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The communication of CSR. Analysis of the hotel sector

I. Castillo [CV] [ID] [ORCID] Researcher– Faculty of Information Sciences – Universidad Complutense de Madrid – Spain– idocasti@ucm.es

N. Villagra [CV] [ID] [ORCID] Full Professor of the Department of Applied Communication Sciences – Faculty of Information Sciences - Universidad Complutense de Madrid –Spain- nuriavillagra@ccinf.ucm.es

Abstracts

Introduction. This article analyses the communication on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) made by hotel chains, especially through online channels, that have become the main instruments for the communication of companies towards their groups of interest. **Methodology.** The research includes a content analysis to study the messages published in two online channels (corporate websites and Facebook profiles); and two in-depth interviews to some CSR responsables of hotel chains, to understand the performance and challenges that companies identify in the communication of CSR in this sector. **Results and conclusions.** The companies studied communicate their CSR actions, but this communication does not make the most of the potential of the new media and is essentially unidirectional. The hotel chains must promote the dialogue with their public and offer information in a more appealing and close manner.

Keywords

Corporate Social Responsibility; hotel sector; communication strategies; Facebook; corporate website.

Contents

1. Introduction. 2. State of the art. 2.1. CSR in the Spanish hotel sector. 2.2. The communication of CSR in the hotel sector. 3. Objectives and methodology. 3.1. Content analysis of two online communication channels on CSR. 3.1.1. Sample selection. 3.1.2. Corporate websites. 3.1.3. Corporate profiles in the Facebook social network. 3.2. In-depth interviews to responsables for CSR of the hotel chains. 3.2.1 Sample selection. 3.2.2. Technical matters and content of questions. 4. Results. 4.1. Content analysis of corporate websites. 4.1.1. Presence and location of CSR in corporate websites. 4.1.2. CSR content and forms of communication. 4.2. Content analysis of corporate profiles on Facebook. 4.2.1. Content and frequency of publications on CSR. 4.2.2. Interactions in CSR contents 4.3. In-depth interviews. 4.3.1. CSR in companies: background, presence and main commitments.

4.3.2. Challenges on CSR. 4.3.3. Communication strategies on CSR. 5. Conclusions. 6. List of references.

Translated by **Yuhanny Henares**
(academic translator, Universitat de Barcelona)

1. Introduction

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been object of numerous studies (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012) in the past years due to its great impact in companies and the society. From the business perspective, CSR has shifted from an approach essentially focused on social and philanthropic aspects to a more strategical and transforming approach, that aims to reduce the negative impacts and promote the positive ones from the economic, social and environmental perspective (Andreu and Fernández, 2011). The new demands of a society that is more informed and suspicious about business actions (Edelman, 2017; 2018) as well as the environmental or social challenges established in the future, encourage companies to adopt a new more responsible, open and participatory attitude and that fosters a greater dialogue with their groups of interest (Freeman, 1984; 1994).

Communication is one of the complexities about CSR management, since some publics are sceptical about receiving this sort of information from companies (Du, Bhattacharya and Sen, 2010; Elving, Golob, Podnar, Ellerup-Nielsen and Thomson, 2015; Illia, Zyglidopoulos, Romenti, Rodríguez-Canovas and González del Valle, 2013; Jahdi and Acikdilli, 2009; Morsing, Schultz and Nielsen, 2008; Schlegelmilch and Pollach, 2005; Seele and Lock, 2015; Villagra, Cárdbaba and Ruiz San Román, 2016; Waddock and Goggins, 2011), especially if inconsistencies between what the company says and does are detected. However, increasingly more companies wish to communicate their commitments on CSR (Font, Walmsley, Cogotti, McCombes and Häusler, 2012).

From the sectors of the economy where we can study the communication on CSR, the tourism sector stands out. This is one of the most relevant in Spain, because in 2017 it represented 11.5% of GDP of the country, in addition to be the sector driving the economic growth, and the one that more employment generates (Exceltur, 2018). Within tourism, there is the hotel sector, one of the most relevant subsectors (De Grosbois, 2012; Luengo Chávez, 2015).

The hotel sector generates significant positive impacts, but also negative impacts as well (Kirk, 1995), therefore the CSR has a relevant role in this industry. The role of hotel chains is especially noteworthy, because inside the sector in general, they are the stakeholders that develop Corporate Social Responsibility strategies the most (Rodríguez-Antón, Alonso and Celemin, 2013).

This study analyses the CSR communication made by hotel chains, especially through online channels, that have turned into main instruments for the communication of the companies with their groups of interest (Pérez and Rodríguez, 2015). The research involves a content analysis to study the messages published in two online channels (the corporate websites and Facebook profiles); and also interviews conducted to several responsables of Corporate Social Responsibility, to understand the performance of companies in terms of CSR communication.

The general objective of this study is to understand what, how and through what channels the CSR is communicated in the hotel sector based on the analysis of the six hotel chains with greater turnover in Spain according to the Hosteltur ranking (2015): RIU Hotels & Resorts, Meliá Hotels International, Iberostar Hotels & Resorts, NH Hotel Group, Barceló Hotels & Resorts, and Palladium Hotel Group.

Therefore, it is a study about the state of the art of the sector, specifically of the situation of CSR communication in the hotel sector in Spain. According to some authors (Holcomb, Upchurch and Okumus, 2007; De Grosbois, 2012; Font et al., 2012) the CSR communication in the hotel sector has been scarcely studied, and even less in the Spanish context (Pérez and Rodríguez, 2015), therefore this research can contribute to the knowledge about this subject in an innovative and relevant way in, at least, two senses: 1) On the one hand, it is a good starting point to understand the management of CSR communication by the great companies of the sector, especially what are the most relevant themes in terms of CSR for the hotel chains, what channels are used to communicate their actions, what are the challenges identified, etc. 2) On the other hand, to understand what are these large companies doing to promote the relevance of the management and communication of CSR in the sector, especially the smallest hotel chains, where these practices are not so extended.

2. State of the art

2.1. CSR in the Spanish hotel sector

The study of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Spanish hotel sector is a rather recent phenomenon. According to some authors (Martínez, Pérez and Rodríguez, 2013) there is scarce research about the application of CSR to the sector.

Alles and Marqués (2011) conducted an exhaustive review of the scientific literature up until then, stating that the hotel sector is one that might benefit the most from the application of CSR policies and strategies. This is due to the relevance of the sector within the phenomenon of tourism, and due to the impacts, both positive and negative generated by the sector. Like Rodríguez-Antón, Alonso and Celemín (2013) say, there are three major research lines on CSR of the hotel sector. Firstly, those researches that study what CSR practices are undertaken by hotel chains. Secondly, researches focused on the analysis of documents and channels used in the sector to disclose the CSR, the line in which this study would insert into. Lastly, we come across studies that have focused on analysing the relationship between the onset of CSR strategies and activities in the company and their impact on the financial performance.

These same authors say that in the tourism sector in general, the hotel chains are the companies that engage the most on CSR and sustainability due to their greater size, which causes that "their visibility and possible polluting and environment-disturbing activity" to be higher than other companies in the sector (Rodríguez-Antón, Alonso and Celemín, 2013: 16). According to Garriga and Melé (2004), the main reason behind a CSR initiative is the conviction about what should be done, namely, an actual ethical commitment. However, like Alles and Marqués (2011), Martínez, Pérez and Rodríguez (2013) and Rodríguez-Antón, Alonso and Celemín (2013) state, the reasons driving companies of the hotel sector to adopt CSR policies and strategies are diverse, but many of them can be considered reactive or instrumental. Among these, we can highlight the economic impact of CSR on the financial performance of the company, the social pressure of the groups of interest, the reduction of negative

impact that the company might cause or the improvement of its image. According to these authors, there is a *gap* in the initiatives in this sector, because only those that impact positively in the achievement of business objectives are started up.

In accordance with Pérez and Rodríguez (2015), the dimensions of CSR within the hotel sector would be, like CSR in general, the economic, social and environmental, which would constitute what is known as the "Triple Bottom Line." However, these authors suggest including a fourth dimension, the cultural, of great relevance for the sector, since it is sensitive to these sort of questions.

Regarding the content of the CSR practices in the hotel sector, these are focused on the responsible or sustainable tourism, which the World Tourism Organization (WTO, 2012: 1) defines as: "the tourism that fully considers the current and future economic, social and environmental repercussions to meet the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and of the host communities."

2.2. The communication of CSR in the hotel sector

Like the concept of CSR, the studies that have analysed the communication of CSR in the sector of hotel and tourism are scarce (Holcomb, Upchurch and Okumus, 2007; De Grosbois, 2012; Font et al., 2012). According to Pérez and Rodríguez "the studies are still few and, in addition, focused on contexts different than the Spanish in all cases" (2015: 320). This work aims to contribute in the solution of this lack of research.

Pérez and Rodríguez offer a definition of communication on CSR: "it refers to the information disclosed by companies about those activities undertaken and that demonstrate the inclusion of economic, social and environmental commitments in the trade operations of companies as well as in the relationships with the groups of interest" (2015: 316). This definition includes both the triple bottom line perspective as well as the *stakeholder* theory, when talking about "relationships with the groups of interest." Michelin advocates that the communication of activities of companies is part of the dialogue between the company and its groups of interest, and that "it helps to legitimate the corporate behaviour and change the perceptions and expectations about it" (2011: 79). Therefore, the CSR communication contributes to the corporate reputation of a company (Pérez and Rodríguez, 2015).

Some authors (Golob, Podnar, Elving, Ellerup Nielsen, Thomsen and Schultz, 2013) say that two perspectives in the communication of CSR can be differentiated. On the one hand, a functionalist approach, found often in the research oriented to marketing and public relations, where "to conceptualise, plan and send CSR messages towards groups of interest are considered core factors to improve the image and reputation of companies" (Golob *et al.*, 2013: 179). However, this approach involves comprehending the communication as a matter separated from other activities of the company. It is the same approach that Capriotti defines as "a tactical tool for the management of CSR" (2011: 373).

In contrast with that functionalist or instrumental conception, other recent publications get closer to the communication on CSR from a constructivist or constitutive perspective. Thus, authors like Golob et al. analyse it "from an integral framework and an intra and inter-organisational perspective", where

the co-creation and negotiation play a significant role for the anchoring of CSR, "understood as constructor of meaning both inside as well as around the organisation" (Golob *et al.*, 2013: 179).

From this constructivist approach, the CSR communication is strategical and constitutes "a tool to facilitate and promote the collaborative construction of CSR" (Capriotti, 2011: 373). This means that bidirectional communication channels must be established between the company and its groups of interest that allow the companies to identify the needs and interests of their public. In short, it is about a listening and continuous improvement process that enables the company to better orientate its actions towards society. A similar approach is advocated by Schoeneborn and Trittin (2013). The authors suggest shifting from the traditional approach to a constitutive one, where communication is understood as "a process of continuous negotiation of meaning" (Schoeneborn and Trittin, 2013: 193) and that is endowed with a central role. The relevance of fostering bidirectional communication models where *stakeholders* participate in an active manner in the corporate strategies was already manifested in a study of Morsing and Schultz published in 2006. In this study, we identify three strategies that a company can use to communicate CSR: information, response and involvement of all *stakeholders*. The latter is the one indicated as most suitable because it involves a bidirectional and symmetric communication where *stakeholders* participated and influenced in the corporate behaviour (Morsing and Schultz, 2006). Therefore, the involvement strategy entails a process of co-creation between the company and publics when it comes to orientate the CSR strategy.

Regarding the channels that companies use to communicate their CSR, Pérez and Rodríguez (2015) conclude in their study that the most used tools are the press section of the websites (41% of chains), the websites on CSR (34% of chains), the redirection to other entities (29%), and the specific communication media (27%). Also, specific websites are used, specially targeted to employees and the job market (59% of chains). Regarding the minutes or reports on CSR, only 20% of chains inform through these sorts of documents.

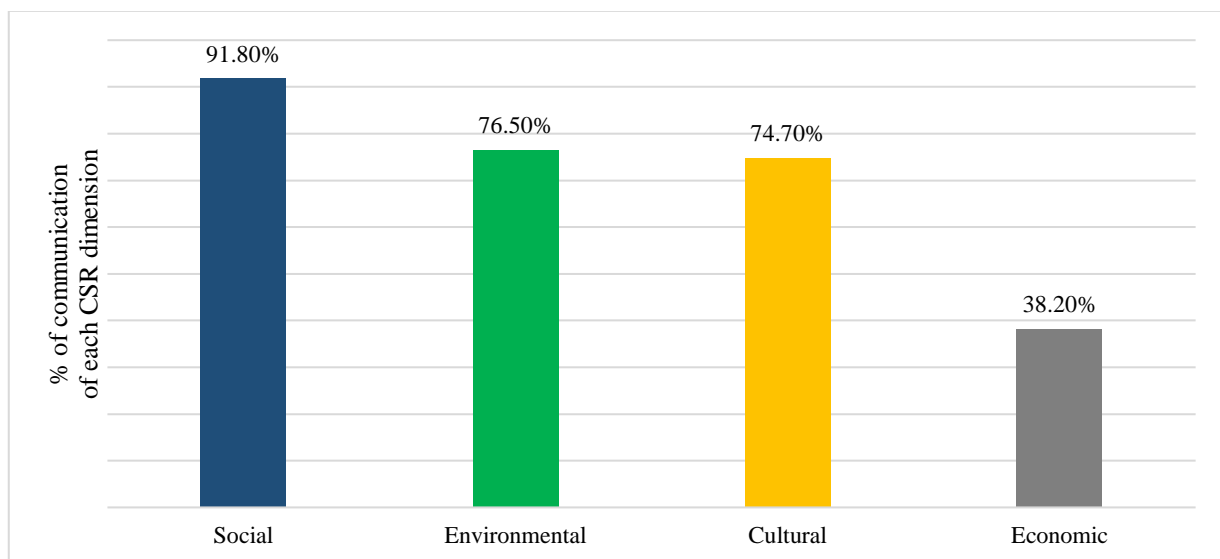
Furthermore, following the same authors, all those tools related to online communication, like corporate websites and social networks, are very important to communicate CSR. Regarding the latter, according to some authors (Capriotti, 2011; Gómez and Chalmeta, 2013; Sustainly, 2016) in the past years there has been noticed an increase in their use by the companies in order to communicate information about sustainability or CSR. Among the most used social networks for this, Twitter stands out, followed by LinkedIn and Facebook (Sustainly, 2016). The online channels allow the simple and straightforward dissemination of information about CSR, a greater flexibility and personalisation of the message, and a more bidirectional communication (Capriotti, 2011). However, according to Gómez and Chalmeta (2013), it is observed, at least on Facebook and Twitter, an unidirectional communication strategy of CSR, evidencing that all the potential of these networks is not used to its full extent. Undoubtedly, this is an aspect that companies should improve in the future. For authors like Capriotti (2011) or Gómez and Chalmeta (2013), the communication of CSR in media should opt for bidirectionality, with the participation of users, since the aim of these tools is precisely the participation and dialogue between people.

In general, the groups of interest have manifested their keenness to receive information about the CSR of hotel companies, although they have reported the difficulty to obtain this kind of information, due to how confusing some channels like reports or minutes might be (Holcomb, Upchurch and Okumus, 2007; De Grosbois, 2012). According to Pérez and Rodríguez (2015) the group of interest composed

of clients is the best informed by hotel chain companies through *online* media, such as websites. On the other hand, other *stakeholders* like suppliers or shareholders, receive rather scarce information through this channel. In fact, the authors inform that "98% of hotel chains and 76% of independent hotels of the sample use online reservation engines on their websites" (Pérez and Rodríguez, 2015: 327). These data allow authors to conclude that websites of hotel companies have a strong commercial nature. Based on the thesis elaborated by Pérez-Aranda Canela, the assessment of the CSR "influences directly and positively in the selection of the hotel premises, as well as in the future purchase intention of its services" (2016: 388). This would explain, partly, the primacy of the communication to clients.

Regarding the contents that hotel companies communicate the most (Graphic 1), the social questions are being communicated more often (91.8% of cases), followed by the environmental (76.5%), cultural (74.7%) and the economic questions (38.2%).

Graphic 1. Communication of every dimension of the CSR



Source: Pérez and Rodríguez (2015).

The results of Pérez and Rodríguez (2015) slightly coincide with the study of De Grosbois (2012) where, out of 150 hotel companies studied, 48% communicated employment matters (social dimension), 40.6% environmental, 30.6% economic and 24% questions about diversity and accessibility. However, it is complex to establish a comparison between both studies, because different codes and categories were used. Moreover, in the study of Pérez and Rodríguez (2015) only the web-based channels were considered, while De Grosbois (2012) used a greater number of channels for analysis, like CSR reports.

A last conclusion of the study of Pérez and Rodríguez (2015) is that information analysed on websites was scattered, and it was not an easy task for researchers to find it, therefore hotel companies should improve their presentation and organisation, perhaps by splitting per dimensions and groups of interest (Pérez and Rodríguez, 2015).

3. Objectives and methodology

Considering what was mentioned earlier in the previous section, it has been observed that the CSR communication of the hotel sector is at an incipient stage, especially in the Spanish context and, therefore, this work contributes to broadening the understanding of the subject.

The aim of this research is to understand what, how and through what channels the CSR is communicated in the hotel sector, in order to help the sector to construct or refine its communication strategy of CSR.

This main objective is concretised in the following specific objectives:

1. Understand what are the themes related to CSR that hotel chains communicate the most.
2. Discover what channels are mainly used by hotel chains to disclose their CSR.
3. Determine what kind of contents related to CSR have a better acceptance on Facebook.
4. Identify what kind of communication of CSR is performed on the corporate websites of the hotel chains.
5. Identify the challenges faced by CSR and its communication in the hotel sector.

Regarding the methodology, for the development of this research a qualitative approach was adopted, using two research techniques: the content analysis and in-depth interviews. The use of both allows the triangulation of the research that, like Denzin (1970) indicates, consists of the combination of two or more theories, sources of data or research methods to study a particular phenomenon.

3.1. Content analysis of two *online* communication channels on CSR

Several authors (Hsieh, 2012; Gómez and Chalmeta, 2013; Luengo Chávez, 2015; Pérez and Rodríguez, 2015; Zhao, 2015) have widely and recently used this analysis technique to study the communication of CSR and sustainability issued by companies on channels like websites or social networks. In general, it is about a technique often used in Social Sciences and specially in communication, since it allows "coding in a systematic and rigorous manner" and offers the researcher "stable guidelines to systematise what could become scattered and difficult to analyse otherwise" (Canel, Benavides, Del Río and Echart, 2002: 2-3).

Like mentioned earlier, the *online* channels are gaining a growing relevance in terms of CSR communication, although it does not always have the bidirectional and interactive nature they should. This study analyses two *online* channels of each one of the companies included in the sample: the corporate website and its corporate profile on the Facebook social network.

3.1.1. Sample selection

We analyse the CSR communication of the six major hotel chains as per turnover, identified in the *Ranking HOSTELTUR of hotel chains with more than 1,000 rooms in 2015*. This ranking is a

classification of reference in the sector (Hosteltur, 2015). The six hotel chains analysed represent practically 60% of the total turnover of the hotel sector in Spain and include: RIU Hotels & Resorts, Meliá Hotels International, Iberostar Hotels & Resorts, NH Hotel Group, Barceló Hotels & Resorts and Palladium Hotel Group (Table 1).

Table 1. Content analysis sample: hotel chains by turnover (likewise, the data of premises and rooms is included)

Hotel chain	Turnover*		Variation	Premises		Rooms	
	2014	2013	%	2015	2014	2015	2014
1. RIU Hotels & Resorts	1,618.00	1,472.00	9.92%	104	104	44,490	45,277
2. Meliá Hotels International	1,464.30	1,352.00	8.31%	309	308	82,283	79,000
3. Iberostar Hotels & Resorts	1,435.00	1,107.00	29.63%	77	76	27,262	26,806
4. NH Hotel Group	1,265.00	1,280.00	-1.17%	382	369	59,047	57,785
5. Barceló Hotels & Resorts	942.20	886.70	6.26%	107	140	33,379	37,380
6. Palladium Hotel Group	420.00	380.00	10.53%	50	50	12,954	13,925

*Turnover in million Euros.

Source: Authors own creation based on Hosteltur (2015).

In addition, it is worth mentioning that these three companies (Meliá Hotels International, NH Hotel Group and Barceló Hotels & Resorts) also appear as the most responsible of the hotel and tourism sector in the *MERCO Ranking of Responsibility and Corporate Government 2015*, elaborated annually by the consultancy agency on reputation and other intangibles, Villafañe & Asociados, positioned in places 21, 25 and 78, respectively.

3.1.2. Corporate websites

The corporate website of a company is one of its main communication channels, not only regarding CSR but also when it comes to providing information in general. For Luengo Chávez (2015: 230), in the case of hotel chains, the websites are their "main display". In this sense, the analysis is focused on corporate websites and not the commercial websites of the companies, because the latter aim to inform clients about trade issues: information and services offered by hotels, reservations, etc. and not offering information about CSR.

Referring specifically to our study, the final sample for the content analysis of the corporate websites is composed of six websites in total (Table 2).

Considering that websites have a dynamic nature, and their content may shift even several times a day, all of them were made a retrieved on 11 January 2016, and an *offline* copy was saved using a specific *software* called *HTTrack Website Copier* to work on these *offline* versions later. In this sense, sections like "about us" were considered, where there is provided general information that may be related to Social Responsibility, or the sections specifically dedicated to CSR as well. There were also considered in the analysis, the sections targeted specially to a group of interest in specific, like the section "careers", that often talks about the commitment with potential or current employees; or the section "shareholders and investors", that tends to deal with issues like ethics and corporate government and economic affairs, namely, more specific information for this kind of public.

Table 2. Analysed websites of the hotel chains

Hotel chains	Websites analysed
1. RIU Hotels & Resorts	Corporate/ commercial website (same website). http://www.RIU.com
2. Meliá Hotels International	Corporate website. http://www.meliahotelsinternational.com/
3. Iberostar Hotels & Resorts	Corporate website. http://www.grupoiberostar.com/
4. NH Hotel Group	Corporate website. http://corporate.nh-hoteles.es/
5. Barceló Hotels & Resorts	Corporate/ commercial website. Section "Grupo Barceló". http://www.barcelo.com/BarceloGroup/es_ES/home-grupo-barcelo.aspx
6. Palladium Hotel Group	Corporate/ commercial website. Section "about us". http://www.palladiumhotelgroup.com/es/

Source: Authors own creation.

Some sections or contents were not included in the analysis. Firstly, the press releases were excluded, namely, the section that is usually called "press office" in the websites, since we understand that this sort of information would require a specific content analysis, because they are sample units different from the website. Secondly, and likewise, all the links to documents offered by websites have been excluded from the analysis (like CSR reports, reports of the corporate government or press dossiers). We believe that these documents, usually in PDF format, also constitute independent specific sample units, that would require a different analysis template.

Lastly, we must consider that in this analysis, we have exclusively studied the CSR related contents, excluding other features of the websites that effectively influence in how the messages are received and in the communication made on a website, like the website's usability, browsing, aesthetics or the wording used (Luengo Chávez, 2015). However, these sort of questions have been noted as "observations" when some significant aspect was perceived.

The tools used for the content analysis of the websites were the *software* mentioned earlier for the saving websites (*HTTrack Website Copier*) and Microsoft Excel.

3.1.3. Corporate profiles in the Facebook social network

The social media have become a relevant channel of companies for sharing information. Among the social media, the social networks stand out, which for Martín and Ramón are "virtual communities, where users interact through the creation and free registry of personal profiles" and which main functions are "to connect users and enable the centralisation and exchange of information (pictures, videos, thoughts and more)" (2015: 11).

Facebook stands out in the wide scope of current social networks. It is one of the most popular social networks in the world, that already has an average of 1,200 million active users daily (Facebook, 2017). In Spain, it is the social network that Internet users are more acquainted to, and the most preferred also, concentrating 29% of preference, only exceeded by WhatsApp (IAB Spain, 2017). In Facebook, users can share status, pictures, videos and events in general with their contacts, besides being part of groups and follow their favourite brands, through personal profiles. For companies, the most common option in Facebook are not personal profiles, but instead the creation of sites or *Facebook Pages*.

The selection of Facebook for our study is due to several reasons. Firstly, according to the *6th Annual Social Media Sustainability Index* (Sustainly, 2016), Facebook is the third social channel used the most by companies to communicate CSR and sustainability questions, only behind Twitter and LinkedIn. Secondly, the Facebook tools for developers (Facebook API) allows to access each one of the publications of the pages, without limit of time nor frequency. While the Twitter tool only allows the access to data of the past 3,200 tweets (Twitter, 2016), considerably limiting the reach of any analysis.

On the other hand, the Facebook user profile is much more heterogeneous and, therefore, allows that the conclusions can be generalised to a greater extent, while in other social networks, like LinkedIn, the profile is much more specialised and professional. Regarding the time period analysed, it is a natural year, from 1 January to 31 December 2015.

3.2. In-depth interviews to responsables for CSR of the hotel chains

In the second stage of the research, in-depth interviews were conducted with the aim to include the perspective of the companies in the study. These interviews allowed to contrast the results of the content analysis and, additionally, to obtain new information to thoroughly understand the motivations and the CSR management in companies, as well as their communication strategies.

3.2.1 Sample selection

The six hotel chains analysed were contacted, specifically the communication or CSR departments. From the total of companies, three responded favourably, accepting to take part in the study. Thus, the final sample in this stage of the study was composed of: RIU Hotels & Resorts, Meliá Hotels International and NH Hotel Group. The three individuals interviewed were the CSR responsables in their respective companies.

3.2.2. Technical matters and content of questions

The semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face between 20 and 28 July 2016 in Palma de Mallorca and Madrid (Spain). The duration ranged from 1 hour to 1 hour and a half, and all of them were recorded and transcribed later. The questions were prepared beforehand, organising them into three large blocks: 1) the CSR in the company, 2) the CSR communication strategy and 3) the CSR communication through the channels studied in the content analysis (corporate websites and corporate profile on Facebook).

4. Results

Next, we introduce the results of the two stages of the research: 1) the content analysis of corporate websites and the corporate profiles in Facebook and 2) the in-depth interviews to CSR responsables.

4.1. Content analysis of corporate websites

After the content analysis of the websites of the hotel chains, we disclose the findings presented by sub-sections of interest as follows.

4.1.1. Presence and location of CSR in corporate websites

The location of CSR contents compared to others on the website, as well as their presence (or absence) on the home pages of companies are clear indicators of the relevance endowed to the Corporate Responsibility by a company (Hsieh, 2012; Luengo Chávez, 2015). It has been detected that only three out of the six companies studied have a specific tab dedicated to CSR (although each one of them uses a different name) in the *home* page of the corporate website, namely, the main website. The rest do not have a specific section and contents related to these themes are essentially detailed in the sections "About us", "Careers" and the section of "Shareholders and investors" in the case of companies listed on the stock exchange.

4.1.2. CSR content and forms of communication

Regarding the CSR that companies communicate on their websites, we must indicate that for this study, we divide the questions into four main fields (the economic, social, environmental and corporate field), where each one involves a series of specific aspects about CSR. Said themes and questions were defined based on the *Guideline G4 for the elaboration of reports on sustainability* (Global Reporting Initiative, 2015) published in 2015 by the organisation Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). GRI is an independent organisation which standards for *reports* on sustainability are the most used worldwide (Global Reporting Initiative, 2017) and therefore, they have a high level of recognition in the field of CSR and sustainability.

In the case of corporate websites, practically all companies of the sample communicate about all fields (Table 3).

However, considering that not all companies communicate each indicator with the same strength, we have deemed necessary to study the thoroughness in the communication of each message. Likewise,

we have scored that thoroughness of the message with 0 if there is no indicator, 1 if it is commented in a slight or implicit manner; 2 if it is normal or adequate; and 3 if it is an indicator communicated in a strong and exhaustive manner. On Table 3, the empty spaces that indicate there is no indicator (equivalent to 0), a tick (✓) stands for 1; two ticks (✓✓) for 2; and three ticks (✓✓✓) for 3, the maximum score.

Table 3. Presence by indicator of the message in the websites of hotel chains

Fields	Aspects	Hotel chains					
		RIU Hotels & Resorts	Meliá Hotels International	Iberostar Hotels & Resorts	NH Hotel Group	Barceló Hotels & Resorts	Palladium Hotel Group
1. Economic	11. Economic performance		✓✓✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	
	12. Presence in the market		✓✓				
	13. Indirect economic consequences		✓				
	14. Procurement practices		✓✓		✓✓✓		
2. Social	21. Labour practices and dignified work	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓
	22. Human Rights (HHRR)	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	
	23. Society	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	
	24. Responsibility on products		✓✓		✓✓✓	✓	
3. Environmental	31. Materials		✓		✓✓✓		
	32. Energy	✓✓	✓✓		✓✓✓		✓
	33. Water	✓✓	✓		✓✓✓		
	34. Biodiversity	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓✓✓		
	35. Emissions	✓✓	✓✓		✓✓✓		
	36. Effluents and residues	✓✓			✓✓✓		
	37. Others and env. in general	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓✓		
4. Corporate	41. Strategy						
	42. Profile		✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓
	43. Relationship with the groups of interest		✓✓				
	44. Government		✓✓✓	✓	✓✓✓		
	45. Ethics and integrity		✓✓✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓
TOTAL		19/60	38/60	10/60	46/60	13/60	5/60
FINAL RESULT (1 TO 10 SCALE)		3.1	6.3	1.6	7.6	2.1	0.08

Source: Authors own creation.

Thus, NH Hotel Group is the chain that communicates its CSR in greater detail, with a final score of 7.6 in a 1 to 10 scale; followed by Meliá Hotels International, with 6.3. The good score of NH Hotel Group is partly explained by the complete communication about the environmental field, where it achieves the maximum score. The fact is that this company has a specific website dedicated to the environmental aspect of its CSR.

In general, companies communicate, firstly, a broad commitment with the CSR that serves as an introduction to the issue. Later, the companies analysed explain their specific commitments to the different fields or groups of interest. However, the fact of communicating with results or achievements is not common among the hotel chains. Based on the analysis, only two hotel chains (NH Hotel Group and RIU Hotels & Resorts) consolidate their communication with specific results. The rest of companies provides data, but essentially focused on the social and economic fields and that, sometimes, are outdated or focus on a specific group of interest, like employees.

Therefore, and in conclusion, it is observed that on the corporate websites, the type of communication is unidirectional. It is a tool that companies understand as being of information and enquiry. The communication of CSR commitments is frequent, but not the disclosure of specific data that help to materialise that commitment.

4.2. Content analysis of corporate profiles on Facebook

Before talking about the main results obtained, we show below (Table 4) a summary table with the most relevant data gathered: average of fans in the period, number of publications, average of *likes* by publication, percentage of publications of every field on CSR, and frequency of publication about CSR content. The field "environment" has been abbreviated as "env." in the table.

Table 4. Summary table of the main data obtained from the content analysis

Companies and link to the Facebook profile	Average of fans in the analysed period	No. of publications (by type of content)	Average of likes (by type of publication)	% Publications on CSR by fields	Frequency of publication of CSR contents
RIU Hotels & Resorts	731,379 fans	257 in total 28 CSR 229 no CSR	599 <i>likes</i> total 267 <i>likes</i> CSR 639 <i>likes</i> no CSR	75% social 17.8% env. 7% corporate	2.3 publications monthly
Meliá Hotels International	50,013 fans	171 in total 45 CSR 126 no CSR	25.7 <i>likes</i> total 25.8 <i>likes</i> CSR 25.6 <i>likes</i> no CSR	75.5% social 13.3% env. 11.1% corporate	3.75 publications monthly

Iberostar Hotels & Resorts	112,411 fans	552 in total 17 CSR 535 no CSR	949 <i>likes</i> total 134 <i>likes</i> CSR 975 <i>likes</i> no CSR	52.9% social 41.1% env. 5.8% corporate	1.4 publications monthly
NH Hotel Group	29,004 fans	638 in total 64 CSR 574 no CSR	29.8 <i>likes</i> total 28.7 <i>likes</i> CSR 30 <i>likes</i> no CSR	67.1% social 32.8% env.	5.3 publications monthly
Barceló Hotels & Resorts	158,539 fans	347 in total 31 CSR 316 no CSR	97 <i>likes</i> total 50 <i>likes</i> CSR 101 <i>likes</i> no CSR	77.4% social 3.2% env. 19.3% corporate	2.5 publications monthly
Palladium Hotel Group	6,813 fans	159 in total 29 CSR 130 no CSR	39 <i>likes</i> total 48 <i>likes</i> CSR 37 <i>likes</i> no CSR	44.8% social 27.6% env. 27.6% corporate	2.4 publications monthly

Source: Authors own creation.

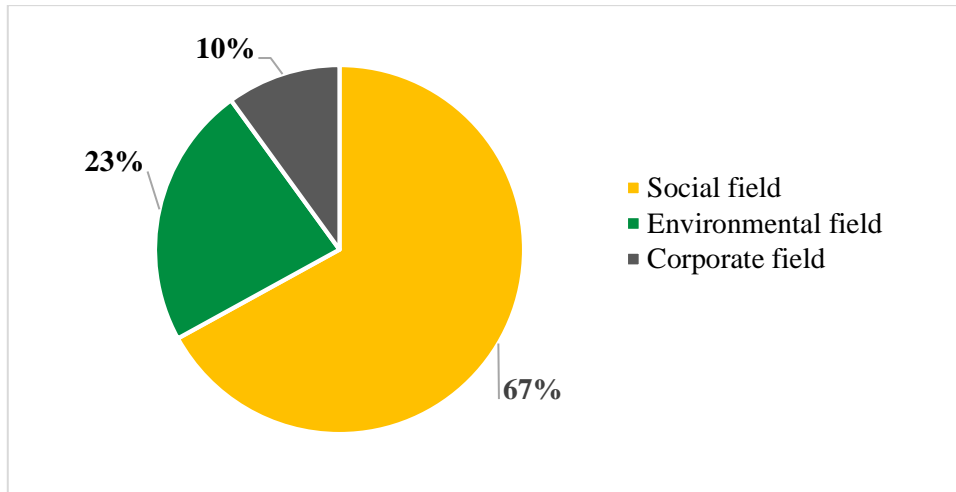
4.2.1. Content and frequency of publications on CSR

Focusing on the content of publications, the hotel chains studied published, altogether, a total of 2,124 posts. From them, 214 were about CSR, namely, 10% of the total. Thus, the hotel chains publish, a total of 17.8 posts on CSR monthly, compared to the 159 posts that do not deal with CSR. It is complex to infer whether this datum is insufficient, considering the initial state of the CSR and, especially, its communication. However, a priori it seems that the content on CSR, in contrast with the rest of contents shared, is rather scarce.

Regarding the fields on CSR, what sort of contents, by theme, are communicated more often by the hotel chains in Facebook? Altogether, 67% of publications on CSR refer to the social field (Graphic 2). This percentage contrasts with the much lower data of the environmental (23%) and corporate field (10%). Furthermore, it is rather noteworthy that no chain published economic matters related to CSR, which might suggest that the type of public on Facebook is mainly composed by consumers and the society in general, rather than a specialised public or a public that is interested about the economic matters of the Corporate Responsibility.

Although some of the hotel chains studied and many companies in general are opting for a strategical Corporate Responsibility, there is observed a superiority in the content of social matters especially, and then environmental in second place. This evidences that the communication on CSR is quite linked to philanthropy and social action.

Graphic 2. Total of publications on CSR in Facebook by fields

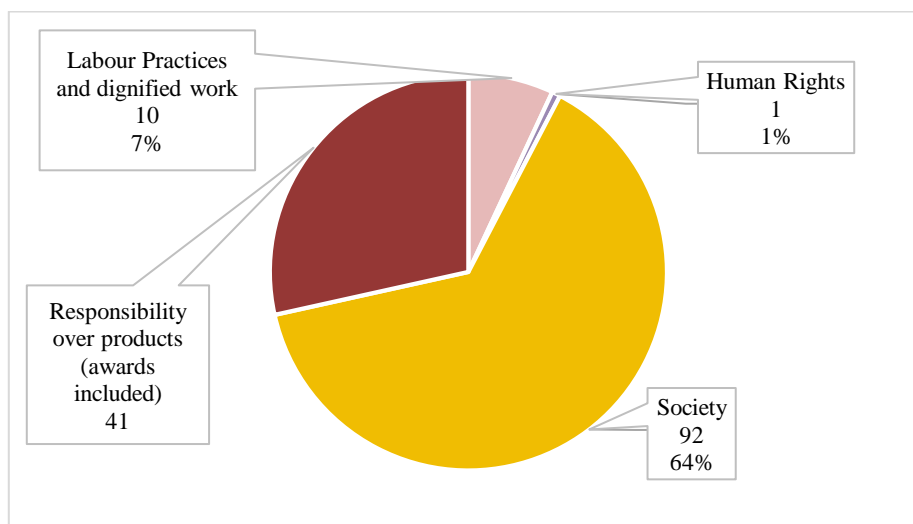


Source: Authors own creation.

We must consider that the matters related to these themes are likely to be easier to communicate to the type of public that follows social networks.

Now we focus on the social and environmental fields, the most frequently communicated. In the social field, effectively, the matters related to social action stand out (Graphic 3), hoarding 64% of the publications in the social field of all chains. This sort of communications eminently talk about collaborations with NGOs, donations to different organisations or the affiliation to causes like the fight against breast cancer.

Graphic 3. Social field: indicators communicated and percentage

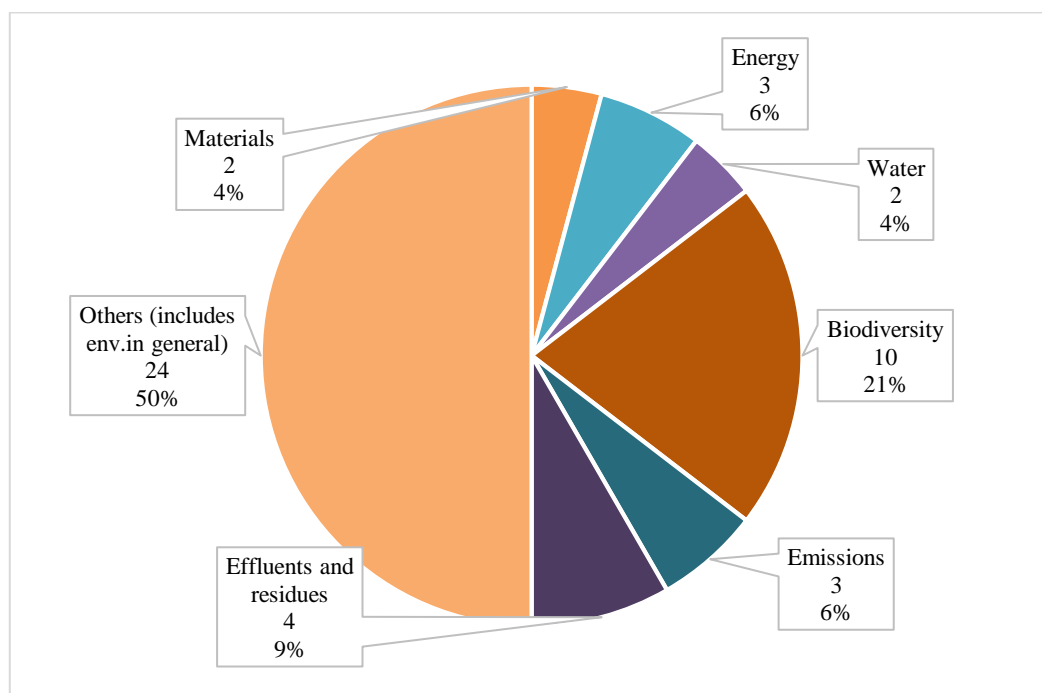


Source: Authors own creation.

The second most common indicator is the one we have called "responsibility on products" (28%) where there are included contents related to the quality and excellence of hotels, and the awards they receive for these matters, as well as awards and recognitions on sustainability. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that during the period studied, only 10 posts were published that can be catalogued as related to labour practices and dignified work. This is undoubtedly an aspect that could be improved, because hotel chains, due to their relevant contribution to GDP and employment, should potentiate formulas to generate dignified quality work, in all countries where they are.

In the case of the environmental field (Graphic 4), the most common content is "Others", with a 50% of the total, where there highlight publications that explain environmental investments in general, or it is claimed that the company has a strategy for environmental care.

Graphic 4. Environmental field: indicators and percentage

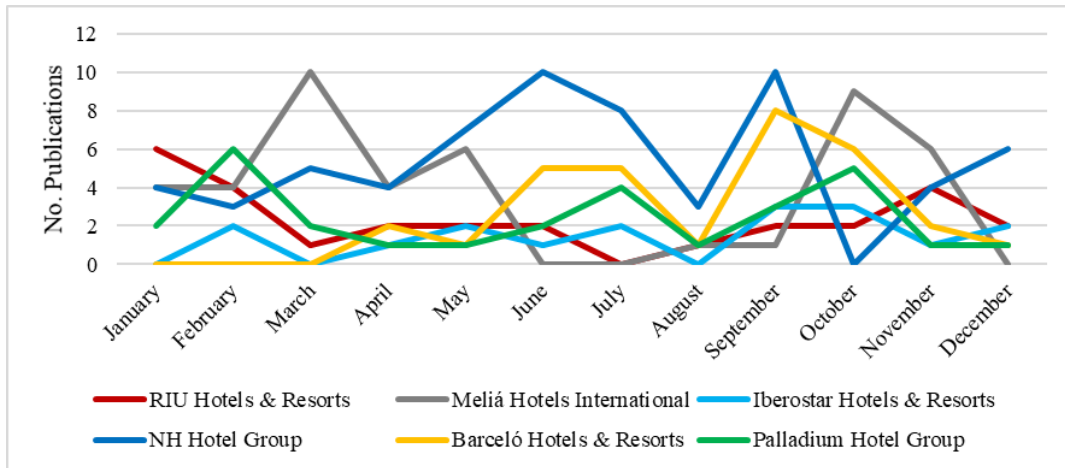


Source: authors own creation.

These are publications that are not circumscribed to a specific environmental question, and that often make the most of the "International Days" or "World Days" related to the environment, or where the commitment towards the environment in general is communicated by the company. This kind of contents seem to have acceptance on Facebook, possibly due to the fact that specially, the "World Days", like "The Hour of the Planet", are already very well known by the population in general.

The second most treated subject is that of the biodiversity (21% of the total of contents on environment), especially issued by Iberostar Hotels & Resorts and RIU Hotels & Resorts, companies that have significant programmes for turtle protection in the resorts of areas like Dominican Republic, Aruba or Cape Verde.

Graphic 5. Frequency of publications of CSR contents by months and hotel chains



Source: authors own creation

A last question of relevance is the publication frequency. The social networks require a continuous and well distributed dedication (Gómez and Chalmeta, 2013). Thus, as shown on Graphic 5, although Meliá Hotels International is the chain that most contents on CSR publishes compared to the total, the publications are not well distributed between the months of the year, because there are months, like March, where the number of publications on CSR is high (10 in total), but others, like Summer months, where nothing regarding CSR is posted.

As for hotel chains, the chain that best distributes its contents throughout the year is Palladium Hotel Group, since every month they publish at least one question regarding Corporate Social Responsibility. NH Hotel Group also has adequately distributed contents, although with peaks of greater communication and except for October, where there is nothing communicated about CSR so far.

4.2.2. Interactions in CSR contents

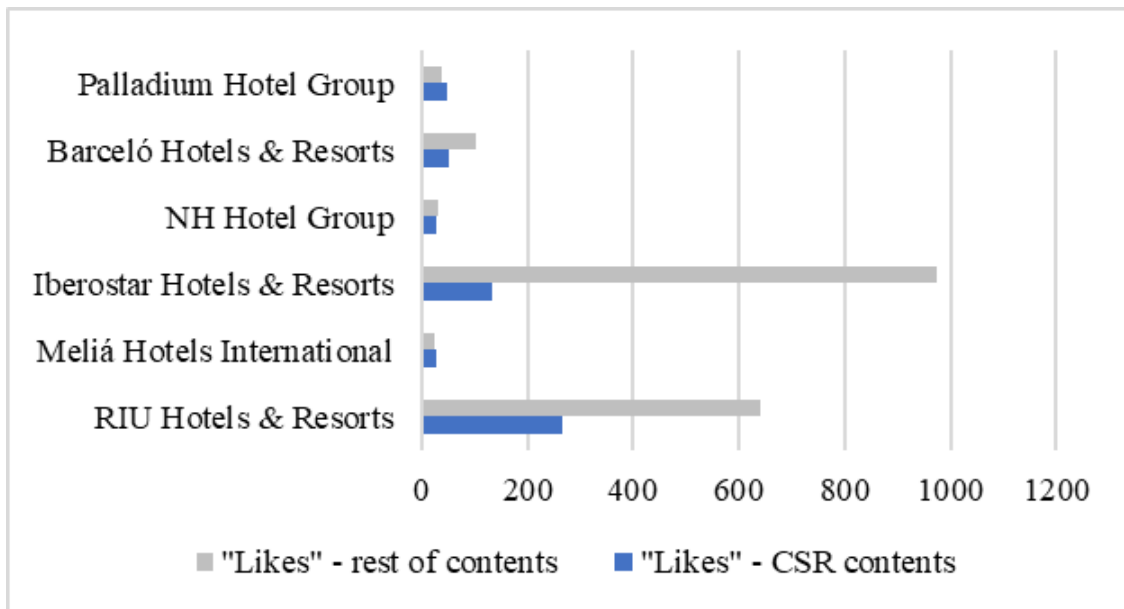
It is interesting to note that contents dealing with CSR generally lower the average of interactions in general. Namely, questions of Corporate Social Responsibility do not have the same stopping power as other kind of publications posted by companies. The case of Iberostar Hotels & Resorts is especially impactful: the average of *likes* of everything not related to CSR is 975 *likes* against the 134 *likes* of average for CSR contents (Graphic 6). The difference in RIU Hotels & Resorts (639 versus 267) and Barceló Hotels & Resorts (101 versus 50) is also quite significant.

As for the listed companies, they practically keep the level of *likes* in the two types of contents; and in the case of Palladium Hotel Group, the CSR-related exceed the rest of contents.

We believe that the huge gap mentioned earlier about the three chains might be due to two reasons. First, it might be due to a lack of coherence detected by the public on Facebook. The three companies

with this huge *gap* in their likes have the common feature that they specially focus on the holiday segment, with many results in zones where the impact to the environment might be high. Therefore, a rationale of the difference of interactions between one content and another can be the lack of coherence detected, in such a way that the "responsible" information is received by the public as a mere *greenwashing* or face washing.

Graphic 6. Average of likes about contents: CSR versus rest of contents



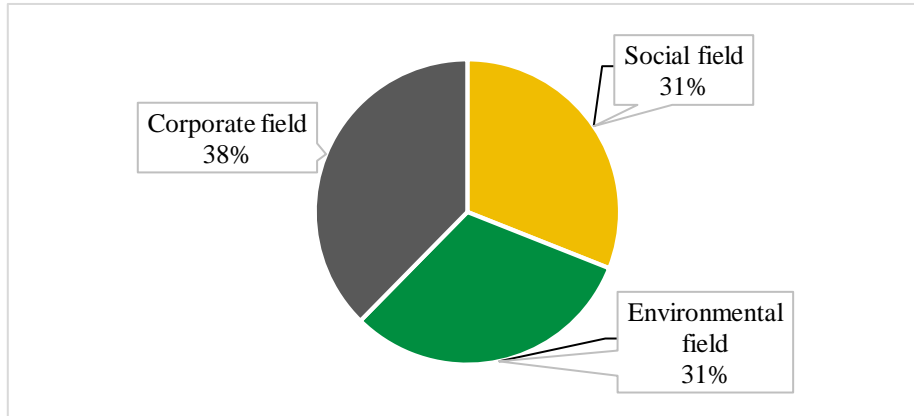
Source: authors own creation

A second rationale to this difference between interactions might be due to the fact that CSR contents cannot compete with the contents published normally by hotel companies. Information about environmental care, for instance, will hardly gather as many "likes" as a picture of a paradise beach. In this sense, the CSR contents need to "compete" in interactions with this other sort of contents, that due to their undeniable visual appeal, are hugely accepted on social networks.

In this situation, the Facebook algorithm also has something to do with it, which in general, show users those contents that, based on their activity in the social network, values who will be more interested about them. In addition, it was recently announced that, after many changes, there will be prioritised, in the news section that appears when we log on to the social network, the contents that friends and family publish, over the contents of brands and other pages (Isaac and Ember, 2016). Thus, when for example, Meliá Hotels International posts a content, it does not reach the total of their about 50,000 fans, but instead its reach is much lower, a fact that would explain the lower interaction rates -- percentage of fans that interacted with our content-- (Leander, 2016).

Although when comparing to other contents, the acceptance of CSR publications is lower, as observed, even so "likes" are obtained as well, especially in relation to the social field.

Graphic 7. Contribution of every field to the total of interactions of the hotel chains altogether

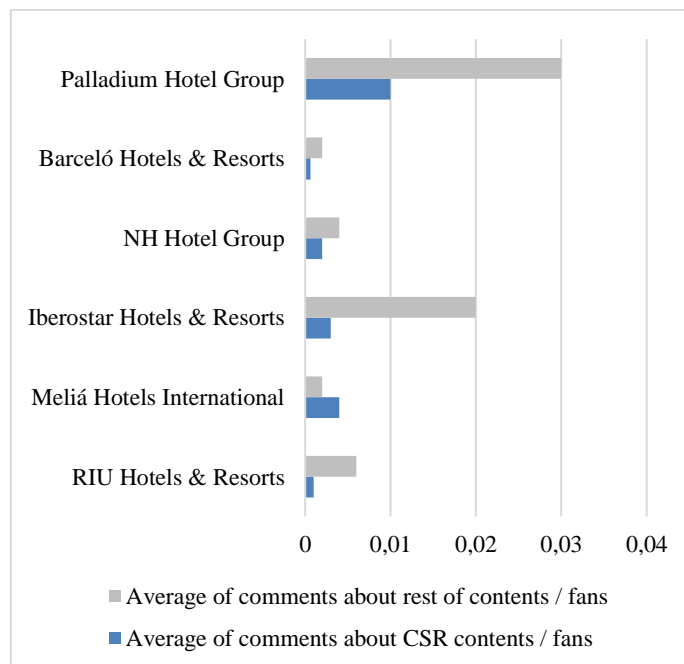


Source: Authors own creation.

Nevertheless, if we sum the interactions of publications of the three fields, and divide by the number of publications in every field to obtain an average of interactions by field (Graphic 7), we confirm that although the number of publications made in the environmental and corporate field is lower, the average of interactions even exceed, in the case of the corporate field, the interactions in the social publications.

Thus, practically all fields contribute, in average of number of interactions, the same percentage of interactions to the total.

Graphic 8. Average of comments of hotel chains publications (relative)

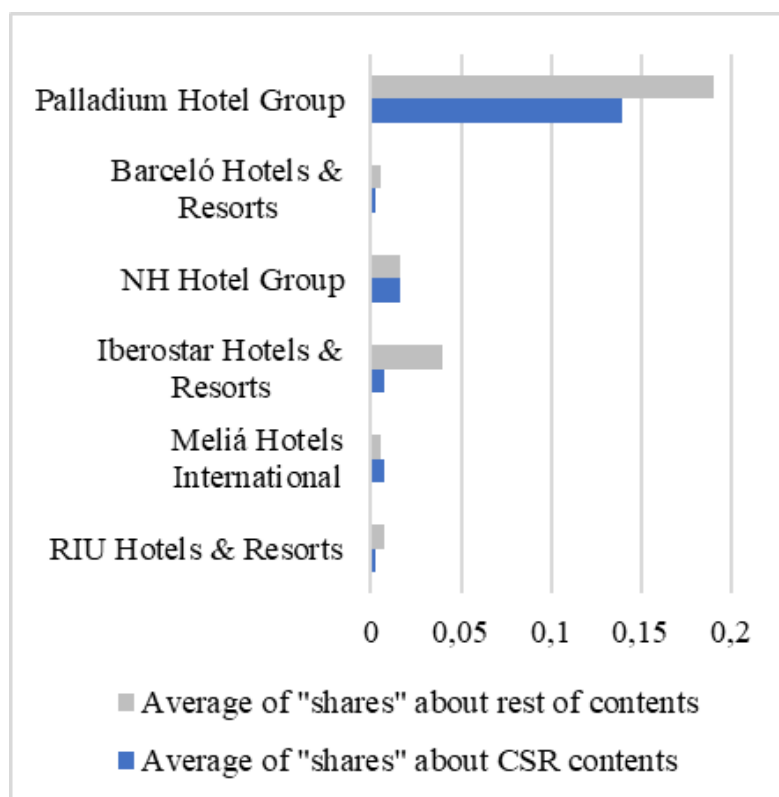


Source: Authors own creation

This demonstrates that among social publications, which win in number, there are some of great success, but many others do not, therefore evidencing a huge gap between the most and least successful, which finally generates a normalisation of the number of interactions. Meanwhile, in corporate and environmental publications, although lower in number, there is a certain evenness in "likes", comments and shares. In short, the environmental and corporate contents are more efficacious in average, because despite being lower in number, achieve the same success or more than the average of social contents.

Lastly, the scarce number of comments and *shares* received by the publications of the hotel chains is noteworthy (Graphics 8 and 9) both in terms of CSR contents as well as in the rest of contents. To avoid the number of followers of a company to influence the data (the higher number of followers, the higher number of comments) we present relative data, namely, divided by the number of followers of every company.

Graphic 9. Average of *shares* of hotel chains publications (relative)



Source: Authors own creation

These actually low data show, in first place, that in general, like *likes*, the CSR content are commented and shared to a lower extent than the rest of contents. In addition, the analysis demonstrates that the type of communication on Facebook is practically unidirectional: the chain publishes the content and

there is no further interaction with their public. This sort of communication does not comply with the principles of the social media like Facebook, which is based on "the collaboration, sharing and participation" (Gómez and Chalmeta, 2013: 9). Thus, the hotel chains are wasting the opportunity to generate relationships with their groups of interest through this kind of interactive media, and coinciding again with Gómez and Chalmeta (2013), the social networks, Facebook in our case, is not being used 100% to generate this *engagement* about CSR issues.

4.3. In-depth interviews

Considering the different themes discussed with CSR responsables during the in-depth interviews, the following results are presented, split into three blocks.

4.3.1. CSR in companies: background, presence and main commitments

The three individuals interviewed coincided in explaining that Corporate Social Responsibility emerged in their companies, initially, either as philanthropy or as activities centred on Human Resources and environment. Therefore, CSR in the hotel companies emerges from the social and environmental fields, areas where already punctual actions were undertaken, without being labelled under the name of "Corporate Social Responsibility." In the past years, the companies have shifted from undertaking actions to the implementation of a strategy that considers all *stakeholders* or the business in general:

"We started by the end of 2011, with the will of creating a Social Responsibility strategy. Because isolated actions, related to sustainability, were already undertaken" (Respondent 1, hereinafter R1).

"The CSR started by the end of 2006, in a moment of internal change where, from HHRR, the chance of broadening the focus to all stakeholders was noticed. The president essentially identified the environmental opportunity. Some initiative of social action by the communication department already existed, and actually what we did, was extending it to the whole chain" (Respondent 3, hereinafter R3).

The companies believe there has been considerable progress ever since, and currently, there is a much more strategic and personalised model, or it is the trend. The intention of the CSR departments is that the discipline becomes intrinsic to the business and that the Senior Management (both corporate and in hotels) feels the Corporate Responsibility as its own:

"Since the end of 2011 [where the CSR department is created] we have been making steps. (...) we have tried that sustainability, or what I call responsible decision making, becomes intrinsic in the performance of the senior manager, to the same extent quality is." (R1).

"The evolution has been exponential. The evolution of the framework of CSR has been always linked to the strategic framework of the company, namely, within the lines or the strategic approaches of the company (...) Today it is much more professional" (Respondent 2, hereinafter R2).

There is a certain discrepancy between companies when it comes to choosing the term that, in their opinion, better encompasses what CSR means today. For some, there is a trend towards sustainability, although others think that this term still has the environmental halo. However, all respondents interviewed agree that the term Corporate Social Responsibility is exclusively associated to the social field, although it actually means much more than that, and therefore, in a way there is an attempt to overcome this concept:

"Our department is called Corporate Social Responsibility, but sometimes, when we talk about Social Responsibility, it is only associated to social themes, to social action, and it is not correct. Even though at corporate level, our area is called CSR, when we talk about it, we are currently referring to sustainability" (R1).

"Although in the department it appears as CSR, it is a term I want to eliminate (...) When you talk about CSR, people exclusively thinks about environment and social areas, therefore a very important part that is not related to it is missing. It should be Corporate Reputation instead, Corporate Responsibility, Business Responsibility... concepts involving much more" (R2).

Regarding the place occupied by the CSR department in the organisation chart, there are different options: sometimes it depends on the senior management, and sometimes other departments, like communication. In the cases where it directly depends on the highest positions in the organisation, the respondents highlight the good acceptance of actions undertaken, thanks to that support coming from managerial positions.

The CSR departments summarise the activity of the discipline in their companies in different ways. In the listed companies, in general, it is about a very professionalised activity and with a broad background.

"In our company we understand that CSR means fulfilling the acquired commitments before groups of interest, covering their expectations, aligning with culture and values" (R2).

"It is like managing our hotel business incorporating ethical, social and environmental criteria, to the management of the company, to improve the relationship and reputation with our stakeholders. That is the objective, that your stakeholders are satisfied, and that it generates profit: that these groups of interest choose you" (R3).

On the contrary, in one of the companies studied, the activity is mainly focused on the minimisation of harmful or negative impacts:

"We try that the activity has the least impact possible; at the moment, we are focusing on minimising the impact we generate" (R1).

Briefly summarising the commitments in terms of CSR of hotel chains, these generally refer to the questions of society, employability, environment and ethics and are defined in their strategic plan.

"We have designed a strategy, called Green & Human, and composed of 12 social and environmental commitments, that summarise all our policies" (R1).

"The company recently decides to develop its conceptual framework of strategic view, under a series of six pillars: Human Rights and Childhood, Employability, Climate Change and Local Development, University and Knowledge, Culture and Leadership and Recognition" (R2).

"Recently, we have developed a new strategic plan 2016-2018 on CR, and we have defined our commitments: responsible business, clients, people, community, sustainability, and a transversal axis of communication" (R3).

Lastly, regarding the existence of CSR or sustainability policies, they do exist, in one way or another, in all companies, either in a separate manner or in a joint policy that encompasses all questions in terms of CSR:

"There is no CSR or sustainability policy in general. We preferred the non-integrated policy, instead each one is separate: environment, HHRR, local community, minor protection, quality and security and health" (R1).

"We have a sustainability policy that is still in force, but we ought to review it, and in my opinion, although the principles are the same, it will have a higher level of commitment" (R2).

"A milestone of the year 2015 is the elaboration and subsequent approval by the Administration Council of the policy of Corporate Responsibility" (R3).

4.3.2. Challenges on CSR

The respondents identify four major challenges: 1) total integration of CSR in the business; 2) sensitisation of all the publics to achieve that integration; 3) the measurement of CSR and 4) CSR communication.

Regarding the need to integrate CSR in the business, the companies interviewed believe they are in the process of achieving said integration, but must keep progress. The second challenge depends on the success of this integration to a great extent, namely, the sensitisation of all publics. It is essential to internally convince the different departments so that they develop CSR initiatives in such a way it becomes transversal to the complete company. Likewise, it is indispensable to have the support of the Senior Management.

Considering the aforesaid, a specific issue that respondents consider to be key in this sector, is to achieve the conviction of the director of each one of the hotels, since it is them who undertake CSR actions. For hotel chains, if the director of the hotel is engaged to CSR, the projects come through in a much simpler manner:

"I think that the most strategic position for any question in our sector is that of the director of a hotel. The hotel management is key for things to start up and work, and end up putting the pieces of the project where they have to be" (R1).

The measurement of CSR and specifically, the development of indicators that reflect their economic and social impact is another relevant challenge identified by respondents and an aspect they are working on.

Regarding communication, the departments consulted coincide in the relevance of adapting every question to every public, and to consider the different channels and formats when communicating responsible matters, because sometimes the challenge is to make CSR tangible so that certain publics understand its value and minimise their scepticism or mistrust about sensitive themes.

"Sustainability needs to be talked about in a very practical manner: our people need things to be tangible, things they can apply, and that we can correct. There should be investment on education and explain people... to involve them in a fun manner" (R1).

"I think you have to identify every opportunity. You must identify what to communicate and where to do so, everything for everybody does not work" (R2).

4.3.3. Communication strategies on CSR

In all companies the CSR is present in communication plans. The most common channels to communicate this are the annual minutes or reports about CSR, the website, the press releases, the social networks, and specific contents related to CSR are present in the hotels, like for instance, corporate videos broadcasted in the screens of the hotel, or publications available in the rooms that talk about the commitments of the company:

"For example, we have a commitment with the press department of releasing 12 press notes per year, we invest in education for employees, in the hotels there are digital totems where clients can receive information about CSR issues..." (R1).

"Now, with this new strategic plan of CR, precisely we have made a special effort to develop the transversal line of communication (...) not communicating in the 21st century is a waste of business opportunity" (R3).

All respondents believe that a greater effort on communication could be made, with a greater relationship with the Department of Communication and providing value to what has been performed so far.

Regarding the communication channels studied in the first stage of this research, the three respondents think that the website is an informative and corporate channel, as well as unidirectional. In this sense, it is understood as a channel to which the different publics go to obtain general information of the company and about its commitments on CSR:

"In the web, we try to be rather simple and to tell, about every aspect, the commitment, what I have achieved and what I will do next year" (R1).

"Regarding CSR, I think the website is useful to communicate the annual report and other aspects related to the company, but it is not a model of dialogue. It is a consultation tool instead (...) it is something much more stable and that is useful as information and consultation. It is unidirectional. In this sense, it is not a relational model" (R2).

Regarding social networks, they are considered a more bidirectional or relational channel. In terms of the superiority of contents of the social field in Facebook identified in this study, there are many arguments to explain it, but in general, the respondents do not believe that the social aspect of CSR is more interesting to the society than other areas:

"I believe that social action is considered the most because in our mindset we think it works better than the rest. Although, anyway, the reality is that in our company we have more projects on social action. The dedication is another issue, because the environmental projects demand a greater dedication" (R1).

"Perhaps fewer environmental questions are communicated because the Environment department does not depend on the Communication department, unlike Corporate Responsibility, and in the end, both information and relations flow less. Recently, I have consolidated the aspect of environmental communication in my responsibility. I do not think that the social action generates more interest, but sometimes it is more about lack of coordination." (R3).

5. Conclusions

The study conducted has contributed, in first place, to broaden the scope of researches in the field of CSR communication, and especially in the hotel sector, object of study, a sector that authors like Alles and Marqués (2011) believe to be under-investigated. Furthermore, we have focused on two communication channels of increasing relevance for companies, like websites and social networks (Pérez and Rodríguez, 2015).

The results of this study confirm that the CSR communication in the Spanish hotel sector is essentially unidirectional both in the corporate web as well as in Facebook. It is a relevant matter already detected by other authors in previous studies (Capriotti, 2011; Gómez and Chalmeta, 2013). The companies studied communicate their actions on CSR but do not have a constructive dialogue with their publics, not even in those channels especially adequate for that bidirectionality and participation, such as social networks. Improving this entails a long process but, in general, it is observed that hotel companies are headed in the right path to communicate, in an effective, coherent and transparent manner, their CSR.

The most frequent themes communicated in the channels studied are those regarding the social and environmental fields, both on corporate websites as well as on the Facebook social network. This conclusion coincides with what was discovered by other authors (Gómez and Chalmeta, 2013; Pérez and Rodríguez, 2015) and allows us to infer that the communication on CSR in the hotel sector keeps very related to the social action, despite companies argue that the Corporate Social Responsibility is strategic and that is managed in an integral manner.

On the other hand, regarding the management implications, this study offers both to companies of the sample selected as well as the sector altogether, relevant information about communication of its CSR: what is communicated and with what strength, what contents have greater success on the Facebook social network or what failures of relatively simple correction have been detected in the communication.

In that sense, we believe that all the companies should review their communication on CSR, especially in the corporate websites, since in our opinion, due to questions like the lack of contents update or the lack of data, the surely good job of many companies on CSR is not reflected properly. Like mentioned earlier, we believe that hotel companies must do a great effort to make CSR true, accessible and interesting for their publics, and not only for the most informed, like shareholders. In this matter, a review of the CSR communication strategy is required, especially in matters of dialogue with the groups of interest and their participation.

Currently, and recalling the three types of communication strategies on CSR defined by Morsing and Schultz (2006), the strategy of information to *stakeholders*, the response to the *stakeholders* or involvement of *stakeholders*, we believe that some companies studied are still on the first strategy. Another group of companies, somewhat more advanced, use the second strategy, with some touches of the third one. The latter, the involvement strategy, is the ideal to which all companies must tend to, but it has not been reached today in this sector so far. In this sense, the hotel chains must follow the path of progress, until now, towards a strategy where the participation of their groups of interest is a reality.

Lastly, we believe that companies need to adapt their contents both to the groups of interest, as well as formats. It is not about the website including many links to the different policies, reports or codes, and thus consider that their communication is exhaustive. The relevant issue is to achieve that the content of these relevant documents gets to the users in a more accessible manner and that it is able to attract their interest.

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