90th anniversary, and although he warns that the use of podcasting in corporate tactics is still in its infancy, his study reveals a good anchoring of it in the strategy of the company studied, as is also the case with BBVA.

In fact, sound messages have always been present in the communicative flows of companies and institutions, and so far, radio advertising has perhaps been the most traditional tool for connecting organizations and audiences through the ear. Thus, for example, a brief historical review shows, as Piñeiro (2015) points out, that jingles, one of the manifestations that make up the brand's sound identity, became the star advertising format in the 1930s-40s. In the 1950s, radio in Spain had nearly 8 million listeners, and women, especially low-income and modest housewives, were a loyal audience to entertainment programs, especially radio dramas (Barea, 1994). At that time, already important brands such as Nestlé, AVECrem, and Cola-Cao were the main sponsors of the dramas, which in the 1950s, "will become fashionable, will paralyze daily life while they are on the air, will boost the consumption of the advertised brands and create the first idols of a society that is beginning to forget the hardships of the war" (Ayuso, 2013, p.172).

However, this was a golden moment that gradually lost strength, to the point that years later, especially from the 1970s onwards, corporations, in the context of their advertising communication activities, relegated radio to a secondary role because they considered that the medium did not allow them to "show their products or services in images". This circumstance resulted in low-budget complementary campaigns, which responded much more to the logic of "being present", that is, to have a presence on all conventional platforms, than to the effect of return that could be obtained (Balsebre et al., 2006). Added to this was the fact that, for decades, radio advertising has suffered from a creative standstill, which has been reflected both in the formats and in the construction of messages, as well as in the use of sound language and its informative and expressive possibilities (Perona, 2007; Espinosa and Vico, 2016; Fajula et al., 2021). However, in the face of this situation, the emergence of podcasts in the media consumption landscape may mean a recovery of the expressive capacity of sound language applied to the current communicative trends of organizations, at a time when we are witnessing a "transfiguration of the sound ecosystem" (Piñeiro and Pedrero, 2022, p. 1). Some evidence of this paradigm shift is, for example, the exponential growth of platforms already converted into priceless historical and heritage sound libraries, the popularization of voice assistants, the commercialization of wireless headphones with infinite features, or the increasingly sophisticated and careful sound design of public spaces (Fajula et al., 2021). In short, and as some authors argue, "we are witnessing the beginning of a great evolution in communication, where audio is the protagonist" (Aguilar, 2019, p. 63).

Unlike the sound logo or audio logo, which seems to have had more success as an audio branding tool and has been embraced by a good number of organizations, especially in the automotive sector, the podcast has not received as much attention from companies or institutions. However, this trend seems to be changing, as organizations are becoming increasingly aware that, currently, and as Sellas (2018, p. 157) argues, "the evolution of corporate audio involves the integration of podcasting, a unique option, but still minor in public relations" and the need for corporate podcast specialists who can make the most of this tool to create new channels of contact with audiences.



At this point, it is important to clarify, as Espinosa de los Monteros (2020) points out, quoting Steve Pratt, co-founder of Pacific Content, a Canadian production company specializing in branded podcasts and one of the main references in the industry worldwide, that a corporate podcast is a very different creation from a brand podcast. A corporate podcast implies that the focus of the program is the company: its executives, its products, or its services. On the other hand, a brand podcast is a program designed for listeners produced by a particular organization. That is, the brand is thinking and acting like a media company, "creating a real show that real people will voluntarily spend their valuable time listening to".

In this context, and considering the increase in the consumption of audio products and the versatility offered by this format, it seems necessary to delve into the use that companies that use it make of an instrument that, as Balsebre-Torroja et al. (2023, p.25) argues, "has gone from being, in a few years, a DIY media (do-it-yourself) to becoming a mass commercial medium in the Anglo-Saxon world." In Spain, according to data from the AIMC (2022) for 2021, podcast listening already exceeds one million daily listeners, although it is true that the most followed ones by the audience are those of radio programs previously broadcast live. On the other hand, according to the same source, just over eight million Spaniards declare that they listen to podcasts at some point. Another source that reinforces this upward trend of podcasts in Spain is the data offered by Amoedo (2022) in the Digital News Report Spain 2022, according to which 41% of internet users listen to this digital audio file format, a figure that rises to 62% among younger listeners (18-24 years old).

## 2. Objectives

CSR as a lever for achieving the 2030 Agenda is presented as the mechanism through which companies integrate the SDGs into their corporate strategies, promoting initiatives committed to society within the company. On the other hand, the communication of these initiatives is an important factor in achieving social legitimacy for the company, and the use of digital communication tools, such as corporate podcasts, become powerful allies for disseminating a corporate brand message aligned with sustainability, commitment, and social responsibility. Taking this starting point into account, the main objective of this research was to analyze the use that the banking sector makes of corporate podcasts as a tool for communicating content related to the SDGs.

The decision to focus on the banking sector as the universe of study to understand how communication of the SDGs can be approached through corporate podcasts is due to several reasons. First, it is a business area that, following the financial crisis, has been exposed to public perceptions, and CSR actions can promote a positive attitude towards them (Hetze and Winistörfer, 2016). Second, these entities have a track record of supporting sustainable development through various initiatives (Barroso et al., 2012; Peeters, 2003). Third, it is a business where communication about CSR plays a key role in the company's CSR strategy (Peterson and Hermans, 2004). Finally, research on CSR communication in the banking sector is limited (Hetze and Winistörfer, 2016).

The specific objectives proposed to achieve the main objective were:

Obj.1. Analyze to what extent banking companies use the corporate podcast as a communication tool for the SDGs.

Obj.2. Highlight which SDGs have the most presence in the audio content of the podcasts of the main banking entities in Spain.

Obj.3. Determine which terms are most commonly used in the dissemination of the SDGs in the audio content of the podcasts of the main banking entities in Spain.

Obj.4. Verify which banking entity uses the corporate podcast predominantly for this purpose.

### 3. Methodology

For the fulfillment of the presented objectives, a descriptive research based on the content analysis of the headlines and explanatory texts of podcast episodes broadcasted throughout the year 2022 by the selected banking entities was proposed. The choice of this study method is because it allows for systematic, objective, and quantitative analysis of communication (Kerlinger, 1986). In addition, as noted by Riffe et al. (1998), it is not feasible to conduct a study on the use of a medium of communication without analyzing its contents.

To decide the analysis sample, the podcast production in 2022 of the four largest financial entities in Spain was consulted (Sobrino, 2022). However, after verifying that Banco Sabadell had no publications in the current year, the study focused on the other three organizations: Banco Santander, BBVA, and CaixaBank. In the case of BBVA, "Blink" was chosen, as one of the pioneering corporate podcasts (Barbeito-Veloso and Perona-Páez, 2019), with a weekly frequency and an average duration of 15 minutes per episode. For Banco Santander, "Santander te cuenta" was analyzed, which began in May 2022 and offers a biweekly program with a similar duration of about 15 minutes. Finally, in the case of CaixaBank, the episodes published on its "CaixaBank Research" platform were chosen, as they have a broader thematic offer and a more regular frequency, with a monthly podcast with an average duration of 11 minutes.

A content analysis was conducted using a keyword catalog to systematize, categorize, and manage the information contained in each of the 17 SDGs in order to analyze them. To gather information related to each SDG, the main ideas representing the actions of each SDG were extracted from texts published on the UN website and coded to create indicators for further content analysis. The next step was to observe the socially responsible actions of each financial organization related to each SDG and include specific indicators representing not only the banking sector but also each of the selected organizations. As a result of this pre-task of observation, selection, and processing of texts related to the SDGs, a catalog of 186 indicators was developed to articulate the content analysis of corporate podcasts (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Classification of the keywords assigned to each SDG.

SDG 1 (14 keys)	eradication of poverty	SDG 6 (5 keys)	water (consumption of)	SDG 12 (12 keys)	sustainable development
	poverty/poor/s		sanitation		sustainable consumption
	vulnerable		water resources		natural resources
	disadvantaged		desalination		recycling
	people in need		BBVA: PGE		reuse
	economic resources	SDG 7 (8 keys)	clean energy		ecological management
	microfinance/ microfinance		energy efficiency		environmental sustainability
	microcredit		renewable source/s		negative impacts
	basic services		renewable energy		sustainable loans
development cooperation	fossil fuels		Dow Jones Sustainability Index		
	pollutant				

	scholarships		BBVA: green bonds		Bcorp Certification
	financial education		sustainable financing		Responsible Investment Principles
	financial/economic inclusion		sustainable growth		climate change
	BBVA: Center for Financial Education and Capabilities		employment	SDG 13 (5 keys)	climate
SDG 2 (10 keys)	food/nutrition		unemployment		environmental management
	nutrition		unemployed		Climate Action
	malnutrition		job positions		Equator Principles
	agricultural/agriculture/farmer	SDG 8 (19 keys)	remuneration	SDG 14 (5 keys)	ocean
	fishing/fisherman		productivity		coast
	livestock/rancher		microenterprise (growth of)		marine ecosystem/s
	crop		access to financial services		biodiversity (marine)
	Food Bank		labor rights		plastic/s
	BBVA: MEbA		sustainable tourism		forest/s
	BBVA: Crediverde		professional development		desertification
SDG 3 (14 keys)	disease		hiring		biological Diversity
	health		entrepreneurship (scholarships, internships, programs)		biodiversity loss
	alcohol		financing for companies and freelancers		fauna
	pandemic		microcredits (businesses)		flora
	Covid		BBVA: Momentum	SDG 15 (17 keys)	species
	epidemic		BBVA: Blue Challenge		extinction (in danger of)
	death		Sant: 10 best companies to work for		ecosystem
	accident		infrastructure		wetlands
	healthcare		small industries (access to credit)		mountains
	health coverage		industrialization		arid zones
	biomedical/biomedicine		industrial sector		rivers
	cancer	SDG 9 (11 keys)	innovation		deforestation
	BBVA: PortalCLÍNICA		agribusiness		reforestation
	CB: GAVI Alliance		BBVA: fintech		forestry
SDG 4 (11 keys)	education		BBVA: fast track		CB: Talks about ODS bonds / sustainable / green / social bonds
	educational		CB: bonos verdes		peace/peaceful
	training / formative		CB: Day One		war
	studies		digital/digitization		Ukraine
	student		developing countries		justice
	teaching		foreign direct investmenta		good government
	school		world (financial) markets	SDG 16 (14 keys)	corruption
	financial culture		tax matter		bribery
	BBVA: Niños adelante		payment of taxes		transparency
	CB: Programa aula		diversity (age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion)		accountability
	CB: research cátedras		international transfers		inclusive
SDG 5 (12 keys)	equality	SDG 10 (8 keys)	CB: MicroBank		human rights /H.H.R.R.
	gender				corporative volunteering
	empower/empowerment				ethics
	women				integrity
	girl/s				
	violence				
	feminine				



	inclusive language		cities		alianza/s
	women empowerment principles		Slum	SDG 17 (3 keys)	accession/ accessions
	CB: Diversidad Agrobank		households		CB: Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosure
	young/youth		housing access		
	CB: Programa wengage		decent housing		
		SDG 11 (18 keys)	public transport		
			road safety		
			green areas		
			urban waste		
			cultural heritage		
			capillarity		
			Green housing		
			hybrid/electric vehicles		
			World Tourism Organization		
			BBVA: parque eólico		
			BBVA: préstamo verde		
			CB: Real Estate & Homes		
			CB: Hotels & Tourism		

**Source:** Own elaboration based on UN (2022), BBVA (2022), CaixaBank (2022), and Banco Santander (2022).

After narrowing down the sample of podcasts to 72 (46 from BBVA, 15 from Banco Santander, and 11 from CaixaBank), the location of indicators in the texts referring to each sound publication, i.e., titles and topic descriptions, was proceeding. Thus, the search for keywords from the catalog was initiated to quantify them. To avoid duplications that could distort the results, it was decided to eliminate repetitions in the same podcast, even if the indicator was mentioned in both section.

#### 4. Results

Next, we present the results obtained after the analysis of the 72 podcasts. Firstly, as a contextualization, a brief description of the main characteristics of the analyzed podcasts is provided. Subsequently, we address the specific objectives of the research described in section 2 (Objectives): to analyze to what extent banking companies use corporate podcasts as a communication tool for the SDGs; to highlight which SDGs are most present in the audio content of the podcasts of the main banking entities in Spain; to find out which terms are most commonly used in the dissemination of the SDGs in the audio content of the podcasts of the main Spanish banks, and to verify which banking entity makes the most use of the corporate podcast for this purpose.

##### 4.1. Characteristics of the analyzed podcasts

The main themes around which the audio messages of the podcasts disseminated by the three banking entities that make up the sample of this study are built upon financial news and advice for decision-making in this area. In all cases, information prevails over any other content, as well as some of its most representative genres, such as news, interviews, and reports, although the latter response more to the concept of "reported" information than to that of reportage in its broadest sense.

Along with information as practically exclusive content, another common denominator presented by the podcasts of these organizations is the limited use of the other components of the sound language apart from the voice. In this sense, it is observed that music, when it appears, is mostly used as an organizer of the sections that make up the different episodes, while the effects are clearly testimonial and do not go beyond performing a purely ornamental function. Regarding the prevailing structure in the discourses, Banco Santander and BBVA opt for the dialogic or conversational genre, while CaixaBank conveys its messages through descriptive monologues.

Although the informative style predominates in all proposals, the speakers who intervene bet on an informal style, especially in the case of "Blink" (BBVA) and "Santander te cuenta." This fact may be largely due to the podcasts, although openly accessible, primarily target internal stakeholders and are produced by staff from the banking entities themselves. Banco Santander is the most explicit in its description, indicating that its podcast is intended "for our employees, but open to all audiences." In "CaixaBank Research," the language used is more technical and strictly informative.

#### 4.2. The communication of the SDGs in the podcasts of the main financial entities

One of the main objectives of the research is to find out if the main financial entities in our country use the corporate podcast as a communication tool for the SDGs. The data obtained from the analysis shows that, out of the total of 72 podcasts studied, 26 of them mention one or more SDGs, which means that 36.1% of corporate podcasts address the SDGs.

If we look at the results for each entity (table 2), we can see how BBVA is the company that includes the most SDGs in its episodic series. In almost half of the analyzed podcasts (21), SDGs are mentioned (45.6%), while in the case of its closest follower, Santander, SDGs are identified in 5 out of the 15 episodes analyzed (33.3%). Despite the difference in sample units where examples of SDGs inclusion were found (21 versus 5), proportionally, as can be seen, the difference is not so marked. The weekly frequency of BBVA's podcast, compared to Santander's biweekly frequency, along with the added detail that the latter's broadcasts started in May 2022 and not in January, means that BBVA's units of analysis triple those of the other organizations in the study. However, percentage-wise, both companies present results that are not so far apart.

It is noteworthy that none of the podcasts of the entity CaixaBank were found to mention any SDGs. Its focus, more geared towards providing its listeners with a monthly summary of the main economic milestones of the analyzed period, may help explain this absence. Once this evidence was detected, it was removed from subsequent result analyses.

**Table 2.** *Number of podcasts with SDGs theme by financial institution.*

Bank	Total sample (no. podcasts)	Number of podcasts that address any SDG	% of the total corporate podcasts of the bank" in English
BBVA	46	21	45,6%
Santander	15	5	33,3%
Caixa Bank	11	0	0%

**Source:** Author's own work.

### 4.3. The dominant SDGs in the podcasts of financial institutions

Of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) defined by the United Nations, 12 of them were represented in the analyzed sample, which means that 70.6% of the SDGs are addressed in the different chapters that have been part of the corpus analysis. The SDGs related to hunger and food security (SDG 2); energy (SDG 7); oceans (SDG 14); forests, desertification, and biodiversity (SDG 15); and partnerships (SDG 17) were not detected in any of the podcasts of the financial entities included in the study.

If we look at the SDGs with the highest presence, those related to infrastructure (SDG 9) and climate action (SDG 13) stand out, both present in a total of 5 podcasts each, followed by SDGs related to reducing inequalities among and within countries (SDG 10) and peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16), which appear in 4 podcasts (Table 3). In the case of Santander, each podcast addresses a different SDG. It should be noted that the presence of SDGs was only detected in 5 podcasts, and in Table 3 it can be observed how they correspond to 5 different SDGs. On the other hand, “Blink” addresses the treatment of more than one SDG in the same podcast (28 thematic detections out of a sample of 21 episodes).

**Table 3.** *Presence of SDGs in the podcasts of financial institutions.*

SDGs	Total sample	BBVA	Santander
Goal 1: End poverty	3	2	1
Goal 2: Hunger and food security	--	--	--
Goal 3: Health	3	2	1
Goal 4: Education	1	1	--
Goal 5: Gender equality and women's empowerment	1	1	--
Goal 6: Water and sanitation	1	1	--
Goal 7: Energy	--	--	--
Goal 8: Economic growth	2	2	--
Goal 9: Infrastructure	5	4	1
Goal 10: Reduce inequalities between and within countries	4	4	--
Goal 11: Cities	1	1	--
Goal 12: Sustainable production and consumption	2	2	--
Goal 13: Climate change	5	4	1
Goal 14: Oceans	--	--	--
Goal 15: Forests, desertification and biological diversity	--	--	--
Goal 16: Peace and justice	4	3	1
Objective 17: Alliances	--	--	--
Generic ( <i>global mention of the SDGs</i> )	1	1	--

**Source:** Author's own work.

### 4.4. Main terms to address the different SDGs

As detailed in the methodology section, in order to conduct the content analysis of the 72 podcasts, a catalog of keywords was developed that represented and summarized information related to each of

the 17 SDGs. As a result, a list of 186 indicators was obtained, which allowed for the counting of the presence of the different SDGs in the sample.

Out of the 186 defined keywords, 26 of them have been identified in different podcasts (table 4). It is logical that the most mentioned concepts coincide with the most recurrent SDGs topics in the episodes studied. Thus, the terms "climate change" (with five repetitions) and "digital/digitalization," with four, are the ones that obtain the most presence in the overall sample and coincide with SDGs 13 and 9, respectively, which, it should be recalled, are two of the most addressed topics by the financial companies' podcasts analyzed. They are followed by terms linked to SDGs 10, "global financial markets" and "diversity," and to SDGs 16, "Ukraine," with 3 mentions each. Apart from these concepts associated with the most addressed SDGs topics in the overall sample, it is relevant to highlight the terms "financial education" and "health," which, despite not belonging to the dominant SDGs topics in the studied podcasts, also achieve 3 mentions each.

**Table 4.** *Keywords present in the podcasts of financial institutions.*

KEYWORDS		TOTAL	BBVA	Santander
SDG 1	microfinance/microfinance	1	1	--
	financial education	3	2	1
	financial/economic inclusion	1		1
	BBVA: Centro para la Educación y Capacidades Financieras	1	1	--
SDG 3	health	3	2	1
	pandemic	1	1	--
SDG 4	education	1	1	--
SDG 5	equality	1	1	--
	gender	1	1	--
	empower/empowerment	2	2	--
	women	1	1	--
	violence	1	1	--
	youth	2	2	--
SDG 6	water (consumption of)	2	2	--
SDG 8	sustainable growth	1	1	--
	entrepreneurship (scholarships, internships, programs)	1	1	--
SDG 9	innovation	2	2	--
	digital/digitization	4	3	1
SDG 10	world (financial) markets	3	3	--
	diversity (age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion)	3	3	--
	international transfers	1	1	--
SDG 11	cities	1	1	--
SDG 12	recycling	1	1	--
SDG 13	climate change	5	4	1
SDG 16	WAR	1	1	--
	Ukraine	3	2	1

**Source:** Author's own work.

The fact that high thematic similarities are perceived between the two financial sector entities is significant. If analyzed individually, it is noticed how the keywords with the highest number of mentions coincide in both organizations and can be explained by the tendency to address current issues (such as the case of the war in Ukraine) and their repercussions in the economic sector. Attached below is the concept cloud (Figure 1) which allows visualizing the keywords present in the studied podcasts, as well as their greater or lesser importance from the point of view of the frequency of appearance.

**Figure 1:** Word cloud of keywords present in the analyzed podcasts.



Source: Author's own work.

#### 4.5. Financial institutions and the use of corporate podcasts as a communication channel for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Once the presence of SDGs in the different analyzed podcasts was determined, it was considered interesting to investigate if it was possible to identify an entity that used this tool as a communication channel for these objectives in a more decisive way. CaixaBank was ruled out, as no presence of these elements was found in any of the 11 studied podcasts. The focus then turned to examples from BBVA and Santander.

Due to the difference in units studied between one entity and the other (46 from BBVA versus 15 from Santander), basically due to inequalities in their periodicity (weekly versus biweekly), a new analysis was included to correct this distortion factor. Thus, the podcasts of the two entities that had coinciding publication weeks were identified. From this new sample, 15 publications were obtained from each company and compared (Table 5). It can be observed that, with an equal number of podcasts, BBVA



has the appearance of 16 terms related to SDGs compared to Santander's 8, that is, double the amount. The study's results point to BBVA as the financial entity, out of the four most important in our country, which bet the most on the podcast as a communication channel for SDGs.

Regarding the most used concepts in the different episodes of BBVA's "Blink", the following stand out: sustainable (3), climate change (2), health (2), and digital/digitalization (2). On Santander's side, digital/digitalization (3), financial education (1), health (1), climate change (1), financial/economic inclusion (1), and Ukraine (1) stand out. When investigating related topics, it can be seen that both entities revolve around topics related to financial education (SDG 1), health (SDG 3), digital/digitalization (SDG 9), and climate change (SDG 13).

**Table 5.** *Presence of terms related to SDGs in the coinciding publication weeks.*

Keywords	BBVA	Santander
financial education	1	1
financial/economic inclusion	--	1
health	2	1
equality	1	--
youth	1	--
water (consumption of)	1	--
digital/digitization	2	3
diversity (age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion)	1	--
climate change	2	1
Ukraine	1	1
violence	1	--
sustainable	3	--

**Source:** Authors own work.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs approved by the UN Member States in 2015 have reinforced the strategic role of CSR in companies, placing it at the center of business management (Estanyol, 2020), strengthening its presence on the international agenda (Oliveira et al., 2021), becoming a priority for CSR managers (Barrio and Enrique, 2021), and ultimately becoming a lever for achieving the 2030 Agenda (Lizcano, 2020). Since then, companies have been aware of these global goals in favor of people and the planet and have established them as the starting point for their strategies of commitment to society. In short, the SDGs have provided a guide for the implementation of CSR in companies. In other words, CSR emerges as the mechanism through which organizations integrate the SDGs into their corporate strategies.

In parallel with the incorporation of new content and narratives related to CSR in organizations, the unstoppable process of digitization has provided new communicative experiences. Companies and institutions, in their aim to increase points of contact with their stakeholders, venture to adapt their discourses to digital platforms that facilitate a more personalized reception of content. Thus, the podcast has become an option within the communicational strategic plans of corporations, of which banking

entities have not been an exception, who have seen in this sound format a way to directly convey content related to their intangible values and actions within the sustainability sphere.

In the case of the analyzed corporate podcasts of banking institutions, the use of information as the main content stands out, whether in the form of news, interviews or reports. In most cases, this content has a limited use of sound language components, beyond the voice. Following the previous contributions of other authors, in the case of the corporate podcasts of the main Spanish banks, the underutilization of sound resources is similar, in part, to the characteristics of radio advertising in our country (Perona, 2007; Espinosa and Vico, 2016), marked by creative stagnation (Fajula et al., 2021) and the use of information and "realism" over-stimulating the imagination.

Regarding the degree of use of corporate podcasts as a tool for CSR communication (Obj.1.), 36.1% of the analyzed episodes mention one or more SDGs. However, this figure varies greatly depending on the bank. While for BBVA, the episodes that address at least one SDG represent 45.6% of the broadcasts, in the case of Banco Santander, this figure decreases to 33.3%, and for CaixaBank, it represents 0%. This last case could be due to the conceptualization of CaixaBank Research's podcast, exclusively dedicated to commenting on global economic and financial perspectives each month. In any case, these data reveal that banks that opt for the podcast as a communication tool for the SDGs dedicate more than 30% of their episodes to addressing the goals of the 2030 Agenda, which shows a clear commitment to the use of corporate podcasts as a communication tool for the CSR initiatives of those companies that want to make their commitment to society and the sustainability of the planet known. These results are in line with the data provided by the Association of Advertising Agencies of Spain (2021), which show that brands have opted for more committed communication, increasing the link of their content to CSR.

Regarding the SDGs addressed in the podcasts of the main banking entities in Spain (Objective 2.), the presence of twelve of the seventeen SDGs stands out. The five SDGs that are not referenced are those that are further away from the actual business activity of the banking entities such as hunger and food security (SDG 2), energy (SDG 7), oceans (SDG 14), and forests and biodiversity (SDG 15). The paradigmatic case is SDG 17 related to alliances, as it is a matter very much linked to the idiosyncrasy of this economic sector and is not addressed in the podcasts. It is also interesting to note that among the SDGs most mentioned by banks, SDG 8 is not found, whose purpose is to "promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all" and, therefore, is the SDG most related to the business activity of these entities, which represents a greater margin of action for socially responsible initiatives of this type of companies. The SDGs that appear most in the analyzed podcasts, in order of mentions, are: SDG 9 (infrastructure), SDG 13 (climate change), SDG 10 (inequalities), and SDG 16 (peace and justice). The inclusion of these SDGs, although related in some way to the actual activity of banks, is more due to a matter of media agenda. The prominent presence of SDG 16 (peace and justice) is a reflection of the current situation. The war in Ukraine, along with its devastating effects and consequences, is not ignored by the major financial entities in our country. Evidence of this is that precisely the terms Ukraine and war appear in the catalog of keywords identified in the analyzed podcasts.

If we delve into the most commonly used terms in the dissemination of the SDGs in the audio content of podcasts from the main banking entities in Spain (Objective 3), the following terms stand out in order of mentions: climate change (5 mentions), digital/digitalization (4 mentions) and global financial markets, diversity, Ukraine, financial education and health (all with 3 mentions). These data are interesting in that they provide information on the specific topic mentioned for each SDG. Thus, when addressing SDG 13 (climate change), it is done from a generic and global perspective. On the contrary, SDG 9, related to infrastructure, sustainable industrialization and innovation, is very focused -in the

analyzed podcasts- on communicating initiatives in favor of reducing the digital divide, hence one of the most used terms is digital or digitalization. The same happens with SDG 10, relating to the reduction of inequalities in and among countries, which in the case of the analyzed sample is very focused on promoting initiatives in favor of diversity (especially LGBTQ+) and actions focused on facilitating global financial flows. In relation to this aspect, it would be worth considering the nature of the CSR actions carried out by the banking sector and their involvement with the SDGs, since, although these entities communicate a large part of the 17 SDGs through their corporate podcasts, it is necessary to reflect on the main topics addressed which, in cases such as SDGs 9 and 10, are limited to very specific issues that diminish the transversality of these objectives. If we focus on SDG 9, which represents a transformative opportunity for companies in the fields of sustainable infrastructure development, industrial reconversion in favor of inclusivity and sustainability, financial support for research and financial access to small industries, in the cases analyzed it is reduced to the reduction of the wage gap. Something similar happens with SDG 10, which encompasses actions focused on promoting economic growth in developing countries, promoting social, economic, and political inclusion of all people, and promoting official development assistance and financial flows, in short, a whole range of initiatives focused on reducing inequalities, it is observed that for the sample studied, they are reduced to facilitating global financial flows and promoting diversity.

It is also interesting to observe how the most recurrent themes by banks when communicating the SDGs encompass the three dimensions of CSR mentioned by Elkington (1998), Lee and Hess (2022), and Lizcano (2022). Those episodes dedicated to climate change are directly related to the environmental dimension, while those that discuss the promotion of diversity and the conflict in Ukraine have a purely social orientation, and the chapters that address the issue of global financial flows and the reduction of the digital divide have an economic character. These data are in line with the approach of Ramón-Llorens et al. (2021), who affirm that the path to sustainability in the company began in 1982 with the Brundtland Commission, reaching the present day with the establishment of the 2030 Agenda.

Finally, regarding the identification of the banking entity that uses the corporate podcast more extensively (Ob. 4), the data clearly shows that BBVA is the bank in the analyzed sample that is most committed to the podcast as a communication channel for CSR. These data reinforce a continuous line by the entity, as "Blink" has been a proposal for the communication of its intangible values: "The studied financial entity does not spare efforts in emphasizing, at the moment of specifying its activities, its commitment to sustainable development, responsible consumption, the fight against climate change or social integration, for example" (Barbeito-Veloso and Perona-Páez, 2019, p.8).

Understanding how organizations, in this case, banks, use communication tools and the contents linked to social responsibility actions they disseminate through them has been the underlying interest of this proposal. The podcast was the selected option to understand how banks adapt their discourses to the communicative possibilities provided by digital platforms. This study analyzes the relationship between the contents that address aspects related to the field of CSR, specifically those focused on the actions of the SDGs, with the media that are gaining presence in the communicative landscape, such as podcasts, which have experienced and continue to experience a growing boom in recent years (AIMC, 2022; Amoedo, 2022). This trend towards the growth in consumption of this format has allowed it to be considered as an option for companies and institutions to become a vehicle for their messages, especially those more directly related to current affairs and that may be of greater interest to their users.

Among the lines of future research, it would be interesting to know the real scope of the podcast for all types of organizations, beyond financial institutions, in order to establish whether this format is becoming a strategic tool within their communication plans, that is, whether it is a conscious decision or simply the result of an "effect of being" on all platforms. Similarly, it would also be of great interest

to find out to what extent communication managers are aware of the informative and expressive possibilities of sound language and to analyze their skills to adapt the content to the profile of the audience they want to reach and if they are willing to invest in experimenting and innovating in this format. This research would account for the communicative importance given to the podcast or, on the contrary, show whether it is just a cheap option that is trendy and does not require large production costs.

On the other hand, it would also be interesting to investigate whether organizations would consider the podcast as an element of their audio branding strategy, and therefore take sound as a differentiating and personality element. Likewise, a study could be conducted to observe whether the podcast is capable of becoming an alternative to expand points of contact with stakeholders, with whom topics related to sustainability would be shared, something that would affect both users and society in general.

As a conclusion to the article, we want to refer to the recent initiative of the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (2022), which has launched a campaign in search of alliances and support in order to incorporate a new SDG called responsible communication (SDG18) into the 2030 Agenda. This proposal demonstrates the strategic function of communication in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and therefore, we are facing a great opportunity to study digital communication channels and formats that contribute to the dissemination of the articulation of the SDGs in organizations.

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