

# ESTUDOS EM COMUNICAÇÃO COMMUNICATIONS STUDIES ESTUDIOS EN COMUNICACIÓN ÉTUDES EN COMMUNICATION

REVISTA . REVIEW . REVISTA . MAGAZINE

Nº39 . VOL 1 . DEZ'2024





**EDITORIA [EDITOR]**

Gisela Gonçalves (LabCom, Universidade da Beira Interior)

**EDITORES ASSOCIADOS [ASSOCIATE EDITORS]**

João Carlos Correia (LabCom, Universidade da Beira Interior)

Samuel Mateus (LabCom, Universidade da Madeira)

**EDITORES CONVIDADOS [INVITED EDITORS]**

Evandro Oliveira (EAE, Business School, Barcelona)

Shannon A. Bowen (University of South Carolina)

**CONSELHO EDITORIAL****[EDITORIAL BOARD]**

Alfredo Vizeu (Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Brasil)

Ana Catarina Pereira (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)

Ana Serrano Tellería (University of Castilla La Mancha, Espanha)

Anabela Carvalho (Universidade do Minho, Portugal)

Anabela Gradim Alves (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)

André Barata (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)

Ângela Felippi (Universidade Federal de Santa Cruz do Sul, Portugal)

Bruno Costa (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)

Carla Cerqueira (Universidade do Minho, Portugal)

Carlos Campones (Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal)

Carmen Costa Costa-Sánchez (Universidade da Coruña, Espanha)

Catarina Moura (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)

Catarina Rodrigues (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)

Cláudia Lago (Universidade de São Paulo, Brasil)

Dimitra Milioni (University of Technology Aneksartisias, Chipre)

Edna Miola (Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná, Brasil)

Eduardo Camilo (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)

Eduardo Paz Barroso (Universidade Fernando Pessoa, Portugal)

Elias Machado (Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brasil)

Elisa Zwick (Universidade Federal de Alfenas, Brasil)

Enric Saperas Lapiedra (Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Espanha)

Eugenia Siapera (Dublin City University, Grécia)

Filipa Gonçalves Subtil (Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa, Portugal)

François Heinderyckx (Université Libre de Bruxelles, Bélgica)

Francisco Javier Ruiz del Olmo (Universidad de Málaga, Espanha)

Francisco Merino (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)

Francisco Paulo Jamil Marques (Universidade Federal do Paraná, Brasil)

Francisco Tiago Antunes de Paiva (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)

Francisco Xarão (Universidade Federal de Alfenas, Brasil)

Gerson Pereira Filho (Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais, Brasil)

Gil Ferreira (Instituto Politécnico de Coimbra, Portugal)

Gisela Marques Gonçalves (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)

Heitor Costa Lima Rocha (Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Brasil)

Helena Sousa (Universidade do Minho, Portugal)

Herlander Elias (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)

Inês Amaral (Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal)  
Isabel Babo (Universidade Lusófona do Porto, Portugal)  
Jairo Ferreira (Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos, Brasil)  
Javier Díaz Noci (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Espanha)  
Jean-Marc Ferry (Université Libre de Bruxelles, Bélgica)  
João Canavilhas (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)  
João Carlos Correia (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)  
João Figueira (Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal)  
João José Pissarra Esteves (Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal)  
Jorge Pedro Sousa (Universidade Fernando Pessoa, Portugal)  
José Bragança de Miranda (Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal)  
José Luís Garcia (Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal)  
José Ricardo Carvalheiro (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)  
José Rosa (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)  
Mafalda Eiró Gomes (Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa, Portugal)  
Manuel Pinto (Universidade do Minho, Portugal)  
Manuela Penafria (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)  
Marcos Palácios (Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brasil)  
Maria Helena Weber (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil)  
Maria João Silveirinha (Universidade de Coimbra, Portugal)  
Maria José Brites (Universidade Lusófona do Porto, Portugal)  
María Luisa Humanes (Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Espanha)  
Mário Mesquita (Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa, Portugal)  
Marisa Torres Silva (Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal)  
Martin Jay (University of California, USA)  
Miquel Rodrigo Alsina (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Espanha)  
Moisés Lemos Martins (Universidade do Minho, Portugal)  
Mozahir Salomão Bruck (Pontifícia Universidade Católica Minas Gerais, Brasil)  
Nelson Traquina † (Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal)  
Nico Carpentier (Charles University, República Checa)  
Paula Espírito Santo (Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal)  
Paulo Denisar Fraga (Universidade Federal de Alfenas, Brasil)  
Paulo Martins (Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas, Portugal)  
Pedro Coelho (SIC, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal)  
Paulo Serra (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)  
Patrícia Fernandes (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)  
Pedro Jerónimo (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)  
Pedro Pereira Neto (Instituto Politécnico de Lisboa, Portugal)  
Pedro Pinto Oliveira (Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso, Brasil)  
Peter Dahlgren (Lund universitet, Suécia)  
Rafael Cardoso Sampaio (Universidade Federal do Paraná, Brasil)  
Ricardo Morais (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)  
Rita Figueiras (Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Portugal)  
Rogério Christofolletti (Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Brasil)  
Rosa Cabecinhas (Universidade do Minho, Portugal)  
Rousiley Maia (Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brasil)  
Sara Velez Estevão (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)  
Sónia de Sá (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)



Sónia Lamy (Instituto Politécnico de Portalegre, Portugal)  
Stephen Reese (Austin University, EUA)  
Stephen Stephen K. White, (University of Virginia, EUA)  
Susan Buck-Morss (Georgetown University, EUA)  
Tiago Quiroga Fausto Neto (Universidade de Brasília, Brasil)  
Tito Cardoso Cunha (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)  
Todd Gitlin (Columbia University, USA)  
Valeriano Piñeiro-Naval (Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal)  
Wilson Gomes (Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brasil)  
Xosé López García (Universidad Santiago de Compostela, Espanha)

#### **PRODUÇÃO EDITORIAL [EDITORIAL PRODUCTION]**

Rafael Mangana (LabCom, Universidade da Beira Interior)

#### **CREDITS [FICHA TÉCNICA]**

© Estudos em Comunicação [Communication Studies] – [www.ec.ubi.pt](http://www.ec.ubi.pt) LabCom – Comunicação e Artes <https://labcomca.ubi.pt/>

UBI – Universidade da Beira Interior – [www.ubi.pt](http://www.ubi.pt)

Universidade da Beira Interior – FAL/LabCom Rua Marquês D'Ávila e Bolama  
6201-001 Covilhã, Portugal

ISSN : 1646-4923

ISSN (suporte electrónico) : 1646-4974

DOI : 10.25768/fal.ec

DOI no 10.25768/1646-4974n39v1

Semestral periodicity [Periodicidade semestral]

Contacts [Contatos] : [gisela.goncalves@labcom.ubi.pt](mailto:gisela.goncalves@labcom.ubi.pt)

Publication : December 31th, 2024

A Revista Estudos em Comunicação é financiada por Fundos FEDER através do Programa Operacional Factores de Competitividade – COMPETE e por Fundos Nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia no âmbito do projeto LabCom – Comunicação e Artes, *UIDB/00661/2020*.

O conteúdo desta obra está protegido por Lei. Qualquer forma de reprodução, distribuição, comunicação pública ou transformação da totalidade ou de parte desta obra carece de expressa autorização do editor e dos seus autores. Os artigos, bem como a autorização de publicação das imagens, são da exclusiva responsabilidade dos autores.



# Index [Índice]

|                                                                                                                                                               |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Navigating the Ethical Landscape: Organizational Dynamics, Engagement, Authenticity, and Societal Impact</b>                                               |     |
| <i>por</i> Gisela Gonçalves, Evandro Oliveira & Shannon A. Bowen                                                                                              | 3   |
| <b>A Comunicação Estratégica e a Inovação Social Corporativa:<br/>sinergias para o Bem-Comum</b>                                                              |     |
| <i>por</i> Sónia Pedro Sebastião                                                                                                                              | 10  |
| <b>Culturas organizativas y discursos comunicativos de las ONG españolas ante<br/>los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible en el espacio digital</b>            |     |
| <i>por</i> Víctor Manuel Marí-Sáez, Yiheng Wang & Hanae Trola Skalli                                                                                          | 30  |
| <b>Bridging the gap: Understanding Spanish society's perception of<br/>purpose-driven companies and their role in sustainable development</b>                 |     |
| <i>por</i> Isabel Ruiz-Mora, Daniel Guerrero-Navarro & Ana M. Lucía-Casademunt                                                                                | 51  |
| <b>Quando “os golos dispensam balizas”: uma análise às estratégias de<br/>comunicação de responsabilidade social da Fundação do Futebol/Liga<br/>Portugal</b> |     |
| <i>por</i> Fernando Rocha & Ricardo Morais                                                                                                                    | 74  |
| <b>Novos tons de verde: lógicas contemporâneas de greenwashing a partir da<br/>mineração</b>                                                                  |     |
| <i>por</i> Daniel Reis Silva, Fábila Pereira Lima & Samora N'zinga Soares<br>Cardoso                                                                          | 94  |
| <b>Communicating the Italian recovery and resilience plan through social media:<br/>challenges, strategies and practices</b>                                  |     |
| <i>por</i> Leonardo Piromalli, Dario Germani & Alessandro Lovari                                                                                              | 109 |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Adapting Internal Communication to Hybrid Work: Identifying<br/>Strategies for Government Institutions</b><br><i>por Vytautas Beniušis</i>                                                                                                                 | <b>127</b> |
| <b>The impact of CEO Activism in brand reputation: the PROZIS case</b><br><i>por Alexandre Duarte</i>                                                                                                                                                         | <b>145</b> |
| <b>Unlocking the Power of Inclusive Communication in Public<br/>Relations: A Comprehensive Review of Strategies</b><br><i>por Jonathan Jacob Paul Latupeirissa, Nadia Aura<br/>Ardyansyah, Kadek Ayu Dewi Pratiwi &amp; Made Jasmine<br/>Regita Nareswari</i> | <b>160</b> |



# Navigating the Ethical Landscape: Organizational Dynamics, Engagement, Authenticity, and Societal Impact

Gisela Gonçalves, Evandro Oliveira & Shannon A. Bowen

*LabCom, University of Beira Interior / EAE, Business School, Barcelona / University of South Carolina*

*gisela.goncalves@labcom.ubi.pt / eoliveira@professor.eae.es / sbowen@sc.edu*

## Abstract

Contemporary societal challenges - such as the erosion of privacy and data rights, climate change, social injustice, and economic inequality - necessitate the establishment of a comprehensive ethical framework to facilitate both technological advancement and social progress. There is an urgent need for ethical commitments at various levels, including the political, individual, organizational, and societal realms. Organizational dynamics, engagement, authenticity, and societal impact raises different questions that can be explored from various theoretical and empirical perspectives.

Keywords: ethics, authenticity, societal challenges, moral imperative

**I**n the course of history, there are periods when ethics - examination and reflection about behaviour in individual and social life - become particularly important. We are witnessing one of those periods. Contemporary societal challenges - whether it's a loss of privacy and data rights, climate change, social injustice, or economic inequality - require a robust ethical framework to ensure both technological and social progress.

The world is not on track to control climate change, as evidenced by the commitments to reduce greenhouse emissions made by the nearly 200 countries that signed the 2015 Paris Agreement. These pledges are inadequate to restrict the increase in the planet's average temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The environmental crisis highlights the ethical implications of our consumption patterns and industrial practices. As the consequences of global warming become increasingly apparent, a moral obligation arises to consider the long-term impact of our actions on future generations and vulnerable populations. This disparity underscores the need for an ethical framework that prioritizes sustainability and the responsible use of resources, compelling policymakers, corporations and citizens to engage in critical ethical discussions about environmental stewardship and our collective responsibility toward the planet.

---

Revista Estudos em Comunicação é financiada por Fundos FEDER através do Programa Operacional Factores de Competitividade – COMPETE e por Fundos Nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia no âmbito do projeto *LabCom – Comunicação e Artes*, UIDB/00661/2020.



The date of December 10, 2023 marks the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, as the United Nations (UN) President António Guterres noted in his speech, “The world is losing its way. Conflicts are raging. Poverty and hunger are increasing. Inequalities are deepening. The climate crisis is a human rights crisis that is hitting the most vulnerable hardest. Authoritarianism is on the rise. Civic space is shrinking, and the media is under attack from all sides. Gender equality remains a distant dream and women’s reproductive rights are being rolled back”. In light of contemporary challenges, it is imperative to adopt an ethical lens through which to evaluate social structures and practices. A passive stance is insufficient; active efforts are necessary to dismantle systemic inequalities that plague society. An ethical stance demands a commitment to justice, inclusivity and the recognition of the human dignity of all individuals, irrespective of their background, position of influence, or affluence.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2024) recently published the 2023/2024 Human Development Index (HDI) report. According to the study, the world has recovered its pre-pandemic level of development. However, the gap between rich and poor countries is also widening. In 2020 and 2021, for the first time since its creation more than 30 years ago, the HDI, which looks at life expectancy, education and standard of living, dropped by about five years for the first time since it was created more than 30 years ago. This was because of all the crises the world is facing, including the Covid-19 health crisis. This uneven progress is leaving the poorest behind, exacerbating inequality and fueling political polarization around the world. The result is a dangerous gridlock that needs to be addressed urgently through collective action (UNDP, 2024). In order to address the issue of economic inequality, it is urgent that policies which perpetuate wealth concentration and advocate for fair wages, access to education, and healthcare be enforced. Ethical considerations in economic practices compel us to rethink capitalism and consider alternative models that promote shared prosperity and social welfare (Piketty, 2019).

In addition to the societal challenges posed by climate change, social injustice and economic inequality, we are also confronted with pressing issues arising from rapid advances in technology and science. As innovations in fields such as artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, and big data transform the human condition, the ethical considerations surrounding these technologies have become increasingly paramount. The implications of these technologies are profound and much remains to be explored as they may impact on privacy, security, and human rights. For instance, AI systems— which are increasingly employed in decision-making processes —unwittingly perpetuate biases inherent in the data on which they are trained. This phenomenon gives rise to critical inquiries concerning equity and discrimination, particularly with regard to marginalized groups that may encounter heightened disadvantage due to the implementation of biased algorithms. A critical evaluation of these implications involves examining how technology can be designed and implemented in ways that prioritize ethical standards. An ethical approach necessitates the establishment of comprehensive regulations that ensure technology serves humanity rather than exploiting it, promoting innovation that aligns with societal well-being (Crawford, 2021).

The Times has published a series of articles regarding the use of surveillance software, colloquially referred to as “bossware.” An article in the series proclaims, “Big brother is watching workers, even at home”. This type of software possesses the capability to monitor the activities of employees, even in their personal residences. Notable examples include PwC’s initiative to track the location of over 20,000 employees in the UK and Uber Eats’ settlement following a legal claim that its facial recognition app is racist, discriminatory, and damaging to ethnic minorities. In 2023, Microsoft enabled employers to utilize its Copilot software to monitor their employees’ health through an integrated “wellbeing” function. Concurrently, Zoom incorporated an artificial intelligence-based feature that detects the emotional states of users during video conferences. With the growth of AI, an expanding array of tools in this field is becoming increasingly available to both individuals and businesses. Proponents of these tools argue

that they improve efficiency and accountability, yet significant ethical concerns persist. The central question, therefore, is whether the potential benefits of enhanced productivity justify the compromises to privacy that these tools entail. A salient concern pertains to the potential for algorithms to exhibit bias, resulting in the disproportionate penalization of specific behaviors or groups. Additionally, the pervasive surveillance that accompanies the integration of AI into organizational practices may erode trust within the organization, potentially fostering a culture of fear and disengagement among employees. These inquiries underscore the delicate equilibrium that organizations must maintain between leveraging technology for operational gains and respecting employee rights and dignity, to warrant socio-economic justice and avoid workers' rights reversals.

In the contemporary era, there is an urgent need for ethical commitments at various levels, including the political, individual, organizational, and societal realms. Ethical commitments are necessary not only to address micro-issues or a few legal concerns, but also to play a central role in finding solutions to global and local challenges. At the political level, ethical commitment requires leaders and policymakers to prioritize the common good over individual or partisan interests. The overarching objective of political ethics is to establish systems that promote equity, justice, and sustainability. This commitment may entail the enactment of legislation that protects human rights, fosters social equity, and incentivizes sustainable practices among businesses. Additionally, governments, public organizations and authorities must engage in transparent and accountable governance, ensuring that their decisions reflect the interests of the communities they serve. Trust in government actors and politicians as sources of information has been shown to be particularly pivotal in risk-related context (Gonçalves et al, 2024). This imperative is particularly salient in the contemporary era, often termed the “permacrisis”, which is characterized by a protracted period of instability and insecurity resulting from the accumulation of catastrophic events, including pandemics, wars, mass **migration**, and climate change.

At the individual level, ethical commitment entails a personal dedication to principles that prioritize integrity, fairness, and respect for others. Individuals must recognize their role as active participants in society, understanding that their choices—whether in consumer behavior, civic engagement, or advocacy—impact not only their immediate surroundings but also larger societal trends. This awareness fosters a sense of personal responsibility, encouraging individuals to align their personal values with their actions. This cultural shift can catalyze meaningful change within society. For instance, consumers are increasingly cognizant of the ethical implications of their purchasing decisions, leading to a rise in demand for products that are sustainably sourced and produced under fair labor practices. This shift in consumer preferences has compelled organizations to introspect and commit to ethical standards that align with the evolving societal expectations. By making informed consumer choices, individuals can advocate for corporate transparency and social responsibility, thereby holding brands accountable for their commitment to ethical practices.

At the organizational level, ethical commitment should be integrated into the very framework of a company's operations and governance. Ethical considerations have the capacity to influence strategic decision-making processes, thereby ensuring that organizations align their business practices with their stated values. This transformation requires a cultural shift within the organization, cultivating an environment in which ethical behavior is rewarded and critical conversations concerning social responsibility are actively encouraged.

At the societal level, we call upon scholars to educate in the areas of critical thinking and moral autonomy, to avoid the egocentric and sociocentric thinking mistakes of the past and to focus on the moral worth of principles. This ethical paradigm calls for us to leave behind the outmoded idea of “mutually beneficial” solutions, and use our rational ability of ethical analysis to arrive at the moral principle driving a conflict, seeking an ethical solution (Bowen & Heath, 2020). Using climate change as a case study, we argued that ethical analysis is the intelligent and strategic way forward, creating a moral core



for decision making. This approach is applicable to many of the problems we face today, such as the increasing number of wars, using lawfare to persecute political opponents, or the use of AI to monitor citizens for “social credit scoring,” which has been deemed patently unethical (but still occurs).

Strategically adopting ethics as a core value can enhance an organization’s authenticity (Bowen, 2010), fostering a consistently ethical reputation, building consumer trust, and promoting stakeholders loyalty. Organizations are no longer merely reacting to societal expectations; they are expected to proactively engage in ethical discourse and contribute to solutions for pressing societal issues. This engagement can manifest through initiatives such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), in which companies develop programs that address community needs; through corporate social advocacy and CEO activism, in which businesses take public stances on social and political issues; or creating shared value (CSV) by actively participating in community development.

However, as organizations strive to embody these ethical commitments, challenges such as corporate hypocrisy and inauthentic behavior can undermine their efforts. For example, cases of greenwashing—where companies exaggerate or falsely claim environmental benefits to mislead consumers— or homocommodification – pandering to diverse gender groups - create distrust and can backfire, leading to public backlash (Place et al., 2021). This highlights the need for genuine commitment that goes beyond superficial marketing and public relations tactics.

We advocate for a management logic that is centered on the principles of biocentrism (Oliveira, 2024b), which prioritize the concepts of regeneration and sustainability as foundational principles for the governance of organizations. This approach underscores a holistic responsibility that extends beyond the paradigm of people, planet, and profit, to include the well-being and health of employees and the organization, as an ethical imperative. By fostering a balance between business operations and a genuine commitment to the individuals who create and sustain the organization, biocentric management promotes a harmonious integration of corporate responsibility and sustainable growth. This integration occurs through an ethical, integrated approach that considers the sacred and the profane elements of business life, using a Durkheimian approach (Oliveira, 2024a).

The eight papers selected for this special issue of Communication Studies propose different approaches to reflect on the ethical imperative that permeates the various social and environmental challenges facing our society. From different theoretical foundations and with different empirical approaches, they reflect on how public and private organizations navigate the ethical landscape, and how publics respond to their ethical positioning. As editors, we hope that this special issue will make a significant contribution to the theoretical and empirical analysis of the ethical debate in the field of strategic and organizational communication, while at the same time helping to envision practical ways for ethical engagement with social impact. At a time of growing structural inequalities, increasing disinformation and polarization of citizens, critical reflection that can be linked to social and communicative practices, the implementation of public policies and profound systemic interventions seems to us a much needed theoretical-practical endeavor to promote the common good.

The first article, authored by Sónia P. Sebastião, examines Corporate Social Innovation (CSI) through a communication lens, emphasizing the crucial role of strategic communication in its implementation. It argues that strategic communication is not just a tool, but a constitutive principle for collaboration between organizations and stakeholders, and proposes a theoretical model with four key elements: assessment, strategic intent, alignment, and organizational principle. The study distinguishes CSI from corporate social responsibility and creating shared value, positions it as a proactive, innovative approach to addressing social and environmental issues, and provides a practical framework for companies to effectively integrate CSI into their strategies.

Social and environmental issues continue to be the focus of the second article, but this time from a non-corporate perspective. Victor Manuel Marí-Sáez, Yiheng Wang, and Hanae Trola Skalli, present “Organizational cultures and communicative discourses of Spanish NGOs facing the Sustainable

Development Goals in the digital space”. Their study highlights the interplay between organizational culture and communicative practices, showing how even organizations with primarily institutional cultures incorporate elements of participatory communication. The findings also reveal a wide range of approaches to incorporating and promoting the SDGs, reflecting the diverse nature of Spanish NGOs.

Sustainable development is then addressed from the perspective of citizens in the research presented by Isabel Ruiz-Mora, Daniel Guerrero-Navarro and

Ana M. Lucía-Casademunt, in “Bridging the Gap: Understanding Spanish society’s perception of purpose-driven companies and their role in sustainable development”. This article explores Spanish society’s perspective on purpose-driven businesses as a sustainable model. It assesses Spain’s commitment to sustainability and aligns corporate expectations with citizen responsibilities for societal and environmental improvement. The key findings of the survey revealed a significant authenticity gap between expectations and perceptions of purpose-driven companies. While many citizens believe that such companies are necessary for sustainable development, a large portion remains unaware of their existence.

The following two articles present studies of organizations’ discourses on CSR and sustainability, with a focus on strategic digital social media communication. The article by Fernando Rocha and Ricardo Morais makes a valuable contribution to the study of strategic communication in the sports sector. Their research provides a useful framework for analyzing the Football Foundation/Liga Portugal’s CSR communication strategies on Facebook. The findings provide insights into how organizations in the sports sector can use communication to achieve their corporate social responsibility goals, while highlighting the importance of aligning communication with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Daniel Reis Silva, Fábila Pereira Lima and Samora N’zinga Soares Cardoso’s article focuses on corporate greenwashing in the mining industry in Brazil. They found a significant lack of discussion of climate change and dam safety in the discourse of Vale, a major Brazilian mining company. Their findings suggest that Vale employs a multifaceted greenwashing strategy, using ambiguous narratives and visual elements to obscure negative impacts while promoting a positive corporate reputation. Their analysis of Instagram shows that these issues are deliberately suppressed in the company’s messaging, resulting in a lack of authenticity.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on public sector communication is a common element in the research presented in the following articles, which analyze government communication in two different countries. Focusing on Italy’s National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP), Leonardo Piromalli, Dario Germani and Alessandro Lovari used a mixed-methods approach to analyze the government’s official social media communication project, Italia Domani. The findings indicate that Italia Domani has a relatively low social media engagement and a general messaging strategy, resulting in limited public awareness of the NRRP. In addition, there is a clear separation between public sector and political communication, reflecting efforts towards transparency and accountability in the midst of complex challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

The challenges and adaptations of internal communication within Lithuanian ministries as they transitioned to hybrid work during the pandemic were the focus of the article authored by Vytautas Beniusis. Based on semi-structured interviews with department heads and internal communication specialists, this study highlights that while hybrid work introduced new digital communication methods, it also posed significant challenges in terms of maintaining strong interpersonal relationships, providing timely feedback, and communicating effectively in a remote environment. As in the previous study, this research also examines ethical considerations in public sector communication, emphasizing the importance of open and transparent communication, particularly in times of organizational change and crisis, while prioritizing the well-being of the public.

Alexandre Duarte offers a compelling case study on the impact of CEO activism on brand reputation, specifically examining the backlash against the CEO of Prozis following public comments on

abortion in Portugal. The results of an online survey indicate that while many respondents disagreed with the CEO's statements, a majority supported the idea that CEOs have the right to express their opinions publicly. Furthermore, most respondents believed that Prozis' reputation had been damaged by these statements; however, more than half said that they would continue to buy Prozis products. The findings highlight notable generational and political differences in responses to CEO activism, authenticity, and public speech.

The final article in this special issue of the *Journal of Communication Studies* was developed by a team of researchers from the Universitas Pendidikan Nasional in Bali, Indonesia, and led by Jonathan Latupeirissa. Their research examines the impact of inclusive communication on audience engagement and attitudes within public relations, using a systematic literature review of Scopus. The results show that inclusive communication fosters perceptions of authenticity, credibility, and trustworthiness, thereby increasing engagement and positive attitudes. However, the study also identifies challenges, including unconscious bias, lack of awareness, and the complexity of digital communication. The findings highlight the ethical responsibility of public relations professionals to foster diverse stakeholders and promote meaningful relationships, emphasizing transparency, cultural sensitivity, and bias mitigation in communication practices.

It is no accident that each of these papers addresses some aspect of the creation or loss of *authenticity* as an ethical construct. These papers, among the best presented at ECREA-Organizational and Strategic Communication (OSC) and the Global Strategic Communication Consortium (GSCC) Conclave, offer an insight into what factors constitute an ethical organization.<sup>1</sup> Authenticity was conceptualized as being at the core of an organization to create a normative good for the communication function (Bowen, 2010). Each of these papers extends that perspective and addresses the epistemological question of "How do we know what is good" in an organization.

Each author answers that question with different themes, topics and methods, concluding in their own right that ethical behavior requires authenticity. Strategic intelligence requires deep examination of and reflection upon one's ethical choices and stances. An ethical approach to a complex world demands authenticity and the creation of a strategic organizational communication in which influence, manipulation, and disingenuousness are forfeited in the interest of authentic moral principle.

## References

- Bowen, S. A. (2010). The nature of good in public relations: What should be its normative ethic? In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of public relations* (pp. 569-583). Sage.
- Bowen, S. A., & Heath, R. L. (2020). Intelligences in strategic issues management: Challenging the mutually beneficial relationship paradigm. *Partecipazione e Conflitto: The Open Journal of Sociopolitical Studies*, 13(2), 1-20. <https://doi.org/https://DOI: 10.1285/i20356609v13i2p1002>
- Crawford, K. (2021). *Atlas of AI: power, politics and the planetary costs of artificial intelligence*. Yale University Press Books.
- Gonçalves, G., Piñeiro-Naval, V. & Toniolo, B. (2024). Covid-19 communication in Portugal: exploring the relation between sources of information and citizens' trust in governmental risk and crisis communication. In A. Diers-Lawson, A. Schwarz, F. Meißner, & S. Ravazzini, (2023), *Risk and Crisis Communication in Europe: Towards Integrating Theory and Practice in Unstable and Turbulent Times* (pp.326-340). Routledge.

1. For a complete overview of the works presented at the ECREA OSC interim conference in Lisbon, please see the BoA "The normative imperative: sociopolitical challenges of strategic and organizational communication" (Oliveira & Gonçalves, 2023) and for other works related to the conference and topic see the book published by LabCom Books "Ethics and Society: Challenges in Organizational and Public Communication (Oliveira & Gonçalves, 2024c).

- Oliveira, E. (2024a). Exploring organizational commitment to well-being: A management logic perspective driven by the sacred-profane dichotomy. In D. Verčič, A. Verčič & K. Sriramesh (Eds.) *Public Relations and Well-being*. Book of Abstracts of the 31st International Public Relations Research Symposium BledCom (pp. 93-95).
- Oliveira, E. (2024b). Regeneration and sustainability: The Biocentric Management Logic. In E. Ordeix & S. Ajour (Eds). *First Research Summit on Sustainable Business Excellence*. EAE Research Institute for Business Trends (p.17).
- Oliveira, E. & Gonçalves, G. (2024c). *Ethics and Society: Challenges in Organizational and Public Communication*. LabCom Books.
- Oliveira, E., Gonçalves, G. (2023). *The normative imperative: sociopolitical challenges of strategic and organizational communication*. LabCom Books.
- Piketty, T. (2019). *Capital and ideology* (A. Goldhammer, Trans.). Harvard University Press.
- Place, K. R., Edwards, L., & Bowen, S. A. (2021). Dignity and respect or homo-commodification: Applying moral philosophy to LGBTQ public relations. *Public Relations Review*. <https://doi.org/> in press
- Prescott, K. (2024, January 30). Big Brother is watching workers, even at home. *The Times*. <https://www.thetimes.com/article/big-brother-is-watching-workers-even-at-home-m3z3q5r63>
- United Nations Development Programme (2024, March). *Human Development Report 2023/2024 – Breaking the gridlock*. <https://doi.org/10.18356/9789213588703c003>
- United Nations (2021, December 10). *Human rights day: UN Secretary-General's message*. United Nations Peacekeeping. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/human-rights-day-un-secretary-generals-message>

# A Comunicação Estratégica e a Inovação Social Corporativa: sinergias para o Bem-Comum

Sónia Pedro Sebastião

*Centro de Administração e Políticas Públicas, Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas,  
Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal*  
ssebastiao@iscsp.ulisboa.pt

## Resumo

Este artigo conceptual discute o conceito de inovação social corporativa (ISC) de um ponto de vista comunicativo, enfatizando o papel da comunicação estratégica na implementação desta política empresarial que visa o desenvolvimento, a coesão social e o bem-comum. É adotada uma perspetiva analítica normativa concebendo a comunicação estratégica como um princípio constitutivo, organizativo e reflexivo interdisciplinar responsável pela colaboração entre as organizações e as partes interessadas da sociedade e como o mecanismo institucional transformador necessário à integração da inovação social na estratégia e nas atividades corporativas. Para evidenciar a relevância da comunicação estratégica na defini-

ção da política de inovação social corporativa, é proposto um modelo teórico onde se enfatizam os quatro princípios base da comunicação estratégica: o diagnóstico, a intenção estratégica, o alinhamento e o princípio organizativo.

Este artigo é um contributo teórico original propondo a comunicação estratégica como o mecanismo institucional necessário para incorporar a inovação social corporativa de forma substantiva em toda a organização. Isto proporciona uma agenda para os estudos sobre a ISC, ao mesmo tempo que oferece às empresas ideias-chave sobre o aproveitamento da ISC para impulsionar mudanças positivas e o bem-comum.

Palavras-chave: Comunicação estratégica, inovação social corporativa, responsabilidade social, valor partilhado, modelo teórico

# Strategic Communication and Corporate Social Innovation: Synergies for the Common Good

## Abstract

This article explores corporate social innovation (CSI) from a communication perspective, emphasizing the vital role of strategic communication in implementing this corporate policy. CSI aims to foster development, social cohesion, and the common good. The article takes a normative analytical approach, defining strategic communication as an interdisciplinary, constitutive, organizational, and reflective principle that facilitates collaboration between organizations and their stakeholders. Additionally, it underscores strategic communication as a transformative institutional mechanism for incorporating social innovation into corporate strategies and activities.

To illustrate the importance of strategic communication in defining CSI policy, the article proposes a theoretical model that emphasizes the four basic principles of strategic communication: assessment, strategic intent, alignment, and organizational principle. The article aims to offer an original theoretical contribution by presenting strategic communication as the institutional mechanism necessary for incorporating CSI throughout the organization in a substantive way. This conception provides a roadmap for future studies on CSI, offering companies key ideas on harnessing CSI to drive positive change and promote the common good.

Keywords: Strategic communication, corporate social innovation, social responsibility, shared value, theoretical model

Data de submissão: 2024-05-30. Data de aprovação: 2024-10-18.

Revista Estudos em Comunicação é financiada por Fundos FEDER através do Programa Operacional Factores de Competitividade – COMPETE e por Fundos Nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia no âmbito do projeto *LabCom – Comunicação e Artes*, UIDB/00661/2020.





## Introdução

As empresas são atores sociais com capacidade para transformar problemas sociais em oportunidades económicas, nos mercados complexos e fluídos em que desenvolvem a sua atividade. Sob constante monitorização social e financeira, as estratégias empresariais globais são desenvolvidas com base nas expectativas das sociedades quanto à contribuição para o bem comum. O bem comum resulta das interações entre os indivíduos de uma comunidade ou sociedade. É o produto de esforços coletivos e de valores partilhados, designando o bem-estar coletivo e o florescimento de toda a sociedade. O conceito de bem comum é parte de uma reflexão filosófica, ética e política abundante e em evolução. O bem comum é frequentemente visto como um objetivo intrínseco e valioso. Representa um estado ou condição em que se realizam o bem-estar, o florescimento e a excelência moral dos indivíduos e da comunidade como um todo. Não é apenas um meio para atingir um fim, mas é valorizado por si próprio. Alcançar o bem comum é um objetivo fundamental da ética e da filosofia política (Hussain & Kohn, 2024).

Vários teóricos políticos e éticos contemporâneos continuam a empenhar-se e a aperfeiçoar o conceito de bem comum no contexto do multiculturalismo, da globalização, de desafios sociais e políticos e de problemas complexos. Por exemplo, existe uma forte relação entre o conceito de bem comum e os Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS) das Nações Unidas. Estes objetivos foram concebidos para dar resposta a uma vasta gama de desafios sociais, económicos e ambientais, a fim de melhorar o bem-estar das pessoas e do planeta.

Por conseguinte, na prossecução do bem comum, os indivíduos trabalham em conjunto, cooperam e envolvem-se em interações sociais, políticas e morais para criar uma sociedade onde todos possam prosperar. Esta cooperação entre diferentes atores (indivíduos, organizações, instituições políticas, governos) é complexa devido a interesses divergentes, mas sobretudo devido à configuração das sociedades pós-pandémicas. Criado pelo antropólogo e futurista Jamais Cascio (2020), o acrónimo BANI (frágil, ansioso, não linear e incompreensível) explica mudanças complexas e ilustra um mundo onde é ainda mais difícil definir estratégias, tomar decisões, desenvolver instâncias de colaboração e práticas coletivas, com vista ao bem comum.

O imperativo da responsabilidade e a necessidade de colaboração para o bem comum tem conduzido ao surgimento de novos conceitos associados à atuação empresarial. Destacamos neste artigo, o conceito interdisciplinar emergente no século XXI: Inovação Social Corporativa (ISC). A ISC é entendida por Kanter (1999) como uma solução integradora e inovadora que identifica formas de desenvolvimento económico sustentável compatíveis com a salvaguarda das gerações futuras, através da utilização eficiente dos recursos.

A ISC é apresentada como uma evolução da responsabilidade social corporativa (RSC) para uma abordagem mais inovadora e pró-ativa na resolução de problemas sociais. Neste contexto, a ISC torna-se relevante nos imperativos da responsabilidade social (Mustapha et al., 2021). No entanto, a literatura sobre a ISC ainda é escassa, uma vez que este conceito se sobrepõe a antecedentes teóricos, colocando problemas de compreensão (Tabares, 2020). Além disso, a gestão da ISC tende a ser complicada devido à escassa literatura sobre mecanismos institucionais para integrar a inovação social na estratégia e nas atividades empresariais (Dionisio & de Vargas, 2020).

As empresas devem equilibrar o propósito corporativo, a reputação, a relação com as realidades locais e as necessidades sociais para atingir os seus objetivos sociais e corporativos. Autores neo-institucionalistas definem as instituições como rotinas, crenças, normas, regras culturais ou ideias que dão significado coletivo (*sensegiving*). As organizações seguem essas regras de adequação para obter legitimidade para as suas ações (Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010). A ISC procura novas fontes de receita e gerar um sistema de inovação e uma cultura corporativa socialmente mais relevantes que alavanquem a vantagem

competitiva (e.g., Herrera, 2015; Kanter, 1999; Mirvis et al., 2016). Argumentamos, por isso, que requer comunicação estratégica, enquanto disciplina que promove a organização e o alinhamento, a partilha de intenções e objetivos.

O debate sobre as origens da ISC conduz a diferentes interpretações. A ISC está próxima da inovação social, do empreendedorismo social e da inovação. No entanto, a ISC também tem sido associada ao desenvolvimento sustentável, ao marketing, às parcerias estratégicas e, principalmente, à responsabilidade social corporativa (RSC) (Tabares, 2020). Os estudos que estabelecem um paralelo entre a ISC e a RSC concordam com a profunda ligação entre os *constructos*. No entanto, a ISC não é “a próxima RSC” nem uma expressão de substituição.

No campo da comunicação estratégica, a pesquisa bibliográfica na base de dados EBSCO (setembro de 2023) não devolveu resultados significativos. A expressão não apareceu em nenhum título de artigo. Lim & Lee (2022) mencionam “corporate social innovation” nas palavras-chave. Perante estes resultados e dado o possível contributo da Inovação Social Corporativa para o bem comum surge uma questão: *Como é que a comunicação estratégica pode contribuir para a definição da política de Inovação Social Corporativa?*

Este artigo teórico visa destacar a comunicação estratégica como o mecanismo institucional necessário para integrar a inovação social na estratégia e nas atividades empresariais, uma vez que pode promover a colaboração e o envolvimento de várias partes interessadas na prossecução do bem comum. Assim, a conceção de comunicação estratégica enfatiza a sua abordagem transformadora para o desenvolvimento sustentável (Pleil et al., 2023). No modelo proposto são igualmente enfatizados quatro princípios base da comunicação estratégica: o diagnóstico (e.g., Holtzhausen et al., 2021); a intenção estratégica (e.g., Hallahan et al., 2007; Herrera, 2015); o alinhamento (Volk & Zerfass, 2018) e o princípio organizativo (Valentini, 2021).

Em termos estruturais, este artigo está dividido em quatro pontos. A discussão conceptual é apresentada nos três primeiros pontos que abordam, respetivamente, os conceitos de comunicação estratégica; inovação social corporativa; e de responsabilidade social corporativa e criação de valor partilhado. No quarto ponto demonstra-se o contributo da comunicação estratégica na conceção de uma estratégia de ISC, tendo por base o Modelo Global de Relações Públicas e Comunicação da *Global Alliance* (2021).

## 1. Conceito de comunicação estratégica

O conceito de comunicação estratégica é um composto de dois conceitos complexos: comunicação e estratégia, estudados em diversas áreas científicas, incluindo a ciência política, a filosofia e as ciências da comunicação. Comunicação é um conceito polissémico e pode ser considerada como um processo, uma interação, uma prática transacional. Etimologicamente, deriva do latim *communicatio*, i.e., “ação em comum” e, em termos gerais, é entendida como uma troca simbólica mutuamente compreendida (Lelo, 2016; Steinfatt, 2009). A estratégia, por sua vez, pode ser definida como uma intenção lógica e fundamentada que guia o processo que exprime o carácter, o objetivo e a cultura da organização (Holtzhausen et al., 2021).

A comunicação estratégica foi inicialmente definida como uma função de gestão com o propósito de cumprir objetivos organizacionais (Hallahan et al., 2007). Pode ser definida como um processo deliberado de interação utilizado por uma organização para atingir os seus objetivos e cumprir a sua missão. Este processo é desenvolvido respeitando a identidade e os valores da organização e baseia-se numa visão materializada num plano de ação que é definido em conjunto pelo líder e por um profissional de comunicação. Esta definição de comunicação estratégica considera este campo da comunicação como um processo gerencial e institucionalizado associado à tomada de decisão que requer inteligência

organizacional competitiva, alinhamento e não se limita a instâncias táticas e operacionais (Zerfass et al., 2018). A comunicação é um processo iterativo que gera conhecimento permite a colaboração para a criação de soluções com a participação de várias partes interessadas (Nahi, 2016).

Assinalamos que Zerfass et al. (2018), num artigo de revisão conceptual, identificaram o uso da expressão “comunicação estratégica” com quatro diferentes aceções. Em primeiro lugar por autores que optaram por usar o manancial teórico-conceptual das relações públicas (RP), em especial, a teoria e o fator de excelência, e substituíram a expressão RP por comunicação estratégica. Em segundo lugar, autores da área da comunicação integrada que, por desenvolverem todos os tipos de comunicação orientada para objetivos iniciados por organizações para se dirigirem a qualquer tipo de partes interessadas, consideram que realizam “comunicação estratégica”, apesar do seu escopo tático. Em terceiro lugar, autores do campo político e militar usam a expressão atendendo a que desenvolvem comunicação com a missão de conquistar poder, vencer a guerra e manter a paz. Finalmente, a comunicação estratégica é apresentada como uma nova área de estudos comunicacionais, associada ao novo papel, estratégico e decisório, que a comunicação assume em empresas contemporâneas, de grande dimensão, privadas e cotadas em bolsa. A principal contribuição desta abordagem é a noção de organizações como atores corporativos inseridos na sociedade, que se caracterizam por interesses, estruturas, processos, culturas e modos de tomada de decisão específicos interdependentes com os interesses sociais e políticos.

Como enfatizado por Holtzhausen et al. (2021), o desenvolvimento da comunicação estratégica ocorre a três níveis: macro, meso e micro. É necessário o entendimento do ambiente político, económico, social e cultural (nível macro) que condiciona a definição da estratégia de comunicação e a sua prática organizacional. Neste nível, a comunicação não é apenas uma função, uma vez que tem de criar sentidos e significados a partir da recolha de informação junto do ambiente externo, que sirvam à tomada de decisão. A nível meso, é fundamental a compreensão do ambiente organizacional e como este pode ser otimizado para uma prática comunicacional efetiva. Uma vez mais, a comunicação assume um carácter interpretativo e co-criativo que requiere o entendimento das premissas de institucionalização e o reconhecimento do papel da comunicação no seio organizacional (Sandhu, 2009). Finalmente, a nível micro várias ações comunicativas são desenvolvidas para a interação com os diferentes *stakeholders*, assegurando que a mensagem é transmitida sem ruídos ou desinformação. Neste nível, existe internalização do processo comunicativo e a necessidade de envolver partes interessadas internas da organização.

A perspetiva multinível da comunicação estratégica enfatiza a sua institucionalização, e participação em processo de criação de sentidos (Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010). Recordamos que as premissas da institucionalização incluem a consciência do funcionamento das organizações de modo constrangido, porque inseridas numa rede social de regras, normas e pressupostos cognitivos, que formam expectativas sociais que permitem, moldam ou restringem a comunicação estratégica e restantes formas de comunicação da organização (Sandhu, 2009).

Ao estudarmos a comunicação estratégica como um processo intencional desenvolvido em vários níveis organizacionais, focamos a sua natureza constitutiva, organizativa e reflexiva sobre o seu impacto social (Pleil et al., 2023; Valentini, 2021). Organizar é o papel central que a comunicação desempenha na estruturação e manutenção das empresas, bem como na facilitação das suas interações com as diversas partes interessadas, na esfera pública.

Não obstante, não podemos omitir que no contexto da comunicação e gestão estratégicas, o princípio organizador fomenta o “alinhamento”, i.e., a harmonização das estratégias ou atividades de comunicação com as metas e objetivos mais amplos de uma organização. Isto pode envolver a garantia de que todas as mensagens de comunicação são consistentes com a identidade e a missão da organização, ou que os diferentes departamentos de uma organização estão a comunicar de forma coordenada e coesa. O alinhamento é um aspeto fundamental da comunicação estratégica e é tanto um resultado como um processo contínuo. Volk e Zerfass (2018) apresentam diferentes tipos de alinhamento, por exemplo, de



gestão-estratégia-atividades e processo-estrutura-cultura-pessoas, salientando que os mais significativos para a comunicação estratégica são o alinhamento organização-*stakeholder*; o alinhamento da estratégia de comunicação com as funções de comunicação (áreas operacionais); e o alinhamento da estratégia de negócio com as atividades de comunicação.

Para classificar a comunicação como estratégica, deve existir uma intenção a longo prazo (denominada *intenção estratégica*) destinada a inspirar e orientar uma organização na prossecução dos seus objetivos finais e na criação de um roteiro para o futuro. A intenção estratégica preconiza uma visão clara e ambiciosa dos objetivos e aspirações a longo prazo de uma organização.

O processo de planeamento da comunicação estratégica envolve quatro fases principais - diagnóstico, estratégia, implementação e avaliação (Holtzhausen et al., 2021). Na fase de diagnóstico, a organização efetua uma pesquisa sobre as questões sociais e ambientais mais relevantes para o negócio da empresa e para as partes interessadas. As dimensões cruciais incluem a identificação de públicos e partes interessadas, necessidades e expectativas, questões e oportunidades sociais e o ambiente externo. Na fase da estratégia, a organização define o seu propósito social, os objetivos de comunicação, as mensagens-chave e os públicos-alvo. Esta fase engloba o planeamento de uma estratégia de comunicação alinhada com o propósito e os objetivos sociais e ambientais da empresa. A fase de implementação envolve a execução da estratégia de comunicação, que pode envolver canais e ferramentas para envolver as partes interessadas e criar valor partilhado. Na fase de avaliação, a organização mede os resultados da comunicação, o impacto social e a reputação utilizando indicadores qualitativos e quantitativos e mecanismos de *feedback*. Esta fase permite avaliar o impacto global das atividades de comunicação nos objetivos sociais e ambientais da empresa. Os resultados permitirão a aprendizagem organizacional e criarão condições para aperfeiçoar e melhorar as estratégias de comunicação.

O sucesso deste processo é determinado por quatro elementos-chave: ética, cultura, liderança e inovação. A ética inclui os princípios e valores que orientam as ações e decisões da organização, assegurando a transparência, a *accountability*, a responsabilidade e o alinhamento com o objetivo e os valores da empresa. Adicionalmente, tem-se presente que a ética normativa da comunicação que a define como um bem inerente na sua forma mais pura (Bowen, 2010). A cultura refere-se às crenças, normas e práticas que moldam a identidade e o comportamento da organização, promovendo a diversidade, a inclusão e a colaboração. A liderança refere-se à capacidade e vontade dos líderes da organização para inspirar e capacitar os outros, criando uma visão e uma cultura de inovação social. Por último, a inovação refere-se à criatividade e agilidade da organização para gerar novas ideias e soluções, utilizando a tecnologia e os dados para enfrentar os desafios e oportunidades sociais.

Em resumo, a comunicação estratégica é um processo intencional e colaborativo que apoia uma organização na realização dos seus objetivos e no cumprimento da sua missão. Precisa de ser institucionalizada e participante na tomada de decisões, exigindo inteligência competitiva e alinhamento dentro da organização. Este alinhamento garante que todas as estratégias de comunicação são coerentes com os objetivos gerais da organização. O conceito exige uma intenção estratégica orientada para o futuro, funcionando como um mecanismo estruturante, organizando e sustentando as organizações e facilitando as suas relações com as diferentes partes interessadas. A efetividade da comunicação estratégica assenta em quatro elementos críticos: princípios éticos, cultura organizacional, papéis de liderança e práticas inovadoras. Em conjunto, estes elementos orientam as ações da organização, definem a sua identidade e estimulam a geração de novas ideias, entre as quais a inovação social corporativa.

## 2. O conceito de Inovação Social Corporativa

Kanter (1999) introduziu o conceito de Inovação Social Corporativa (ISC) para designar a adoção da inovação social a nível empresarial. A autora sugeriu a formação de alianças estratégicas entre as

empresas e o sector social, conduzindo a mudanças rentáveis e sustentáveis para ambas as partes. O princípio subjacente à ISC consiste em aplicar sinergias para resolver problemas crónicos da sociedade, o que, por sua vez, estimula o desenvolvimento empresarial.

As origens da ISC deram origem a várias interpretações. A ISC está intimamente relacionada com a inovação social, o empreendedorismo social e a inovação. A inovação social tem como objetivo desenvolver novas abordagens, produtos ou serviços para melhorar o bem-estar das comunidades, dos indivíduos ou do planeta. Dá prioridade ao impacto social ou ambiental positivo em detrimento da geração de lucros, e os governos, as ONG, a sociedade civil e as organizações do terceiro sector são os principais agentes destas atividades. A inovação social tem dois paradigmas principais: a perspetiva sociológica e a perspetiva económica (Mirvis et al., 2016; Samidi et al., 2021).

Kanter (1999) identificou a procura constante de novas fontes de inovação por parte das empresas, o que as levou a explorar o sector social. A ISC é uma estratégia empresarial que visa criar valor para os acionistas e para a sociedade. Tem o potencial de alterar a estrutura dos sistemas de inovação, melhorar a motivação dos trabalhadores e aumentar a vantagem competitiva. A ISC fornece soluções para as necessidades da sociedade, o que a torna uma componente essencial da responsabilidade empresarial. Por conseguinte, o conceito de ISC é apresentado como uma evolução da responsabilidade social corporativa (RSC) para uma abordagem mais inovadora e pró-ativa na resolução de problemas sociais.

A ISC pode ser associada à RSC e ao desenvolvimento sustentável, uma vez que as empresas assumem a responsabilidade por questões sociais, económicas e ambientais (Mustapha et al., 2021; Popoli, 2017; Schmiedeknecht, 2020; Tabares, 2020). A ISC serve de modelo para resolver problemas sociais, económicos e tecnológicos enfrentados por todas as partes interessadas, atraindo, por isso, o interesse e a atenção do sector privado, dos decisores políticos e dos investigadores de todo o mundo.

No entanto, existem vários desafios na definição de uma estratégia de ISC. Por exemplo, como é que as empresas podem garantir que a questão social ou ambiental a abordar se alinha com a sua identidade e estratégia empresariais? Como podem envolver os trabalhadores e incentivá-los a cocriar e a participar na estratégia e no processo de implementação? Como é que podem avaliar os resultados da estratégia de ISC? O que é que pode ser comunicado na esfera pública sobre as iniciativas da ISC?

As parcerias entre empresas privadas e organizações de interesse público têm como objetivo a procura de mudanças rentáveis e sustentáveis para ambas as partes. O sector social era um vazadouro para a caridade das empresas, dinheiro de reserva, equipamento obsoleto e executivos cansados. Em vez disso, a ISC implica que as empresas olhem para as necessidades das comunidades como oportunidades para desenvolver ideias e demonstrar tecnologias empresariais, encontrar e servir novos mercados e resolver problemas empresariais de longa data. As empresas concentram-se na invenção de soluções sofisticadas através de uma abordagem prática como parte do investimento empresarial estratégico. Kanter (1999, *online*) concluiu que as parcerias público-privadas bem-sucedidas partilham seis características: “uma agenda empresarial clara, parceiros fortes empenhados na mudança, investimento de ambas as partes, enraizamento na comunidade de utilizadores, ligações a outras organizações e um compromisso de manter e reproduzir os resultados”. No entanto, surgem várias questões quando se trata de parcerias. Por exemplo, como é que as organizações podem identificar os parceiros certos para trabalhar? Como é que podem assegurar parcerias equitativas que beneficiem todas as partes envolvidas? Quais são as melhores práticas para manter parcerias fortes ao longo do tempo? Quais são os benefícios da criação de parcerias para as organizações e comunidades?

Teoricamente, a ISC é uma solução integradora e inovadora que identifica formas de desenvolvimento económico sustentável compatíveis com a salvaguarda das gerações futuras, das condições de vida dos indivíduos e do ambiente, através da utilização eficiente dos recursos. A ISC ajuda as empresas a utilizar inovações para se diferenciarem da concorrência, criando tanto resultados organizacionais como resultados sociais. Googins (2013) define a ISC como uma estratégia que combina ativos empresariais, tais como competências empresariais, capacidades de inovação, perspicácia de gestão, envol-

vimento dos colaboradores e a capacidade de escalar com ativos de outros sectores. Esta colaboração permite cocriar soluções inovadoras para questões sociais, económicas e ambientais complexas, que afetam a sustentabilidade das empresas e da sociedade.

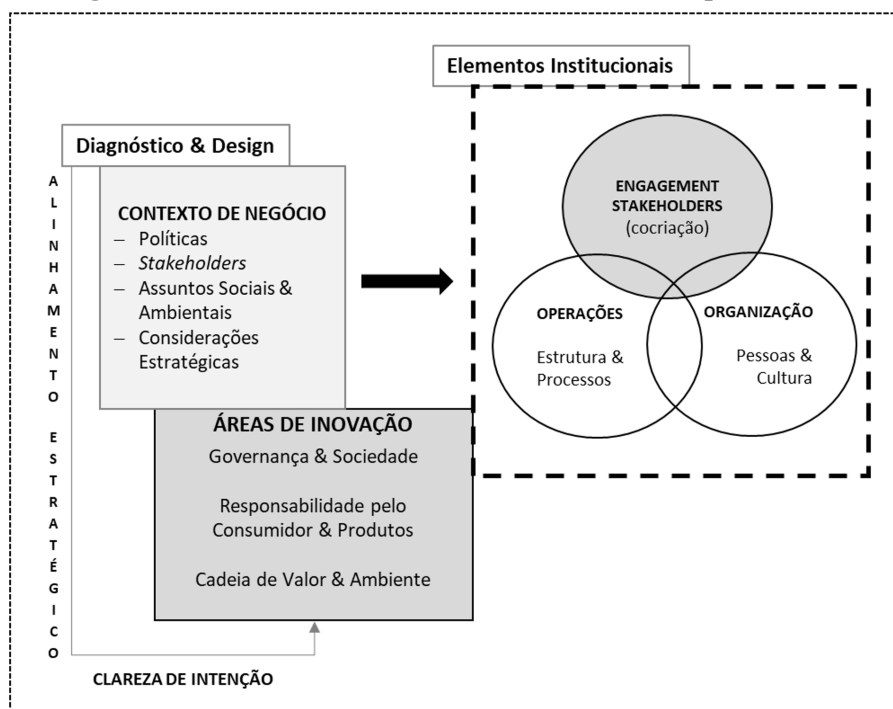
Esen e Maden-Eyiusta (2019) propõem seis dimensões da capacidade de inovação social corporativa: criação de valor partilhado, empatia e consciência social, envolvimento das partes interessadas, capacidade de inovação na resolução de problemas sociais, visão e compromisso da equipa de direção e uma estrutura e cultura organizacionais que apoiam a criação de valor social. Neste âmbito, é fundamental a existência de comunicação interna que envolva os colaboradores e os faça tomar parte do processo de identificação de necessidades e implementação de ações.

A inovação é impulsionada por vários fatores, incluindo os avanços tecnológicos, as mudanças económicas e sociais e a necessidade de soluções sustentáveis para os desafios societais. A ISC representa uma oportunidade significativa para as empresas criarem valor tanto para os acionistas como para a sociedade, conduzindo a um futuro mais sustentável.

A ISC pertence à tradição empresarial e de gestão e precisa de ser integrada na estratégia empresarial (Martinez et al., 2017; Tabares, 2020). No entanto, o ganho económico deve ser encarado como um resultado da inovação social e não como o seu motor (Martinez et al., 2017).

O processo de inovação social corporativa requer a avaliação do contexto para identificar questões sociais, necessidades das partes interessadas e oportunidades de parceria. A informação recolhida permitirá a fase de conceção e a incubação de ideias para institucionalizar a inovação social. De acordo com Herrera (2015), a inovação social é uma iniciativa mensurável e replicável para criar valor social e para os acionistas. Herrera (2015) considera três componentes-chave para a institucionalização da inovação social: alinhamento estratégico, clareza de intenções e facilitadores institucionais da inovação, como o envolvimento das partes interessadas, estrutura e processos operacionais e cultura organizacional (Figura 1).

**Figura 1. Institucionalização da inovação social corporativa**



Adaptado de Herrera, 2015, pp. 1469-1470

O equilíbrio necessário entre a missão e a reputação das corporações mundiais e as realidades locais enfatiza a relevância da ISC na estratégia global dessas empresas (Samidi et al., 2021). Além disso, argumentamos que, neste cenário, a comunicação estratégica pode ser um mecanismo institucional para alinhar a inovação social, os negócios, a estratégia e as atividades de comunicação. A comunicação estratégica pode ser essencial para clarificar a intenção estratégica do negócio; para permitir o diálogo entre os decisores e as estruturas institucionais, bem como o alinhamento entre o contexto do negócio e as áreas de inovação; a articulação das diferentes áreas comunicacionais da organização e para promover a coordenação dos elementos institucionais.

### **3. Conceitos relacionados: responsabilidade social corporativa e criação de valor partilhado**

O conceito de ISC deriva do entrelaçamento de outros conceitos, tais como a Responsabilidade Social Empresarial (RSC) e a Criação de Valor Partilhado (CVP) (e.g., Samidi et al., 2021). Os três conceitos estão relacionados, mas diferem no seu foco e abordagem, como demonstrado nos dois subpontos seguintes.

#### **3.1. Responsabilidade Social Corporativa**

A Responsabilidade Social Corporativa (RSC) refere-se à responsabilidade de uma empresa de operar de forma ética e responsável, considerando o impacto das suas atividades na sociedade e no ambiente. De acordo com Carroll (2016), a RSC inclui políticas e práticas adotadas para garantir que a sociedade e outras partes interessadas sejam consideradas e protegidas nas estratégias e operações da empresa. Por outras palavras, a RSC inclui políticas e práticas de uma empresa para maximizar o lucro, ao mesmo tempo que se preocupa com o desenvolvimento ambiental sustentável e o bem-estar social (Alvarado-Herrera et al., 2017).

A RSC envolve a redução da pegada ambiental de uma empresa, a promoção de práticas laborais éticas e a retribuição à comunidade através de atividades filantrópicas e de criação de valor. Alguns exemplos de iniciativas de RSC incluem o desenvolvimento de competências dos trabalhadores, a inovação de produtos e investimentos na comunidade. As empresas podem investir em programas de formação e desenvolvimento para os seus empregados, especialmente para os que provêm de meios desfavorecidos. Esta iniciativa de RSC ajuda a apoiar o desenvolvimento da comunidade e cria uma mão de obra mais qualificada para a empresa, como se pode ver na iniciativa de modelo escolar P-TECH da IBM (Direção-Geral da Educação, s.d.; P-Tech, 2023) e no programa TEALS da Microsoft (Granor et al., 2016; Microsoft, s.d.).

O desenvolvimento de produtos ou serviços que abordam questões sociais ou ambientais contribui para a RSC ao abordar diretamente estes problemas e ao criar valor partilhado através da abertura de novos mercados para a empresa. No exemplo das fraldas para idosos da Yuhan-Kimberly, estudadas por Lim e Lee (2022), são abordadas questões sociais e a criação de novos mercados para a empresa.

As empresas também podem investir nas comunidades locais, como o apoio à educação, aos cuidados de saúde ou às infraestruturas, para contribuir para o desenvolvimento da comunidade. Estes investimentos criam valor partilhado ao estabilizar e melhorar as comunidades onde a empresa opera ou obtém materiais, o que pode beneficiar as operações da empresa. Por exemplo, a Iniciativa 5by20 da Coca-Cola (The Coca-Cola Company, 2021) e o programa Shakti da Unilever (Rangan et al., 2007) contribuíram significativamente para o desenvolvimento da comunidade.

Por conseguinte, a RSC é a ligação entre as empresas e a sociedade, um compromisso contínuo de contribuir de forma responsável para o desenvolvimento económico e melhorar o ambiente, a comuni-

dade e a qualidade de vida dos trabalhadores (Aslaksen et al., 2021). A RSC e a sustentabilidade são “agendas de mudança social” e “um reflexo das mudanças nas expectativas da sociedade em relação à conduta empresarial” (Brueckner et al., 2018, pp. 3-4).

A RSC é crucial para a comunicação estratégica porque ajuda a cultivar relações entre as organizações e os seus públicos. A RSC pode ser associada ao carácter ético do bem na comunicação, incluindo “a tomada de decisões colaborativa, a escuta e a apreciação, o valor e o significado social, o diálogo e a capacidade de resposta, a gestão da concorrência e do conflito, a responsabilidade e a autonomia” (Bowen, 2010, p. 571).

A RSC compreende quatro responsabilidades: económica, legal, ética e filantrópica (Carroll, 2016). A sociedade exige as duas primeiras, espera a responsabilidade ética e deseja a filantrópica; consequentemente, as atividades de RSC são fundamentais para a comunicação e o envolvimento com os públicos (Verčič & Coric, 2018). Os discursos de RSC e de sustentabilidade estão a fundir-se cada vez mais (Aslaksen et al., 2021). No entanto, os esforços de RSC são criticados como responsivos e criadores de uma boa imagem social, necessitando de um objetivo claro de longo prazo (Nazari et al., 2022). Também é possível destacar discrepâncias entre a prática da RSC e a comunicação da RSC. Schoeneborn et al. (2020), por exemplo, argumentam que a comunicação nem sempre tem divulgado informações verdadeiras sobre as práticas de RSC, contribuindo para o “greenwashing ou hipocrisia da RSC” (p. 7).

Mirvis & Googins (2021) apresentam um modelo de cinco fases pelas quais as empresas normalmente passam no seu percurso de RSC. As etapas são:

1. Conformidade. As empresas concentram-se na conformidade legal e o seu conceito de cidadania é limitado a empregos, lucros e impostos.
2. Envolvimento. As empresas começam a proteger o ambiente, a envolver-se em ações de filantropia e a sua reputação torna-se importante.
3. Inovação. A gestão das partes interessadas torna-se importante, as empresas tornam-se recetivas e adotam sistemas proactivos.
4. Integração. A sustentabilidade torna-se parte da estratégia central da empresa e a empresa alinha as suas estruturas organizacionais para esse fim.
5. Transformação. As empresas procuram promover o progresso social e o desenvolvimento sustentável através das suas atividades comerciais.

As empresas já estão a aproximar-se da quarta fase, em que a RSC está totalmente integrada no negócio, mas, de acordo com Mirvis & Googins (2021), apenas algumas empresas (e.g., Unilever, a Danone e a Novo Nordisk) atingiram a quinta fase de transformação, em que o negócio é impulsionado por um compromisso com a RSC. Os autores sugerem que as empresas precisam de “inovar os processos de inovação” para acelerar o movimento em direção à fase transformadora. Argumentam que, embora haja empresas com protocolos de inovação bem desenvolvidos, estes processos são frequentemente orientados para os mercados empresariais tradicionais e avaliados por critérios comerciais (Mirvis & Googins, 2021).

Mirvis & Googins (2021) propõem que, para enfrentar os desafios sociais, as empresas devem alargar o seu alcance para além da sua base habitual de clientes, às comunidades e populações carenciadas. Isto requer ISC, uma vez que envolve empresas que colocam a inovação social nas suas agendas económicas, sociais e ambientais, utilizando o seu conjunto único de ativos corporativos para cocriar soluções inovadoras para questões complexas associadas à sustentabilidade dos negócios e da sociedade.

Enquanto a RSC é uma abordagem defensiva que visa minimizar e mitigar os impactos negativos, a ISC é uma abordagem proactiva que procura criar impactos positivos através da inovação e da colaboração. A ISC envolve frequentemente parcerias e colaborações intersectoriais, em que as empresas trabalham com organizações da sociedade civil, governos e outras partes interessadas para desenvolver soluções inovadoras para desafios sociais e ambientais complexos.



### 3.2. Criação de valor partilhado

A criação de valor partilhado (CVP) é uma estratégia empresarial que visa gerar valor económico e melhorar a competitividade das empresas, criando simultaneamente valor social e ambiental. Está estreitamente relacionada com a inovação social das empresas (ISC) e a responsabilidade social corporativa (RSC). Por outras palavras, a CVP envolve a identificação de questões sociais e ambientais relevantes para a atividade de uma empresa e o desenvolvimento de soluções inovadoras que abordem essas questões, criando simultaneamente valor para a empresa.

Ao criar valor partilhado, as empresas podem melhorar a sua reputação, atrair clientes que valorizam a sustentabilidade e a responsabilidade social e construir relações de longo prazo com as partes interessadas. Para Lim & Lee (2022), “as empresas têm tentado contribuir para a resolução de problemas sociais que o sector público não consegue resolver sozinho, como a migração, a saúde, as alterações climáticas e a perda de postos de trabalho devido à automatização” (*online*). A CVP é aceite como uma “solução transformadora que confere às empresas legitimidade social e vantagem competitiva” (Lim & Lee, 2022, *online*).

A CVP pode ser entendida como uma abordagem inovadora da RSC, concebida para responder às expectativas atuais em matéria de RSC. Trata-se de um tipo de RSC praticada numa perspetiva estratégica e económica que exige que as empresas identifiquem as consequências positivas e negativas das suas operações para a sociedade, permitindo-lhes contribuir para o desenvolvimento social a longo prazo.

Para distinguir a CVP da RSC podemos destacar que a CVP enfatiza a integração de considerações sociais e ambientais na estratégia de negócio principal de uma empresa, em vez de as tratar como atividades separadas ou conceptuais (Chen et al., 2020). Adicionalmente, centra-se na criação de valor partilhado tanto para a empresa como para a sociedade, enquanto a RSC se centra na responsabilidade da empresa para com a sociedade e o ambiente (Lim & Lee, 2022). Por outras palavras, a CSV visa criar valor económico e, ao mesmo tempo, responder às necessidades da sociedade, enquanto a RSC se centra principalmente na responsabilidade social e ambiental.

O conceito de CVP baseia-se na premissa de que tanto o progresso económico como o social devem ser abordados utilizando princípios de valor. A CVP pode ser resumida como políticas e práticas operacionais centradas no sucesso económico e na competitividade empresarial. Porter & Kramer (2019) sustentam que o valor compartilhado não é responsabilidade social, filantropia ou sustentabilidade, uma vez que “o objetivo da corporação deve ser redefinido como a criação de valor compartilhado, não apenas o lucro em si” (p. 328). Apesar de criticado por falta de demonstração (e.g., Crane et al., 2014), os autores afirmam o potencial do CVP para a legitimidade do negócio, considerando a premissa de cumprimento da lei e dos padrões éticos e a necessidade de mitigar qualquer dano causado pelo negócio (Porter & Kramer, 2019).

De acordo com Chen et al. (2020), a CVP proporciona uma situação em que as organizações estão mais dispostas a dialogar do que qualquer outra comunicação organização-públicos para desenvolver iniciativas que cocriem valor partilhado. A CVP facilita a comunicação mutuamente benéfica, promovendo relações fortes entre a organização e os públicos. Apenas a CVP com colaboração entre as partes promove as dimensões relacionais de empoderamento, legitimidade e representação (e.g., de los Reyes et al., 2017; Lim & Lee, 2022). No entanto, A CVP também difere da ISC, uma vez que a maximização do lucro é o objetivo principal ao criar valor social e ambiental.

Como anteriormente mencionado, as empresas podem participar em atividades filantrópicas que criam valor partilhado. Por exemplo, o investimento na educação e no desenvolvimento de competências dos empregados conduz a uma força de trabalho talentosa, diversificada e inovadora, gerando assim valor

partilhado. Da mesma forma, os investimentos na comunidade contribuem para o desenvolvimento local e para o bem-estar das partes interessadas, ao mesmo tempo que criam boa vontade e potencialmente desenvolvem novos mercados ou clientes.

O Quadro 1 permite-nos comparar os conceitos de RSC, CVP e ISC com base nas variáveis de valor, atores, objetivos, maximização do lucro, impacto e uso da comunicação. É importante notar que estes conceitos não são mutuamente exclusivos, e as empresas podem incorporar elementos dos três para concretizar as suas estratégias de sustentabilidade. Esta constatação reforça a percepção destes conceitos como “wicked concepts” em paralelismo com a conceptualização de “wicked problems” (Rittel & Weber, 1973). Recordamos que este tipo de conceitos é difícil de definir e não têm um significado universal, apesar de existir a procura de uma definição universal; as definições e conceptualizações de conceitos perversos não são verdadeiras nem falsas; todos os componentes deste tipo de conceitos são fundamentalmente únicos e multidimensionais (Kutor et al., 2021).

**Quadro 1. Comparação dos conceitos de RSC, CVP e ISC**

| <b>CONCEITO<br/>VARIÁVEL</b> | <b>RSC</b>                              | <b>CVP</b>                      | <b>ISC</b>                                                     |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>CONCEITO CENTRAL</b>      | Responsabilidade Social                 | Valor Partilhado                | Inovação Social                                                |
| <b>VALORES</b>               | Economia<br>Ética<br>Filantropia<br>Lei | Social<br>Ambiental<br>Economia | Social<br>Ambiental<br>Economia                                |
| <b>ATORES</b>                | Empresa<br>Partes Interessadas          | Empresa<br>Sociedade            | Empresa<br>Partes Interessadas<br>Sociedade<br>ONG<br>Governos |
| <b>FINS</b>                  | Responder a expectativas sociais        | Criar valor económico           | Enfrentar desafios sociais                                     |
| <b>MAXIMIZAÇÃO DO LUCRO</b>  | Objetivo secundário                     | Objetivo primário               | Integrado nos objetivos sociais e ambientais                   |
| <b>IMPACTO</b>               | Mitigar impactos negativos              | Criar valor social e económico  | Estimular mudança social positiva                              |
| <b>USO DA COMUNICAÇÃO</b>    | Comunicação unidirecional               | Comunicação bidirecional        | Diálogo e cocriação com partes interessadas                    |

Fonte: Elaboração Própria



O quadro anterior evidencia a necessidade de conceção da comunicação estratégica como mais do que uma função de gestão para a implementação de políticas de inovação social corporativa. Existindo a necessidade de identificação de necessidades e parceiros, negociação e colaboração com vários atores. O uso dos mecanismos de colaboração e envolvimento de vários atores para a constituição de equipas e implementação da ISC só será possível com uma visão constitutiva da comunicação estratégica assumindo-a como um processo de co-criação de significado e de construção social.

A ISC tem o potencial de se tornar uma política empresarial dominante no futuro, servindo não só como a próxima etapa da RSC, mas também como um quadro de sustentabilidade. A investigação de Prabawani et al. (2023) sobre a Gold Proper Industry fornece um exemplo de como os programas iniciados pelo governo podem promover a ISC, empurrando as empresas para práticas inovadoras que abordam questões ambientais e sociais. Ao integrar a ISC nas políticas, os governos podem incentivar as empresas a atuar como entidades socialmente responsáveis e inovadoras, contribuindo para um futuro mais sustentável e inclusivo. O programa Gold Proper, um mecanismo regulador, recebeu reconhecimento e prémios de instituições como a Universidade das Nações Unidas e o Banco Mundial, o que valida o programa e fornece um modelo a seguir por outros governos e instituições.

Outro exemplo da relevância da ISC para o futuro é a crescente proeminência da terceira missão das universidades: a valorização do conhecimento. Ao valorizarem os seus conhecimentos, as universidades podem desempenhar um papel fundamental na promoção e facilitação da ISC. É fundamental uma relação de colaboração e reciprocidade entre o meio académico, o governo e a indústria, aproveitando os pontos fortes de cada um para impulsionar o progresso social (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000). A valorização do conhecimento implica investigação e desenvolvimento colaborativos que conduzam a produtos, serviços e modelos empresariais inovadores. Envolve também o desenvolvimento de cursos especializados e formação em empreendedorismo social, dotando os estudantes de competências para criar práticas empresariais socialmente responsáveis e sustentáveis. Por último, incentiva o envolvimento da comunidade. As universidades e as empresas, as instituições públicas e as organizações do terceiro setor que praticam a ISC devem envolver-se com as comunidades para compreender as suas necessidades e unir esforços na conceção, criação e implementação de soluções socialmente inovadoras.

O conceito de ISC é amplo e significa uma mudança no sentido de adotar práticas empresariais mais sustentáveis para obter uma vantagem competitiva e criar valor social (Dionisio & de Vargas, 2020; Porter & Kramer, 2019; Samidi et al., 2021). A ISC é parte integrante da estratégia de uma empresa, à semelhança da CVP. Deve ser institucionalizada e formar o núcleo das operações de uma empresa, com total alinhamento entre gestão-estratégia-atividades e processo-estrutura-cultura-pessoas (Volk & Zerkass, 2018).

Pode ser difícil distinguir ações de ISC, RSC e CVP, uma vez que estes conceitos surgem frequentemente interligados. Sinteticamente, a RSC envolve a minimização dos impactos negativos de uma empresa na sociedade e no ambiente. A CVP envolve a integração de considerações sociais e ambientais na estratégia de negócio principal de uma empresa, criando valor económico, social e ambiental. A ISC envolve a capacidade de uma empresa gerar impactos positivos através da inovação e da colaboração com outros atores, com o objetivo de promover a mudança social e o bem comum.

As empresas podem utilizar uma combinação de abordagens para atingir os seus objetivos de sustentabilidade. Por exemplo, uma empresa pode envolver-se em atividades de RSC para minimizar os impactos negativos, integrar a CVP no seu negócio e prosseguir iniciativas de ISC para criar impactos positivos, como a mudança social sustentável. Dionisio & de Vargas (2020) afirmam que a ISC é a melhor solução para os problemas sociais, uma vez que as empresas precisam de se ligar urgentemente à sociedade para reconstruir a confiança.

Reconstruir a confiança nas empresas é essencial para obter vantagens competitivas, ganhar legitimidade e obter licenças comerciais para operar na sociedade. Isto permite que as empresas reforcem as

suas contribuições positivas, ganhem a confiança das partes interessadas e desenvolvam uma nova geração de líderes e empregados. Uma comunicação eficaz é crucial para a implementação bem-sucedida da estratégia ISC, tornando-a um domínio essencial dos estudos de comunicação estratégica.

#### 4. A comunicação estratégica na conceção de uma estratégia de ISC

Investir em ISC é uma decisão estratégica que exige que uma empresa se envolva em investigação e desenvolvimento socialmente relevantes. Isto implica a utilização de ativos empresariais para enfrentar desafios sociais. A ISC implica uma colaboração mais profunda entre funções dentro de uma empresa e com partes externas para criar algo novo que forneça uma solução sustentável para questões sociais e possa ser uma fonte de vantagem competitiva (Samidi et al., 2021). A colaboração é um aspeto essencial da comunicação estratégica e envolve a comunicação e a gestão de relações que atravessam os sistemas e assumem uma dimensão ética e cívica (Oliveira, 2022).

O Modelo Global de Relações Públicas e Comunicação (Modelo GRPC) da Global Alliance (2021) fornece um quadro para compreender como a comunicação pode apoiar a implementação da estratégia ISC. O modelo é o resultado de uma investigação baseada num consenso global sobre o papel e o valor atuais e futuros das relações públicas (RP) e da gestão da comunicação. O Modelo integra os Acordos de Estocolmo (Skoogh et al., 2010) e o Mandato de Melbourne (Global Alliance..., 2012), e consolida o *Global Capability Framework for Public Relations and Communication Management* (Global Alliance..., 2018).

O objetivo do modelo é definir o roteiro e os blocos de construção das funções de RP e Comunicação para promover a sua contribuição para a criação de diferenciação, reputação, confiança e legitimidade social. De acordo com o Modelo GRPC, as cinco dimensões que permitem gerar e proteger o valor num mundo BANI são:

- D1: Definição e ativação do objetivo da empresa (propósito - missão)
- D2: Construção da marca e da cultura corporativa
- D3: Gerir a reputação e o risco reputacional
- D4: Melhorar a comunicação (para além da informação)
- D5: Conectar as métricas da *intelligence* e dos ativos intangíveis (por exemplo, defesa, envolvimento, confiança e legitimidade).

Embora o modelo da Global Alliance não aborde todos os conceitos relevantes para a ISC, pode ser um ponto de partida útil para as empresas que pretendam desenvolver estratégias de comunicação eficazes para apoiar os seus objetivos de sustentabilidade. Ao adaptar o modelo às suas necessidades e objetivos específicos, as empresas podem envolver as partes interessadas de forma mais eficaz, medir o seu impacto social e defender práticas sustentáveis.

Combinando o conceito ISC com o Modelo GRPC, podemos afirmar que:

D1. Propósito – missão. O objetivo de uma empresa deve estar alinhado com os seus objetivos sociais e ambientais e fornecer uma orientação clara para as suas ações. Ao ativar o propósito corporativo, uma empresa pode envolver as partes interessadas de forma mais eficaz, criar parcerias e promover práticas sustentáveis.

D2. Marca e cultura. Ao comunicarem os seus objetivos e iniciativas de sustentabilidade, as empresas podem construir uma imagem de marca positiva e reforçar as relações com as partes interessadas. Da mesma forma, a promoção de uma cultura de sustentabilidade dentro da organização pode envolver os funcionários de forma mais eficaz e impulsionar a inovação, uma vez que a cultura organizacional pode apoiar a implementação da estratégia ISC.

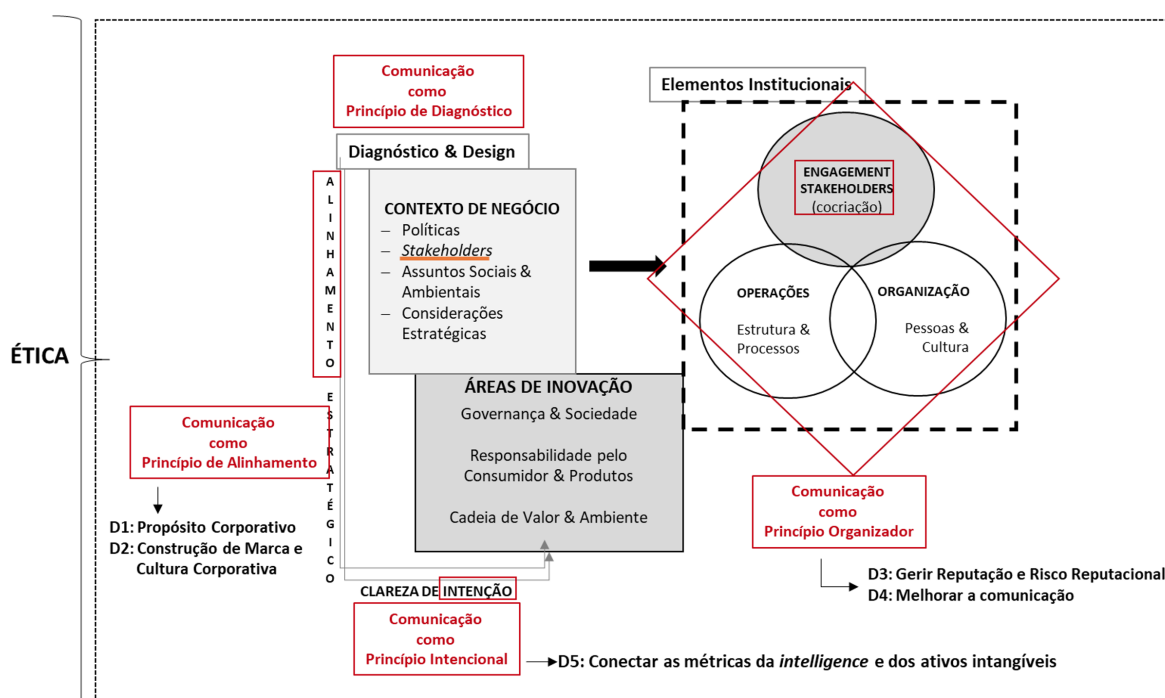
D3. Reputação e risco reputacional. Ao abordar proactivamente as questões sociais e ambientais, uma empresa pode proteger a sua reputação e atenuar os riscos potenciais. Do mesmo modo, ao comunicar o seu desempenho e progresso em matéria de sustentabilidade, as empresas podem criar confiança e legitimidade junto das partes interessadas.

D4. Comunicação. A comunicação efetiva é crucial para a implementação da estratégia ISC. As empresas devem procurar envolver as partes interessadas através do diálogo e da participação. Ouvindo ativamente as partes interessadas e incorporando o seu *feedback*, uma empresa pode construir relações mais fortes e abordar as questões sociais e ambientais de forma mais eficaz.

D5. Conectar as métricas da *intelligence* e dos ativos intangíveis. Ao medir os principais indicadores de desempenho relacionados com a defesa, o envolvimento, a confiança e a legitimidade, uma empresa pode acompanhar mais eficazmente o seu progresso em direção aos seus objetivos de sustentabilidade e identificar áreas de melhoria.

No geral, estes conceitos adicionais podem ajudar a apoiar a implementação da estratégia ISC, reforçando o objetivo, a cultura, a reputação, a comunicação e os indicadores da empresa. Ao incorporar estes conceitos nas suas estratégias de sustentabilidade, as empresas podem abordar as questões sociais e ambientais de forma mais efetiva, criando valor para todas as partes interessadas. Para além disso, a comunicação estratégica promoverá a institucionalização, ou seja, o aumento e a incorporação de inovações sociais na cultura e identidade organizacionais. Por conseguinte, as componentes-chave da comunicação estratégica - pesquisa/diagnóstico, estratégia, implementação, medição/avaliação e ética - são também essenciais para a ISC (Figura 2).

**Figura 2. Comunicação Estratégica na Estratégia de Inovação Social Corporativa**



Fonte: Elaboração própria

A comunicação estratégica parece ser a pedra angular de qualquer programa de Inovação Social Corporativa bem-sucedido. Pode ser resumida em quatro eixos essenciais que se baseiam em valores e práticas éticas.

Em primeiro lugar, a comunicação deve ser estrategicamente intencional, contribuindo para a definição e implementação da estratégia de ISC, com uma direção clara dada pela liderança da empresa. Só assim os profissionais de comunicação estratégica poderão organizar processos de criação de significado e de construção social entre os diferentes parceiros e partes interessadas.

Em segundo lugar, a comunicação estratégica é vital para pesquisar e diagnosticar o contexto empresarial e as áreas de inovação. Através da recolha e análise de dados, os líderes obtêm conhecimentos que ajudam a fundamentar a estratégia de ISC.

O terceiro eixo é o alinhamento da ISC com os valores, a missão, a visão e a cultura da organização. Os profissionais de comunicação estratégica prestam aconselhamento para garantir que a estratégia de ISC é consistente com estes elementos, assumindo um papel facilitador junto dos públicos organizacionais internos.

Por último, a comunicação é um princípio organizador, facilitando a interação entre elementos institucionais como as pessoas, a cultura, a estrutura e os processos, e mitigando os riscos que poderiam prejudicar a reputação da organização. Ao concentrar-se na comunicação estratégica nestas quatro áreas críticas, as empresas podem criar um programa de ISC bem-sucedido que seja ético e eficaz.

## **Conclusão**

Este artigo enfatiza a comunicação estratégica como um princípio constitutivo, organizativo e refletivo e um mecanismo transformador que facilita a integração da inovação social nas estratégias e operações empresariais. A comunicação estratégica alinha a estratégia empresarial com a estratégia de comunicação, estabelecendo uma intenção estratégica partilhada que orienta a conceção de uma política de ISC. Este alinhamento permite a organização de estruturas, processos, cultura e pessoas, facilitando a inovação em todos os elementos institucionais.

As implicações retiradas desta discussão realçam o papel vital da ISC na abordagem dos desafios sociais e ambientais. Enquanto a RSC tem sido a medida tradicional do impacto social das empresas, a ISC incrementa esta abordagem ao identificar ativamente oportunidades para criar valor através da inovação, da colaboração e do envolvimento. Esta mudança na estratégia empresarial evidencia a importância de alinhar eticamente os objetivos económicos, sociais e ambientais para melhorar as relações entre as empresas, as partes interessadas e a sociedade.

Ao incorporar a ISC nas operações centrais do negócio, as empresas poderão promover uma cultura de inovação social, motivar os colaboradores, reconstruir a confiança dos interessados e posicionarem-se como agentes de mudança positiva.

No entanto, para que as estratégias de ISC atinjam estes objetivos, devem ser efetivamente implementadas. A comunicação estratégica pode colmatar a lacuna entre a intenção e os resultados. Enquanto princípio constitutivo, organizativo e refletivo, pode ativar o objetivo da empresa, moldar a cultura, gerir os riscos para a reputação, facilitar o diálogo com as partes interessadas e monitorizar o progresso através de métricas de desempenho social.

Enquanto processo simbólico e socio-construtivo, a comunicação efetiva pode aumentar a sensibilização para as questões sociais e ambientais, angariar apoio para iniciativas de sustentabilidade, incentivar a ação das partes interessadas, legitimar e restaurar a confiança nas empresas. Pode também divulgar informações fiáveis sobre o desempenho e o progresso da sustentabilidade de uma empresa, mostrando os seus impactos sociais e ambientais positivos, e o seu contributo para o bem comum.

Para uma maior compreensão da ISC e do seu enquadramento empresarial, são necessários mais estudos que justifiquem a ISC como parte do campo académico da comunicação estratégica. Este ar-

tigo contribui de forma teórica e prática, destacando os benefícios da utilização de uma abordagem de comunicação estratégica para estudar, conceber e implementar uma política de ISC. A política de ISC pode beneficiar as empresas, os governos e as comunidades, abordando questões complexas, muitas vezes designadas por “problemas perversos”. Estes problemas exigem uma colaboração contínua, aprendizagem e adaptabilidade entre as partes interessadas.

Os benefícios da ISC estendem-se para além da empresa, proporcionando um quadro quadripartido que enfatiza 4P: as *Pessoas* (qualidade de vida), a *Produtividade* (lucro e competitividade), o *Planeta* (ecossistemas sustentáveis) e o *Progresso* (inovação cooperativa e orientada para o futuro). Para os governos e as comunidades, a ISC fornece uma plataforma para os futuros profissionais da comunicação renovarem os serviços públicos, formularem políticas públicas e implementarem iniciativas que conduzam a resultados sociais positivos.

A expansão dos setores do ensino superior e da investigação científica também constitui uma plataforma para estimular a inovação social através do intercâmbio sistemático e da recombinação de ideias. Esta contribuição pode incluir uma maior colaboração entre o meio académico, a indústria e o governo, o desenvolvimento de novas tecnologias e produtos e a criação de conhecimentos aplicáveis para enfrentar os desafios sociais.

A ISC evoluiu de um derivado concetual da RSC e da CVP para uma abordagem vital para as empresas defenderem a sua legitimidade social perante os desafios do século XXI. Tendo a comunicação estratégica como mecanismo transformador e organizador, a ISC fornece um modelo para as empresas, os governos e as comunidades criarem em conjunto soluções que beneficiem as partes interessadas e a sociedade em geral.

Face às incertezas do futuro e à evolução dos desafios sociais e ambientais, a ISC está a tornar-se um imperativo e não apenas uma opção. A ISC prepara as empresas para antecipar, adaptar-se e mitigar vários desafios, promovendo a resiliência e o crescimento sustentável.

Em conclusão, embora as ideias apresentadas neste artigo sejam complexas proporcionam uma compreensão partilhada das principais funções empresariais e da competitividade. A ISC pode afirmar-se como uma estratégia empresarial que materializa uma mudança de paradigma na forma como as empresas abordam as suas responsabilidades sociais e ambientais. Ao combinar a inovação, a colaboração e a comunicação estratégica, a ISC fornece um quadro robusto e adaptável para que as empresas possam enfrentar os desafios multifacetados do futuro.

## Conflito de Interesses

Os autores declaram não existir conflitos de interesses.

## Financiamento

Este trabalho é financiado por fundos nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P., no âmbito do Projeto UIDB/00713/2020

## Referências Bibliográficas:

Alvarado-Herrera, A., Bigne, E., Aldas-Manzano, J., & Curras-Perez, R. (2017). A scale for measuring consumer perceptions of corporate social responsibility following the sustainable development paradigm. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 140(2), 243-262. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2654-9>



- Aslaksen, H. M., Hildebrandt, C. & Johnsen, H. C. G. (2021). The long-term transformation of the concept of CSR: towards a more comprehensive emphasis on sustainability. *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*, 6(11), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-021-00063-9>
- Bowen, S. A. (2010). The nature of good in PR. What should be its normative ethic?. In R. L. Heath (ed.), *The Sage Handbook of Public Relations* (pp. 569-583). Sage.
- Brueckner, M., Spencer, R. & Paull, M. (2018). Teaching for Tomorrow: Preparing responsible citizens. In M. Brueckner, R. Spencer & M. Paull (eds.), *Disciplining the Undisciplined? Perspectives from Business, Society and Politics on Responsible Citizenship, Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability* (pp. 1-18). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71449-3>
- Carroll, A. (2016). Carroll's pyramid of CSR: taking another look. *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*, 1(3), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-016-0004-6>
- Cascio, J. (2020). Facing the Age of Chaos. <https://medium.com/@cascio/facing-the-age-of-chaos-b00687b1f51d>
- Chen, Y-R., Hung-Baesecke, S-J. F., Bowen, S. A., Zerfass, A., Stacks, D. W., & Boyd, B. (2020). The role of leadership in shared value creation from the public's perspective: A multi-continental study. *Public Relations Review*, 46(1), 101749. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2018.12.006>
- Crane, A., Palazzo, G., Spence, L. J., & Matten, D. (2014). Contesting the value of "Creating Shared Value." *California Management Review*, 56(2), 130-153. <https://doi.org/10.1525/cmr.2014.56.2.130>
- de los Reyes, G., Scholz, M., & Smith, N. C. (2017). Beyond the "Win-Win": Creating shared value requires ethical frameworks. *California Management Review*, 59(2), 142-167. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0008125617695286>
- Dionisio, M. & de Vargas, E. R. (2020). Corporate social innovation: A systematic literature review. *International Business Review*, 29 (2), 101641. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2019.101641>
- Direção-Geral da Educação (s.d.). Plataforma Open P-TECH da IBM. <https://apoioescolas.dge.mec.pt/ferramentas/plataforma-open-p-tech-da-ibm>
- Esen, A. & Maden-Eyiusta, C. (2019). Delineating the concept of corporate social innovation: toward a multidimensional model. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management*, 23(1), 23-45. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJEIM.2019.096497>
- Etzkowitz, H., & Leydesdorff, L. (2000). The dynamics of innovation: from National Systems and "Mode 2" to a Triple Helix of university-industry-government relations. *Research Policy*, 29(2), 109-123. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0048-7333\(99\)00055-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0048-7333(99)00055-4)
- Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (2018). Global Capability Framework for Public Relations and Communication Management. <https://www.globalalliancepr.org/capabilitiesframeworks>
- Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (2021). The Global Public Relations & Communication Model. <https://www.globalalliancepr.org/2021-the-global-pr-and-communication-model>
- Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management (2012). The Melbourne Mandate. A call to action for new areas of value in public relations and communication management. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/561d0274e4b0601b7c814ca9/t/5e1dc148210a4e03880d811b/1579008334310/Melbourne-Mandate-Text-final.pdf> | <https://melbournemandate.wordpress.com/>
- Googins, B. (2013). Leading with Innovation: Transforming Corporate Social Responsibility. In T. Osburg, & R. Schmidpeter (eds.), *Social Innovation. CSR, Sustainability, Ethics & Governance* (pp. 89-98). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-36540-9\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-36540-9_8)



- Granor, N., DeLyser, L. A., & Wang, K. (2016). TEALS: Teacher Professional Development Using Industry Volunteers. In *Proceedings of the 47th ACM Technical Symposium on Computing Science Education (SIGCSE '16)*. Association for Computing Machinery, New York, USA, 60–65. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2839509.2844589>
- Hallahan, K., Holtzhausen, D., Ruler, B. v., Vercic, D., & Sriramesh, K. (2007). Defining Strategic Communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 1(1), 3-35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15531180701285244>
- Herrera, M. E. B. (2015). Creating competitive advantage by institutionalizing corporate social innovation. *Journal of Business Research*, 68(7), 1468-1474. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.01.036>
- Holtzhausen, D., Fullerton, J., Lewis, B.K., & Shipka, D. (2021). *Principles of Strategic Communication*. Routledge.
- Hussain, W. & Kohn, M. (2024). The Common Good. In E. N. Zalta & U. Nodelman (eds.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2024/entries/common-good/>
- Kanter, R. M. (1999). From spare change to real change – The social sector as Beta site for business innovation. *Harvard Business Review*, 77(3), 122–132. <https://hbr.org/1999/05/from-spare-change-to-real-change-the-social-sector-as-beta-site-for-business-innovation>
- Kutor, S. K., Amoak, D., Owusu, B., & Kyeremeh, E. (2021). Theorizing “Wicked Concept” and reconceptualizing wisdom as wicked. *The Professional Geographer*, 73(4), 632–640. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00330124.2021.1933553>
- Lelo, T. V. (2016). Faces do comum na comunicação: da partilha à disjunção. *Galaxia*, 31, 66-78. <https://revistas.pucsp.br/index.php/galaxia/article/view/22028>
- Lim, J. R. & Lee, S. Y. (2022). Creating shared value (CSV) and mutually beneficial relationships to address societal issues and develop corporate competitive advantage: A case study of Yuhan-Kimberly and an ageing population. *Public Relations Review*, 48(4), 102225. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2022.102225>
- Martinez, F., O’Sullivan, P., Smith, M., & Esposito, M. (2017). Perspectives on the role of business in social innovation. *Journal of Management Development*, 36(5), 681-695. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-10-2016-0212>
- Microsoft (s.d.). What is the TEALS Program? <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/teals>
- Mirvis, P. & Googins, B. (2018). Corporate social innovation. Top-down, bottom-up, inside-out and inside-in. In H. Borland, A. Lindgreen, F. Maon, V. Ambrosini, B. Palacios-Florencio, & J. Vanhamme (Eds.), *Business Strategies for Sustainability* (chapter 11). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429458859>
- Mirvis, P. & Googins, B. (2021). Corporate Social Innovation. The next stage of CSR. In T. Maak, N. M. Pless, M. Orlitzky & S. Sandhu (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Corporate Social Responsibility* (pp. 295-307). Routledge. <http://doi.org/10.4324/9781003152651-29>
- Mirvis, P., Herrera, M. E. B., Googins, B., & Albareda, L. (2016). Corporate social innovation: How firms learn to innovate for the greater good. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(11), 5014–5021. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.04.073>
- Mustapha, N. D., Jali, M. N., & Muhamad, N. (2021). An overview of Corporate Social Innovation (CSI). *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 11(7), 691-698. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v11-i7/10527>
- Nahi, T. (2016). Cocreation at the base of the pyramid: Reviewing and organizing the diveRSC conceptualizations. *Organization & Environment*, 29(4), 416-437. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026616652666>
- Nazari, M., Nezami, I. M., & Zargar, Z. H. E. (2022). The journey from Corporate Social Responsibility to Corporate Social Innovation: The Whys and the Hows. *Technium Business and Management*, 2(2), 27–39. <https://doi.org/10.47577/business.v2i2.6539>

- Oliveira, E. (2022). Civic relations. Socio-communicative collective action. In G. Gonçalves & E. Oliveira (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Nonprofit Communication* (pp. 46-54). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003170563-7>
- Pleil, T., Otsa, T., & Helferich, P. S. (2023). Strategic communication as a transformative approach in the context of sustainable development. *30<sup>th</sup> International Public Relations Research Symposium – BledCom*, June 30 – July 1, 2023.
- Popoli, P. (2017). Corporate Social Innovation in Comparison with Corporate Social Responsibility: Integration, Development or Replacement? *International Business Research*, 10(10), 148-155. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v10n10p148>
- Porter, M. E. & Kramer, M. R. (2019). Creating Shared Value. In G. Lenssen & N. Smith (eds.), *Managing Sustainable Business* (pp. 323-346). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1144-7\\_16](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1144-7_16)
- Prabawani, B., Hadi, S. P., Wahyudi, F. E., & Ainuddin, I. (2023). Drivers and initial pattern for corporate social innovation: From responsibility to sustainability. *Helion*, 9(6), e16175. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e16175>
- P-Tech (2023). Learn about P-TECH schools. <https://www.ptech.org/about/>
- Rangan, V. K., Sehgal, D., & Rajan, R. (2007). The Complete Business of Serving the Poor: Insights from Unilever's Project Shakti in India. In V. K. Rangan, J. A. Quelch, G. Herrero, & B. Barton (eds.), *Business Solutions for the Global Poor: Creating Social and Economic Value* (pp. 144–154). John Wiley & Sons.
- Rittel H. W. J. & Webber M. M. (1973). Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. *Policy Sciences*, 4(2), 155-169. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf01405730>
- Samidi, S., Amarullah, M. W., Zulaikha, H., Kusumaningtyas, A. S., Jawad, K. A., & Nuraisyah, A. (2021). A systematic literature review on corporate social innovation towards sustainable competitive advantage. *Proceedings of the Conference Towards ASEAN Chairmanship 2023* (T-A-C 23 2021), 196-204. <https://doi.org/10.2991/aebmr.k.211207.031>
- Sandhu, S. (2009). Strategic Communication: An Institutional Perspective. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 3(2), 72–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15531180902805429>
- Schmiedeknecht, M. H. (2020). Social innovation and entrepreneurship supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – fostering social value creation. In S. O. Idowu, R. Schmidpeter, & L. Zu (Eds.), *The Future of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Business Perspectives for Global Development in 2030* (pp. 211-225). Springer.
- Schoeneborn, D., Morsing, M., & Crane, A. (2020). Formative perspectives on the relation between CSR communication and CSR practices: Pathways for walking, talking, and t(w)alking. *Business & Society*, 59(1), 5–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650319845091>
- Schultz, F. & Wehmeier, S. (2010). Institutionalization of corporate social responsibility within corporate communications: Combining institutional, sensemaking and communication perspectives. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 15(1), 9-29. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13563281011016813>
- Skoogh, Y., McCormick, G. & Falconi, T. M. (2010). Stockholm Accords. The Value of Public Relations and Communication Management. <http://www.wprf2010.se/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Stockholm-Accords-final-version.pdf>
- Steinfatt, T. M. (2009). Definitions of Communication. In S. W. Littlejohn & K. A. Foss (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Communication Theories* (pp. 295-299). Sage.
- Tabares, S. (2020). Insights from corporate social innovation: a research agenda. *Social Enterprise Journal*, 16(3), 317-338. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SEJ-08-2019-0057>
- The Coca-Cola Company (2021). 5by20 Report: A Decade of Achievement. <https://www.coca-colacompany.com/reports/2020-5by20-report>

- Valentini, C. (2021). 32 Mapping public relations theory: Concluding reflections and future directions. In C. Valentini (ed.), *Public Relations* (pp. 615-627). De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110554250-032>
- Verčič, A. T. & Coric, D. S. (2018). The relationship between reputation, employer branding and corporate social responsibility. *Public Relations Review*, 44(4), 444-452. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2018.06.005>
- Volk, S. C. & Zerfass, A. (2018). Alignment: Explicating a key concept in strategic communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 12(4), 433-451. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2018.1452742>
- Zerfass, A., Verčič, D., Nothhaft, H., & Werder, K. P. (2018). Strategic Communication: defining the field and its contribution to research and practice. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 12(4), 487-505. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2018.1493485>

# Culturas organizativas y discursos comunicativos de las ONG españolas ante los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible en el espacio digital

Víctor Manuel Marí-Sáez, Yiheng Wang & Hanae Trola Skalli

Universidad de Cádiz, España

victor.mari@gm.uca.es / yiheng.wang@uca.es / hanae.trola@uca.es

## Resumen

El presente artículo tiene por objetivo realizar un análisis de los discursos comunicativos de las ONG de desarrollo (ONGD) españolas ante los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenibles teniendo en cuenta su cultura organizativa. Este enfoque plantea que hay una correlación entre la forma jurídica que adopta una ONG y las prácticas sociales puestas en marcha por ellas, de tal modo que una cultura organizativa expresiva favorece más una comunicación participativa de la ciudadanía que una cultura organizativa de carácter institucional. Para ello se ha llevado a cabo un muestreo estructural atendiendo a los tres grupos de ONGD existentes (grandes, medianas y pequeñas) y se

han realizado tanto entrevistas en profundidad a responsables de estas entidades como análisis documental de materiales producidos por ellas. Los resultados apuntan a una mayor incorporación de los ODS entre las organizaciones grandes del polo de la institucionalidad, así como a un predominio de un marco comunicativo centrado en la transmisión de información y fuertemente influido por las lógicas mercantiles. No obstante, se evidencia que la cultura organizativa influye, pero sin llegar a determinar absolutamente los discursos comunicativos puestos en marcha por las organizaciones solidarias.

Palabras clave: Comunicación solidaria, ONG, cultura organizativa, Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible, mercantilización

## Organizational cultures and communicative discourses of Spanish NGOs facing the Sustainable Development Goals in the digital space

### Abstract

The present article aims to conduct an analysis of the communicative discourses of Spanish non-governmental development organizations (NGDOs) in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, considering their organizational culture. This approach suggests that there is a correlation between the legal form adopted by an NGDO and the social practices they implement, such that an expressive organizational culture favours more participatory communication from citizens than an institutional organizational culture. To this end, a structured sampling has been carried out according to the three existing groups of NGDOs (large, medium, and small), and in-depth inter-

views with those responsible for these entities have been conducted, as well as a documentary analysis of materials produced by them. The results point to a greater incorporation of the SDGs among the large organizations at the pole of institutionality, as well as a predominance of a communicative framework centered on the transmission of information and strongly influenced by commercial logics. However, it is evident that the organizational culture influences, but does not absolutely determine the communicative discourses implemented by the solidarity organizations.

Keywords: Solidarity communication, NGO, Organizational Culture, Sustainable Development Goals, Commoditization

Data de submissão: 2024-07-22. Data de aprovação: 2024-10-05.

Revista Estudos em Comunicação é financiada por Fundos FEDER através do Programa Operacional Factores de Competitividade – COMPETE e por Fundos Nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia no âmbito do projeto *LabCom – Comunicação e Artes*, UIDB/00661/2020.



## Introducción

**E**l establecimiento de los Objetivos del Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) por parte de Naciones Unidas, en 2015, ha supuesto un nuevo marco de actuación para todas aquellas entidades sociales interesadas por las cuestiones sociales y solidarias, una vez reconocido el agotamiento y fracaso del anterior proyecto marco de los Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio (ODM).

Las entidades públicas y privadas de distintas partes del mundo han encontrado aquí una oportunidad para adaptar - en algunos casos - o iniciar - en otros - actividades encaminadas a mejorar alguno de los diecisiete campos de actuación establecidos por los ODS<sup>1</sup>. Entre estas organizaciones figuran las entidades sin ánimo de lucro, organizaciones del sector no lucrativo (Gonçalves y Oliveira, 2023; Salamon y Anheier, 1997), colectivos del Tercer Sector de Acción Social (Casado, 2015) o las ONG (Lang, 2013; Petras, 1999) por recurrir a algunas de las nomenclaturas más extendidas.

Este artículo plantea un análisis de las estrategias de incorporación de los ODS por parte de una serie de ONG y colectivos sociales, con la finalidad de observar, principalmente, el trabajo comunicativo realizado por estas organizaciones en la difusión de los objetivos de desarrollo propuestos por Naciones Unidas.

Obviamente, son muchas las variables que intervienen en este proceso, como numerosas son, también, las clasificaciones que se pueden establecer en relación a los tipos de ONG y a sus estilos de comunicación. En este sentido, Martens (2002) plantea que el establecimiento de un sistema de clasificación de las ONG puede ser una misión imposible. Y, tras observar la realidad empírica, se constatan las dificultades objetivas para intentar establecer cierto orden clasificatorio en un campo tan numeroso, diverso y plural.

De todas las opciones posibles, el presente trabajo va a tener en cuenta, de un modo especial, una de las propuestas que ha tenido un recorrido notable en el panorama internacional y, específicamente, en España, a la hora de establecer criterios axiales en el análisis de este campo. El propio Martens (2002) propone, a la hora de clasificar a las ONG, dar prioridad a dos ejes: el jurídico y el sociológico. En continuidad con sus planteamientos, López-Rey (2007) establece una correlación entre la forma jurídica que adopta una ONG y las prácticas sociales puestas en marcha por ellas. De este modo, plantea una diferencia entre dos tipos de entidades – asociaciones y fundaciones – que se sustancia en una mayor participación de la base social en las primeras que en las segundas (López-Rey, 2007, p. 26).

Por lo tanto, puesto que nuestra investigación se va a centrar en las prácticas comunicacionales de las ONG españolas en relación a su adopción y difusión de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible, si tuviéramos que sintetizar, en forma de preguntas de investigación, los planteamientos presentados hasta el momento, las dos cuestiones principales quedarían formuladas de la siguiente manera:

- ¿En qué medida afecta la cultura organizativa de las ONG españolas a la incorporación y difusión de los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible por parte de estas entidades?

- Por lo que respecta a la dimensión comunicacional, ¿cuál es la relación que hay entre la cultura organizativa y el discurso comunicativo de una ONG?

1. Los 17 ODS que se fijaron dentro de la Agenda 2030 son: 1) Erradicar la pobreza; 2) Lograr la seguridad alimentaria; 3) Garantizar una vida sana en todas las edades; 4) Garantizar una educación inclusiva, equitativa y de calidad para todos; 5) Lograr la igualdad entre los géneros; 6) Garantizar la disponibilidad de agua y su gestión sostenible; 7) Garantizar el acceso a una energía asequible segura; 8) Promover el crecimiento económico inclusivo y sostenible; 9) Construir infraestructuras resilientes; 10) Reducir la desigualdad entre los países; 11) Conseguir comunidades sostenibles; 12) Garantizar el consumo y la producción sostenibles; 13) Adoptar medidas por el clima; 14) Conservar la vida submarina; 15) Proteger la vida de ecosistemas terrestres; 16) Promover justicia e instituciones sólidas; y 17) Fortalecer alianzas para el Desarrollo Sostenible.



Para ello, en los siguientes epígrafes vamos a realizar el siguiente itinerario. En primer lugar, se presentará una breve síntesis de los ODS, sus planteamientos fundamentales y las observaciones que se les ha realizado a su diseño desde una perspectiva comunicativa. En segundo lugar, se desarrollará la cuestión de la cultura organizativa, los autores que han trabajado en la construcción de esta categoría de análisis y el recorrido que ha tenido esta perspectiva de investigación, en España, en el estudio de las prácticas comunicacionales del sector solidario. A continuación, presentaremos el diseño metodológico realizado para esta investigación, seguido de los datos y de su análisis, para terminar con la formulación de una serie de conclusiones.

## **Los ODS y las perspectivas comunicativas en el impulso del desarrollo**

Lamentablemente, se ha observado, en numerosas ocasiones, que instituciones internacionales como las que integran las Naciones Unidas (NU) han sido excesivamente ingenuas e idealistas a la hora de emitir declaraciones bienintencionadas respecto a las prospectivas de futuro sobre asuntos de interés prioritario como son la reducción de la pobreza y la desigualdad social (Servaes y Yusha'u, 2023). En muchos casos, estas declaraciones adolecen de una mayor contextualización a la hora de definir qué elementos materiales, a nivel sociopolítico, dificultan la implantación de tales medidas y cuáles de ellos sirven de catalizadores de las mismas.

A menudo se pone de manifiesto lo que Easterly (2015) denomina “la tiranía de los expertos”, esto es, la falsa creencia de que la resolución de los problemas relacionados con el desarrollo pasa, principal o exclusivamente, por una gestión tecnocrática de los mismos. Consideran, como apunta Servaes (2017, p.7), que estamos ante un problema de ingeniería social que debe resolverse desde una perspectiva descendente.

Siendo esto cierto, es necesario reseñar que la formulación de los ODS incorpora alguna de las lecciones aprendidas de la propuesta que le precedió en el tiempo, los ODM. Sanahuja y Tezanos (2017) apuntan, en este sentido, que los ODM surgieron en los años noventa del pasado siglo XX como un intento incipiente de servir de contrapeso al proyecto globalizador neoliberal. Se ha criticado a los ODM por ser un diseño centrado más en la gestión de los síntomas que en las causas de la desigualdad social, por limitarse a la reducción parcial de la pobreza extrema y por su renuncia a definir una agenda universal, al limitar el ámbito de actuación a los países pobres, manteniendo una visión Norte-Sur tradicional (Sanahuja, 2007). El balance de Martínez Osés (2015) tampoco es positivo, al resaltar el alto grado de incumplimiento de los ODM, sus límites a la hora de construir una nueva gobernanza mundial y, finalmente, su escaso grado de influencia en las decisiones políticas más importantes tomadas durante su periodo de vigencia (pp. 41-42).

Por todo ello, en la formulación de los ODS y de la Agenda 2030 se han corregido algunos de los defectos de los objetivos anteriores, hasta el punto de que los actuales pretenden superar la compartimentación del trabajo técnico y político promoviendo enfoques integrados de los retos económicos, sociales y medioambientales a los que se enfrenta el mundo. No obstante, uno de los problemas encontrados a la hora de su implementación ha sido el desigual grado de prioridad dado por los diferentes países. En el caso español, los informes señalaban, en aquellos primeros años de su puesta en marcha, una situación preocupante, dada la lentitud y desinterés mostrado por las instituciones nacionales hacia los ODS. Así, el barómetro del Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS) de febrero de 2019 preguntaba a la población española si conocía la Agenda 2030. El 85,8% respondía negativamente. En este contexto, no es de extrañar que, en el equipo de gobierno constituido por el presidente Pedro Sánchez a inicios del año 2020, para muchos españoles resultase desconocido el nombre del Ministerio de Asuntos Sociales y Agenda 2030. Con el tiempo, este sería uno de los organismos catalizadores del impulso de estas temáticas en el panorama español.



Dado que este trabajo se centra en analizar la dimensión comunicativa de estas acciones solidarias, vamos a abordar esta cuestión fijándonos, en primer lugar, en cuál ha sido el modelo comunicativo dominante en las agencias y organismos de Naciones Unidas. De la amplia diversidad de perspectivas teóricas existentes en el campo de la comunicación solidaria (Aranguren, 2000; Herranz de la Casa, 2010; Nos, Iranzo y Farné, 2012) una de las que más recorrido ha tenido, históricamente, en Naciones Unidas, ha sido la Comunicación para el Desarrollo y el Cambio Social (Servaes, 1999, 2002). Quarry y Ramírez (2014), en su trabajo de reconstrucción de este proceso, indican que ya, desde los años sesenta del pasado siglo XX, se produce la primera financiación por parte de Naciones Unidas al denominado, por aquel entonces, servicio de Apoyo a la Comunicación para el Desarrollo (2014, p. 34). Precisamente una de las definiciones más extendidas de esta perspectiva de investigación es la ofrecida por quien fuera el primer jefe de la unidad de Comunicación para el Desarrollo de la FAO (Organización de Naciones Unidas para la Alimentación y la Agricultura, *Food and Agriculture Organization*, en inglés), Colin Fraser, en colaboración con Sonia Restrepo-Estrada:

La comunicación para el desarrollo implica el uso de los procesos, técnicas y medios de comunicación para ayudar a las personas a tomar plena conciencia de su situación y de sus posibilidades de cambio, para resolver conflictos, llegar a consensos, para ayudar a las personas a adquirir habilidades y conocimientos necesarios para mejorar sus condiciones de vida y las de la sociedad, al tiempo que se mejora la efectividad de las instituciones (1998, p. 63).

Manuel Calvelo Ríos (2016, 2017) da cuenta de este proceso y del papel relevante que tuvo la Comunicación para el Desarrollo en Latinoamérica en aquellos años. No obstante, desde finales de los ochenta y comienzos de los noventa, se produce la incorporación, en las agencias de Naciones Unidas, de otros subcampos de la Comunicación para el Desarrollo y de otras perspectivas ajenas a esta tradición. McCall (2011) establece estos cuatro como los principales: 1) comunicación para el cambio de comportamiento; 2) comunicación para el cambio social; 3) comunicación para la promoción; y 4) fortalecimiento de un entorno mediático y comunicativo propicio.

En este esfuerzo de clarificación, Servaes y Malikhaio (2020) hablan de la existencia, dentro de la Comunicación para el Desarrollo y el Cambio Social, de tres paradigmas de desarrollo, dos modelos de comunicación y numerosas aplicaciones y aproximaciones. En cuanto a los modelos de desarrollo, estos autores hablan de la existencia de tres: 1) el modelo de la *modernización*, impulsado desde finales de la Segunda Guerra Mundial y caracterizado por la extensión de las tecnologías y del modo de vida occidental a los países del Sur Global; 2) el modelo de la *dependencia*, que surge desde mediados de la década de los sesenta como respuesta al primero y que pone el acento en el análisis global de las relaciones del sistema-mundo (Wallerstein, 1974) con el fin de identificar las causas del subdesarrollo dependiente y de revertir la situación; 3) la puesta en marcha, desde mediados de los ochenta, del modelo de la *multiplicidad*, que incorpora al análisis del desarrollo otras dimensiones (como la cultural) que habían quedado eclipsadas, en anteriores etapas, por una mirada al desarrollo excesivamente economicista.

Dentro de estos tres paradigmas del desarrollo se puede hablar de dos grandes modelos de comunicación. El primero, asociado al enfoque de la modernización, basado en las teorías funcionalistas y conductistas de la *Mass Communication Research* (Rodrigo-Alsina, 1995). En este modelo el cambio social queda reducido, en la práctica, a un cambio del comportamiento individual. Se reproducen los mismos esquemas comunicativos (unidireccionales, jerárquicos) que predominan en los *mass media*. Frente a este modelo está el participativo, propio de los enfoques del desarrollo de la dependencia y de la multiplicidad. Esta segunda propuesta se inspira en los planteamientos dialógicos del educador bra-

sileño Paulo Freire (1968) y contempla una triple dimensión del cambio social: personal, comunitaria y estructural. Como indica su nombre, el modelo toma como eje central la participación, de abajo arriba, de los sujetos y de las comunidades en el proceso de desarrollo y de cambio social.

Estas grandes tendencias mundiales se materializan de un modo diferente en cada país. En el caso español, la historia de la Comunicación para el Desarrollo ha pasado de un periodo de indiferencia y marginación a una época, más reciente, de cierta eclosión y difusión (Marí, 2013). Por otro lado, la apropiación particular de estos planteamientos, en España, ha llevado a la infrarrepresentación, por un lado, y a la sobrerrepresentación, por otro, de los modelos de desarrollo establecidos por Servaes y Malikha. Así, Jiménez y Arriola (2016) identifican, en el caso español, un sesgo positivo hacia las corrientes del posdesarrollo (Rist, 2002), del decrecimiento (Latouche, 2008) o del Buen Vivir (Acosta, 2013). Por el contrario, hay una infrarrepresentación de otras posiciones que forman parte de la tradición del campo, como puede ser la teoría de la dependencia (Barán, 1957; Cardoso y Faletto, 1969).

Esta aproximación a los diversos modelos y paradigmas de desarrollo y de comunicación serán especialmente útiles a la hora de analizar los datos de nuestra investigación, en la medida en que los acentos de cada uno están implícita o explícitamente presentes en las acciones y en las comunicaciones de las diversas organizaciones que intervienen en el espacio solidario.

### **Culturas organizativas y discursos comunicativos en las ONG españolas**

Como avanzábamos al inicio, en la presente investigación se va a tener en cuenta, como un eje central de análisis, la influencia que la cultura organizativa de una entidad tiene en la construcción de su discurso comunicacional. Para ello, seguiremos las claves ofrecidas por Martens (2002), quien resalta la perspectiva sociológica y la perspectiva jurídica como especialmente relevantes para este trabajo clasificatorio. Dentro de la primera, este autor plantea que la acción solidaria de las ONG se realiza desde una estructura organizativa formalmente establecida. En esto se diferencian, por ejemplo, de las manifestaciones o acciones solidarias espontáneas. Una Organización No Gubernamental tiene unos mínimos requisitos organizativos como son el hecho de contar con unos miembros permanentes, con unos locales y unos ingresos económicos para desarrollar sus actividades (Martens, 2002, p.281).

En el contexto español, López-Rey ha sido uno de los investigadores que más y mejor ha trabajado en esta perspectiva de análisis. Desde estos planteamientos realizó una de las primeras investigaciones más sólidas sobre comunicación y ONG en España (Sampedro, *et al*, 2002) a la que daría continuidad con sucesivos trabajos, en los que desarrollaría más en profundidad estas claves de análisis (López-Rey 2007, 2008).

Este autor, a la hora de definir el concepto de cultura organizacional dirá, siguiendo a Schein, que consiste en “un modelo de presunciones básicas – inventadas, descubiertas o desarrolladas por un grupo dado al ir aprendiendo a enfrentarse con sus problemas de adaptación externa y de integración interna – que hayan ejercido la suficiente influencia como para ser consideradas válidas y, en consecuencia, ser señaladas a los nuevos miembros como el modo correcto de percibir, pensar y sentir esos problemas” (Schein, 1988. pp. 25-26).

Los elementos de la cultura organizacional aparecen jerarquizados según su grado de visibilidad o de conciencia. En su dimensión más visible, está compuesta por sus producciones, artefactos o creaciones. En segundo lugar, estarían sus valores. Finalmente, en el nivel más profundo, estarían las presunciones básicas de una organización, sus creencias profundas en relación con el entorno, la naturaleza de la realidad, del género humano o de las relaciones humanas (Schein, 1988, pp. 30-37 y 96-120, citado en López-Rey, 200, pp. 22).

Tomando estas aproximaciones como punto de partida, López-Rey plantea que, en el seno del Tercer Sector hay dos culturas organizativas en competencia. Una que le es propia y otra que en principio le es ajena pero que se va introduciendo poco a poco mediante un proceso de *percolación cultural*

(López-Rey, 2008). Este término, de propio cuño, procede originariamente del campo de la geofísica. Hace referencia al proceso de filtración de líquidos en el suelo, desde las capas más superficiales hasta las más profundas. A partir de ahí, López-Rey lo adapta a su objeto de estudio, para plantear que la cultura de mercado ha ido calando poco a poco en las organizaciones solidarias, hasta impregnar sus imaginarios y prácticas y configurar su cultura organizativa.

Así, establece que, en el seno de la ONG hay dos culturas organizativas en conflicto. Por un lado, existe una cultura que les es propia, de tipo expresivo, que trata de canalizar la solidaridad y el altruismo a través de la participación social, entendida ésta como un fin en sí mismo. Por otro lado, estaría otra lógica, de tipo institucional que, desde una perspectiva instrumental, *percolada* desde el mercado, evidencia la presencia del capitalismo dentro de aquellas organizaciones solidarias que, en su modo de funcionar, demuestran regirse por una lógica similar a la de las empresas (López-Rey, 2008, pp. 18-19).

De este modo, las asociaciones estarían regidas, en su mayoría, por una cultura organizativa de tipo expresivo, con un mayor protagonismo de la participación de su base social y de la ciudadanía, mientras que en el polo opuesto estarían las fundaciones, gobernadas en su mayoría por una cultura organizativa de tipo institucional. Siguiendo el hilo argumental, podemos ver que, en la actualidad, en el campo de las ONG en España, las organizaciones consideradas por la Coordinadora Estatal de ONG como grandes<sup>2</sup> estarían regidas, mayoritariamente, por una lógica institucional, mientras que las organizaciones consideradas como medianas o pequeñas se organizarían según una lógica de tipo expresivo.

Teniendo como referencia estos criterios, no podemos olvidar que, de un tiempo a esta parte, todas las organizaciones solidarias (pequeñas y grandes) se ven impelidas a poner en marcha cauces de participación de sus socios o de los sectores de la ciudadanía a los que se dirigen. En esta tendencia influyen factores de tipo social, cultural o tecnológico, entre los que se encuentra la amplia difusión de las redes sociales virtuales y sus mecanismos de interactividad y de participación. De este modo, podemos decir que, hoy en día, hasta las fundaciones, regidas por una lógica institucional, ponen en marcha diversos mecanismos de participación.

La participación se ha convertido, sin duda, en un desafío generalizado que interpela a todos los tipos de ONG, sea cual sea su cultura organizativa. Hasta el punto de que, como apuntaban hace años Cooke y Kothari (2001), es posible que la participación se haya convertido en una nueva tiranía a la que, en nuestros días, ningún tipo de organización puede escapar. Porque no todas las modalidades de participación son capaces de ser gestionadas eficazmente (Welchman, 2015) ni, sobre todo, permiten transformar la realidad. Por ello, se hace necesario discriminar entre los niveles de participación que ofrece una determinada entidad a la ciudadanía (Arnstein, 1969; Lauria y Schively, 2020), desde el más básico de la mera transmisión de información o consulta hasta los niveles más elevados, que conducen hasta la autogestión y participación plena de la ciudadanía.

Por otro lado, respecto a la relación entre la cultura organizativa y el discurso comunicativo de una entidad solidaria, son varias las perspectivas teóricas y las dimensiones susceptibles de ser tenidas en cuenta (Koschmann e Isbell, 2023; Oliveira, 2023; Silva, Ruão y Gonçalves, 2020). Sampedro, Jerez y López-Rey (2002) dirán que hay prácticas comunicativas expresivas y prácticas comunicativas institucionales, siendo las primeras más participativas y transformadoras que las segundas. En continuidad con los dos modelos comunicativos propuestos por Servaes y Malikhao, Víctor Marí (2013) plantea que hay, por un lado, organizaciones que apuestan por unos modelos periodísticos-transmisores y publici-

2. La Coordinadora Estatal de ONGD, a la hora de clasificar a las organizaciones en pequeñas, medianas y grandes, toma como referencia los criterios sugeridos por la Comisión Europea para el sector empresarial que divide a las empresas en grandes, medianas y pequeñas. Así, las grandes son aquellas que tienen contratadas a más de 250 personas y que cuentan con unos ingresos anuales de más de 50 millones de euros; las medianas, por su parte, tienen contratadas a menos de 50 personas y sus ingresos anuales no superan los 10 millones de euros; finalmente, las pequeñas contratan a menos de diez personas y sus ingresos anuales no exceden los dos millones de euros (Informe de la Coordinadora de ONG para el Desarrollo 2009).

tarios, mientras que, por otro lado, hay organizaciones que apuestan por modelos de comunicación más orientados al impulso de procesos para la transformación social. Finalmente, Iranzo y Farné (2014), siguiendo los planteamientos de Nos Aldás (2007), hablan de organizaciones que apuestan por el marco comunicativo de la ayuda frente a otras, cuyo marco comunicativo es el de la transformación social.

## Metodología

Tomando en cuenta la aproximación teórica que acabamos de realizar y guiados por las preguntas de investigación que formulábamos en el apartado introductorio, nuestra investigación se centra en analizar la incorporación de los ODS en las ONG españolas y la construcción de su discurso comunicativo en el espacio digital. En esta tarea, se tendrá en cuenta, de un modo especial, el modo en el que la cultura organizativa influye en estas dos cuestiones.

Para ello, se ha llevado a cabo un muestreo estructural que permita seleccionar oenegés representativas de las tres categorías establecidas por la Coordinadora de ONG de Desarrollo de España (grandes, medianas y pequeñas). Del grupo total de las ONG nos hemos centrado, específicamente, en las ONGD (de desarrollo) por ser las que están orientadas de un modo más claro a los asuntos vinculados al desarrollo propuestos por los ODS y la Agenda 2030. Por otro lado, dado que el análisis de sus discursos comunicativos se iba a focalizar en el espacio digital, se ha procurado que las organizaciones seleccionadas tuvieran una mínima presencia y actividad en él.

Así, de este modo, las organizaciones analizadas han sido las siguientes. En el grupo de las ONGD grandes estarían tres de las organizaciones más conocidas, más antiguas y con más peso en el panorama nacional: Cruz Roja, Intermón-Oxfam y Manos Unidas; en el grupo de las oenegés de desarrollo medianas se encuentran CIC-Batá, Alboan y Madre Coraje. Finalmente, en el grupo de las pequeñas estarían las ONGD Cala y Kubuka y la Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de Andalucía (APDHA).

A partir de la configuración de la muestra, nuestra investigación, de carácter cualitativo, se ha llevado a cabo a lo largo de año 2021, ya que nos interesaba analizar la apropiación de los ODS en la fase en la que, según la literatura científica consultada, aún no había despegado, en toda su plenitud, el trabajo de estas entidades en torno a los ODS.

Para ello, se han implementado, por un lado, nueve entrevistas en profundidad (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2012) a responsables de comunicación de la organización de las entidades seleccionadas o, en su defecto, a personas que forman parte del equipo directivo de la organización y que están al tanto del trabajo comunicativo, en el periodo que abarca de abril a julio del año mencionado. Además, se ha realizado un análisis documental de aquellas producciones de las organizaciones seleccionadas (informes, memorias, etc.), disponibles en sus espacios digitales (preferentemente páginas web), que pudieran ser útiles en esta investigación.

Los resultados se han procesado y filtrado con la ayuda del software de análisis cualitativo Nvivo (Dias do Nascimento, *et al.*, 2016), que permite operaciones como el almacenamiento, la codificación de datos, la importación de archivos y documentos de grandes dimensiones, así como su posterior conexión con los fragmentos de las entrevistas.

Así pues, detallando el proceso de análisis, señalamos que, en primer lugar, se ha procedido a una transcripción de todas las entrevistas realizadas, con el objeto de obtener un corpus metalingüístico. Posteriormente, hemos subido dicho corpus de estudio a la nube de almacenamiento que proporciona el programa, con el fin de resumir y clasificar la información, aplicando como sistema categorización el grupo de descriptores que nos sirvió de guión en las entrevistas semiestructuradas realizadas: el perfil y las características de la organización (tenemos en cuenta la estructura organizativa, el tamaño, el po-

sicionamiento y el ámbito de actuación); sus estrategias comunicativas; sus posicionamientos sobre los ODS y las vías de financiación. En la fase final se han extraído los temas principales y los subtemas de cada entrevista.

Con esto, cabe añadir que, para una mayor clarificación del trabajo de categorización llevado a cabo en la fase de análisis de las entrevistas, nos hemos basado en el esquema disponible en la Tabla II (Anexos).

## Resultados y análisis

### Culturas organizativas y ODS

Presentamos, en primer lugar, los datos relativos a la primera pregunta de investigación, dirigida a analizar la influencia que había tenido la cultura organizativa de cada ONGD en el grado y la forma de incorporar los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible a su trabajo cotidiano. Comenzamos con el grupo de las ONGD grandes seleccionadas en la muestra que, de entrada, estarían encuadradas en una cultura organizativa de tipo institucional.

En las tres oenegés de este grupo (Cruz Roja, Intermón-Oxfam y Manos Unidas) se constata un alto grado de incorporación de los ODS desde los primeros momentos de su implantación. Se puede decir que entre las ONGD grandes hay un fuerte alineamiento institucional respecto a los objetivos de desarrollo, aunque con diversos matices. Así, por ejemplo, Cruz Roja hace referencia a la campaña puesta en marcha por su organización en 2017 en torno a la creación de un banco de imágenes, libres de derechos, sobre los ODS y su esfuerzo por acabar con los abusos, las desigualdades y la violación de los derechos humanos.

En la misma línea, Oxfam Intermón hace referencia a una actividad organizada en 2016 titulada “Diálogo Político y Social para la implementación de la Agenda de Desarrollo Sostenible 2030 por España”<sup>3</sup>, en un periodo en el que había muy poco conocimiento sobre el tema en el país.

Por lo que respecta a Manos Unidas, esta organización también impulsa, desde el inicio, actividades y proyectos de difusión y sensibilización de los ODS. En la entrevista se hace referencia a su Festival de Clipmetrajes<sup>4</sup> propuesto para alumnado de centros de enseñanza, en el que tienen que grabar un vídeo de un minuto que visibilice el compromiso con la consecución de alguno de los ODS. En cuanto a su posición institucional frente a los ODS, se mueve en cierta ambivalencia. Manos Unidas, como organización vinculada orgánicamente a la Conferencia Episcopal Española, oscila entre el apoyo manifiesto del Papa Francisco a las cuestiones que tienen que ver con el desarrollo humano (Souto et al. 2011) y, por otro lado, entre el rechazo que algunas de estas cuestiones generan entre el sector más conservador del episcopado español.

Respecto a las ONG medianas de la muestra, se observa que en todas ellas cobran más peso cuestiones de carácter expresivo, especialmente la participación de sus socios y sectores de la ciudadanía con los que trabajan, en los entornos locales y redes en los que desempeñan sus actividades y proyectos. Adicionalmente, cada una de ellas destaca algún elemento propio de su identidad o estilo. Así, nos encontramos con que, desde CIC-Batá, a partir de una larga trayectoria en la gestión de proyectos de desarrollo y en la reflexión sobre las políticas de cooperación, se preguntan por la génesis de estos ODS: “¿dónde se diseñan y cómo surgen? ¿Por consenso? ¿Cómo surgen estos objetivos de los cuales luego participo?”. En otro lugar de la entrevista se habla de la poca presencia que la cultura tiene en los ODS

3. <https://www.oxfamintermon.org/objetivos-desarrollo-sostenible-agenda-2030-espana>

4. <https://www.clipmetrajesmanosunidas.org/>



y, específicamente, de la infrarrepresentación de las cuestiones que tienen que ver con la comunicación. Aparecen de un modo genérico, cuando se podría haber incluido referencias “a la promoción del empoderamiento ciudadana, del acceso a los medios y a la información pública desde la ciudadanía”.

Por otro lado, CIC-Batá insiste en un aspecto, en el que coincide con Madre Coraje, que tiene que ver con que, para estas organizaciones, lo importante es seguir impulsando los procesos de transformación social en los que llevan trabajando años y, desde ese trabajo local y concreto, buscar la conexión con los ODS. Además, en el caso de Madre Coraje, los ODS les plantearon el desafío de hacer un trabajo de educomunicación al interior de la organización, con sus socios, para explicárselos de modo que los entendieran y los relacionasen con las actividades y proyectos impulsados por la organización:

El perfil de nuestra junta directiva es de un señor de setenta años, y nos preguntamos cómo explicarles los ODS para que los entendieran...hicimos este panfletito plastificado, que son mensajes prioritarios de Madre Coraje...de lo que hablábamos era de los ODS y de qué hace Madre Coraje en cada caso (entrevistado de Madre Coraje).

La tercera organización de este grupo, Alboan, insiste en la ambivalencia que ven las otras ONG medianas de la muestra respecto a los ODS. Son una oportunidad y, al mismo tiempo, hay limitaciones en ellos. En cuanto a las oportunidades, destacan el escenario que se abre de colaboración con el sector empresarial, aunque no son ingenuos de las contradicciones y peligros que pueden aparecer. Piensan que está bien que se acerquen las empresas, *“pero tenemos que reflexionar también sobre el modelo económico y el modelo de empresa, ya que en estas cuestiones está el embrión de las personas que se quedan al margen, en situaciones de exclusión”*. Es, por tanto, en esa interlocución con otros sectores en la que emerge una visión del desarrollo y de la cooperación construida estratégicamente desde la ONG.

Finalmente estaría el grupo de las ONG pequeñas, en el que se encuentran Kubuka, Cala y APDHA (Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de Andalucía). Se observan diferencias en cuanto a la posición de varias de ellas respecto a los ODS. Por un lado, se encuentra Kubuka, una organización pequeña y relativamente joven, creada en 2013. Para ellos, los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible son una oportunidad que aprovechar, tanto en su trabajo de sensibilización en colegios como en los proyectos de intervención que llevan a cabo en Kenia o Zambia.

Por otro lado, nos encontramos con una postura más crítica por parte de Cala y APDHA, también con matices entre ellas. Para Cala, este tipo de macroproyectos les parece papel mojado, aunque respetan a las ONG que puedan verlos como una oportunidad. Ellas mismas plantean que, si tienen que hacer algo en este sentido, lo harían desde la perspectiva crítica que caracteriza a sus proyectos de educomunicación y de intervención social:

Si a mí mañana me piden una charla de educomunicación sobre los objetivos de la Agenda 2030 te la puedo preparar con una perspectiva crítica...precisamente en uno de nuestros cursos, de campañas de comunicación, puse un vídeo de una lectura crítica que hace de ellos Yayo Herrero<sup>5</sup>. Para mí su lectura me parece muy acertada y es un poco mi guía (entrevistada de Cala).

---

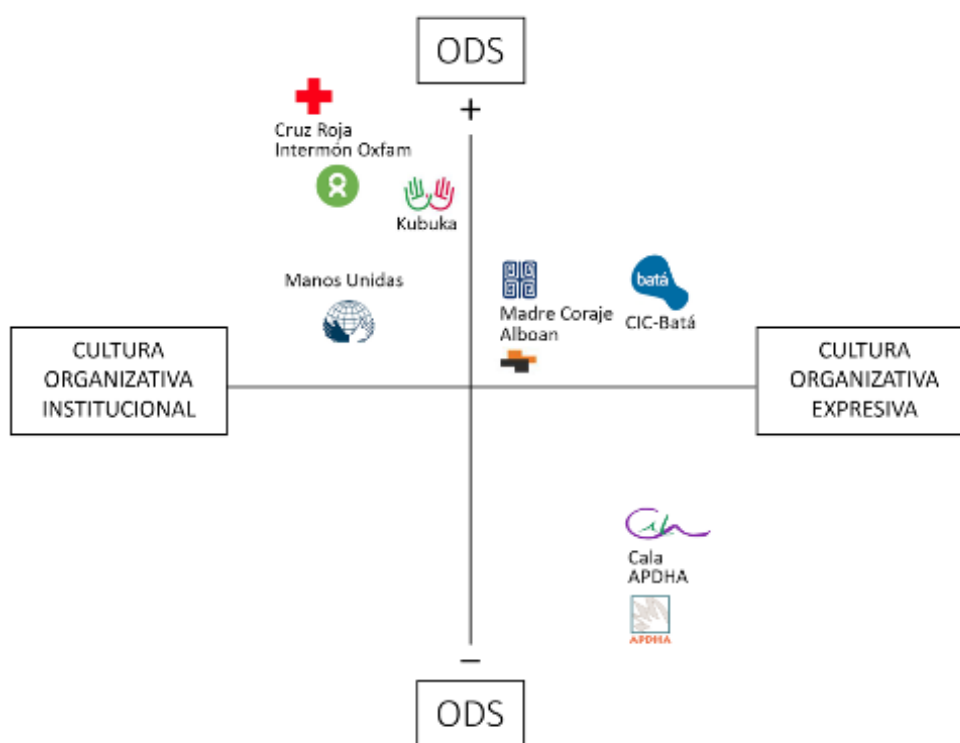
5. Yayo Herrero es una activista ecofeminista. Estudió Antropología, ingeniería agrícola y educación social. Ha sido directora de la fundación FUHEM (Fundación Benéfico-Social Hogar del Empleado) y ha formado parte de la dirección de Ecologistas en Acción.



Finalmente, APDHA manifiesta su distanciamiento respecto a la Agenda 2030 y los ODS. Así lo muestra en el informe elaborado con motivo del día de los derechos humanos, en el que manifiestan que “hay algunos mecanismos, como el Acuerdo de París de 2015 o los ODS de la Agenda 2030, de los cuales, además, estamos bastante alejados”.

En síntesis, tal y como puede verse en la gráfica n.º 1, la mayoría de las organizaciones (7) están en la zona positiva de la incorporación de los ODS. Solamente el colectivo Cala y APDHA están en la zona negativa, y ni siquiera estos dos casos implican una negación absoluta a realizar ninguna acción en esta línea, tal y como han manifestado en la entrevista y en sus memorias de actividades.

**Gráfico 1: Influencia de la cultura organizativa en el grado de incorporación de los ODS**



Fuente: Elaboración propia

En un análisis más detallado de esta zona positiva, se puede ver que cuatro organizaciones se encuentran en el área correspondiente a la cultura organizativa institucional. Se trata de las tres ONGD grandes (Cruz Roja, Intermón-Oxfam y Manos Unidas), con ligeros matices entre ellas, y la ONGD Kubuka, del grupo de las pequeñas. Por lo tanto, a la vista de este resultado, se confirma que las organizaciones con una cultura organizativa institucional están más alineadas con los ODS, aunque este factor haya que contemplarlo más como una clara influencia que como una determinación absoluta. De lo contrario, la organización pequeña no estaría en esa zona de la gráfica.

Finalmente, las tres organizaciones medianas son el único grupo que aparece representado en la misma zona de la gráfica, con una actitud positiva hacia los ODS y, al mismo tiempo, en la zona de la cultura organizacional expresiva. Esto significa que la incorporación y apropiación de los Objetivos del Desarrollo Sostenible se ha llevado a cabo en estas entidades dando prioridad al impulso de la participación de sus públicos y de la ciudadanía que participa de sus proyectos, desde la identidad y estilo propios de cada organización.

## Culturas organizativas y discursos comunicativos

A continuación, pasamos a analizar los resultados desde el segundo eje propuesto, esto es, a identificar en qué medida las culturas organizativas de las ONG influyen en los discursos comunicativos contruidos por ellas. Para ello, vamos a seguir el mismo esquema que en el apartado anterior. Se irán presentando los resultados en los tres grupos establecidos y, al final, se hará un balance general.

En el bloque de las ONG grandes (Cruz Roja, Intermón-Oxfam y Manos Unidas) la cultura institucional se hace presente en todas ellas, aunque con diferentes matices. Así, la comunicación de Cruz Roja es la que manifiesta un carácter más institucionalizado, basado en el principio de unidad del discurso y de las prácticas comunicativas. Se aboga por la unidad tanto fuera como dentro de la organización, pues es de gran importancia que todo aquello que se comunica al exterior sea consensuado y tratado previamente de manera interna por los departamentos correspondientes:

...eso lo comunicamos a nivel externo todos siguiendo las mismas pautas, haciendo las mismas publicaciones y dando el mismo mensaje, porque uno de los principios, además, de Cruz Roja es la unidad, ¿vale? No puede ser que yo esté dando un mensaje y a lo mejor, en otra ciudad, el contrario (entrevistada de Cruz Roja).

La neutralidad y la imparcialidad son otros de los rasgos característicos de la entidad que también tienen reflejo en sus prácticas comunicativas. De este modo, su discurso comunicativo se mueve entre el *enfoque periodístico* y el *enfoque publicitario* descritos por Marí (2013), esto es, la transmisión de información y la construcción de imagen de marca, todo ello teñido de un tono de alta autorreferencialidad en sus mensajes en redes sociales virtuales como X (Laserna, Marí y Ceballos, 2021). Algo parecido ocurre con Intermón-Oxfam España. En una revisión de las memorias de ambas entidades se identifican discursos de autoafirmación, en los que prevalecen las categorías ideológicas de *autopresentación* y *descripción de actores*, que involucra tanto a los miembros de la organización como a quienes participan de sus actividades (Fernández-Smith y Trola, 2022),

No obstante, hay dos rasgos característicos que diferencian al discurso comunicativo de esta segunda ONG. El primero es que Intermón-Oxfam adopta una perspectiva más reivindicativa en su discurso. Se identifica más claramente con las personas a las que van dirigidas sus acciones. Esta identificación se traduce, en el plano discursivo, con la presencia del *nosotros*, la primera persona del plural, en las comunicaciones de Intermón, mientras que Cruz Roja suele recurrir a la tercera persona del singular. El otro rasgo distintivo del discurso comunicativo de Intermón Oxfam es una mayor sofisticación en la construcción de su imagen de marca, de modo que traslada al espacio de la comunicación solidaria las estrategias del *branding* puestas en marcha sistemáticamente por las empresas en el espacio comercial (Lucerga, 2005). Una estrategia que, desde la perspectiva analítica de López-Rey, es una clara muestra de percolación del mercado en el espacio solidario.

La tercera ONG del grupo de las grandes es Manos Unidas. Comparte con las otras organizaciones del grupo la adscripción al marco institucional. En cuanto a las diferencias, una de ellas tiene que ver con su historia y con sus características organizativas. Manos Unidas nació en 1959 como una acción puntual realizada por las Mujeres de Acción Católica Española, que consistió en la organización de la primera Campaña contra el Hambre, celebrada al año siguiente. Estas campañas, y la elaboración de los boletines informativos de la asociación, iniciada en 1967, han sido las dos mediaciones comunicativas principales alrededor de las cuales ha girado históricamente la acción y la comunicación de la entidad. El binomio acción-información ha sido el elemento central que ha permitido a Manos Unidas mantener e incrementar su actividad desde su fundación. La difusión se ha realizado con los medios que en cada

momento han estado a su disposición (Ruiz-Simón, 2022, p.7). En Manos Unidas aparece, como en el caso de Cruz Roja, la idea de la centralización de las comunicaciones en los espacios digitales correspondientes a las diferentes delegaciones nacionales:

A finales de 2018, Manos Unidas emprendió una visión unificadora de la comunicación, en el sentido de que querían que la comunicación emanara de los servicios centrales de Madrid y que las delegaciones pudieran comunicarse en su propio idioma, pero desde el mismo portal corporativo (entrevistado de Manos Unidas).

En cuanto al grupo de las ONG medianas (Alboan, CIC-Batá y Madre Coraje), encontramos en las tres la construcción de un discurso comunicativo más orientado al polo de la cultura organizacional expresiva y del discurso dialógico de justicia social, aunque con matices específicos en cada una ellas. Alboan realizó, algunos años antes de nuestra entrevista, un profundo trabajo de reconfiguración de su organización interna y externa, con la correspondiente proyección de esta nueva estructura en sus acciones comunicativas. Esta organización es ejemplo de la búsqueda de un modo propio de organización y de comunicación en el espacio solidario. El cambio en la estructura y sistema de organización va ligado a un reposicionamiento de la marca Alboan hacia una visión más unitaria e integral de los atributos y conceptos con los que se la identifica. Y, a su vez, la campaña institucional hace confluir objetivos y estrategias comunicativas, en sintonía con el proceso de reestructuración interna de la organización (Pagola, 2017, p. 74). Estas ideas también aparecían en la entrevista mantenida con el representante de la entidad:

Ahora nuestra reflexión se centra en ver cómo generar un proyecto comunicativo. No tanto contar todo lo que hacemos sino también cuál es el proyecto comunicativo que queremos poner en marcha y que sea este proyecto el que nos ayude a posicionarnos y, también, que contribuya a generar la incidencia que queremos conseguir (entrevistado de Alboan).

Por otro lado, Madre Coraje tiene un largo recorrido en la construcción de un discurso comunicativo entroncado con el campo de la comunicación para el cambio social, uno de los enfoques propios y característicos de las organizaciones del Tercer Sector de Acción Social y de los movimientos sociales. Además, Madre Coraje es un buen ejemplo de coordinación entre el área de educación para el desarrollo y el área de comunicación, algo que en otras organizaciones lleva a unas prácticas contradictorias entre lo que dice y hace cada una de estas dos áreas. Muchas veces, los estereotipos sobre el Sur Global criticados en el área de educación para el desarrollo son reproducidos en los mensajes contruidos desde el área de comunicación.

CIC-Batá es otra organización con un pensamiento comunicacional vinculado a los presupuestos de la comunicación para el cambio social. Su relación con organizaciones del Sur Global especializadas en este tipo de comunicación, unido a su trabajo durante décadas en el diseño de políticas de desarrollo que tengan en cuenta a la comunicación como un eje transversal estratégico, hacen que su discurso comunicativo esté muy próximo al polo de la cultura expresiva. En la entrevista, el representante de CIC-Batá habla de la importancia que tiene, para las organizaciones solidarias, la superación de la mera comunicación instrumental, para construir una cultura comunicativa de la propia entidad. La primera, la comunicación instrumental, se centra en redactar notas de prensa o publicar noticias, mientras que la cultura comunicativa parte de la base de que:

Se comunica con lo que tú eres como organización y, por ejemplo, tras una actividad, transmitir los resultados y para qué ha servido esa acción, hacer una devolución a la sociedad...por ejemplo, hemos conseguido que cien o doscientos jóvenes de bachillerato hayan participado en nuestras actividades, han comprendido mejor lo que supone trabajar con herramientas comunicativas digitales, han mejorado su empoderamiento comunicativo, etc. (entrevistado de CIC-Batá).

En tercer lugar, tenemos el grupo de las ONG pequeñas, con unos discursos comunicativos menos uniformes entre ellas respecto a lo que ha sido la tónica general en los otros dos grupos. Respecto a Kubuka, identificamos, en su discurso comunicativo, su alineamiento con la tendencia general de la comunicación solidaria que las ONG realizan en el contexto español. Especialmente, en el espacio digital, esta pasa por la reproducción de los esquemas de la comunicación comercial y por un uso más informacional que dialógico de las redes sociales virtuales (Marí, 2022). En esta línea, la representante de esta organización comenta:

...luego está el área de redes sociales...sobre todo estamos en Instagram y en Facebook. Ahora estamos entrando más en LinkedIn por todo el tema de empresas, financiación y demás...luego tenemos el departamento de Medios, para crear contenidos para notas de prensa, o artículos de opinión, etc.". Estos espacios son concebidos más como un lugar en el que diseminar las informaciones de la organización que como medicaciones desde las que conversar con sus públicos y con la ciudadanía (entrevistada de Kubuka).

Por otro lado, se encuentra APDHA, que en sus estrategias comunicativas habituales utiliza tanto medios digitales (redes sociales virtuales) como medios convencionales (prensa). En cuanto a la relación entre la estructura organizativa y comunicativa,

Es la asociación, a través de su junta directiva, o a través de sus distintas áreas, la que diseña el contenido de las campañas o de los mensajes...y nuestras compañeras (de comunicación) lo que hacen es corregirla, convertirla en nota de prensa (entrevistado de APDHA).

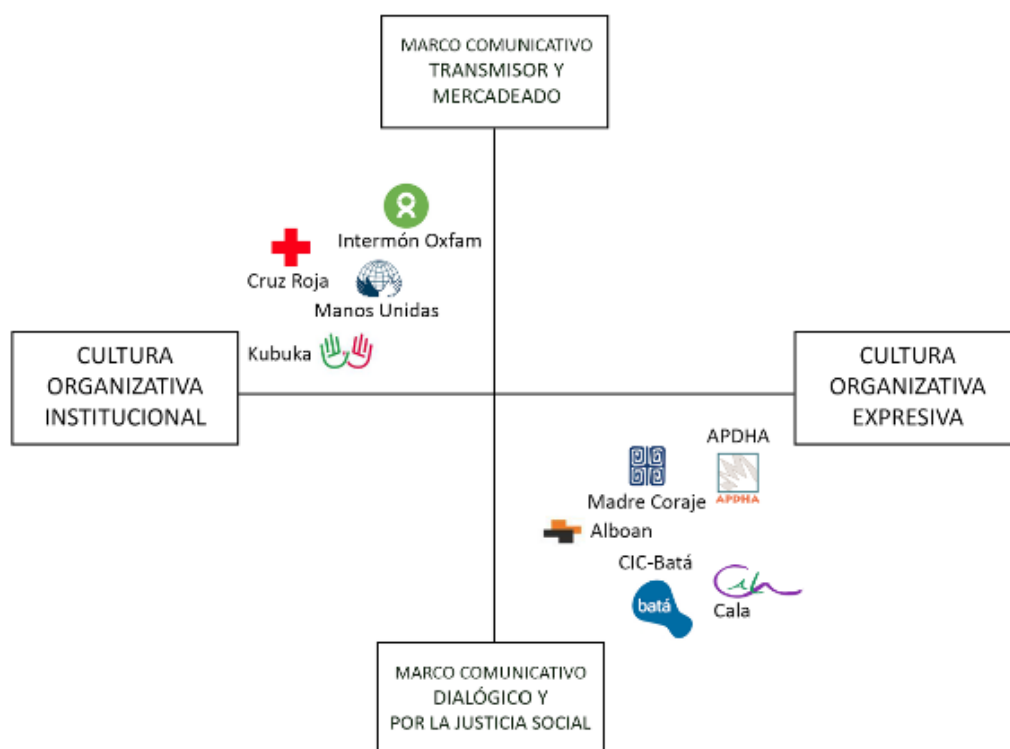
Sus palabras reflejan una situación un tanto contradictoria, en la medida en que el contenido de sus mensajes es crítico y transformador, mientras que el enfoque comunicacional en el que se mueve la organización es clásico o convencional, alejado de las posturas innovadoras que se han podido constatar, de diferentes maneras, en las tres organizaciones medianas vistas anteriormente. Una situación, por otro lado, bastante habitual entre las ONG y movimientos sociales, en las que la radicalidad de los mensajes convive, muchas veces, con la convencionalidad de los modelos de comunicación puestos en práctica (Kaplún, 1985).

Finalmente, el colectivo Cala muestra afinidades con el discurso comunicativo de CIC-Batá, una entidad con la que, no por casualidad, mantiene vínculos de colaboración. No obstante, a ambas organizaciones les separan el tamaño y el volumen de actividades y proyectos llevados a cabo. Se podría decir que, en Cala, las iniciativas comunicativas están atravesadas por una educomunicación de carácter crítico y por un gran enraizamiento de sus iniciativas en lo local y su aportación propia como movimiento social:

...hemos ido aprendiendo cual es el aporte que nosotras podemos hacer, y claro el aporte es desde la educación transformadora, nosotras el punto en el que vemos que podemos aportar es en toda la parte pues metodológica y pedagógica de la educomunicación (entrevistada de Cala).

Desde estas claves, su aproximación a las redes sociales ha ido siendo progresiva, marcada por las demandas generadas desde los proyectos que han ido impulsando y por su saber hacer en el campo de la educación transformadora.

**Gráfico 2: Culturas organizativas y marcos comunicativos en las ONGD**



Fuente: Elaboración propia

Tal y como se hizo en el apartado anterior, se procede a realizar un análisis global y una lectura de las posiciones de cada organización en la gráfica n.º 2. El grupo de las ONG grandes está más próximo al marco comunicativo *transmisor* de la comunicación *mercadeada*. Es transmisor porque pone más el acento en la transmisión de información que interesa a la organización que en la dinamización de procesos dialógicos con la ciudadanía y sus públicos. Y responde a las claves de la comunicación *mercadeada* (Erro, 2003), un modo de percolación (López-Rey, 2007) propio del espacio comunicativo de estas entidades, en el que se importan al campo solidario los modos de comunicar propios del espacio comercial. No obstante, se observan ligeras variaciones entre las posiciones de las tres entidades del grupo. Manos Unidas mantiene una posición menos institucional que Cruz Roja. Por otra parte, Intermón-Oxfam está más influida por los discursos comunicativos propios del espacio publicitario, en los que la gestión de la marca solidaria (Lucerga, 2005) cambia los contenidos pero mantiene las formas mercantiles de la comunicación comercial.

En segundo lugar, las organizaciones medianas, más próximas a una cultura organizacional expresiva, en términos comunicacionales, se mueven en el entorno del marco dialógico y de la justicia social.

Esto sucede en un mayor grado en el caso de CIC-Batá y, en menor medida, en el de Madre Coraje y de Alboan, pero siempre en la zona de la gráfica donde confluyen las culturas organizativas propias de las entidades solidarias (cultura expresiva) y los marcos comunicativos también propios y específicos de estas organizaciones (marco dialógico y transformador).

En tercer lugar, es en el grupo de las organizaciones pequeñas donde se vuelve a producir la mayor disparidad de posiciones. Cala y APDHA ocupan la zona propia de las organizaciones solidarias, aunque Cala está más próxima al máximo rango porque su concepción dialógica de la comunicación es mayor. En el caso de Kubuka, a pesar de ser una organización pequeña, sus prácticas comunicativas reproducen las tendencias dominantes en el espacio comercial e institucional. Por ello, aunque a muchos niveles hay un abismo entre esta entidad y Cruz Roja, en las concepciones comunicativas mercadeadas de ambas entidades se muestran, en el fondo, muy próximas.

A otro nivel, al comparar las dos gráficas, se observa una mayor diversidad de posiciones en la segunda que en la primera y, al mismo tiempo, un mayor número de discordancias con los resultados *a priori* previsibles por la cultura organizativa de las entidades. Esta disparidad tiene una serie de posibles justificaciones, de las que destacamos las siguientes. Por un lado, la definición del posicionamiento de una organización ante los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible es una operación que entronca con su visión y misión y que, por tanto, se realiza de un modo explícito por parte de los órganos ejecutivos de las organizaciones. Además, de estos posicionamientos depende, en una parte importante, el acceso a financiación local, nacional e internacional, por lo que la reflexión sobre esta materia es de máxima prioridad. Estos posicionamientos se pueden releer desde los tres paradigmas de desarrollo propuestos por Servaes y Malikhao (2020). La mayoría de las ONG han superado el enfoque modernizador del desarrollo del que hablan estos autores. Se observa, también, como apuntan Jiménez y Arriola (2016), dentro del paradigma crítico del desarrollo, una sobrerrepresentación del enfoque decolonial y decrecentista y, al tiempo, una infrarrepresentación del enfoque crítico de la dependencia.

Por el contrario, muy pocas organizaciones solidarias, en el contexto español, han llegado al punto de explicitar, en su visión y misión como organización, la concepción comunicativa desde la que se posicionan. Y, mucho menos, llegan a establecer canales de evaluación para verificar que sus prácticas comunicativas concuerdan con las concepciones comunicativas que hayan podido llegar a formular. Este trabajo de pensar la comunicación sigue quedando a la libre voluntad de las organizaciones. A lo que todas ellas se ven impelidas es, obviamente, a comunicarse con sus públicos. Y, a la hora de orientar sus prácticas comunicativas, juega un papel importante la cultura organizativa en la que se encuadran y los procesos formativos que hayan podido poner en marcha en estas materias.

De esta manera, como se constata en la presente investigación, unas posiciones generalmente críticas con el modelo de desarrollo modernizador conviven, en las organizaciones, con los modelos de comunicación preferentemente jerárquicos, unidireccionales y centrados en el cambio del comportamiento individual de los que hablan Servaes y Malikhao (2020). Esta contradicción entre modelos de desarrollo críticos e innovadores y modelos de comunicación conservadores y transmisores atraviesa, en una intensidad variable, a la mayoría de las organizaciones de la muestra.

## Conclusiones

La implantación de los ODS y de la Agenda 2030 ha seguido avanzando en el contexto español, superando de este modo la incertidumbre y lentitud de las etapas iniciales. No obstante, también se ha ido incrementando el grado de rechazo de este marco de intervención por parte de las fuerzas políticas de la extrema derecha española, representada en Vox. García Solana y Mairal Medina (2023) han recopilado numerosos indicios del frente de batalla que ha hecho este partido respecto a estas temáticas, llegando



a decir que “la Agenda 2030 es el caballo de Troya del poscomunismo (...) supone el empobrecimiento generalizado de la población, la liquidación de la soberanía de las naciones y es un ataque frontal a las familias, a la vida y a las raíces de Occidente”<sup>6</sup>.

En el campo de las ONGD hay un alineamiento ampliamente generalizado con los ODS y con la Agenda 2030, con diversos matices y una geometría variable de posiciones y críticas más o menos explícitas. En el actual contexto de recorte de financiación pública para la cooperación al desarrollo, los debates teóricos e ideológicos en este campo de la acción solidaria han ido dejando paso, progresivamente, a la competencia por los recursos y al posicionamiento público de las organizaciones (Cloquell y Lacomba, 2022), conscientes de que alrededor de estas temáticas hay una importante fuente de financiación. Se intensifica, por tanto, el grado de competencia en el mercado de la solidaridad que hace algún tiempo identificase Sogge (1996).

En otras palabras, usando algunos términos manejados en esta investigación, se puede afirmar que el grado de percolación cultural del mercado en las ONGD ha aumentado, con la consiguiente incorporación de unas culturas organizativas cada vez más institucionalizadas.

El espacio comunicativo de las ONGD es uno de los lugares en los que se proyecta esta cultura organizacional dominante. La mayoría de las organizaciones de la muestra se mueven en el marco de una comunicación transmisora y mercadeada. Y, en la mayoría de los casos, este posicionamiento guarda relación con la cultura organizativa de las entidades, por lo que se confirma el papel central de esta variable.

Hay relación, influencia o condicionamiento, pero no determinación mecánica y absoluta, entre la cultura organizativa y los posicionamientos comunicativos de una entidad. Así se ha podido comprobar, también, en este trabajo, al identificar en una organización pequeña las mismas claves comunicativas que se producían, mayoritariamente, en las organizaciones grandes.

Por otro lado, en el diseño de los Objetivos del Desarrollo Sostenible, falta una mayor presencia de la comunicación como un ODS propio para, de este modo, visibilizar la centralidad de las cuestiones comunicativas a la hora de impulsar un determinado tipo de desarrollo. En esta línea, hay iniciativas que proponen un ODS nº 18 centrado en la comunicación para todos (*SDG 18 Communication for All* en su formulación en inglés) (Servaes y Yusha’u, 2023) o la concepción de la comunicación como un *commons* (Mari, 2023), alejada de las visiones de la comunicación propias del capitalismo digital y extractivista.

Finalmente, se ha podido constatar que las organizaciones medianas son las que, de diferentes formas, han construido una cultura comunicativa propia, cada una a partir de su saber hacer, de su historia y de su identidad. Las organizaciones de este grupo muestran una mayor coherencia entre su cultura organizativa expresiva y sus marcos comunicacionales dialógicos y de justicia social, y, al menos hasta la fecha, han demostrado ser organizaciones sostenibles en medio de la precariedad y competitividad circundante. Algo que podría servir para, en un futuro, seguir trabajando por ampliar estas dinámicas comunicativas en el campo de las ONGD, como postura alternativa respecto a la tendencia generalizada de omitir una reflexión articulada y propia en materia comunicacional o, peor aún, frente a la inercia de incorporar acríticamente unos marcos y estilos comunicativos importados del mercado.

6. Intervención de la diputada de Vox en el Congreso de los Diputados, recogida en el Diario de Sesiones del Pleno y Diputación Permanente del Congreso de los Diputados, 04/10/2022 (p.56), citado en García Solana y Marial Medina (2023, p.150)

## Referencias Bibliográficas:

- Acosta, A. (2013). Extractivism and Neoextractivism: Two sides of the same curse. In M. Lang and D. Mokrani (eds.) *Beyond Development: Alternative Visions from Latin America* (pp. 61-86). Fundación Rosa Luxemburg.
- Alfaro, R. M. (2016). Ciudadanías y Medios: Veedurías desde la participación ciudadana. *Commons. Revista de Comunicación y Ciudadanía Digital*, 2(1), 1-22. <http://dx.doi.org/10.25267/COMMONS.2013.v2.i1.01>
- Aranguren, L. (2000). *Reinventar la solidaridad. Voluntariado y educación*. PPC.
- Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A Ladder of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35(4), 216-224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225>
- Arroyo-Almaraz, I. y Baños-González, M. (2013). Tendencias de la comunicación del Tercer Sector en la web 2.0: análisis retórico de los tropos. *Revista ICONO14. Revista científica de Comunicación y Tecnologías emergentes*, 11(2), 331-356. <https://doi.org/10.7195/ri14.v11i2.556>
- Ballesteros-García, C. (2002). Supermercados de la solidaridad. En L. Nieto Pereira (coord.), *La ética de las ONGD y la lógica mercantil* (pp. 89-113). Icaria.
- Baran, P. (1957). *La economía política del crecimiento*. Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Calvelo-Ríos, M. (2016). Comentarios sobre los modelos y la práctica de la comunicación para el desarrollo. *Commons. Revista de Comunicación y Ciudadanía Digital*, 4(2), 6-41.
- Calvelo-Ríos, M. (2017). Evaluación de procesos de comunicación para el desarrollo. *Commons. Revista de Comunicación y Ciudadanía Digital*, 6(1), 63-79. <http://dx.doi.org/10.25267/COMMONS.2017.v6.i1.05>
- Cardoso, F. H., y Faletto, E. (1969). *Dependencia y desarrollo en América Latina*. Siglo XXI.
- Casado, D. (2015). Cambios y continuidades en el Tercer Sector de Acción Social. *Revista Española del Tercer Sector*, 30, 33-47.
- Cloquell-Lozano, A. y Lacomba-Vázquez, J. (2022). Las organizaciones no gubernamentales de desarrollo en España. Una nueva radiografía sobre su perfil y tipología en el contexto del Tercer Sector. *Revista Internacional De Sociología*, 80(1), e203. <https://doi.org/10.3989/ris.2022.80.1.20.155>
- Cooke, B. y Kothari, U. (eds.) (2001). *Participation: The new tyranny*. Zed Books.
- Dias do Nascimento, J. Meireles-Gomes, I., Ribeiro-Lacerda, M., Braga de Camargo, T., Catafesta Utzumi, F., y Bernardino, E. (2016). Uso del software NVivo® en una investigación con Teoría Fundamentada. *Index de Enfermería*, 25(4), 263-267.
- Easterly, W. (2015). The trouble with the sustainable development goals. *Current History*, 114 (775), 322-324. <https://doi.org/10.1525/curh.2015.114.775.322>
- Erro, J. (2003). ¿Comunicarse por qué y para qué? El paso de la comunicación mercadeada a la comunicación social educativa. En V. Benet y E. Nos (coord.), *La publicidad en el tercer sector: tendencias y perspectivas de la comunicación solidaria* (pp. 53-82). Icaria.
- Fernández-Smith, G. y Trola, H. (2022). Análisis crítico del discurso solidario y marcos gubernamentales. Estudio de caso de Oxfam Intermón y de Cruz Roja. En V. M. Marí-Sáez (coord.), *Comunicación solidaria en el capitalismo digital. Teorías, metodologías y prácticas* (pp. 131-158). Gedisa.
- Fraser, C. y Restrepo-Estrada, S. (1998). *Communicating for Development: Human Change for Survival*. Tauris.
- Freire, P. (1968). *Pedagogia do Oprimido*. Editora Paz e Terra.
- García-Solana, M. J. y Mairal-Medina, P. (2023). Agenda 2030, discapacidad y ultraderecha en España. *Tiempo de paz*, 151, 62-71.
- Gonçalves, G., y Oliveira, E. (eds.). (2023). *The Routledge Handbook of Nonprofit Communication*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003170563>
- Herranz de la Casa, J. M. (2010). La comunicación de la responsabilidad social: una forma de participación ciudadana. *Sociedad y Utopía*, 35, 201-217.

- Iranzo, A. y Farné, A. (2014). Herramientas de comunicación para el Tercer Sector: el uso de las redes sociales por las ONGD catalanas. *Commons. Revista de Comunicación y Ciudadanía Digital*, 3(2), 28-55. <http://dx.doi.org/10.25267/COMMONS.2014.v3.i2.03>
- Iranzo, A. (2017). La comunicación de las ONGD: la lenta erosión del enfoque caritativo dominante. *Anuario Electrónico de Estudios en Comunicación Social Disertaciones*, 10(1), 66-83. <https://doi.org/10.12804/revistas.urosario.edu.co/disertaciones/a.4910>
- Jiménez, M. y Arriola, J. (2016, 16-18 de noviembre). *Cómo se concibe el desarrollo económico y social en los textos de C4D en España* [ponencia] International Conference on Regional Science: Treinta años de integración en Europa desde la perspectiva regional: balance y nuevos retos. Santiago de Compostela, España.
- Kaplún, M. (1985). *El comunicador popular*. Ciespal.
- Koschmann, M., y Isbell, M. (2022). A constitutive approach to nonprofit communication. En Gonçalves, G. y Oliveira, E. (eds.). *The Routledge Handbook of Nonprofit Communication* (77–84). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003170563-11>
- Lang, S. (2013). *NGOs, Civil Society, and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sánchez-Saus Laserna, M., Marí Sáez, V. M., y Ceballos Castro, G. (2021). Análisis del discurso solidario de las ONG españolas sobre el coronavirus en Twitter. *Tonos digital: revista de estudios filológicos*, 41. <http://hdl.handle.net/10201/111088>
- Latouche, S. (2008). *La apuesta por el decrecimiento*. Icaria.
- Lauria, M. y Schively, C. (eds.) (2020). *Learning from Arnstein's Ladder*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429290091>
- López-Rey, J. A. (2007). La cultura de las organizaciones para el desarrollo: análisis macro y micro de un conflicto institucional. *Revista Española del Tercer Sector*, 6, 15-36.
- López-Rey, J. A. (2008). La percolación cultural o cómo el mercado se institucionaliza en el Tercer Sector. *Papers. Revista de Sociología*, 87, 127-143. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/papers/v87n0.792>
- Lucerga, M. José (2005). Cuando IO soy la marca. La solidaridad como construcción publicitaria. *Tonos digital. Revista de estudios filológicos*, 9. <http://hdl.handle.net/10201/49933>
- Marí, V. M. (2013). Comunicación, Desarrollo y Cambio Social en España: entre la institucionalización y la implosión del campo. *Commons. Revista de Comunicación y Ciudadanía Digital*, 2(2), 40-64. <http://dx.doi.org/10.25267/COMMONS.2013.v2.i2.02>
- Marí, V. M. (2022). NGO-ization of solidarity in the digital age. En Gonçalves, G. y Oliveira, E. (eds.). *The Routledge Handbook of Nonprofit Communication* (pp. 39-45). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003170563-6>
- Marí, V. M. (2023). Sustainable Development Goals and Communication as a Commons in the Context of Extractive Capitalism: Tensions and Possibilities. In: Servaes, J., Yusha'u, M.J. (eds.) *SDG18 Communication for All, Volume I*. Sustainable Development Goals Series (pp. 85-106). Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-19142-8\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-19142-8_4)
- Martens, K. (2002). Mission impossible? Defining nongovernmental organizations. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 13 (3), 271-285. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:102034152669>
- Martínez-Osés, P. J. (2015). *Aprendizajes de los ODM: hacia una hoja de ruta post-ODM*. Anuario de la Plataforma 2015 y más. Editorial 2015 y más.
- McCall, E. (2011). *Communication for Development: Strengthening the Effectiveness of the United Nations*. UNDP.
- Nos-Aldás, E. (2007). *Lenguaje publicitario y discursos solidarios: Eficacia publicitaria, ¿eficacia cultural?* Icaria.

- Nos-Aldás, E., Iranzo, A. y Farné, A. (2012). La eficacia cultural de la comunicación de las ONGD: los discursos de los movimientos sociales actuales como revisión. *CIC. Cuadernos de Información y Comunicación*, 17, 209-237. [https://doi.org/10.5209/rev\\_CIYC.2012.v17.39265](https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_CIYC.2012.v17.39265)
- Oliveira, E. (2023). A conceptual approach for strategic communication. The ITNC. En Gonçalves, G. y Oliveira, E. (eds.). *The Routledge Handbook of Nonprofit Communication* (165-173). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003170563-21>
- Pagola, J. I. (2017). La campaña de comunicación institucional “Tecnología Libre de Conflicto” de la ONGD Alboan como caso de comunicación para el cambio social. *Revista Documentación Social*, 184, 59-79.
- Petras, J. (1999). NGOs: In the service of Imperialism. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 29(4), 429-440. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472339980000221>
- Plataforma de ONG de Acción Social (2018, 19 de febrero). *Cruz Roja y su campaña “Imágenes sin derechos” da a conocer los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible, claves para alcanzar la Justicia Social*. Plataforma de ONG de Acción Social.
- Quarry, W. y Ramírez, R. (2014). *Comunicación para otro desarrollo: escuchar antes de hablar*. Editorial Popular.
- Rist, G. (2002). *El desarrollo: historia de una creencia occidental*. Los libros de la Catarata.
- Rodrigo-Alsina, M. (1995). *Los modelos de la comunicación*. Tecnos.
- Ruiz Olabuénaga, J. I. (2012). *Metodología de la investigación cualitativa*. Deusto.
- Ruiz-Simón, E. (2022). Visiones históricas de la solidaridad en el siglo XX. Desarrollo y cooperación internacional a través de los boletines informativos de Manos Unidas. *Human Review*, 15 (2), 2-8. <https://doi.org/10.37467/revhuman.v11.4223>
- Salamon, L. M., y Anheier, H. K. (eds.). (1997). *Defining the nonprofit sector: A cross-national analysis*. Manchester University Press.
- Sampedro, V., Jerez, A. y López-Rey, J. A. (2002). ONG, medios de comunicación y visibilidad pública. La ciudadanía ante la mediatización de los mensajes sociales. En M. Revilla, (coord.), *Las ONG y la política* (pp. 251-285). Ediciones Istmo.
- Sanahuja, J. A. (2007). ¿Más y mejor ayuda? La Declaración de París y las tendencias en la cooperación al desarrollo. In M. Mesa (coord.), *Guerra y conflictos en el Siglo XXI: Tendencias globales. Anuario 2007-2008 del Centro de Educación e Investigación para la Paz (CEIPAZ)* (pp. 71-101). CEIPAZ.
- Sanahuja, J. A. y Tezanos-Vázquez, S. (2017). Del milenio a la sostenibilidad: retos y perspectivas de la Agenda 2030 para el desarrollo sostenible. *Política y Sociedad*, 54(2), 533-555. <https://doi.org/10.5209/POSO.51926>
- Servaes, J. (1999). *Communication for development. One world, multiple cultures*. Hampton Press.
- Servaes, J. (Ed.). (2002). *Approaches to development communication*. UNESCO.
- Servaes, J. (2017). *Sustainable Development Goals in the Asian Context*. Springer Singapore. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-2815-1>
- Servaes, J. y Malikhao, P. (2020). Communication for Development and Social Change: Three Development Paradigms, Two Communication Models, and Many Applications and Approaches. In J. Servaes, (ed.) *Handbook of Communication for Development and Social Change* (pp. 63-92). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-2014-3\\_110](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-2014-3_110)
- Servaes, J., Yusha'u, M.J. (2023). Introduction: The Need for an 18th Sustainable Development Goal—Communication for All. In J. Servaes, M.J. Yusha'u, (eds.) *SDG18 Communication for All, Volume I. Sustainable Development Goals Series* (pp 1-24). Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-19142-8\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-19142-8_1)
- Schein, E. H. (1988). *La cultura empresarial y el liderazgo*. Plaza y Janés.

- Silva, S., Ruão, T., y Gonçalves, G. (2020). O estado de arte da Comunicação Organizacional: as tendências do século XXI. *Observatorio (OBS\*)*, 14(4). <https://doi.org/10.15847/obsobs14420201652>
- Sogge, D., Biekart, K., y Saxby, J. (eds.) (1996). *Compassion and calculation: The business of private foreign aid*. Pluto Press.
- Souto-Coelho, J., Elosúa de Juan, M. L. y Andrés, J. P. (2001). Presencia de la Doctrina Social de la Iglesia en la acción de Manos Unidas. *Sociedad y utopía: Revista de ciencias sociales*, 17, 335-347.
- Wallerstein, I. (1974). *The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*. University of California Press.
- Welchman, L. (2015). *Managing Chaos: Digital Governance by Design*. Rosenfeld Media.

## Financiación

Este artículo forma parte del proyecto de investigación de la AEI (Agencia Estatal de Investigación de España) titulado “Comunicación solidaria digital. Análisis de los imaginarios, los discursos y las prácticas comunicativas de las ONGD en el horizonte de la Agenda 2030” (PID2019-106632GB-I00/AEI /10.13039/501100011033). IP: Víctor Manuel Marí Sáez.

Asimismo, este trabajo se ha podido realizar gracias a la ayuda del Plan Propio de la UCA para la realización de estancias de investigación (EST2024-036) disfrutada por Víctor Manuel Marí Sáez.

Además, la investigadora Yiheng Wang ha realizado este trabajo en el marco de su beca de Investigador en Formación asociada a Proyectos convocada por Resolución UCA/REC13VPCT/2020.

## Anexos

**Tabla 1: ONGD grandes, medianas y pequeñas en función del n.º de personas contratadas y del presupuesto anual.**

| ONG            | Personas contratadas | Ingreso anual (euros) |
|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Cruz Roja      | 14661                | 160.857.497           |
| Oxfam Intermón | 1.193                | 114.104.827           |
| Manos Unidas   | 158                  | 47.462.020            |
| Alboan         | 47                   | 10.246.561            |
| Madre Coraje   | 94                   | 8.571.155             |
| CIC Batá       | 59                   | 176.305               |
| APDHA          | 14                   | 380.605               |
| Cala           | 20                   |                       |
| Kubuka         | 32                   | 75.392                |

Fuente: elaboración propia a partir de datos tomados de las páginas web de cada ONG, relativos al año 2023



**Tabla 2: Categorías para el análisis de los datos de la investigación**

| Primer nivel                     | Segundo nivel                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Presentación de ONG              | Área de actuación<br>Tamaño<br>Presentación de entrevistados<br>Puestos de trabajo de los entrevistados<br>Antigüedad de los entrevistados en la organización |
| Estructura organizativa          | Estructura organizativa<br>Perfil de socios y voluntarios                                                                                                     |
| Estrategias comunicativas        | Proyectos<br>Comunicación con sus socios<br>Relación con periodistas y medios<br>Uso de Página web<br>Uso de las redes sociales<br>Uso de otras herramientas  |
| Temáticas                        | Palabras claves sobre el posicionamiento de su organización hacia diversos temas<br>Discursos                                                                 |
| Visión de los ODS                |                                                                                                                                                               |
| Sobre la tecnología y lo digital | Actitud referente a la comunicación digital<br>Actitud referente a la tecnología                                                                              |
| Vías de financiación             | Autosostenibilidad<br>Tipos de fondo por fuentes exteriores                                                                                                   |

Fuente: elaboración propia



# Bridging the gap: Understanding Spanish society's perception of purpose-driven companies and their role in sustainable development

Isabel Ruiz-Mora, Daniel Guerrero-Navarro & Ana M. Lucía-Casademunt

University of Malaga, Spain

isabelruiz@uma.es / dguerrero@uma.es / alucia@uma.es

## Abstract

This study explores Spanish society's perspective on purpose-driven businesses as a sustainable model. Also, it assesses Spain's commitment to sustainability and aligns corporate expectations with citizen responsibilities for societal and environmental betterment. A survey spanning 2021-2022 gauges citizen knowledge and attitude evolution towards these companies. Results reveal 63% of the population is unaware of such businesses, but 74% deem them necessary upon unders-

tanding. About 64.5% undertake small daily actions for planetary care, but only 12.8% cease purchasing from environmentally harmful companies. This paper provides empirical evidence of the link between corporate purpose and business sustainability in Spain, and citizen perception of this business model's impact and significance. It lays a theoretical and practical groundwork for future in-depth studies on purpose-driven companies.

Keywords: Purpose-driven companies, citizenship, sustainable development, B corporations, Spain.

## Introduction

The United Nations 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emerged with the intention of offering opportunities to the population for a sustainable planet (United Nations, 2015). It is the mission of the UN Global Compact to channel actions in support of the SDGs in relation to the ten principles (Pacto Mundial, 2017). In this sense, an imminent reconfiguration is gaining momentum in response to the need for an economic system that implements more inclusive and sustainable models. Here two intrinsically related concepts come into play, i.e. corporate purpose and business sustainability, with very little research on the nature of such a relationship (Gartenberg, 2022). In this attempt to renew approaches, questions such as 'Is the purpose of the corporation to serve shareholders, stakeholders, or the public good in general?' (Gartenberg, 2022), proposals arise such as stakeholder capitalism (Freeman et al., 2007; Losada-Vázquez, 2022) and conscious capitalism (O'Toole and Vogel, 2011). However, it is evident that these labels fail to fully capture the magnitude of the transformations required to confront challenges such as the practically irreversible climate emergency (Pörtner et al., 2022). Further, research beyond this context is necessary.

---

Data de submissão: 2024-04-14. Data de aprovação: 2024-11-20.

Revista Estudos em Comunicação é financiada por Fundos FEDER através do Programa Operacional Factores de Competitividade – COMPETE e por Fundos Nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia no âmbito do projeto *LabCom – Comunicação e Artes*, UIDB/00661/2020.



In the face of the existing and growing debate (Canvas Estrategia Sostenibles, 2023, 2022) on the need to reformulate capitalism towards a more inclusive and sustainable system aligned with the 2030 Agenda, it is crucial for the near future to have a committed society with companies that seek to (re) define their purpose. In this emerging scenario, citizenship assumes a more active and influential role (Theben et al., 2021), encouraging organisations to rethink their purpose and even actively demand a more responsible impact on their environments, beyond their own traditional economic objectives. In fact, this research work investigates this need and analyses how Spanish society perceives the role of companies that have objectives going beyond the merely financial.

In this line, the triple bottom line approach entails a shift from business models that solely pursue economic benefits to models that balance such benefits with a positive impact on society and the environment (Correa et al., 2020). Although this is an area that has not yet been widely explored, studies suggest that there is no negative influence (Horneaux Jr. et al., 2018).

Promoted by the B Lab foundation, which was born in the US (2006), the global movement B certifies companies (about 5.000 companies from 80 countries) in terms of social and environmental impact with its own measurement systems. So, certified B Corps are implicit benefit corporations (Montiel Vargas, 2022). In this context, in Spain, the Congress of Deputies (Law 18/2022, September 28) approved the creation of a new legal concept providing a framework for these new companies, known as 'Benefit and Common Interest Societies' (SBIC). In the year of the creation of the new legal concept, data multiplied. The number of companies with this profile increased by 82%, thus generating a total revenue of 8.2 billion euros in Spain. Globally, there are over 6,200 companies in this category, with a total revenue of 189 billion euros at the year-end (Estébanez García, 2023). According to the annual report published by B Lab Spain, the indicators of revenue growth (31%) and the use of renewable energy sources (70% of all companies) validate the commitment of these businesses to the strategic shift developed by these types of companies.

In this area, there is the conclusion that corporate purpose and business sustainability appear to be intrinsically related ideas, yet there is little research on the nature of this relationship (Gartenberg, 2022). Therefore, there is a strong need for additional research in this area. To bridge this research gap, this study aims to examine the perception that Spanish society has regarding purpose-driven companies, expanding into the role that citizenship plays in the construction of a more sustainable society. Drawing from the aforementioned discussion, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. Are purpose-driven companies known by Spanish citizens as examples of ethical and sustainable businesses?

RQ2. What role does Spanish society assume in the transition towards sustainability?

RQ3. Is there alignment between the expectations imposed on corporations and the responsibilities assumed by citizens in fostering societal and environmental improvement?

The main contribution of this paper is intended to spur research among various scholars who will develop this field in the coming years. This research provides practical implications for corporate leaders about society's sensitivity to purpose-driven companies and the role of citizenship in building more inclusive and sustainable systems. Therefore, we proposed an investigation aiming at analysing descriptively the knowledge that the Spanish population has regarding the triple bottom line companies, also known as purpose-driven companies, which operate under an ethical and sustainable approach. Simultaneously, we aimed to assess the level of commitment of the population towards sustainability and understand how Spanish society is addressing this challenge. The empirical results show that 63% of the population is unaware of this new business model, but once they understand, 74% believe that these companies are necessary. As for the role of citizens, 64.5% recognise that they carry out small actions in their daily lives to take care of the planet; however, only 12.8% admit stopping buying products from companies that have a negative impact on the planet on a regular basis. On the other hand, 55.7% would opt for purpose-driven companies when buying and/or recommending them. In this sense, it should be

noted that, although according to the results, citizens are demanding that the organisations coexist and embody ethical, social, environmental, and economic values due to their impact on the people's lives. The reality is that there is a significant gap between expectations and perceptions. According to Rey (2019), only 39% of citizens believe that organisations work hard to improve people's quality of life, and generally, 76% would not mind if brands disappeared. To bridge this gap, a profound transformation in corporate leadership, culture, and behaviour is required. Many are urging CEOs and executives to rethink the role of their companies, their impact, and the legacy they will leave for future generations.

As its exploration has been limited, present efforts have made a novel contribution to the extant literature. Regarding practical contributions, the resulting empirical discoveries have shown how the citizens who know of these companies value its impact and work, so as a consequence this study would be useful for companies that want to move towards more sustainable business models, as well as for policymakers or business groups that want to work on public policies that strengthen the presence of these companies and their positioning in the market. Theoretically, the paper presents a new framework for future in-depth studies on purpose-driven enterprises.

In this paper, Section 2 provides a review of the literature. Then Section 3 describes the methodology used, and Section 4 presents the empirical findings. Section 5 provides a discussion of these findings, followed by the implications of the study. Conclusions and future research directions are given in Section 6.

### **Theoretical framework: ethics, purpose-driven companies and citizenship**

Companies in recent years have increased their power and impact, not only in terms of economic resources but also in their social and political role, which has given them the opportunity to contribute to addressing global economic and socio-environmental problems (Mion & Loza, 2020).

When comparing various concepts like Social Responsibility (SR), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG), Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), Creating Shared Value (CSV), and Corporate Social Investment (CSI), it's clear that while all aim to enhance corporate ethical practices, purpose-driven companies differentiate themselves by integrating these elements into their core mission, going beyond peripheral activities. SR focuses on a company's obligation to stakeholders but often treats social responsibility as an external consideration, whereas purpose-driven companies embed this responsibility into their operational framework. SDGs provide global objectives, and many purpose-driven companies align with these goals to contribute to broader societal change. ESG, often used by investors, assesses how companies perform in environmental, social, and governance areas. While ESG emphasizes evaluation, purpose-driven companies aim to inherently meet these standards by aligning their business purpose with sustainability and social impact. DEI initiatives focus on creating an inclusive and equitable workforce, which can be part of a purpose-driven company's strategy, but these companies typically pursue wider societal and environmental missions. CSV emphasizes mutual benefits for businesses and society, similar to purpose-driven companies, but the latter prioritize long-term societal impact beyond profitability. Finally, CSI refers to philanthropic efforts, often external to core business activities, while purpose-driven companies integrate social and environmental goals into their business model, ensuring these principles guide their daily operations rather than acting as separate initiatives.

The role of companies is changing. From mere economic agents focused on shareholder profit, they are now assuming a participatory role in society: as an actor that impacts the environment and is impacted by it. With this new role, new responsibilities also arise: managing their impacts on the environment,

respecting human rights, contributing to fair and sustainable economic development, increasing the sustainability behaviours of its employees (i.e. employee sustainability behaviours or ESB), and offering shared prosperity.

As a result, more and more companies are emerging that pay more attention to the notion of having a purpose and a desire to do good for society (Dupret et al., 2022). In this regard, one of the transformations in the business field is the shift from business models that pursue solely economic benefits to models that balance such benefits with a positive impact on society, employees, and the environment (Bhattacharya et al., 2023; Correa et al., 2020). However, this transformation also raises various questions or concerns related to how they are perceived by society regarding the purposes conveyed by companies.

Companies define their good business purposes, but in many cases, they are not prepared for correct digital corporate communication (Bhattacharya et al., 2023; López de Aguilera et al., 2023) or to build their brand so that their mission or vision is really understood by the public (Abdullah et al., 2022). In this line, a study carried out in Spain (Sanahuja-Peris et al., 2023), which analysed the purposes transmitted on the websites of the 100 most reputable companies, showed an uneven implementation as well as terminological confusion and a fixation on the term 'sustainability' as a keyword/concept to be transmitted. As the authors point out, the use of the term 'purpose' in companies' discourse is consolidated, but 'sometimes it is done more for convenience than for a true understanding of its usefulness, which leads us to conclude that it is used as a tendency' (Sanahuja-Peris et al., 2023, p. 713). Given this, depending on the scope of these companies in the lives of the citizens and according to their true purpose or when they combine economic and social purposes, citizens will act in the same way. This is because citizens also have an important role to play.

Citizens – in their role as employees, customers, and investors – could enjoy acting independently and influencing their environment, rather than being acted upon (Edmans, 2023). In this sense, there is a growing demand from citizens for companies to create ethical, social, environmental, and economic value and therefore to have a positive impact on people's quality of life and living conditions. The relationship between citizens' perceptions and organisational commitment has been proven (Peterson, 2004).

In this context, companies are tending to develop a combined purpose, not only private interest (Mion & Loza, 2020). Depending on the degree to which private interests incorporate causes related to the public interest, companies can be classified as traditional companies, those engaged in philanthropic social responsibility activities, and those known as hybrid enterprises (Battilana et al., 2018; Dupret et al., 2022) or social enterprises (Mair & Sharma, 2012). The latter are referred to as 'purpose-driven' or 'purposeful' in contrast to market-driven organisations (Bull & Ridley-Duff, 2019), and include Benefit Corporations or B Corps.

The redefinition of the traditional business model has also gained ground in public, political, and media agendas, emerging as an urgent need that will advance towards a more inclusive and sustainable system, where citizens assume a more active and influencing role (Mata-Benito et al., 2014). Some studies (Barroso et al., 2023; Corporate Excellence & Canvas, 2022; Paeleman et al., 2024) have demonstrated that companies following this model achieve a more positive impact on businesses, society, and the planet and are aligned with the triple bottom line (Elkington, 2020) and stakeholder capitalism (Ferreira et al., 2020; Losada-Vázquez, 2022).

In this study, the term "purpose-driven companies" refers specifically to businesses that are guided by a mission beyond profit maximisation. These companies seek to balance financial performance with positive contributions to society and the environment. Unlike traditional businesses that prioritise shareholder returns, purpose-driven companies integrate social, environmental, and governance goals into their core operations, aiming for a broader societal impact.

It is important to note that, in this context, “purpose-driven” is used exclusively in a business framework, detached from any religious or faith-based connotations that might be associated with the term in other contexts. The use of “purpose” here is aligned with the idea of businesses adopting a social or environmental mission, as opposed to being purely driven by religious or spiritual goals.

### **The ethical consumption debate and its connection to purpose-driven companies**

The discourse on ethical consumption is not a recent phenomenon. Scholars and philosophers have long examined the role of consumers in promoting ethical business practices. One notable contribution is Adela Cortina’s *Por Una Ética del Consumo* (2002), in which she argues that consumption is not merely an economic action but a moral one. According to Cortina (2002), consumers possess the capacity to influence the market by making purchasing decisions that reflect their ethical values, such as environmental sustainability and social justice. She emphasises that ethical consumption can serve as a form of civic engagement, where individuals exercise their responsibility to society through their consumer choices.

Cortina’s analysis is particularly relevant in today’s context, where B Corporations aim to integrate ethical principles directly into their business models. These companies seek to balance profit with purpose, aligning with the ideals of ethical consumption by ensuring that their operations benefit not only shareholders but also society and the environment. However, Cortina’s work also raises critical questions about the effectiveness of ethical consumption. Can consumer choices alone drive systemic change within capitalism, or is ethical consumption merely a way to ease the conscience of consumers without addressing deeper structural problems? Similarly, the rise of B Corporations prompts reflection on whether these companies truly represent a meaningful shift in business ethics or whether they are responding to consumer demand for more responsible companies without enacting substantial changes.

Cortina’s insights suggest that while B Corporations may offer a model for ethical business, their potential to transform the broader economic system should be viewed with caution. Historically, similar initiatives, such as the SA 8000 certification in the 1990s, were met with initial enthusiasm but later criticised for failing to create lasting change. This highlights the importance of ensuring that B Corporations do not simply serve as another “greenwashing” mechanism, but instead offer genuine solutions to the social and environmental challenges of our time.

By integrating Cortina’s perspective, this study aims to critically examine the role of B Corporations within the larger ethical consumption debate, exploring whether they represent a temporary response to shifting consumer preferences or a durable model for driving real change in business practices.

While Cortina’s insights highlight the potential and challenges of ethical consumption, they also underscore the importance of more systemic efforts to foster real change. This is where the role of B Corporations becomes critical. By embedding ethical principles into their core structures, B Corporations present a model that seeks to institutionalise values that go beyond profit. However, to truly address global challenges, it is crucial to reflect on the role of both businesses and citizens in driving this transformation.

Therefore, it is crucial to act accordingly, to reflect on the involvement that citizens have in the development of purpose-driven companies, whether this knowledge and commitment serve as a lever for

---

1. *Greenwashing* is a term coined by Jay Westerveld (1986) when he observed deceptive practices in the hotel industry, such as the supposed environmental effort to save towels. This concept refers to strategies where companies portray their products or policies as more eco-friendly than they truly are to create an environmentally responsible image for consumers (Parguel et al., 2011, Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Lyon & Montgomery, 2015)



change towards daily responsibility to act and clearly contribute to improving the environment (Theben et al., 2021), and simultaneously to understand through the analysis of purpose how these companies contribute to solving global challenges.

B Corps currently represent an emerging phenomenon within this context of new economic DNA (B Lab Spain and Gabeiras & Asociados, 2021). Thus, in 2006, the NGO B Lab emerged in the USA, leading a global movement to promote these companies, with partners in different countries like B Lab Spain, and seeking their regulation and development (Barroso et al., 2020). Fewer than ten countries in the world have such a legal framework, and there is an increasing agreement on the need for companies to create social and environmental value beyond economic benefits.

As enterprises become more innovative and impactful, they argue that they can no longer be governed by traditional corporate law. If the corporation remains the legal cloth for business activities, then its purpose must consider the nature and impacts of these activities. We therefore interpret the new legal forms of purpose-driven corporation as an appropriate framework to restore the enterprise and a collective purpose within corporate law (Segrestin et al., 2022).

The lobbying campaign *#EmpresasConPropósito*,<sup>2</sup> carried out in 2021 in Spain and led by B Lab Spain, achieved significant mobilisation in this regard, advocating for a legal framework to regulate these emerging business models. As a result of this action, it led to the creation of the business concept *Sociedades de Beneficio de Interés Colectivo (SBIC)*, included in Law 18/2022, dated September 28, on the creation and growth of companies, although its regulatory development is still pending. This law provides legal recognition to triple impact (social, environmental, and economic) companies to protect and recognise them as a key sector for evolving towards a more inclusive and sustainable economy.

It is relevant to address the interconnection between ethics, purpose-driven companies, and citizenship from the basis of social responsibility as a crucial foundation in all of them.

If we briefly recall the concept of business ethics, Nisberg (1988, p. 43) defines it as 'a set of principles that guide business practices to reflect a concern for society as a whole while pursuing profits.' In this sense, the concept of 'concern' acquires special importance, that is, with the idea of 'purpose: from the theory to the practice' (Jones-Khosla & Gomes, 2023, p.90). In this line, it is therefore pertinent to allude to the analysis of the concept of purpose developed in the study by Stubbs et al. (2022) on ecosystem purpose. This study contributes to delving into the emerging phenomenon of the ecosystem of purposes and shows how its different actors support the achievement of the sustainable development objectives by seeking to modify the purpose of companies and integrate the goals and objectives into their operational processes and commitments with stakeholders.

This means that in their global organisational purpose, companies should maintain permanent attention to taking care of the impact that they generate in their environments and society while seeking to obtain profit and material results. These new companies have a clear mission and values that guide their actions and decisions. They strive to contribute to social and environmental well-being while still being financially sustainable. Undoubtedly, the convergence of ethics and purpose-driven companies requires a single objective, along the lines of Cohen's (2021) 'Impact Revolution' movement, which aims to end the dichotomy between non-profit companies (that seek social good) and for-profit companies (that seek economic benefit). Through the promotion of the change of paradigm with the 'revolution', there is a convergence between the objective of profit and that of producing an impact, an improvement, either for specific groups or for society. In short, we are in a new boom paradigm with what are known as hybrid organisations that gather social (and/or environmental) and economic objectives in the organisational nucleus, that have become the focus of much recent research (for example, Bruneel et al. 2016; Dupret et al., 2022; Mair et al. 2015).

2. Translated as #Purpose-DrivenCompanies.



Likewise, citizenship acquires an important role in the context of business, in relation to their responsibilities as corporate citizens in society. Public trust in business is largely understudied (Pirson et al., 2019). These responsibilities involve actively engaging with communities, promoting social justice, supporting local initiatives, and being accountable for the impact of one's actions on various stakeholders, including employees (Gartenberg, 2022), customers, communities, and the environment. The connection between these concepts lies in the idea that ethics and purpose-driven business embrace the principles of social responsibility and act as responsible corporate citizens. By integrating ethical practices and a sense of purpose into their operations, these companies can create a positive impact and contribute to the betterment of society as a whole (Porter & Kramer, 2011), and also improve the levels of engagement and conversation with their audiences (Barroso & Tojar-Hurtado, 2023). For example, companies can use tools like social media channels to explore co-creation values among different stakeholders (Chatterjee & Nguyen, 2020).

## Methodology

The working methodology followed a comparative approach. Through the implementation of an online survey, we sought to compare two time periods (2021 and 2022) to identify whether there was an evolution in the knowledge and attitude of citizens towards purpose-driven companies. This comparison was carried out within the framework of the lobbying campaign conducted by B Lab Spain to pass legislation that provided legal coverage for purpose-driven companies. The questionnaire used was structured as follows:

- Sociodemographic data.
- Purpose-driven companies: we enquired about the knowledge of purpose-driven companies and the perception among the population.
- Active citizenship: this section focused on the different citizen profiles in terms of their involvement with sustainability, habits, and the influence of purpose-driven companies on decision-making.

The data validation procedure for the questionnaire was inspired by a previously conducted study (Gómez-Rey et al., 2021). The research instrument underwent expert review to assess the approach and relevance of the questions before data collection. The questionnaire's development followed a formal validation process, including psychometric validity and reliability assessments. This involved a systematic four-step approach: (1) drafting initial items based on existing literature relevant to B-corps, (2) conducting a qualitative content validity assessment to ensure appropriateness and comprehensiveness, (3) quantitatively evaluating reliability and validity, and (4) using non-parametric tests to confirm internal consistency and content validity. Experts from diverse fields, including society, social B-corps, and statistics, contributed to the rigorous validation process.

The data collection phase was conducted in two waves, 2021 and 2022, through online survey methodology. The fieldwork obtained 1,001 valid responses in 2021 and 1,004 in 2022, from a representative sample across Spain; participants in both samples were independent. The study was conducted with women and men between the ages of 18 and 65 from the main regions of Spain. The selection aimed to have a representative sample of Spanish society, and all responses were anonymous. Subsequent data processing and analysis were conducted using Excel. The study is based on levels of confidence and significance of 95%.

The profile of the participants is shown in tables 1 and 2. In both years, there was gender parity. Regarding age, four age groups were created, although there was nearly balanced representation, with the Generation Z group (18–27 years) being the least represented.

**Table 1. Gender distribution**

| <b>Gender</b>      | <b>2021<br/>%</b> | <b>2022<br/>%</b> |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Women              | 51,6              | 48,5              |
| Men                | 48,4              | 50,7              |
| Nonbinary          | -                 | 0,8               |
| Total participants | 1001              | 1004              |

Source: Own elaboration.

**Table 2. Age distribution**

| <b>Age (groups)</b>        | <b>2021<br/>%</b> | <b>2022<br/>%</b> |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Generation Z (18-27 years) | 13,8              | 16                |
| Generation Y (28-40 years) | 25,8              | 24,7              |
| Generation X (41-52 years) | 31,7              | 31,2              |
| Baby Boomer (53-65 years)  | 28,8              | 28,1              |
| Total participants         | 1001              | 1004              |

Source: Own elaboration.

## Findings

### *Purpose-driven companies and knowledge of them among the citizenship*

Regarding the first axis, purpose-driven companies and their recognition by Spanish society, we address our first research question: Are purpose-driven companies known by Spanish citizens as examples of ethical and sustainable organisations? In 2021, 63.1% of the respondents claimed to be unfamiliar with this type of company, and among them, the majority (94%) did not associate it with any specific company. Only 29% had heard of them, and a mere 2% of the individuals had a direct relationship with any purpose-driven company.

In 2022, over half of the population remained unaware of the purpose-driven business model (61.3%), although there was a slight decrease compared to 2021 (63.1%). However, 38.7% of the popu-

lation did have some knowledge of the purpose-driven business model. Only 29% of the citizens had heard of them, even though they admitted (93.6%) that they could not name any examples of companies with these characteristics.

However, when explaining the concept of purpose-driven businesses to respondents, 70.7% (74% in 2021) of the population considered it very necessary for companies to make the move towards more sustainable and responsible business models with which purpose-driven businesses are defined. In 2022, furthermore, 57.7% (56.3% in 2021) agreed that these types of companies were necessary to drive the development of a more sustainable economic and social system.

The proportion of individuals who were familiar with specific examples of purpose-driven companies increased by two percentage points in 2022, representing 7.5% of the population (5.5% in 2021). Furthermore, 2.2% of the citizens acknowledged having consumed products or used services from companies they considered purpose-driven organisations.

In contrast, this type of company was better known among predominantly young generations in 2022 (see table 3). Among Generation Y/Millennials, 45.2% claimed to have heard of purpose-driven companies. They were followed by Generation Z, with a knowledge level of 41.6%. On the other hand, the baby boomer generation had less knowledge about them, with a total of 68% being unaware. Generation Y/Millennials were the ones who were most familiar with the purpose-driven business model, but only 4.4% stated that they had purchased products or services from companies they believed had a purpose. In 2021, it was primarily Generation Z who were the least unfamiliar with this type of companies, with 13% of them stating that they did know companies that had made the transition to this new model.

**Table 3. Knowledge of purpose-driven companies (data by generations)**

|                                                                                                                       | 2021<br>%                 |                           |                           |                                    | 2022<br>%                 |                           |                           |                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                       | Gen Z<br>(18-27<br>years) | Gen Y<br>(28-40<br>years) | Gen X<br>(41-25<br>years) | Baby<br>Boomer<br>(53-65<br>years) | Gen Z<br>(18-27<br>years) | Gen Y<br>(28-40<br>years) | Gen X<br>(41-25<br>years) | Baby<br>Boomer<br>(53-65<br>years) |
| <b>Knowledge of purpose-driven companies (by generations)</b>                                                         |                           |                           |                           |                                    |                           |                           |                           |                                    |
| I was unaware of this trend towards "Purpose Driven Business" business models.                                        | 52,9                      | 63,2                      | 65,6                      | 65,3                               | 58,4                      | 54,8                      | 62                        | 68,1                               |
| I've heard about the shift to these business models, but I can't name any company                                     | 31,9                      | 27,9                      | 27,8                      | 30,9                               | 26,7                      | 33,9                      | 27,8                      | 27,3                               |
| I have heard about this shift towards these business models, and I know of companies that have taken the plunge       | 13                        | 6,6                       | 3,8                       | 2,8                                | 13                        | 6,9                       | 8                         | 4,3                                |
| I have heard of such companies, and I have also had a direct relationship with some of these companies (used/bought). | 2,2                       | 2,3                       | 2,8                       | 1                                  | 1,9                       | 4,4                       | 2,2                       | 0,4                                |

Source: Own elaboration.

If we consider the gender variable in 2022, 64.8% of women claimed to be unfamiliar with purpose-driven companies, while 32.1% of men had heard of them, although they may not have been able to recall or mention any examples. In 2021, similar percentages were identified, with 64.6% of women being unaware of these types of companies, while 30.4% of men had heard of them.

Although there was no clear understanding of the concept of purpose-driven companies, 74% in 2021 and slightly less in 2022 (70.7%) of the population considered it 'totally' or 'quite necessary' for companies to prioritise the triple impact of social, environmental, and economic aspects.

As seen in table 4, when asked about the importance of companies evolving or transitioning towards purpose-driven models, and the assessment made by the citizens, there was a sense of distrust both in 2021 (44.6%) and in 2022 (40.7%), as they believed that such companies were 'more facade than reality'. Additionally, 49% (in both 2022 and 2021) found it challenging to consider or believe that companies 'go beyond generating economic benefits and also work for social and environmental benefits'. Citizens remained sceptical about the potential social impact of this type of enterprises and doubts about their motivation.

**Table 4. Valuing purpose-driven companies**

| Valuing purpose-driven companies (part 1) | I believe that such companies are more facade than reality |             | I find it difficult to believe that companies go beyond generating economic benefits and also work for social and environmental benefits |             |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
|                                           | 2022 %                                                     | 2021 %      | 2022 %                                                                                                                                   | 2021 %      |
| <b>TOP 2</b>                              | <b>40,7</b>                                                | <b>44,6</b> | <b>49</b>                                                                                                                                | <b>49</b>   |
| Completely agree                          | 12,5                                                       | 14,4        | 18,1                                                                                                                                     | 15,9        |
| Mostly agree                              | 28,2                                                       | 30,2        | 30,9                                                                                                                                     | 33,1        |
| Neither agree nor disagree                | 44,5                                                       | 39,4        | 32,6                                                                                                                                     | 32,7        |
| Mostly disagree                           | 12                                                         | 13,2        | 14,3                                                                                                                                     | 14,2        |
| Completely disagree                       | 2,9                                                        | 2,9         | 4,1                                                                                                                                      | 4,2         |
| <b>BOTTOM 2</b>                           | <b>14,9</b>                                                | <b>16,1</b> | <b>18,4</b>                                                                                                                              | <b>18,4</b> |

Source: Own elaboration.

In this regard (as observed in table 5), 61.1% of Spanish citizens considered that companies could play a decisive role in sustainable development in 2022, compared to 56.3% in 2021, thus indicating a positive evolution, but minimal. Additionally, 57.1% positively valued the efforts of these companies to have a positive impact on society and the environment.

Likewise, we considered it important to analyse the level of proactivity of those citizens who valued the existence of companies with a purpose and who, however, did not fully trust the real social impact that they could develop. As seen in table 6, the participating citizens in the study expressed their willingness to support purpose-driven companies. In 2022, 53.1% of the population considered buying and recommending products or services from a company that operated under sustainability and responsibility principles (compared to 49.4% in 2021). Furthermore, 50.7% in 2022 (47.1% in 2021) would consider working for a purpose-driven company or recommending it as a career opportunity. According to the table below (table 5), our study shows that one in four (28.4%) were more active with their habits and attitudes in relation to sustainable development, developing activities with a positive impact (Barroso et al., 2023), this is, citizens considered buying and recommending the products/services of purpose-driven companies.

**Table 5. Valuing purpose-driven companies (citizen perception about the need and importance)**

| Valuing purpose-driven companies (part 2) | These types of companies are necessary to foster the development of a more sustainable economic and social system |             | I believe that this type of company can play a decisive role in sustainable development in the world |             | I positively appreciate the effort of these types of companies to have a positive impact on the social and environmental sphere. |             |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
|                                           | 2022 %                                                                                                            | 2021 %      | 2022 %                                                                                               | 2021 %      | 2022 %                                                                                                                           | 2021 %      |
| <b>TOP 2</b>                              | <b>57,7</b>                                                                                                       | <b>54,3</b> | <b>61,1</b>                                                                                          | <b>56,3</b> | <b>57,1</b>                                                                                                                      | <b>50,7</b> |
| Completely agree                          | 20,6                                                                                                              | 20,6        | 26,2                                                                                                 | 22,3        | 18,1                                                                                                                             | 15,4        |
| Mostly agree                              | 37,1                                                                                                              | 33,7        | 34,9                                                                                                 | 34          | 39                                                                                                                               | 35,3        |
| Neither agree nor disagree                | 28,6                                                                                                              | 30,7        | 23,7                                                                                                 | 26,5        | 29,1                                                                                                                             | 32,6        |
| Mostly disagree                           | 9,9                                                                                                               | 10,7        | 10,2                                                                                                 | 13          | 10,6                                                                                                                             | 13          |
| Completely disagree                       | 3,9                                                                                                               | 4,4         | 5,1                                                                                                  | 4,3         | 3,2                                                                                                                              | 3,8         |
| <b>BOTTOM 2</b>                           | <b>13,8</b>                                                                                                       | <b>15,1</b> | <b>15,3</b>                                                                                          | <b>17,3</b> | <b>13,8</b>                                                                                                                      | <b>16,8</b> |

Source: Own elaboration.

**Table 6. Valuing purpose-driven companies (impact of public knowledge and citizen involvement)**

| Valuing purpose-driven companies (part 3) | Knowing that a company works under these principles can make me consider buying and recommending their products/services. |             | Knowing that a company works under these principles makes them a good employer and may make me consider working for them or recommend them. |             |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
|                                           | 2022 %                                                                                                                    | 2021 %      | 2022 %                                                                                                                                      | 2021 %      |
| <b>TOP 2</b>                              | <b>53,1</b>                                                                                                               | <b>49,4</b> | <b>50,7</b>                                                                                                                                 | <b>47,1</b> |
| Completely agree                          | 16,7                                                                                                                      | 15,6        | 16,3                                                                                                                                        | 15,1        |
| Mostly agree                              | 36,4                                                                                                                      | 33,8        | 34,4                                                                                                                                        | 32          |
| Neither agree nor disagree                | 34,6                                                                                                                      | 34          | 35,1                                                                                                                                        | 37,4        |
| Mostly disagree                           | 8,6                                                                                                                       | 12,5        | 10,1                                                                                                                                        | 11,2        |
| Completely disagree                       | 3,8                                                                                                                       | 4,2         | 4,2                                                                                                                                         | 4,4         |
| <b>BOTTOM 2</b>                           | <b>12,4</b>                                                                                                               | <b>16,7</b> | <b>14,3</b>                                                                                                                                 | <b>15,6</b> |

Source: Own elaboration.

Analysing this reality from a gender perspective also becomes relevant for the study. In this regard, men expressed more scepticism than women about the role of purpose-driven companies in society, in both periods. On the other hand, women clearly identified how these companies could have a positive impact on society. In a general assessment, both men and women acknowledged the decisive role of these companies in sustainable development, and a positive evolution can be observed between 2021 and 2022. Highlighting the female presence (59.3% were women), more than 84% affirmed that a company with a purpose would influence them when choosing its products or services, or would recommend it.

Similarly, it is pertinent to analyse whether this scepticism was widespread among the general population or dependent on age or generation. In this regard, Generation X continued to be the most

sceptical in 2022 regarding the actual actions taken by purpose-driven companies, although their perception clearly improved within just one year (42.8% in 2022 compared to 48.3% in 2021). Their results aligned with those of baby boomers (42.6% in 2022), and both generations still maintained a level of disbelief regarding the purpose of these companies in working for social and environmental benefits (48.6% and 55.3% respectively in 2022, compared to 49.2% and 51.4% in the previous year). However, both generations were increasingly firm in considering the role of these types of companies as crucial for sustainable development (69.9% for baby boomers and 61.3% for Generation X in 2022). Generation Y did not express their conviction prominently, except for the positive assessment of companies' efforts for positive impact on the environment (56% in 2022, increasing from 46.5% in 2021 in that particular aspect). Generation Z was the least sceptical about the purpose of businesses (33.5% in 2022, down from 42.8% the previous year).

### *The role of citizenship*

Likewise, we provide an answer to research question 2 of our study: What role does Spanish society assume in the transition towards sustainability? By grouping the responses with those from the previous section, we will answer our third research question: Is there alignment between the expectations imposed on corporations and the responsibilities assumed by citizens in fostering societal and environmental improvement?

Once the responses from this section were collected, the different profiles of citizenship were analysed along three dimensions: active, conventional, and inactive, to identify the level at which the population was more sensitised (socially, economically, and environmentally) and how they acted accordingly. This analysis enabled us to identify three profiles of Spanish citizenship:

- a) The most active group of the population, who supported and initiated changes through their habits and decisions, as well as their interactions with companies; they claimed to engage in nine or more sustainability-related actions regularly.
- b) The more conventional or mainstream group, who were aware of the issues faced by society and/or the environment but did not actively participate in their solution; they reported engaging in 2 to 8 sustainability-related actions regularly.
- c) The inactive citizenship group, who were not conscious of these issues and/or did not have access to or desire to become active in another sense; they engaged in one or no sustainability-related actions.

Looking at the data in table 7 on the representation of citizen profiles in both 2021 and 2022, we can see that the mainstream group was the predominant one (with a slight increase in 2022), followed by the active group, which increased by 2% in 2022, and the inactive group, which decreased by 4% in 2022.

In both 2021 and 2022, the active citizenship group was mostly female, the group of inactive women increased in 2022, and the mainstream maintained similar values in 2021 and 2022. In contrast, the male group of active citizens in 2022 increased by 3%, the mainstream male group also increased, and the inactive group decreased.

By age, in 2021 Generation Z was mostly mainstream and had the smallest active population group; Generation Y emerged as the generation with the most inactive group, but with similar values of mainstream and active citizens; while Generation X and baby boomers emerged as the most active groups. In 2022, it was in Generation Z where the inactive group predominated; in Generation Y and Generation X, the three profiles had a balanced distribution, with a difference of less than 1% between categories; on the other hand, it was among the baby boomer generation where the lowest percentage of inactive citizens was identified and where the active ones were the majority.



Table 7. Citizenship profile by gender and age group

| Profiles                   | 2022     |            |        | 2021     |            |        |
|----------------------------|----------|------------|--------|----------|------------|--------|
|                            | Inactive | Mainstream | Active | Inactive | Mainstream | Active |
|                            | %        | %          | %      | %        | %          | %      |
|                            | 15       | 57         | 28     | 19       | 56         | 26     |
| <b>Gender distribution</b> |          |            |        |          |            |        |
| Man                        | 57,2     | 51         | 40,7   | 59,5     | 49,5       | 37,6   |
| Women                      | 42,8     | 49         | 59,3   | 40,5     | 50,5       | 62,4   |
| <b>Age distribution</b>    |          |            |        |          |            |        |
| Gen Z (18-27 years)        | 22,4     | 15         | 14,7   | 13,2     | 16,5       | 8,2    |
| Gen Y (28-40 years)        | 25       | 24,9       | 24,2   | 34,2     | 24,3       | 22,7   |
| Gen X (41-52 years)        | 32,2     | 31,9       | 29,1   | 28,4     | 31,7       | 34,1   |
| Baby Boom (53-65 years)    | 20,4     | 28,2       | 31,9   | 24,2     | 27,5       | 34,9   |
| Total participants         | 1004     |            |        | 1001     |            |        |

Source: Own elaboration.

The population expressed willingness to take action to have a positive impact on society and the planet. However, when it came to daily acts, divergences occurred as the majority claimed to engage in these habits only occasionally. In the social dimension, we observed that ‘occasionally’ was the main response when citizens were asked about the frequency of engaging in actions that directly impacted people (small decisions in day-to-day life, collaborating with NGOs, conscious information about consumed goods and services, advocating for equity, raising awareness among others, etc.). A positive trend was observed from 2021 to 2022 in habits related to small daily actions that contributed to personal care and resource conservation. In 2022, 64% admitted to regularly practising these actions, compared to 42.7% in 2021. Similarly, it is noteworthy that 45.3% of the participants in the second wave consistently advocated for equity and gender equality, actively seeking employment in companies where gender equality was a reality. Occasionally, they sought information on how to be more sustainable or engage in conversations with others about this topic.

Considering habits related to the economic dimension of sustainability (see table 8), both in 2021 and 2022, over 50% stated that they occasionally prioritised local businesses over purchasing from on-line platforms. Similarly, they occasionally shared positive actions of companies in triple impact areas, either among acquaintances or on social media. It is also noteworthy that there was a significant proportion of individuals who never recommended or criticised these actions, across both periods and for both issues. They represented the highest results in these series of questions. In 2022, regarding purchasing habits, they also indicated that they occasionally used technology to buy goods or services based on sustainability criteria, purchased second-hand goods, or paid more for sustainable products.

**Table 8. Citizens' habits for sustainability (economic dimension)**

| <b>Habits for sustainability (economic dimension)</b> |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                              |                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Frequency</b>                                      | <b>2022 %</b>                                                                                              | <b>2021 %</b>                                                                                              | <b>2022 %</b>                                                                                                        | <b>2021 %</b>                                                                                                        | <b>2022 %</b>                                                                                                             | <b>2021 %</b>                                                                                                             | <b>2022 %</b>                                                                                                                       | <b>2021 %</b>                                                                                | <b>2022 %</b>                                                        |
|                                                       | I prioritise shopping in shops or firms in my district or locality rather than on the big online platforms | I prioritise shopping in shops or firms in my district or locality rather than on the big online platforms | I recommend to acquaintances and on Social Networks positive actions of companies on social or environmental issues. | I recommend to acquaintances and on Social Networks positive actions of companies on social or environmental issues. | Critical on social media and stop buying products/ services from companies that have a negative impact on the environment | Critical on social media and stop buying products/ services from companies that have a negative impact on the environment | I use technology to decide whether to buy or not, based on the information available on sustainable criteria of products / services | I buy and/or sell second-hand goods (furniture, electrical appliances, books, clothes, etc.) | I am willing to pay more for sustainable and responsible consumption |
| Usually                                               | 38,8                                                                                                       | 42,7                                                                                                       | 14,5                                                                                                                 | 14,4                                                                                                                 | 12,8                                                                                                                      | 13                                                                                                                        | 25,9                                                                                                                                | 25,2                                                                                         | 16,8                                                                 |
| Occasionally                                          | 51,8                                                                                                       | 50,6                                                                                                       | 43,6                                                                                                                 | 37,4                                                                                                                 | 43,4                                                                                                                      | 38,5                                                                                                                      | 52,2                                                                                                                                | 53,9                                                                                         | 59,4                                                                 |
| Never                                                 | 9,4                                                                                                        | 6,7                                                                                                        | 41,8                                                                                                                 | 48,3                                                                                                                 | 43,7                                                                                                                      | 48,6                                                                                                                      | 21,9                                                                                                                                | 20,9                                                                                         | 23,8                                                                 |

Source: Own elaboration.

**Table 9. Citizens' habits for sustainability (environmental dimension)**

| <b>Habits for sustainability (environmental dimension)</b> |                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                       |                                                                       |                                                                                                      |                                                                                                      |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Frequency</b>                                           | <b>2022 %</b>                                                                                                                                              | <b>2021 %</b>                                                                                                                                              | <b>2022 %</b>                                                         | <b>2021 %</b>                                                         | <b>2022 %</b>                                                                                        | <b>2021 %</b>                                                                                        | <b>2022 %</b>                                                                                              | <b>2021 %</b>                                                                                                                         | <b>2022 %</b>                                                                                                                      |
|                                                            | I choose sustainable transport (public, electric, bicycle, etc.) whenever possible, for my journeys (work or studies) and I look for alternatives for this | I choose sustainable transport (public, electric, bicycle, etc.) whenever possible, for my journeys (work or studies) and I look for alternatives for this | I buy products that have less plastic packaging and that are reusable | I buy products that have less plastic packaging and that are reusable | I read everything on labels of products/ services to be informed about how what I consume is consume | I read everything on labels of products/ services to be informed about how what I consume is consume | I prefer to reuse or repair things I already have before buying new ones (food, clothes, technology etc.). | I take measures to make responsible use of resources (saving energy, water, plastic, etc.) and waste recycling (at home and outside). | I choose to buy green energy, use energy - saving light bulbs and turn off the tap while brushing my teeth or cleaning the dishes. |
| Usually                                                    | 35,2                                                                                                                                                       | 35                                                                                                                                                         | 40                                                                    | 38                                                                    | 36,3                                                                                                 | 36,3                                                                                                 | 55,6                                                                                                       | 64,1                                                                                                                                  | 61,9                                                                                                                               |
| Occasionally                                               | 44,5                                                                                                                                                       | 43                                                                                                                                                         | 49,5                                                                  | 50,5                                                                  | 48                                                                                                   | 50                                                                                                   | 53,7                                                                                                       | 30,4                                                                                                                                  | 31,4                                                                                                                               |
| Never                                                      | 20,3                                                                                                                                                       | 22,1                                                                                                                                                       | 10,5                                                                  | 11,5                                                                  | 15,7                                                                                                 | 13,7                                                                                                 | 7                                                                                                          | 5,5                                                                                                                                   | 6,8                                                                                                                                |

Source: Own elaboration.

Examining the environmental dimension (see table 9), habits that have a positive impact on environmental surroundings are predominantly observed, either occasionally or regularly. These habits are mainly related to the use of public transport, reduction of plastic in packaging, product information, product reuse, and reduction in consumption of resources such as water, energy, plastics, and more.

In the second wave of 2022, a question focusing on the habits and/or behaviours that citizens would like to improve (limited to three options) was included. Regarding the three habits to improve, there was consensus among the three citizens' profiles; they would like to do it periodically: local shopping (over online platforms), making small changes that impacted their day-to-day routine (short showers), and resorting to the second-hand market.

Regarding the level of personal satisfaction among participants, we observed similar results in both waves. Approximately, 31% of the responses stated being quite or very satisfied with their personal involvement in actions seeking a positive impact. In 2022, 51.8% and in 2021, 53.8% stated feeling somewhat satisfied. Conversely, 16.6% in 2022 and 15.2% in 2021 admitted to not feeling satisfied with their personal commitment. The more active population group reported a significantly higher degree of satisfaction with their actions. These profiles show more alignment between saying-feeling-doing, between the level of positive impact habits and the feeling of well-being that their actions bring them. On the contrary, we observe that the most inactive groups said that they were not satisfied with their level of involvement in addressing the challenges facing the planet.

In the second wave of the study, it was also deemed appropriate to inquire about the sources of information used by citizens to learn about a company's policies and its impact on the environment and society. All three population profiles predominantly relied on traditional media such as newspapers and radio. Notably, among the active profiles, the use of forum web pages and review platforms ranked second, indicating a proactive search for insights and feedback from others. Both the inactive and mainstream profiles expressed a lack of engagement in seeking such information.

Finally, in 2022, we included one last question that focused on the influence that purpose-driven companies had when choosing a product/service and making a recommendation. For the active group, it was a determining factor in the purchasing decision and recommendation, as 84.6% expressed being moderately or greatly influenced. Among the mainstream profiles, 49.5% stated the same. In contrast, the inactive group indicated that it would have some influence (54.6%) primarily, although 24.4% acknowledged feeling quite or greatly inclined towards purchasing and/or recommending. Additionally, 21.1% affirmed feeling little or no influence from this type of company when acquiring goods or services.

## Discussion and implications

The search to align organisational purpose with achievement of the SDGs may enable a transformation in how businesses are governed, why, and for whom (Stubbs et al., 2022), requiring more 'purposeful' companies to be in line with sustainable development. In other words, their main purpose is not limited to achieving one's own benefit (company), but rather it includes a set of integrated mini purposes (aligned with society demands, including the planet as a stakeholder) that are articulated on the basis of a corporate purpose where prioritising takes second place and balancing becomes the fundamental axis of organisational mission.

In this sense, the most interesting finding of this study stemmed from exploration of the emergence of organisations with a purpose that prioritised 'in addition' for achieving a social and environmental purpose or the 'common good'. With such findings, we want to be the first to move the academic and research community to generate debate on the importance of the existence of purpose-driven companies and how they are perceived by citizens increasingly committed to sustainable development. At

the macro level, boosting purpose-driven businesses could be relevant to contribute to the achievement of the following SDGs established by the United Nations (2015): 1 (*End poverty*, targets 1.2 and 1.4); 8 (*Promote ... decent work and economic growth*, targets 8.1, 8.3, and 8.5); 10 (*Reduce inequalities*, targets 10.1, 10.2, and 10.7); 12 (*Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*, with all its targets); and 16 (*Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective accountability systems* with all its targets). At the micro level, our work stands out for the importance of knowing whether citizens are aware of the existence of these SDGs and highlighting how they impact their lives as users and customers of such companies.

Specifically, the importance of these types of companies is becoming increasingly evident. However, on a global scale, there are 6,271 purpose-driven companies operating in 88 countries, with a total of 525,000 employees, generating a total revenue of 189.178 billion euros and an average annual revenue growth of 28%. For example, in 2022, in Spain alone, 200 companies were certified as purpose-driven companies, with a total revenue of 8,260 million euros and a workforce of 14,383 employees, generating a local and global ecosystem for change, according to data provided by B Lab Spain.

This reality is evident to Spanish citizens, so we conclude that seven out of ten people consider it totally or fairly necessary for companies to take the step towards more sustainable and responsible businesses (Canvas Estrategias Sostenibles, 2023). It is time for companies to act beyond corporate voluntarism: society is demanding new ways of doing business. Reactive social responsibility actions, which do not prove to be effective in proposing solutions to the challenges of today's world, are not enough.

Undoubtedly, citizens need to contrast these theories of social responsibility and sustainable development with the creation of positive social and environmental value, and optimise the value for a broader network of interested parties, including society and the environment as a pool of stakeholders, thus optimising value for the system (Stubbs & Cocklin, 2008). However, creating shared value among stakeholders is difficult to achieve in practice (Porter & Kramer, 2011) and in the end, many companies end up with social responsibility hypocrisy (Steimikiene et al., 2023) rather than CSR.

When we talk about citizens believing in this type of company, corporate reputation comes to mind. It is this reputation that companies are gaining over time through being consistent with their promises for and purposes with society. In this regard, we could say that the so-called 'corporate reputation' (Fombrun, 1996) of purpose-driven companies has not yet been achieved, because the 49% of people in Spain do not trust that companies can also work to generate social and environmental benefits (Canvas Estrategias Sostenibles, 2023, p.49).

This study has several noteworthy implications for managers and policymakers in various fields. Firstly, it contributes to a better understanding that it will be the responsibility of purpose-driven companies to live up to this widespread social demand for ethical and economic solvency, transparency, and social responsibility, which organisations cannot ignore. In this regard, it should be remembered that, as defined by Von Berlepsch et al. (2022), corporate reputation is a unique, intangible status achieved through the perception of stakeholders, including the public, of the commitments acquired by companies and the experiences offered in the past. In this scenario, social enterprises in general today provide an important projection of the future (Cermelli et al., 2019). These types of companies have the appropriate characteristics to meet the needs of the advanced economies of the global economy and to contribute to the creation of sustainable and economic shared value (Porter and Kramer, 2011). This issue can effectively contribute to addressing the economic, social, and environmental challenges of the welfare state crisis, which is taking on increasingly significant dimensions and whose solution seems to be less and less postponing (Nogales & Zandonai, 2014).

Secondly, citizens must also make a commitment in this regard. After analysing the results, the social actions that require the greatest investment of personal resources are those that obtain the least involvement, compared to other simpler actions such as turning off lights or taking shorter showers (see tables 8 and 9). We observe that involvement in both recommending and publicly questioning the

actions of companies with responsible behaviour (good or bad) is at an intermediate level of involvement (see table 8) and is a far cry from the demands made on purposeful companies by respondents in tables 5–7. This can be seen as an area of opportunity, since consumers will abandon brands that do not support their values and will be willing to pay more for those that do align with their concerns (Accenture, 2021). Therefore, it is not so much that we find ourselves with a society that is not very committed, perhaps, as Álvarez-Vergnani (2019, p. 87) points out: ‘what we should question is whether the new patterns of participation (...) are the most efficient (...) to face the new scenarios resulting from climate change’.

We observe that responsible consumption as a form of activism (López-Triana, 2020) can become a potential driver of change in everyday habits that underlie people’s different roles as consumers, employees, clients, suppliers, etc, and this can become a compelling reason for companies to seek to align their purposes with the concerns of their stakeholders.

Another noteworthy finding that this content analysis revealed is that the environmental dimension (table 9) is the one that exhibits the most homogeneous behaviour among participants. This finding could be related to the fact that environmental issues are one of the major concerns for Spanish society (Greenpeace, 2017), and the evidence of the consequences of climate change directly and without mediation impact the population (Sanz & Galan, 2022), which is why citizens are increasingly concerned about these consequences and are beginning to value corporate behaviours that contribute to mitigating these effects.

### *Practical and theoretical implications*

This work primarily demonstrates the perspective of Spanish society on purpose-driven business as an emerging sustainable model, fostering a balance between profit, environmental concerns, and societal welfare. Secondly, the Spanish population has been studied to find out what they are willing to contribute to sustainability as part of the current economic system. It thus innovatively offers an alignment between the expectations placed on business and the responsibilities taken by citizens in promoting social and environmental improvement.

Through an analysis of how informed citizens perceive the impact and significance of these novel business models, the findings can be extrapolated and applied to other stakeholders, including policymakers and conventional companies seeking to transition towards sustainable practices, thereby enhancing their market presence and positioning.

Another practical implication of this study is related to the level of commitment of the population towards sustainability and how Spanish society confronts this challenge. The results of the study highlight the alignment between their expectations of businesses and their individual commitment to enhancing society and the environment, both as consumers and employees, as well as engaging citizens (active/mainstream/inactive). The study shows which habits have been easily acquired by the population and which have a positive impact on the planet, and therefore represent the strategic lines that can be promoted to move towards sustainability, both for educational and market purposes.

Theoretically, we provide empirical evidence regarding the nexus between corporate purpose and business sustainability in the Spanish context. Therefore, this paper presents an initial theoretical framework for future in-depth studies on purpose-driven companies in different countries and sectors, where the study could be replicated or adapted.



## Conclusions

Regarding RQ1, 'Are purpose-driven companies known by Spanish citizens as examples of ethical and sustainable businesses?', the data demonstrate that they are, although there is a slight evolution. In 2022, a positive evolution is identified, as 38.7% of the population was already familiar with the concept of purpose-driven companies (compared to 37% in 2021), wider among younger age groups (45.2% for Millennials and 41.6% for Generation Z). The main sectors associated with purpose-driven companies are the energy sector, followed by two consumer-related sectors: fashion and cosmetics, and food and beverages.

For RQ2, 'What role does Spanish society assume in the transition towards sustainability?', we observe that in 2022, 28% of the total population corresponded to a more active profile in sustainability and engaged in nine or more activities with positive impact regularly. Within this active group, the majority were female (59.3%) and committed (over 84% stated that a purpose-driven company would influence their product and service choices). Although the mainstream profile predominates (57%), there are opportunities for a shift towards more sustainability-oriented attitudes among the population.

Therefore, our last question (RQ3), 'Is there alignment between the expectations imposed on corporations and the responsibilities assumed by citizens in fostering societal and environmental improvement?', demonstrates that there is indeed alignment between the demands placed on companies and personal actions taken by the respondents. In 2022, 70.7% of the population considered it either highly or moderately necessary for companies to transition towards more sustainable and responsible business models, which define purpose-driven companies. Additionally, 53% of the Spanish population would be willing to buy and recommend products or services from a company that operates under triple impact and sustainability principles. Furthermore, up to 50.7% would consider working for or recommending such companies as places of employment. Even inactive citizens expressed their dissatisfaction with their own actions in defence of the planet, a gesture of great honesty and an opportunity to implement new actions to help raise awareness among this population group.

We find ourselves in a context where citizens' concerns are calling for a transformation of the economic system towards a more sustainable model connected to the common good. The evidence obtained and the analysis carried out provide keys to face the challenges and opportunities of the transformation we are undergoing on a social and environmental level. We are living in times of dizzying changes, and it is important to broaden our vision in order to understand and position ourselves with a sense of interdependence. The alliance between purpose-driven companies and active citizens may represent the way to achieve an economic system that is fairer to people and the planet, to continue generating opportunities for business without risking our most precious asset: the planet on which we live and its natural resources.

However, it is essential to critically assess whether B Corporations are merely a response to the growing demand for ethical business practices or if they represent a lasting shift in corporate behavior. Historical precedents, such as the SA 8000 certification introduced in the 1990s, provide cautionary examples. Although SA 8000 was initially embraced as a standard for social responsibility, it ultimately faced criticism for being adopted more as a marketing tool than a genuine effort to implement systemic changes. A similar concern applies to B Corporations: while the certification process is rigorous, there is a risk that some companies may use it to bolster their image without enacting meaningful reforms.

Moreover, it is important to recognize that non-certified ethical companies may also deliver substantial social and environmental value, often without the formal recognition that comes with certifications like B Corp. The key challenge for B Corporations is to avoid becoming a passing trend



and instead demonstrate sustained impact. To achieve this, these companies must commit to ongoing transparency, accountability, and structural change that addresses the core issues of global capitalism, beyond consumer-driven demand for greener products.

In conclusion, the true value of B Corporations will ultimately depend on their ability to maintain a long-term commitment to ethical principles and avoid falling into the same pitfalls as previous certification models.

While the sustainability and long-term impact of B Corporations remain subject to scrutiny, one thing is clear: their success, as well as the success of any ethical business model, depends not only on corporate actions but also on the active engagement of citizens. As consumers, employees, and investors, citizens play a pivotal role in shaping the future of purpose-driven companies. Their involvement can serve as a critical force in ensuring that these companies remain accountable and committed to genuine ethical practices, rather than falling into the traps of past certification models.

Based on our empirical findings, we suggest that future research should pay attention to the following questions: Purpose-driven companies are backed by active citizens, but how are citizens involved in the development of this business model? And who are more active and what are their habits?

Without a doubt, as Fontan et al. (2019) underline, these active citizens permanently demand that organisations generate an ethical, social, environmental, and economic value and have a positive impact on the quality and condition of people's lives. It is an ethical citizenship behaviour of high ethical commitment and involvement with society in general, and the economy, environment, and specific groups that are more vulnerable. Even though the reality is different, there is a clear and great difference between the gap between expectations and perceptions of this reality: only 39% of citizens believed that organisations worked hard to improve people's quality of life and, in general, they would not mind if 76% of brands disappeared. Working to reduce this difference requires a major transformation in corporate leadership, culture, and behaviour (Fontan et al., 2019).

Organisational purpose, as part of the social enterprise identity, needs to be built as a result of a new kind of leadership performance, focused on learning processes and driven by individual and organisational communication capabilities. Such a challenge points out, on the one hand, that a more socially concerned enterprise is needed and, on the other, that top management capabilities must be improved in order to play the new role they are compelled to play in order to promote social economy and stakeholder capitalism (Losada-Vázquez, 2022). Therefore, purpose-driven companies can serve to reconsider the role of traditional ones, their impact, and the mark they will leave for the future society.

## Limitations

This work reflects only on Spanish society's knowledge of purpose-driven companies, so it will be necessary to carry out similar studies in other countries to be able to draw general conclusions. Likewise, it presents only descriptive data of a phenomenon that is just beginning to be studied, so we propose as a second phase to continue exploring this issue, having experts analyse the results, with purpose-driven companies and with other key stakeholders from academia and the media; also, it would be interesting to know how citizens could have an impact on these companies.

## References

- Abdullah, Z., Anumudu, C. E., & Raza, S. H. (2022). Examining the digital organisational identity through content analysis of missions and vision statements of Malaysian and Singaporean SME company websites. *The Bottom Line*, 35(2), 137-158. <https://doi.org/10.1108/bl-12-2021-0108>
- Adams, W. (2015). Conducting semi-structured interviews. In K. E. Newcomer, H. P. Hatry, & J. S. Wholey (Eds.), *Handbook of practical program evaluation* (pp. 412-444). Jossey-Bass.
- Álvarez-Vergnani, C. (2019). Participación ciudadana: retos para una ciudadanía activa ante el cambio climático, *UNED Research Journal*, 11(1), 578-588. <https://doi.org/10.22458/urj.v11i1.2325>
- Accenture (2021, June 23). Life reimaged. Mapping the motivations that matter for today's consumers. *Accenture*. <https://newsroom.accenture.com/news/2021/accenture-report-finds-consumer-values-and-buying-motivations-have-fundamentally-changed-shifting-away-from-price-and-quality>
- B Lab Spain & Gabeiras & Asociados (2021). *Libro blanco de las empresas con propósito* (1st ed.). La Cultivada. <https://bit.ly/404AwnV>
- Barroso, M. B., & Tojar-Hurtado, J. C. (2023). La gestión de relaciones públicas en las empresas con propósito. *Revista Internacional de Relaciones Públicas*, 13(25), 21-40. <https://doi.org/10.5783/revrrpp.v13i25.801>
- Barroso M. B., Castillo-Esparcia A., & Ruiz-Mora I. (2023). La dimensión medioambiental y los ODS en la comunicación estratégica de las empresas de triple impacto. *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, 29(1), 27-42. <https://doi.org/10.5209/esmp.80708>
- Barroso, M. B., Ruiz-Mora, I. & Álvarez-Nobell, A. (2020). *Propósito, sostenibilidad y conversaciones en empresas de triple impacto. Los ODS en la comunicación digital en las B Corps #BestForTheWorld2019*. Alicante, Spain: Universidad de Alicante, Digital Wall Collection. <https://bit.ly/3qeWJml>
- Battilana, J., Pache, A. C., Sengul, M., & Model, J. (2018). *Combining social welfare and market logics: What drives social performance in socioeconomic hybrids?* Academy of Management Proceedings. Annual Meeting 2018, ESSEC Business School. New York: USA. <https://doi.org/10.5465/ambpp.2012.13268abstract>
- Bhattacharya, C. B., Sen, S., Edinger-Schons, L. M., & Neureiter, M. (2023). Corporate purpose and employee sustainability behaviors. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 183(4), 963-981. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05090-5>
- Bruneel, J., Moray, N., Stevens, R., & Fassin, Y. (2016). Balancing competing logics in for-profit social enterprises: A need for hybrid governance. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, 7(3), 263-288. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19420676.2016.1166147>
- Bull, M., & Ridley-Duff, R. (2019). Towards an appreciation of ethics in social enterprise business models. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 159, 619-634. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-3794-5>
- Canvas Estrategias Sostenibles (2021). *Propósito y reinención del capitalismo. ¿Qué piensa la población Española y cuáles son las claves para la transformación?* I Edición. Canvas Estrategias Sostenibles. [https://www.canvasconsultores.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Proposito-y-reinencion-capitalismo\\_CANVAS\\_-Estudio-completo.pdf](https://www.canvasconsultores.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Proposito-y-reinencion-capitalismo_CANVAS_-Estudio-completo.pdf)
- Canvas Estrategias Sostenibles (2023). *Propósito y reinención del capitalismo. La ciudadanía y los nuevos modelos de empresa en tiempos de transformación*. II Edición. Canvas Estrategias Sostenibles. <https://www.canvasconsultores.com/proposito-y-capitalismo-2023/>
- Cermelli, M., Maggio, U. D., Notarstefano, G., & Terzo, G. (2019). Social capital and social entrepreneurship. Cross-country evidence for development and cohesion. *RIEDS–Rivista Italiana di Economia, Demografia e Statistica–The Italian Journal of Economic, Demographic and Statistical Studies*, 73(2), 87-98.

- Chatterjee, S., & Nguyen, B. (2021). Value co-creation and social media at bottom of pyramid (BOP). *The Bottom Line*, 34(2), 101-123. <https://doi.org/10.1108/bl-11-2020-0070>
- Cohen, R. (2021). *On impact: A guide to the impact revolution*. <https://www.onimpactnow.org/>
- Corporate Excellence and Canvas Estrategias Sostenibles (2022). *Approaching the future 2022*. Canvas Estrategias Sostenibles. <https://www.canvasconsultores.com/approaching-the-future-2022/>
- Correa, M. E., Abramovay, R., Gatica, S., & Van Hoof, B. (2020). *Nuevas empresas, nuevas economías: Empresas B en Sur América*. Yopublico.
- Delmas, M. A., & Burbano, V. C. (2011). The drivers of greenwashing. *California Management Review*, 54(1), 64–87. <https://doi.org/10.1525/cmr.2011.54.1.64>
- Dupret, K., Hansen, A. V., Pultz, S., Pilmark, A., Brander, E., Friberg, B., Tranetoft Nielsen, K., & Eldor, T. (2022). What's the purpose? Employee perspectives on being 'purpose-driven' in hybrid organisations. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, 1-20. 10.1080/19420676.2022.2148714
- Edmans, A. (2023). How great companies deliver both purpose and profit. *Journal of Chinese Economic and Business Studies*, 465-469. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14765284.2023.2219439>
- Elkington, J. (2020). *Green swans: The coming boom in regenerative capitalism*. Greenleaf Book Group.
- Estébanez García, D. (2023, February 20). El movimiento B Corp crece en España y mejora el impacto que generan las empresas. *Cinco Días*. <https://cincodias.elpais.com/extras/2023-02-20/el-movimiento-b-corp-crece-en-espana-y-mejora-el-impacto-que-generan-las-empresas.html>
- Ferreira, V., Barreira, A.P., Loures, L., Antunes, D., & Panagopoulos, T. (2020). Stakeholders' engagement on nature-based solutions: A systematic literature review. *Sustainability*, 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12020640>
- Fombrun, C. J. (1996). *Reputation: Realizing value from the corporate image*. Harvard University Press.
- Fontán, C., Alloza, Á., & Rey, C. (2019). (Re)Discovering organizational purpose. In C. Rey, M. Bastons, P. Sotok (Eds.), *Purpose-driven organizations* (pp. 107-118). Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-17674-7\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-17674-7_9)
- Freeman, R. E., Martin, K., & Parmar, B. (2007). Stakeholder capitalism. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 74, 303-314. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-007-9517-y>
- Gartenberg, C., M. (2022). Purpose-driven companies and sustainability. In G. George, M. R. Haas, H. Joshi, A. M. McGahan & P. Tracey (Eds.), *Handbook on the business of sustainability: The organization, implementation, and practice of sustainable growth* (pp. 24-42). Edward Elgar. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3786823>
- Greenpeace (2017, November 15). *Una encuesta de Greenpeace demuestra que la ciudadanía se encuentra concienciada y preocupada por el cambio climático*. <https://es.greenpeace.org/es/sala-de-prensa/comunicados/el-cambio-climatico-ya-es-la-principal-preocupacion-medioambiental-de-la-sociedad-espanola/>
- Gómez-Rey, P., Barbera, E., Fernández-Navarro, F., Zhang, J., & Moreira, A. (2021). Development and validation of a life skills evaluation tool for online learning based on the framework of the capability approach. *Education Tech Research and Development*, 69, 3029-3049. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-021-10054-z>
- Hourneaux Jr, F., Gabriel, M.L.d.S., & Gallardo-Vázquez, D.A. (2018), Triple bottom line and sustainable performance measurement in industrial companies. *Revista de Gestão*, 25(4), 413-429. <https://doi.org/10.1108/REGE-04-2018-0065>
- Jones-Khosla, L. A., & Gomes, J. F. S. (2023). Purpose: From theory to practice. *Global Business and Organizational Excellence*, 43(1), 90-103. <https://doi.org/10.1002/joe.22203>
- Law 18/2022, September 28, On creation and growth of companies, BOE 234. <https://www.boe.es/eli-es/1/2022/09/28/18/con>.
- Lyon, T. P., & Montgomery, A. W. (2015). The means and end of greenwash. *Organization & Environment*, 28(2), 223–249. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026615575332>

- López de Aguilera, C., Molares, J., & Badenes, V. (2023). El propósito como dinamizador de la cultura corporativa y generador de valor: Análisis de las webs de las empresas españolas del IBEX-35. *Revista Internacional de Relaciones Públicas*, 13(25), 41-54. <https://doi.org/10.5783/revrrpp.v13i25.797>
- López-Triana, I. (2020, November 27). Del consumismo al activismo ciudadano: una transformación necesaria. *Diario Responsable*. <https://diarioresponsable.com/opinion/30302-del-consumismo-al-activismo-ciudadano-una-transformacion-necesaria>
- Losada-Vázquez, A. (2022). Organizational learning at purpose-driven enterprise: Action–research model for leadership improvement. *Sustainability*, 14(3), 1301. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14031301>
- Mair, J., Mayer, J., & Lutz, E. (2015). Navigating institutional plurality: Organizational governance in hybrid organizations. *Organization Studies*, 36(6), 713-739. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840615580007>
- Mair, J., & Sharma, S. (2012). Performance measurement and social entrepreneurship. In C. K. Volkman, T. O. Tokarski, & K. Ernst (Eds.), *Social entrepreneurship and social business: An introduction and discussion with case studies* (pp. 175-189). Springer [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-8349-7093-0\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-8349-7093-0_9)
- Mata-Benito, P., Ballesteros-Velázquez, B., & Gil-Jaurena, I. (2014). *Aprendizaje de la ciudadanía y la participación*. Traficantes de Sueños. <http://e-spacio.uned.es/fez/eserv/bibliuned:500383-III Congreso Etnografía-1040/Documento.pdf>
- Mion, G., & Loza, C. R. (2020). Understanding the purpose of benefit corporations: An empirical study on the Italian case. *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*, 5(4), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-020-00050-6>
- Montiel Vargas, A. (2022) Las empresas B (B Corps) y la regulación de las sociedades con propósito (benefit corporations) en Derecho comparado. *Revesco: Revista de Estudios Cooperativos*, 141(8), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.5209/reve.82253>
- Nisberg, J. N. (1988). *The random house handbook of business terms*. Random House Reference.
- Nogales, R., & Zandonai, F. (2014). L'impresa sociale ei suoi ecosistemi. Una mappatura europea. *Impresa Sociale*, 4(11), 1-6. <https://bit.ly/3IMPMiR>
- O'Toole, J., & Vogel, D. (2011). Two and a half cheers for conscious capitalism. *California Management Review*, 53(3), 60-76. <https://doi.org/10.1525/cm.2011.53.3.60>
- Pacto Mundial (2017). *La misión del Pacto Mundial: 10 Principios + 17 ODS*. Pacto Mundial. <https://www.pactomundial.org/noticia/10-principios-17-ods/>
- Paeleman, I., Guenster, N., Vanacker, T., & Siqueira, A. C. O. (2024). The consequences of financial leverage: Certified B corporations' advantages compared to common commercial firms. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 189, 507-523. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-023-05349-5>
- Parguel, B., Benoît-Moreau, F., & Larceneux, F. (2011). How sustainability ratings might deter “greenwashing”: A closer look at ethical corporate communication. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 102(1), 15–28. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-011-0901-2>
- Peterson, D. K. (2004). The relationship between perceptions of corporate citizenship and organizational commitment. *Business & Society*, 43(3), 296-319. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650304268065>
- Pirson, M., Martin, K., & Parmar, B. (2019). Public trust in business and its determinants. *Business & Society*, 58(1), 132-166. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781139152389.007>
- Porter, M., & Kramer, M. R. (2011, January–February). Creating shared value. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2011/01/the-big-idea-creating-shared-value>
- Pörtner, H. O., Roberts, D. C., Adams, H., Adler, C., Aldunce, P., Ali, E., ... & Ibrahim, Z. Z. (2022). *Climate change 2022: Impacts, adaptation and vulnerability*. IPCC. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009325844>
- Sanahuja-Peris, G., Antón-Carrillo, E., & Mut-Camacho, M. (2023). De qué hablamos cuando hablamos de “propósito”: expresión y análisis discursivo del propósito corporativo en España. *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, 29(3), 701-715. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/esmp.87208>



- Sanz, M. J., & Galan, E. (2022, February). Impactos del cambio climático en España. *Funcas*. <https://www.funcas.es/articulos/impactos-del-cambio-climatico-en-espana/>
- Segrestin, B., Hatchuel, A., & Levillain, K. (2022). Rethinking the purpose of the corporation with the creative power of the enterprise. In R. E. Meyer, S. Leixnering & J. Veldman, (Eds.), *The corporation: Rethinking the iconic form of business organization research in the sociology of organizations*, pp. 191-207). Emerald. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X20220000078010>
- Steimikiene, D., Mikalauskiene, A., & Stanislovaityte, G. (2023). *Corporate social hypocrisy: CSR in the era of global crises*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003391753>
- Stubbs, W., & Cocklin, C. (2008). Conceptualizing a sustainability business model. *Organization & Environment*, 21(2), 103-127. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026608318042>
- Stubbs, W., Dahmann, F., & Raven, R. (2022). The purpose ecosystem and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: Interactions among private sector actors and stakeholders. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 180(4), 1097-1112. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05188-w>
- Theben, A., Aranda-Juárez, D., Lupiáñez-Villanueva, F., Peña-López, I., & Porcu, F. (2021), Participación y ciudadanía activa de los jóvenes a través de Internet y las redes sociales. Un estudio internacional. *BiD: textos universitarios de biblioteconomía i documentació*, 46(1), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1344/BiD2020.46.02>
- United Nations (2015). *La Asamblea General adopta la Agenda 2030 para el Desarrollo Sostenible*. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es/2015/09/la-asamblea-general-adopta-la-agenda-2030-para-el-desarrollo-sostenible/> PH
- Von Berlepsch, D., Lemke, F., & Gorton, M. (2022). The importance of corporate reputation for sustainable supply chains: A systematic literature review, bibliometric mapping, and research agenda. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 189, 9-34. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05268-x>

## Quando “os golos dispensam balizas”: uma análise às estratégias de comunicação de responsabilidade social da Fundação do Futebol/Liga Portugal

Fernando Rocha & Ricardo Morais

*Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal / Universidade do Porto, Portugal*

fernando.rocha@ubi.pt / rjmorais@letras.up.pt

### Resumo

Este estudo tem por objetivo verificar as estratégias de comunicação de responsabilidade social adotadas pela Fundação do Futebol, iniciativa criada pela Liga Portugal. Procura-se investigar as principais práticas de responsabilidade social corporativa, analisando de que forma estas podem ser aplicadas no âmbito desportivo e, em particular, no universo do futebol. Procura-se assim avaliar o tipo de publicações que têm sido feitas pela Fundação no Facebook. O período escolhido para a análise corresponde a todo o ano de 2022. Neste contexto, foi feita uma recolha de 347 postagens. Para efeitos de análise foi considerada uma abordagem qualitativa, que

ênfatisa a relevância da análise de conteúdo como uma técnica válida para extrair informações significativas e interpretar dados qualitativos. As publicações e estratégias utilizadas pela Fundação do Futebol foram categorizadas com base em seis das principais práticas de RSC apresentadas pela literatura do campo. Os resultados permitem identificar as principais iniciativas empregadas pela Fundação. A partir dessas práticas, este estudo desenvolveu três estratégias agrupadas por equivalência de objetivos, permitindo uma visão detalhada das ações de sensibilização, intervenção e práticas corporativas promovidas pela Fundação do Futebol.

Palavras-chave: Responsabilidade Social; Fundação do Futebol; Comunicação Estratégica; Futebol; Análise de conteúdo; Facebook.

## When “goals don’t need goalposts”: an analysis of the Fundação do Futebol/Liga Portugal’s social responsibility communication strategies

### Abstract

The aim of this study is to verify the social responsibility strategies adopted by the Football Foundation, an initiative created by Liga Portugal. It seeks to investigate the main practices of corporate social responsibility, analyzing how these can be applied in the sporting sphere and, in particular, in the world of soccer. The aim is to evaluate the type of posts that have been made by the Foundation on Facebook. The period chosen for the analysis corresponds to the whole of 2022. In this context, 347 posts were collected. For the purposes of analysis, a qualitative approach was considered, which emphasizes the relevance of content analysis as

a valid technique for extracting meaningful information and interpreting qualitative data. The publications and strategies used by the Football Foundation were categorized based on six of the main CSR practices presented by the literature in the field. The results allow us to identify the main initiatives employed by the Foundation. Based on these practices, this study developed three strategies grouped by equivalence of objectives, allowing a detailed view of the awareness-raising actions, interventions and corporate practices promoted by the Football Foundation.

Keywords: Social Responsibility; Football Foundation; Strategic Communication; Football; Content Analysis; Facebook.

Data de submissão: 2024-07-09. Data de aprovação: 2024-11-03.

Revista Estudos em Comunicação é financiada por Fundos FEDER através do Programa Operacional Factores de Competitividade – COMPETE e por Fundos Nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia no âmbito do projeto *LabCom – Comunicação e Artes*, UIDB/00661/2020.





## 1. Introdução

A sociedade, atualmente, demonstra um interesse crescente nas questões sociais, de modo a exercer pressão sobre as organizações para que respondam, para além das responsabilidades económicas, também às sociais e ambientais (Kunsch, 2018). Este despertar coletivo busca fomentar um mundo mais equitativo e sustentável. Tal perspetiva é indicada por Kotler e Lee (2005), que, na sua obra *“Corporate Social Responsibility: Doing the most good for your company and your cause”*, identificam e distinguem seis práticas relacionadas a esse contexto. Esta obra é utilizada como principal base teórica deste estudo, onde elaboramos, a partir das perspetivas dos autores, uma adaptação ao cenário do futebol por meio de uma sistematização que pretendemos deixar como legado neste estudo, ao agruparmos essas práticas em três tipos de estratégias: Sensibilização, Intervenção e Corporativas.

Esta obra foi escolhida pela sua abordagem prática e pela potencial aplicabilidade ao contexto desportivo, especialmente por propor iniciativas que possam ser empregues por diferentes tipos de organizações, entre elas, os clubes de futebol. Enquanto outras obras seminais (Elkington, 1997; Porter & Kramer, 1997) tendem a focar-se em práticas predominantemente filantrópicas ou, mesmo, na criação de valor para a organização, Kotler e Lee (2005) ampliam essa plataforma social ao incluir práticas que vão além do apoio direto a causas sociais ou tendo em vista o ganho reputacional. A sua proposta inclui o envolvimento comunitário por meio do voluntariado, a sensibilização para causas sociais, a mudança de comportamentos, e as práticas corporativas socialmente responsáveis. Estas práticas foram consideradas como capazes de ajudar a expandir o campo de atuação dos clubes de futebol em relação à responsabilidade social, e de forma particular no contexto digital, o foco deste estudo.

A divulgação destas práticas concretiza-se através das redes sociais da Fundação, que, além de conteúdos próprios, utiliza de forma até prevalente, a partilha dos conteúdos dos clubes afiliados. Nos últimos anos, as plataformas digitais deixaram de ser um fenómeno de nicho para uma adoção em massa (Gouveia, 2013), especialmente no universo do futebol, onde ocupam uma posição de destaque na construção da identidade e no fortalecimento das relações (Di Fátima et al., 2021). Cardoso (2023) explora como as redes sociais influenciam a perceção dos públicos acerca de temas específicos, intensificada pelo poder destas plataformas em filtrar e disseminar informação de forma rápida (Gouveia, 2013), de tal modo que acaba por se configurar num cenário que justifica a relevância em analisar as redes sociais neste estudo.

Assim, analisamos a iniciativa social criada pela Liga Portugal, instituição que gere e regulamenta o futebol profissional em Portugal. A entidade criou a Fundação do Futebol, o seu braço social que tem como propósito contribuir para a promoção de uma sociedade mais justa, alinhada com e para o universo do futebol<sup>1</sup>. Procuramos, assim, identificar as suas estratégias de RSC, através da verificação das suas redes sociais digitais, uma vez que esta iniciativa tem como propósito “utilizar a notoriedade do futebol, dos seus intervenientes e as competições profissionais em prol da responsabilidade social e da promoção da Sustentabilidade Ecológica”<sup>2</sup>.

Além disso, incorporamos a análise dos 17 Objetivos do Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS) nas mensagens, assinalando-as como postagens de RSC quando identificamos no texto a presença dessas publicações. Os ODS, provenientes da Agenda 2030 das Nações Unidas e guiados pelo lema *“leave no one behind”* (não deixe ninguém para trás), representam um conjunto de metas globais orientados para um mundo mais justo e sustentável (dos Santos et al., 2019).

O futebol, sendo um dos desportos mais populares e com maior audiência a nível global, possui um potencial significativo para influenciar positivamente a sociedade (McGowan & Mahon, 2009; Smith

1. Disponível em: <https://fundacaodofutebol.ligaportugal.pt/a-fundacao/>. Acesso em 02 de jul. de 2023.

2. Disponível em: <https://fundacaodofutebol.ligaportugal.pt/a-fundacao/>. Acesso em 02 de jul. de 2023.

& Westerbeek, 2007). Reconhecendo este facto, as Nações Unidas lançaram o *Football For The Goals*, uma plataforma destinada a envolver a comunidade global do futebol na promoção dos 17 ODS, contando com a adesão pioneira da Liga Portugal e da Fundação do Futebol neste novo projeto<sup>3</sup>, no ano de 2022.

Esta investigação pretende, assim, aprofundar a compreensão da abordagem da Fundação do Futebol face à responsabilidade social no contexto desportivo, explorando a questão: que estratégias de comunicação de RSC são adotadas pela Fundação do Futebol? Procuramos não apenas identificar as estratégias, mas também classificá-las e perceber em que medida estão alinhadas com os ODS. Utilizando o futebol como plataforma, a Fundação visa justamente estimular os clubes pertencentes à Liga Portugal para gerar um impacto positivo na sociedade, promovendo a transformação de comportamentos e o envolvimento em causas sociais. A análise das publicações da Fundação do Futebol no Facebook ao longo de 2022 permitirá identificar as principais práticas adotadas, assim como realizar uma análise temporal da ênfase e da concentração das ações de sensibilização, intervenção e divulgação de práticas corporativas ao longo dos meses do ano, desenvolvendo estratégias que incorporem práticas semelhantes.

Através da identificação das principais práticas destacadas pela Fundação, reorganizadas em estratégias, e do seu alinhamento com temas sociais e sustentáveis, espera-se contribuir para uma melhor compreensão da realidade da comunicação de RSC no futebol, oferecendo uma perspetiva prática para outras organizações – especialmente as desportivas – que desejam integrar ações sociais e posicionar-se na defesa dos direitos humanos através de diferentes estratégias de comunicação. Esta investigação reforça, assim, a importância de iniciativas que utilizam a visibilidade e o alcance do futebol para promover valores e comportamentos positivos, alinhados com a Agenda 2030, que contempla objetivos globais de desenvolvimento sustentável e justiça social.

## **2. Marco Teórico**

### **2.1. Comunicação Organizacional**

Toda atividade desportiva que precisa de visibilidade requer estratégias de comunicação para estabelecer e manter uma imagem positiva perante um público diversificado (Hafiar et al., 2024). No contexto do futebol, cabe-nos reconhecer que a comunicação promovida por uma organização vai além da mera comunicação desportiva. Uma vez que esta comunicação reflete os valores corporativos da organização, caracteriza-se, também, como uma comunicação organizacional, afinal, conforme observado por Baldissera (2009), qualquer comunicação relacionada à organização é considerada parte da Comunicação Organizacional.

A comunicação é fundamental nas organizações, pois harmoniza as ideias e promove a integração de objetivos organizacionais (Torquato, 2004) entre os seus públicos. Com a emergência do digital, a sua importância tem sido amplamente reconhecida, tornando-se vital para a compreensão do comportamento organizacional (Mourão et al., 2016; Silva et al., 2020). Dessa forma, entender a cultura organizacional é imperativo para assegurar que a comunicação a expresse de forma autêntica e alinhada com a missão da organização.

Assim, os profissionais encarregados do planeamento da comunicação devem, primeiramente, realizar um diagnóstico preciso dessa cultura (Baldissera, 2009). Em organizações como clubes de futebol ou fundações de carácter social, é importante que esses profissionais compreendam a missão institucional para articular o posicionamento de forma eficaz na reprodução de ideias e na representação dessas entidades (Deetz, 2010), assumindo um papel constitutivo e não mais meramente instrumental (Pérez,

---

3. Disponível em: <https://www.ligaportugal.pt/pt/epocas/20222023/noticias/institucional/liga-portugal-e-fundacao-do-futebol-na-onu-com-o-football-for-the-goals>. Acesso em 12 de Jul. de 2023.

2012). Para dar resposta a esses desafios, torna-se essencial adotar uma visão holística dos aspetos comunicacionais da organização, como o conceito de comunicação integrada, desenvolvido por Kunsch (2016).

Esta perspetiva enfatiza a importância de as organizações reconhecerem o seu impacto e influência no contexto social em que operam (Deetz, 2010), defendendo uma visão que atribui responsabilidades acrescidas à organização, de modo a dar a sua contribuição para o bem comum, adaptando-se às novas demandas da sociedade, do cenário económico e político (Kunsch, 2018). Conforme ressaltado por Silva et al. (2020), há uma tendência crescente nos estudos de Comunicação Organizacional voltados para questões éticas e de responsabilidade social. As organizações precisam demonstrar transparência, inclusão e flexibilidade, fortalecendo não apenas a sua reputação, como também, consolidando uma conduta pautada por boas práticas junto aos *stakeholders* (Brandão, 2018). Esta evolução exige uma postura proativa por parte das organizações, à medida que buscam alinhar as suas operações com as expectativas da comunidade em que estão inseridas.

Conscientes das suas responsabilidades mais abrangentes, que transcendem a busca por lucros, as organizações reconhecem a importância de se posicionar institucionalmente por meio de estratégias comunicativas (Kunsch, 2018). É através da comunicação que as organizações se desenvolvem e interagem com os diversos públicos e o mundo ao seu redor (Ruão & Kunsch, 2014). No contexto das instituições desportivas, é imperativo que elas façam a gestão do seu próprio conteúdo de mídia, por meio dos seus canais de comunicação (Hafiar et al., 2024). No entanto, é fundamental observar a consistência e a integridade das mensagens corporativas (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2017). Ou seja, cada conteúdo deve ter um propósito claro e ser relevante para o público-alvo (Scheid et al., 2019).

Este novo comportamento tornou-se ainda mais evidente com o surgimento da internet e de um novo “paradigma tecnológico” (Gouveia, 2013, p. 79), que deu às organizações desportivas a oportunidade de ampliar o seu alcance e enriquecer o conteúdo que disponibilizam (Sherwood & Nicholson, 2013). As redes sociais, em particular, tornaram-se canais de comunicação de grande potencial para os clubes de futebol. Cardoso (2023) menciona um estudo do Oxford Reuters Institute (2018), que indica que jovens entre os 18 e 24 anos – uma faixa etária muito ativa no futebol – obtêm informações predominantemente através das redes sociais, especialmente o Facebook, plataforma utilizada neste estudo. Esta realidade redefine a configuração da comunicação desportiva, transformando-a num meio de envolvimento e de proximidade com os adeptos e simpatizantes, que interagem e partilham símbolos, gerando um significado profundo nessas conexões (Pedersen et al., 2007).

## 2.2. Responsabilidade Social Corporativa

O facto de que sociedade está cada vez mais atenta ao comportamento das organizações, com essa crescente expectativa de que demonstrem um compromisso mais amplo com o bem-estar social e ambiental (Paramio-Salcines et al., 2013), denota a compreensão da importância da RSC no elo entre a organização e a sociedade contemporânea (Albareda et al., 2007). O conceito de RSC ganhou força na década de 1950 com a obra *“The Social Responsibilities of the Businessman”*, de Bowen (1953), que, inicialmente, centrou foco no compromisso dos empresários com a sua comunidade e com as demandas da sociedade.

Nas décadas seguintes, especialmente nos anos 1960 e 1970, houve um intenso debate sobre a visão de RSC no cerne das organizações. Enquanto a RSC evoluía para uma perspetiva de que as organizações também existem para servir a sociedade e atender às expectativas do público (Carroll, 1999), autores como Friedman (1962) argumentavam que a única preocupação das organizações deveria ser maximizar o lucro dos acionistas e sobreviver no mercado. Esse contraste de visões já havia começado décadas antes, com Berle (1931), que adotava uma posição de economia clássica, e Dodd Jr (1931), que defendia o envolvimento das organizações com as questões sociais.

Esta divergência de opiniões moldou o desenvolvimento da RSC, destacando a tensão entre a busca de lucro e a responsabilidade social. Autores como Elkington (1997) e Carroll (1979; 1991) desenvolveram modelos que buscavam conciliar ambas as perspectivas. Em especial, o modelo piramidal de Carroll destaca as responsabilidades económicas, legais, éticas e filantrópicas. Como já mencionado, à medida que a sociedade evoluiu, a expectativa de que as organizações contribuam para o bem-estar social e ambiental cresceu (Godfrey, 2009), reforçando a necessidade de integrar esses princípios nas suas estratégias corporativas.

Diante disso, com o tempo, a RSC passou a não apenas responder às demandas sociais, mas também se tornou um elemento de vantagem competitiva na construção de reputação (Porter, 1980) e na criação de valor para todas as partes interessadas (Frooman, 1999; Hill & Jones, 1992; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2015). Esta evolução demonstra a importância de um compromisso alargado das organizações com a responsabilidade social, que não apenas melhora a sua imagem, mas também contribui para a consecução de um mundo melhor (De Woot, 2017).

Se as organizações, em geral, têm adotado um comportamento sensível às causas sociais, as organizações desportivas não ficam à margem. Ginesta e Ordeix (2010) argumentam que, especialmente as organizações ligadas ao futebol, como, de sobremaneira, os clubes, são pioneiros na utilização de conceitos de RSC para expressar a sua face social e sustentável. A RSC, quando combinada com o desporto, é amplificada, tornando-se um instrumento eficaz para o desenvolvimento social e económico (Levermore, 2010; Slack, 2014). Isso ocorre porque o desporto, com toda a sua capilaridade, apelo e impacto sobre a sociedade (McGowan & Mahon, 2009; Walters & Tacon, 2011), pode servir como um “médio centro” entre os sectores económico e social, promovendo a conciliação entre ambos (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007).

Assim, nos dias de hoje, muitos clubes de futebol possuem departamentos ou organizações dedicadas ao envolvimento comunitário (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007), estabelecendo uma ligação direta com a sua comunidade. Segundo Ginesta e Ordeix (2010), essa interação é fundamental para fortalecer a reputação das organizações, criando uma relação mutuamente benéfica com o seu ecossistema. Essas Fundações ou Institutos promovem campanhas focadas em questões sociais, geralmente realizadas em parceria com especialistas da sociedade civil, ONGs e ativistas. Um exemplo é a Fundação do Futebol, em Portugal, que implementa diversas iniciativas, seja de forma independente ou em parceria com os clubes afiliados e organizações pública e civil, de modo a alcançar o que temos preconizado neste estudo: a contribuição para mudanças sociais.

Afinal, conforme defendido por Kotler e Lee (2005), a concretização de um mundo melhor está ligado a uma colaboração corporativa capaz de efetivar mudanças significativas. Os autores destacam que o respaldo das organizações pode manifestar-se por meio de diversas iniciativas, incluindo contribuições financeiras, subvenções, publicidade, patrocínios, expertise técnica e uma comunicação persuasiva voltada para a consciencialização social. Nessa altura, adentramos à principal obra teórica deste estudo. Kotler e Lee (2005) apresentam seis categorias de iniciativas sociais corporativas, que abarcam desde a sensibilização até a filantropia, voluntariado e práticas corporativas socialmente responsáveis.

Importa destacar que, ao longo do livro, os autores enfatizam o termo “discricionário”, referindo-se não a atividades empresariais obrigatórias por lei, morais ou éticas, mas sim a um compromisso voluntário que as empresas assumem ao selecionar e implementar essas práticas e efetuar essas contribuições. Isso remete para a reflexão de Athanasopoulou, Douvis e Kyriakis (2011), que abordam duas perspectivas complementares: a pragmática, onde fazer o bem é um bom negócio, e a nobre, onde fazer o bem é considerado a ação certa. Na nossa série de estudos sobre a importância que os clubes de futebol conferem à Responsabilidade Social Corporativa (RSC), buscamos essencialmente a perspectiva nobre, que motiva os clubes a se comprometerem com o bem-estar da sociedade com práticas discricionárias e voluntárias.

Assim, apresentamos na tabela abaixo, um breve resumo da proposta de cada uma das seis práticas de RSC elaboradas por Kotler e Lee (2005):



Tabela 1. Seis práticas de RSC elaboradas por Kotler e Lee (2005)

| <b>Iniciativa</b>                                                                                          | <b>Resumo</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b><br><b>Promoções de Causas Corporativas</b><br><br>Kotler e Lee (2005, p. 49 a 80)                 | A primeira iniciativa de RSC enfoca as Promoções de Causa, onde uma corporação dedica-se a promover consciencialização e preocupação sobre uma causa social específica. Essas promoções podem ser gerenciadas pela própria organização, agindo de forma independente, ou em parceria com organizações associadas à causa. O cerne dessa iniciativa reside nas comunicações persuasivas, destinadas a criar consciência e mobilizar ações em prol da causa. Os objetivos de comunicação incluem aumentar a consciencialização, motivar ações solidárias e educar o público sobre questões relevantes, desde ambientais e sociais, até questões de saúde e direitos humanos. |
| <b>2</b><br><b>Marketing Relacionado a Causas</b><br><br>Kotler e Lee (2005, p. 81 a 113)                  | A estratégia de Marketing Relacionado a Causas (MRC) envolve o comprometimento de uma organização em destinar uma percentagem de uma determinada receita para uma causa específica, com base, principalmente, nas vendas de produtos. Ao contrário de outras iniciativas sociais corporativas, o nível de contribuição depende de uma ativação do público externo. A MRC busca criar uma relação mutuamente benéfica, impulsionando as vendas de produtos, ao passo que gera apoio financeiro para a causa. Os consumidores têm a oportunidade de contribuir para instituições de caridade enquanto adquirem produtos, caracterizando um modelo ganha-ganha.               |
| <b>3</b><br><b>Marketing Social Corporativo</b><br><br>Kotler e Lee (2005, p. 114 a 143)                   | A estratégia de Marketing Social Corporativo (MSC) se concentra no apoio ao desenvolvimento e implementação de campanhas de mudança de comportamento. Diferenciando-se de outras iniciativas, o MSC coloca ênfase nessa reeducação individual, buscando influenciar ações específicas que beneficiem a sociedade como um todo. O MSC muitas vezes se materializa por meio de parcerias com agências do setor público e organizações sem fins lucrativos.                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>4</b><br><b>Filantropia Corporativa</b><br><br>Kotler e Lee (2005, p. 144 a 174)                        | Na Filantropia Corporativa, uma empresa realiza contribuições diretas, seja em forma de dinheiro, doações de equipamentos ou serviços, para instituições de caridade ou causas sociais. Essa iniciativa, considerada a mais tradicional dentre as estratégias sociais corporativas, tem evoluído para abordagens mais estratégicas, alinhando as suas atividades filantrópicas aos objetivos organizacionais. As organizações ampliaram as opções de doação, incluindo recursos corporativos além de dinheiro, como produtos em excesso, uso de canais de distribuição e até mesmo conhecimento técnico.                                                                   |
| <b>5</b><br><b>Voluntariado Comunitário</b><br><br>Kotler e Lee (2005, p. 175 a 206)                       | Na iniciativa de Voluntariado Comunitário, uma organização incentiva os seus colaboradores, parceiros e demais stakeholders a se voluntariarem para apoiar organizações e causas locais. Esse envolvimento pode ocorrer de maneira independente ou em parceria com outras organizações. É vista como uma das formas mais genuínas de envolvimento social corporativo, contribuindo para relacionamentos comunitários, satisfação dos colaboradores e melhora da reputação.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>6</b><br><b>Práticas Empresariais Socialmente Responsáveis</b><br><br>Kotler e Lee (2005, p. 207 a 235) | Na iniciativa "Práticas Empresariais Socialmente Responsáveis," uma organização adota práticas corporativas discricionárias e investimentos que apoiam causas sociais, visando melhorar o bem-estar da comunidade e proteger o meio ambiente a longo prazo. As práticas incluem alterações nos procedimentos internos, design de instalações, fabricação, relatórios externos e até mesmo a seleção de fornecedores sustentáveis. A transparência e a comunicação são fundamentais. Os benefícios abrangem a satisfação do seu público interno, melhorias no desempenho ambiental e um apoio crescente nas esferas econômica, social e política.                           |

Fonte: adaptado pelos autores a partir da proposta de Kotler &amp; Lee (2005)

### 2.2.1. Adaptação das práticas de RSC para o contexto do futebol

Uma das propostas deste estudo é elaborar uma adaptação das seis práticas de RSC da obra seminal de Kotler e Lee (2005) para o universo do futebol. Uma vez que a Fundação do Futebol tem por missão amplificar e estimular nos clubes a promoção social, partilhando nos seus canais oficiais as iniciativas dos seus afiliados, essa adaptação também contempla as práticas dessa instituição. Tais iniciativas, adaptadas ao futebol, são uma oportunidade para os clubes alinharem os seus valores às estratégias, de modo a expressá-los da melhor maneira.

Entretanto, é importante destacar que, apesar das inúmeras vantagens associadas a um reforço de um compromisso social mais alargado, os clubes podem enfrentar obstáculos na sua implementação, como restrições financeiras e de recursos humanos, a necessidade de equilibrar interesses de patrocinadores e público, e a ênfase natural ao desempenho desportivo, que se pode sobrepor à intenção genuína de promover e dar visibilidade às ações e campanhas sociais realizadas pelos clubes.

De modo, também, a transpor essas dificuldades, exploraremos como cada uma dessas estratégias pode ser adaptada e integrada ao contexto do futebol, examinando não apenas os seus impactos sociais, mas também a forma estratégica como a comunicação pode ser empregue para dar visibilidade a essas iniciativas e envolver os adeptos de maneira orgânica.

#### Prática 1: Promoções de Causa no contexto do Futebol

Num contexto desportivo, a aplicabilidade da prática de Promoções de Causa para um clube de futebol se mostra uma ferramenta útil para engajar a sua base de adeptos e a comunidade em questões sociais sensíveis. Utilizando as suas redes sociais digitais, o clube pode lançar campanhas persuasivas focadas em sensibilizar e consciencializar a sociedade sobre uma causa específica. Tal como a *The Body Shop* e a sua promoção contra testes em animais, citada por Kotler e Lee (2005, p. 24), um clube de futebol pode escolher uma causa alinhada aos seus valores e desenvolver uma promoção para sensibilizar a sociedade.

A comunicação persuasiva é vital para essa iniciativa, utilizando princípios eficazes para desenvolver mensagens motivadoras, selecionando os seus canais de comunicação mais adequados para a proposta. O clube pode partilhar estatísticas e histórias impactantes, destacando a necessidade de apoio à causa escolhida. Isso pode incluir números relacionados a problemas locais, ou histórias de indivíduos que foram ou podem ser beneficiados pela iniciativa. Além disso, o uso estratégico de informações educativas, como infográficos ou vídeos informativos, com técnicas de *storytelling*, pode amplificar o impacto da mensagem.

Ao explorar as estratégias de persuasão, o clube pode conduzir os seus adeptos e a comunidade em geral para ações específicas. Isso pode envolver direcionar os interessados para um site dedicado à causa, solicitando a participação em eventos beneficentes organizados pelo clube, incentivando doações financeiras para instituições de caridade parceiras ou mesmo para as suas próprias fundações e institutos, como já acontece atualmente em clubes como Benfica, Sporting e Marítimo, em Portugal.

Ao envolver a comunidade em atividades práticas e utilizar as suas redes sociais digitais para alertar e sensibilizar a sociedade com preocupações de cariz social, o clube de futebol não apenas contribui para a causa, como também fortalece os seus laços com a comunidade, consolidando a sua posição como agente de sensibilização e consciencialização.



## Prática 2: Marketing Relacionado a Causas no contexto do Futebol

No âmbito do futebol, os clubes podem adotar uma prática de Marketing Relacionado a Causas como uma forma tangível de contribuir para iniciativas sociais, enquanto fortalecem a sua conexão com os adeptos. Essa iniciativa envolve, por exemplo, o compromisso de doar uma parte da receita de diferentes fontes, como bilheteria, *merchandising* e outras formas de arrecadação de fundos associadas ao clube. O clube de futebol poderia designar uma percentagem das receitas de cada bilhete vendido para uma partida de futebol ou destinar um percentual do lucro obtido com a venda de equipamentos desportivos oficiais para uma causa específica.

Ao alinhar-se a organizações sem fins lucrativos ou instituições beneficentes, o clube cria uma relação mutuamente benéfica. Essa parceria é geralmente orientada para uma ação ou um período específico, proporcionando aos adeptos uma oportunidade de contribuir para uma causa, ao mesmo tempo em que apoiam o clube. Por exemplo, o clube pode anunciar que uma percentagem das vendas de camisolas de uma edição especial, com alusão ao cancro de mama, será destinada a organizações afins durante o “Outubro Rosa”.

O Marketing Relacionado a Causas no contexto do futebol oferece um ciclo de ganhos: os adeptos sentem-se envolvidos em ações sociais, o clube solidifica a sua imagem como uma entidade responsável e as organizações beneficiárias recebem apoio. Ao comunicar essa estratégia através das redes sociais digitais, o clube pode amplificar o impacto da campanha, incentivando os adeptos a participarem ativamente, gerando um senso coletivo de responsabilidade social.

## Prática 3: Marketing Social Corporativo no contexto do Futebol

A iniciativa de Marketing Social Corporativo surge, no contexto do futebol, como uma ferramenta para clubes promoverem mudanças de comportamento e cultivarem uma sociedade mais inclusiva e consciente, especialmente em questões sensíveis como racismo, homofobia, xenofobia ou mesmo a consciencialização para a vacinação da COVID-19, por exemplo, casos em que se supõe campanhas de consciencialização como meio de mudar o comportamento da sociedade. Utilizando as suas redes sociais digitais, os clubes podem se valer do seu apelo para apoiar ou desenvolver campanhas destinadas a melhorar a saúde pública, a segurança e o bem-estar da comunidade, quando são necessárias ações mais impactantes com vistas à mudança de comportamento.

Como referido, diferentemente das promoções de causa, o MSC concentra-se na efetiva mudança de comportamento, buscando abordar questões sociais de maneira mais direta. Um clube de futebol pode, por exemplo, desenvolver campanhas próprias para combater o racismo nos estádios, incentivando a empatia e o respeito entre os adeptos. Pode ainda estabelecer parcerias estratégicas com agências do setor público ou organizações sem fins lucrativos como forma de amplificar o alcance e a eficácia dessas campanhas, como tem acontecido no Brasil com o Observatório da Discriminação Racial no Futebol<sup>4</sup>.

Como exemplificado por Kotler e Lee (2005, p. 24), tal como a organização *Philip Morris* desenvolveu uma campanha encorajando os pais a dialogarem com os filhos sobre o uso do tabaco, um clube também pode criar um conteúdo educativo que aborde temas como a importância da vacinação contra a COVID-19, promovendo uma mensagem baseada em evidências científicas. Integrando-se às agências públicas de saúde, o clube pode reforçar a importância de práticas de higiene preventivas, contribuindo assim para o bem-estar e a saúde da comunidade.

4. Disponível em: <https://observatorioracialfutebol.com.br/> Acesso em 30 de Jan. 2024.

Ao envolver os seus adeptos nessas iniciativas, partindo da comunicação nas redes sociais digitais, o clube contribui para mudanças positivas na sociedade, ao passo que também fortalece o vínculo emocional com a sua base de fãs, destacando o seu compromisso com valores sociais e incentivando uma cultura desportiva mais diversa e inclusiva.

#### **Prática 4: Filantropia Corporativa no contexto do Futebol**

No universo do futebol, a Filantropia Corporativa permite que os clubes contribuam de forma direta para o bem-estar da comunidade. Esta prática pode ser implementada de diversas formas, desde doações em dinheiro até a oferta de serviços e instalações para instituições beneficentes. Os clubes podem adotar uma abordagem estratégica, escolhendo áreas específicas para concentrar os seus esforços filantrópicos, alinhando-os aos seus objetivos e valores.

Uma maneira tangível para um clube de futebol se envolver em Filantropia Corporativa é realizar doações diretas para instituições de caridade locais ou organizações sem fins lucrativos que trabalham em benefício de causas relevantes. Isso pode envolver contribuições financeiras ou doação de materiais desportivos. Por exemplo, um clube pode doar parte da sua receita para programas educacionais locais, conceder subsídios para projetos comunitários ou doar equipamentos desportivos para escolas da região. Além disso, a Filantropia Corporativa no contexto do futebol pode incluir a cessão de instalações, como o estádio e outras estruturas do clube, para a realização de atividades sociais e eventos beneficentes.

Ao comunicar essas ações através das redes sociais digitais e outros canais de comunicação, o clube pode impulsionar os seus adeptos a abraçarem iniciativas filantrópicas. Essa abordagem não apenas contribui para melhorar a qualidade de vida local, mas também reforça a imagem positiva do clube como um agente de mudança social.

#### **Prática 5: Voluntariado Comunitário no contexto do Futebol**

O Voluntariado Comunitário, no cenário futebolístico, representa uma oportunidade para os clubes se envolverem com a comunidade local, demonstrando o seu compromisso social e promovendo uma cultura de solidariedade. Esta prática envolve a mobilização de ídolos do passado, jogadores, comissão técnica, funcionários, mascotes e outros membros associados ao clube para participarem de atividades que beneficiam organizações e causas locais.

Os clubes de futebol podem adotar uma abordagem multifacetada para o voluntariado, incluindo visitas a escolas, hospitais, lares e outras instituições. Por exemplo, jogadores do clube podem realizar palestras em escolas locais, partilhando as suas experiências e incentivando os alunos a perseguirem os seus sonhos, enquanto a comissão técnica pode organizar clínicas desportivas para jovens em comunidades carenciadas. Essa prática pode ser implementada de forma autónoma pelos membros do clube ou em colaboração com organizações sem fins lucrativos locais.

A promoção dessas atividades por meio das redes sociais do clube pode influenciar os adeptos a juntarem-se aos esforços voluntários, criando uma mobilização para as causas sociais. O Voluntariado Comunitário não apenas fortalece os laços entre o clube e a sua comunidade, mas também proporciona uma oportunidade singular para os seus membros, incluindo jogadores, treinadores e funcionários, em se conectarem de maneira mais próxima e significativa com os adeptos, a sociedade e a cultura do clube.

## Prática 6: Práticas Empresariais Socialmente Responsáveis no contexto do Futebol

A implementação de Práticas Empresariais Socialmente Responsáveis no contexto do futebol oferece aos clubes a oportunidade de transcender as simples obrigações econômicas, legais e éticas, prescritas no modelo piramidal de Carroll (1979), assumindo um papel proativo na promoção de causas sociais e sustentáveis, como são as responsabilidades discricionais do topo da pirâmide. Essas práticas não só alteram procedimentos internos, mas também redefinem as operações do clube para refletir um compromisso mais amplo com o bem-estar da comunidade e a sustentabilidade ambiental.

Os clubes podem adotar iniciativas como a concepção de instalações que atendam as diretrizes ambientais e de segurança, promovendo a conservação de energia e a sustentabilidade, como, por exemplo, a instalação de painéis solares nas suas estruturas físicas. Além disso, ao escolher materiais de fabrico e embalagem *ecofriendly*, podem contribuir para objetivos de redução de resíduos e eliminação de emissões tóxicas. A descontinuação de ofertas de produtos que são considerados prejudiciais, mas não ilegais, é outra forma pela qual os clubes podem demonstrar o seu compromisso com práticas socialmente responsáveis. Por exemplo, um clube pode optar por eliminar itens de consumo que tenham impactos negativos na saúde ou no meio ambiente.

A comunicação eficaz dessas práticas socialmente responsáveis é fundamental e, no caso dos clubes de futebol, pode ser direcionada não só aos adeptos, como também a agências reguladoras, investidores e stakeholders especiais. Essas práticas, quando implementadas com sucesso, contribuem para construir uma imagem positiva do clube como uma entidade que vai além das expectativas normais, promovendo o bem comum e assumindo um papel de liderança na criação de um ambiente sustentável.

### 2.3. Agrupamento das práticas de RSC em estratégias de Sensibilização, Intervenção e Corporativas

Com base nas seis iniciativas elaboradas por Kotler e Lee (2005) e adaptadas para o contexto do futebol, lançamos uma proposta de sistematização no sentido de agrupá-las, através das suas similaridades, em três estratégias: Sensibilização, Intervenção e Corporativas. Este arranjo visa facilitar a operacionalização das estratégias, com ênfase no ambiente digital, de modo que possam ser aplicadas de forma didática por outras organizações desportivas.

**Tabela 2: Sistematização das práticas de RSC em três estratégias**

| <b>Estratégia</b>        | <b>Práticas</b>                                                                                    | <b>Objetivos</b>                                                                                          |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Sensibilização</b> | Promoção de Causa (Prática 1) e Marketing Social Corporativo (Prática 3)                           | Aumentar a consciencialização e a preocupação sobre questões sociais por meio de comunicações persuasivas |
| <b>2. Intervenção</b>    | Marketing Relacionado a Causas (Prática 2) e Filantropia Corporativa (Prática 4)                   | Envolve ações tangíveis e diretas, como doações integrais ou parciais para causas                         |
| <b>3. Corporativas</b>   | Voluntariado Comunitário (Prática 5) e Práticas Empresariais Socialmente Responsáveis (Prática 6). | Integra valores socialmente responsáveis nas suas operações e na cultura organizacional                   |

Fonte: elaborado pelos autores a partir da proposta de Kotler & Lee (2005)

As Estratégias de Sensibilização, como a Promoção de Causa e o Marketing Social Corporativo, concentram-se na consciencialização e preocupação sobre questões sociais, utilizando comunicações persuasivas. Já as Estratégias de Intervenção, como o Marketing Relacionado a Causas e a Filantropia Corporativa, vão além da sensibilização, envolvendo ações concretas e tangíveis. Por fim, as Estratégias Corporativas, representadas pelo Voluntariado Comunitário e Práticas Empresariais Socialmente Responsáveis, refletem um envolvimento interno do clube, integrando valores responsáveis nas operações e na cultura organizacional.

### 3. Metodologia

Alinhado com as diretrizes propostas por Yin (2015), pioneiro nas teorias de estudo de caso, este trabalho se dedica à análise de um fenómeno contemporâneo: a comunicação de RSC no contexto do futebol. Com o intuito de compreender as estratégias da Fundação do Futebol, esta investigação adota uma abordagem de estudo de caso único, realizando uma imersão profunda no objeto delimitado (Martins, 2008, p. 11). Entre as táticas sugeridas por Yin (2015) para a investigação de estudos de caso únicos, este estudo adota uma das alternativas recomendadas pelo autor, funcionando como uma introdução a uma investigação mais ampla, desempenhando um papel semelhante ao de um caso-piloto.

A escolha pela plataforma Facebook justifica-se pelo facto de esta ser, segundo Skalski, Neuendorf e Cajigas (2017), a principal plataforma de conteúdo de media interativa. Para esta análise, recolhemos todas as mensagens publicadas pela Fundação do Futebol ao longo do ano de 2022, utilizando o software *Crowdtangle* para a extração de dados. A seleção deste período deve-se à consolidação da parceria entre a Liga Portugal, a Fundação do Futebol e as Nações Unidas, que, neste ano, se oficializaram como parceiras no projeto “Football for the Goals”.<sup>5</sup>

A opção pela técnica da análise de conteúdo é justificada pela necessidade de superar incertezas na interpretação e enriquecer a compreensão das mensagens. Conforme Bardin (2011, p. 29), essa abordagem atua, tanto de maneira heurística, explorando e descobrindo conteúdos, quanto como administração da prova, permitindo testar hipóteses de forma sistemática. Dessa forma, essa técnica não apenas facilita a compreensão do que está presente nas mensagens, mas também serve como uma ferramenta no sentido de explorar, descobrir e validar as interpretações no contexto da comunicação de responsabilidade social no futebol (Berelson, 1952; Neuendorf, 2017).

Ademais, a Análise de Conteúdo é uma técnica amplamente utilizada e valorizada entre os investigadores de comunicação, como apontam Carlomagno e da Rocha (2016), justamente por ser eficaz na interpretação de diferentes tipos de material comunicacional (Skalski et al., 2017). Segundo Janis (1982), esta metodologia fornece ferramentas rigorosas para descrever e analisar o conteúdo de variadas formas de comunicação, incluindo mensagens partilhadas em redes sociais (Maia et al., 2022), o que ajuda também a justificar a escolha desta técnica para este estudo.

A validação dos dados na análise de conteúdo exige regras e critérios rigorosos que permitam melhorar as inferências a partir das informações recolhidas (Krippendorff, 2004; Sampaio & Lycarião, 2021). O processo inicia-se com a codificação dos dados, o que organiza e classifica o material em grupos de características comuns (Bardin, 2011). Esta categorização transforma os dados em uma espécie de conhecimento estruturado, com o intuito de refletir, de forma adequada, os conceitos empíricos do estudo (Berelson, 1952; Sampaio & Lycarião, 2021). Assim, a definição de categorias, baseada no referencial teórico e adaptada ao contexto deste estudo, torna-se uma etapa fundamental que ajuda a garantir que os resultados sejam claros e consistentes (Maia et al., 2022).

---

5. Disponível em: <https://www.ligaportugal.pt/pt/epocas/20222023/noticias/institucional/liga-portugal-e-fundacao-do-futebol-na-onu-com-o-football-for-the-goals>. Acesso em 04 de Jul. de 2024.

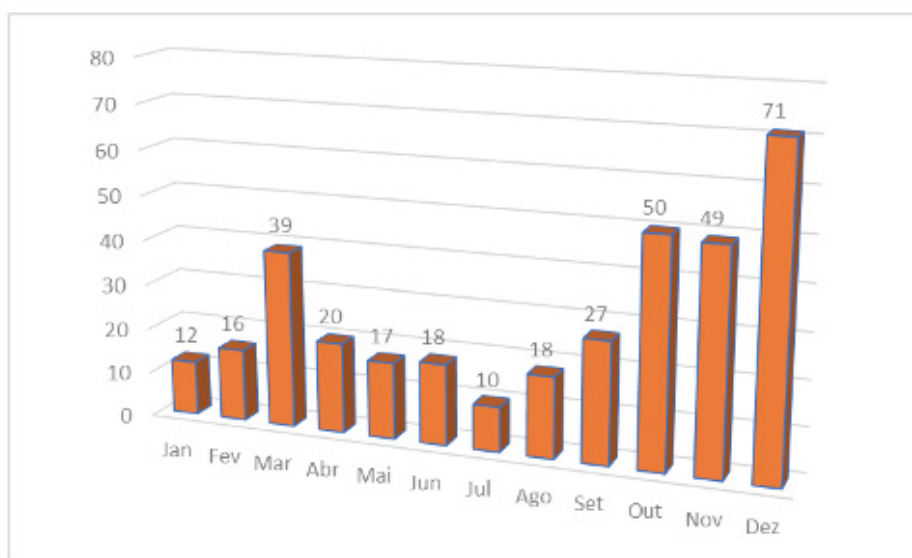
Para assegurar a reprodutibilidade do estudo por parte de outros autores, desenvolvemos um livro de códigos com 14 variáveis, que cobrem aspetos temporais, tipos de conteúdo, presença de ODS e estratégias de RSC adotadas pelos clubes, ancorada nas práticas de Kotler e Lee (2005). Este livro de códigos, prescrito por Janis (1982), facilita a replicação e a reprodução da análise por outros investigadores que desejam explorar a intersecção entre futebol, comunicação e a responsabilidade social. Conforme destacado por Berelson (1952) e Maia et al. (2022), a análise de conteúdo torna-se válida e fiável apenas quando é sistemática, o que reforça a importância da estrutura de codificação como base para a replicabilidade e reprodutibilidade do estudo.

Para esclarecer os tópicos identificados como temas de RSC neste estudo, destacamos a abordagem dos ODS, que inclui: a erradicação da pobreza (ODS 1) e da fome (2), a promoção da saúde (3) e educação de qualidade (4), a igualdade de género (5), acesso a água potável e saneamento (6), uso de energias renováveis (7), trabalho digno e crescimento económico (8), indústria, inovação e infraestruturas (9), redução das desigualdades (10), cidades e comunidades sustentáveis (11), produção e consumo sustentáveis (12), ação climática (13), proteção da vida marinha (14), proteção da vida terrestre (15), paz, justiça e instituições eficazes (16) e parcerias e meios de implementação (ODS 17).<sup>6</sup>

#### 4. Resultados

Entre publicações originais da Fundação do Futebol e partilhas de clubes afiliados, foram identificadas um total de 347 postagens, sendo que apenas nove não fazem referência a algum ODS (Gráfico 1). Os meses em que verificamos a maior recorrência de publicações foram os três últimos do ano: outubro (50), novembro (49) e dezembro (71). O aumento das postagens nos últimos meses do ano pode refletir campanhas sazonais, como o Outubro Rosa, a época natalícia e eventos específicos de celebração do fim do ano civil. Essas datas parecem mobilizar uma maior participação em temas de saúde e redução das desigualdades:

**Gráfico 1: Número de postagens alinhadas com os ODS por mês**



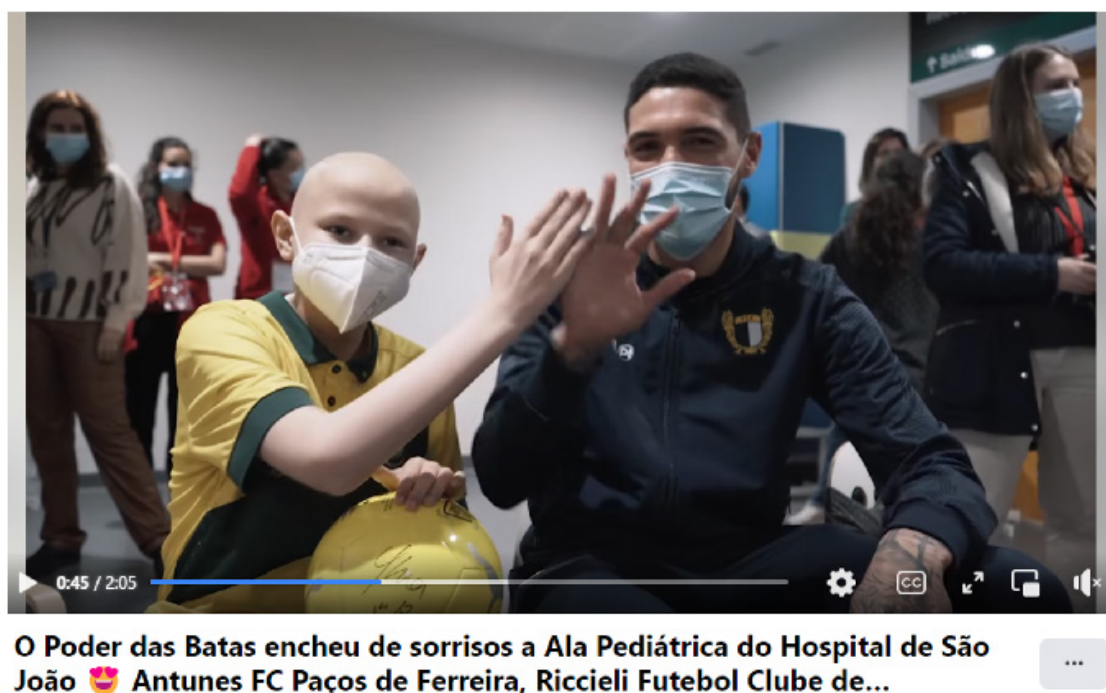
Fonte: elaborado pelos autores

6. Disponível em: <https://unescoportugal.mne.gov.pt/pt/temas/objetivos-de-desenvolvimento-sustentavel/os-17-ods>. Acesso em 06 de Jul. de 2023



Importa destacar que, entre estes três meses, onde se observa um aumento significativo de publicações de RSC, o ODS mais frequentemente abordado foi o terceiro, “Saúde”, com um total de 58 postagens, enquanto a “Estratégia Corporativa” foi a mais utilizada, compreendendo práticas de voluntariado e iniciativas empresariais (72 publicações). Apresentamos, de seguida, um exemplo ilustrativo desse tipo de publicação. A Fundação do Futebol partilhou um vídeo produzido pelo Futebol Clube de Paços de Ferreira, que integra o projeto “O Poder das Batas”<sup>7</sup>, no qual colaboradores, mascotes e jogadores dos clubes voluntariam-se para visitar alas pediátricas em hospitais do país.

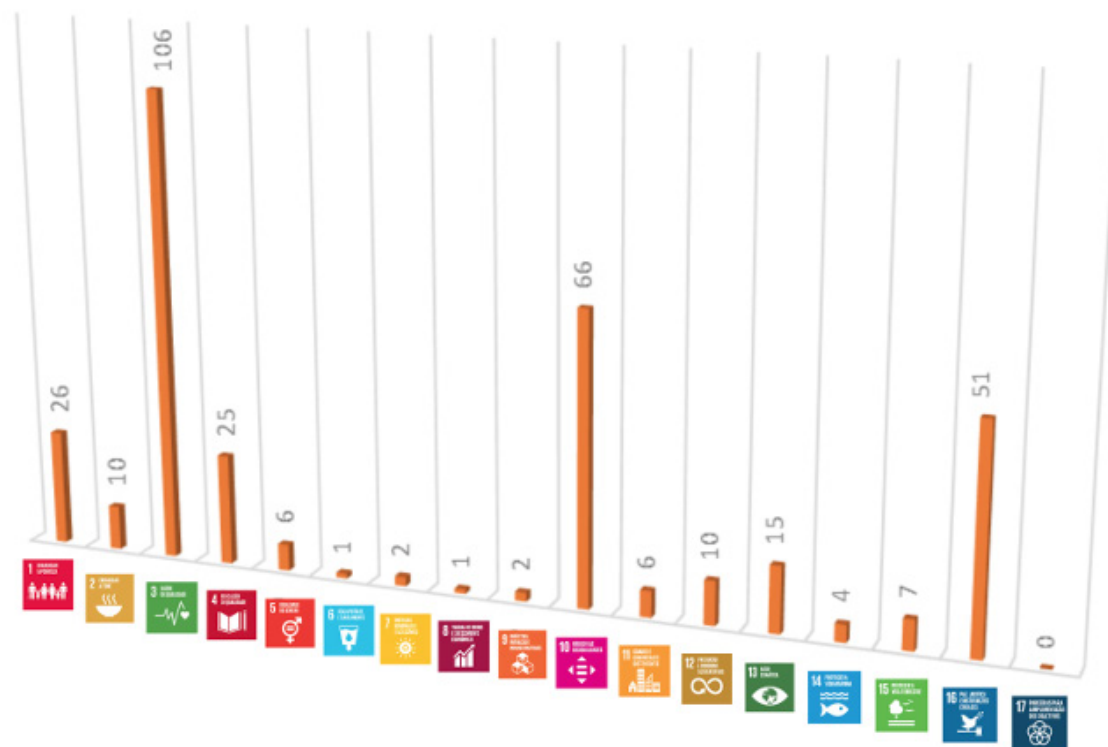
**Figura 1. Frame do vídeo sobre o projeto “O Poder das Batas” promovido pelo Futebol Clube de Paços de Ferreira**



Fonte: Facebook da Fundação do Futebol (28/11/2022)

Considerando que o período de análise neste estudo corresponde ao ano de 2022, próximo do pico da pandemia do Coronavírus, não é de estranhar que o projeto “O Poder das Batas” se tenha evidenciado, acabando por contribuir, de forma significativa, para que o ODS 3 ganhe maior destaque. No total foram 106 postagens associadas à temática da Saúde, o que pode determinar um maior foco da Fundação do Futebol e dos clubes nessa área, pelo motivo já mencionado, mas também porque a prática desportiva surge necessariamente associada ao bem-estar físico e aos cuidados com a saúde (Gráfico 2). O ODS 10, que se concentra na redução das desigualdades e na eliminação de preconceitos, obteve a segunda posição em termos de atenção, totalizando 66 postagens. O terceiro ODS mais abordado foi o 16, centrado na promoção da paz. Este último recebeu atenção especial devido aos conflitos iniciados no leste europeu em 2022, atraindo o engajamento de alguns clubes e da Fundação do Futebol.

7. Disponível em: <https://www.facebook.com/fundacaofutebolligaportugal/videos/1329675867863315/>. Acesso em 13 de Jul. de 2023

**Gráfico 2: Distribuição do número de posts por Objetivos do Desenvolvimento Sustentável**

Fonte: elaborado pelos autores

Ao analisar as postagens associadas ao ODS 3, percebemos que há uma maior concentração na estratégia 1, Sensibilização, com 43 postagens. Um exemplo é o vídeo veiculado pela Fundação Benfica, partilhado pela Fundação do Futebol, onde é assinalado o Dia Internacional da Criança com Cancro<sup>8</sup>. Identificamos uma tónica nessas postagens de alerta e sensibilização para temas de saúde, nas plataformas dos clubes, partilhados pela Fundação.

**Figura 2: Frame do vídeo veiculado pela Fundação Benfica a propósito do Dia Internacional da Criança com Cancro**

Fonte: Facebook da Fundação do Futebol (15/02/2022)

8. Disponível em: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=4699494956838873>. Acesso em 13 de Jul. 2023

Das seis práticas delineadas por Kotler e Lee (2005), a mais frequente foi a 1, “Promoção de Causa”, com 105 postagens, seguida pela 5, “Voluntariado Comunitário”, com 87 postagens. Ao agruparmos essas práticas nas três estratégias, observamos que a “Estratégia de Sensibilização” se destaca como a mais empregada, com um total de 143 postagens associadas. Em seguida, as “Estratégias de Intervenção”, com 98 postagens, e “Corporativa”, com 97 postagens, apresentam uma recorrência praticamente equivalente nas redes sociais digitais da Fundação do Futebol.

Ao analisar a frequência das postagens associadas aos ODS em cada uma das três estratégias, evidencia-se que o ODS 3 é consistentemente empregue com destaque em todas elas, embora haja uma ênfase diferenciada nos demais ODS de acordo com cada estratégia. Na “Estratégia de Sensibilização”, por exemplo, observa-se que os ODS 10 (30 posts) e 16 (26 posts) mantêm uma presença significativa, quase equivalente à do ODS 3, indicando um uso recorrente dessas temáticas. Já nas “Estratégias de Intervenção”, os ODS 1 e 2, relacionados à erradicação da pobreza e combate à fome, com um total de 20 postagens, ganham destaque, diferenciando-se da visibilidade que recebem nas outras estratégias. Por fim, nas “Estratégias Corporativas”, o ODS 3 assume maior relevância, contabilizando 38 postagens associadas

**Gráfico 3: Concentração de ODS por Estratégia**



Fonte: elaborado pelos autores

Nesse contexto, ilustramos com a iniciativa da Fundação do Futebol, que doou 16 toneladas de alimentos para a Rede de Emergência Alimentar<sup>9</sup>, demonstrando uma abordagem concreta na “Estratégia de Intervenção”, centrada entre os ODS 1 e 2, de erradicação da pobreza e combate à fome.

9. Disponível em: <https://encurtador.com.br/2Rnd1>. Acesso em 15 de Jul. 2023

**Figura 3: Post da Fundação do Futebol - Liga de Portugal sobre o apoio à Rede de Emergência Alimentar**



Fonte: Facebook da Fundação do Futebol (30/01/2022)

## 5. Considerações Finais

A análise das estratégias de Responsabilidade Social Corporativa (RSC) da Fundação do Futebol revela uma abordagem abrangente para o alinhamento com questões sociais. Antes de aprofundar a análise dos resultados, chamamos a atenção para o facto de que, das 347 postagens e partilhas da Fundação, apenas nove não estavam associadas a algum dos 17 Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS), evidenciando um acerto metodológico ao utilizar os ODS como referência para o conteúdo de natureza social.

O desequilíbrio na abordagem dos ODS nas redes sociais digitais da Fundação levanta uma hipótese: embora a Fundação tenha aderido à iniciativa *Football For The Goals*, parece não ter desenvolvido uma estratégia baseada na Agenda 2030, que priorize uma abordagem simétrica de todos os ODS, visando uma cooperação mais eficaz com as metas globais das Nações Unidas. Esta lacuna reflete-se igualmente nas práticas dos clubes, que aparentam não definir temáticas sociais que estejam em consonância com as suas práticas corporativas ou a sua missão institucional. O exemplo do St. Pauli, na Alemanha, é ilustrativo: o clube projeta a sua identidade através de uma ideologia alinhada a temas de igualdade, inclusão e justiça social. Historicamente associado à classe trabalhadora, o St. Pauli assume uma posição declarada contra o racismo, a homofobia e o sexismo, promovendo valores que se relacionam com os ODS 5 e 10, relativos à igualdade de género e à redução das desigualdades. Esta análise



sugere a necessidade de uma revisão mais aprofundada das estratégias adotadas por estas organizações desportivas, de forma a assegurar uma maior coerência e alinhamento com os objetivos e princípios da Agenda 2030, potenciando uma convergência com os seus próprios valores e reforçando-os.

A predominância do ODS 3, Saúde, destaca a importância atribuída à promoção da saúde e ao bem-estar no contexto do futebol português. Esta ênfase não é apenas uma resposta à proximidade temporal da pandemia, quando do recorte da investigação, mas, especialmente, sobressai-se através de postagens de sensibilização sobre temas de saúde e higiene, além da execução de um projeto muito significativo, “O Poder das Batas”. Esta iniciativa leva jogadores, ídolos e mascotes para visitar as alas pediátricas dos hospitais do país, demonstrando um claro compromisso da Fundação com o bem-estar da comunidade.

Percebemos um certo equilíbrio no emprego das estratégias de “Sensibilização, Intervenção e Corporativas”, nas atividades da Fundação, desde a consciencialização para questões sociais até ações concretas e a integração de valores socialmente responsáveis na sua cultura organizacional. Isso nos leva a crer que, ao contrário da perceção geralmente associada à RSC como predominantemente filantrópica, a prevalência das estratégias de sensibilização indica uma mudança de paradigma. O posicionamento dos clubes em relação às violações de direitos humanos, responsabilidade social e sustentabilidade torna-se tão importante quanto, ou até mais do que, ações filantrópicas e de caridade, nas estratégias da Fundação. Essa ênfase nas “Estratégias de Sensibilização” na comunicação da Fundação, utilizando as redes sociais digitais como ferramentas para educar, consciencializar e mobilizar a comunidade em torno de questões sociais, não apenas amplificam a mensagem da Fundação, mas também promovem o engajamento dos adeptos e da sociedade em iniciativas sociais.

Contudo, apesar dos esforços da Fundação do Futebol, ainda há espaço para o aprimoramento e a expansão das iniciativas de RSC no futebol português. A continuidade do monitoramento e avaliação das atividades elaboradas pelos clubes é essencial para garantir a eficácia e o impacto positivo a longo prazo, bem como garantir a simetria e equilíbrio nas abordagens, quer seja dos temas, ou mesmo das estratégias adotadas. Como o nosso foco recai mais na divulgação dessas atividades do que propriamente na sua realização, um trabalho conjunto entre o gabinete de comunicação da entidade junto à comunicação dos clubes de futebol, de modo a impulsionar as suas campanhas, e até mesmo servir de curadoria para a produção de conteúdos, seria uma ação que poderia ser adotada com mais efetividade pela entidade.

A colaboração com *stakeholders*, como organizações da sociedade civil, instituições governamentais, empresas privadas e clubes, pode ampliar o alcance das iniciativas de RSC no futebol português. Um exemplo bem-sucedido desta abordagem é o *Premier League Charitable Fund (PLCF)*, fundado em 2010, que atua em parceria com as *Club Community Organisations (CCOs)* dos clubes ingleses<sup>10</sup>, implementando programas sociais em áreas como educação, inclusão e saúde, com especial foco em jovens e grupos vulneráveis. Nos EUA, a MLS também promove a sustentabilidade através do *MLS Works*, uma plataforma que utiliza parcerias comerciais para apoiar causas ambientais. Um exemplo é o projeto *One Planet Kit*, desenvolvido com a Adidas, que utiliza plástico reciclado recolhido de zonas costeiras para fabricar camisolas das equipas da MLS, promovendo a preservação dos oceanos.<sup>11</sup>

Uma das limitações deste estudo é o uso de uma única fonte de evidências, o que impede uma compreensão mais aprofundada sobre, por exemplo, a perceção dos gestores de comunicação da Fundação e dos clubes portugueses em relação às estratégias de comunicação orientadas para a RSC, algo que poderia ser alcançado através de entrevistas. Seria igualmente pertinente uma abordagem longitudinal que permitisse comparar a atuação da Fundação ao longo do tempo, analisando, tanto a simetria no

---

10. Disponível em: <https://www.premierleague.com/footballandcommunity/premier-league-charitable-fund/club-community-organisations>. Acesso em 04 de Nov. de 2024.

11. Disponível em: <https://www.mlssoccer.com/news/end-plastic-waste-mls-unveils-one-planet-kit-made-of-recycled-materials>. Acesso em 04 de Nov. de 2024.



tratamento dos ODS, como a evolução no número de postagens próprias e na partilha de conteúdos dos clubes em diferentes períodos. Além disso, uma análise comparativa com outras ligas de elite do mundo poderia ajudar a posicionar o futebol português em termos de RSC e avaliar a aplicabilidade das práticas de RSC adaptadas a outros contextos desportivos.

Em última análise, a Fundação do Futebol assume um papel proativo e presente na promoção da responsabilidade social corporativa no contexto desportivo português, inspirando e estimulando clubes e organizações a seguirem o seu exemplo e transformando os seus objetivos corporativos em autênticos “golos sem balizas”. Este posicionamento valida o que a literatura aponta, tanto sobre o papel da comunicação organizacional na construção de um mundo mais justo (Deetz, 2010; Kunsch, 2018; Silva et al., 2020), como sobre, mais especificamente, o impacto das organizações desportivas para além do seu desempenho em campo (Ginesta & Ordeix, 2010; Levermore, 2010; Slack, 2014; McGowan & Mahon, 2009; Walters & Tacon, 2011; Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). Ao integrar valores éticos, compromisso social e práticas sustentáveis nas suas atividades, a Fundação não apenas contribui para um mundo mais justo e equitativo, como também fortalece a conexão entre o desporto e a sociedade, demonstrando o poder transformador do futebol para o bem comum.

## Referências Bibliográficas

- Albareda, L., Lozano, J. M., & Ysa, T. (2007). Public policies on corporate social responsibility: The role of governments in Europe. *Journal of business ethics*, 74, 391-407.
- Athanasopoulou, P., Douvis, J., & Kyriakis, V. (2011). *Corporate social responsibility (CSR) in sports: antecedents and consequences*. Paper presented at the 4th Annual EuroMed Conference of the EuroMed Academy of Business.
- Baldissera, R. (2009). Comunicação Organizacional na perspectiva da complexidade. *Organicom*, 6(10-11), 115-120. doi:<https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2238-2593.organicom.2009.139013>
- Bardin, L. (2011). *Análise de conteúdo* (L. A. Reto & A. Pinheiro, Trans.). São Paulo: Edições 70.
- Berelson, B. (1952). Content analysis in communication research. In. Glencoe: Free Press.
- Berle, A. A. (1931). Corporate powers as powers in trust. In *Corporate Governance* (pp. 1049-1074): Harvard Law Review.
- Bowen, H. R. (1953). *Social responsibilities of the businessman*: University of Iowa Press.
- Brandão, N. G. (2018). A comunicação interna estratégica como reforço da valorização das pessoas e seus níveis de engagement nas organizações. *Media Jornalismo*, 18(33), 91-102.
- Cardoso, G. (2023). A comunicação da comunicação.
- Carlomagno, M. C., & da Rocha, L. C. (2016). Como criar e classificar categorias para fazer análise de conteúdo: uma questão metodológica. *Revista Eletrônica de Ciência Política* 7(1).
- Carroll, A. (1999). Corporate social responsibility: Evolution of a definitional construct. *Business society*, 38(3), 268-295.
- Carroll, A. B. (1979). A three-dimensional conceptual model of corporate performance. *Academy of management Review*, 4(4), 497-505.
- Christensen, L. T., & Cornelissen, J. (2017). Construindo pontes entre a Comunicação Organizacional e a Comunicação Corporativa: revisão, desenvolvimento e olhares para o futuro. *Mediapolis—Revista de Comunicação, Jornalismo e Espaço Público*(4), 39-69. doi:[https://doi.org/10.14195/2183-6019\\_4\\_2](https://doi.org/10.14195/2183-6019_4_2)
- De Woot, P. (2017). *Responsible Innovation*: Routledge.

- Deetz, S. (2010). Comunicação organizacional: fundamentos e desafios. In M. Marchiori, A. M. Casali, A. L. de Castro Almeida, A. de Pádua Carrieri, C. Cardoso, C. R. da Cunha, F. Vizeu, G. T. Fairhurst, H. P. V. Machado, & I. de Lourdes Oliveira (Eds.), *Comunicação e organização: reflexões, processos e práticas* (pp. 84-101). São Caetano do Sul: Difusão Editora.
- Di Fátima, B., Gouveia, C., & Miranda, S. (2021). Muito além do relvado: futebol, nacionalismo e redes sociais. *Texto Livre*, 14(3), e29714.
- Dodd Jr, E. M. (1931). For whom are corporate managers trustees. In *Corporate Governance* (Vol. 45, pp. 1145–1163): Harvard Law Review.
- dos Santos, P. M., Antunes, S., & Guedes, A. (2019). *Os objetivos do milénio—os resultados de 2015 e prospetiva para 2030*. Paper presented at the I Congresso Global de Direitos Humanos.
- Elkington, J. (1997). The triple bottom line. In M. V. Russo (Ed.), *Environmental management: Readings cases* (Vol. 2, pp. 49-66).
- Friedman, M. (1962). *Capitalism and freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Frooman, J. (1999). Stakeholder influence strategies. *Academy of management Review*, 24(2), 191-205.
- Ginesta, X., & Ordeix, E. (2010). *Fundaciones y deporte: cómo el fútbol profesional catalán comunica su Responsabilidad Social Corporativa*. Paper presented at the Actas del II Congreso Internacional AE-IC Comunicación y desarrollo en la era digital, Málaga.
- Godfrey, P. C. (2009). Corporate social responsibility in sport: An overview and key issues. *Journal of sport management*, 23(6), 698-716.
- Gouveia, C. M. C. (2013). As Questões da Vigilância e do Controlo na Web 2.0: O Pensamento de Foucault e as Dinâmicas do Mundo Contemporâneo. In A. P. Martinho & B. Di Fátima (Eds.), *Internet. Comunicação em rede* (pp. 79-90). Lisboa: ISCTE IUL - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa.
- Hafiar, H., Budiana, H. R., Abdullah, K. H., Sofyan, D., & Amin, K. (2024). Scoring big: A bibliometric analysis of the intersection between sports and public relations. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 10(1), 2297706. doi:10.1080/23311886.2023.2297706
- Hill, C. W., & Jones, T. M. (1992). Stakeholder-agency theory. *Journal of Management studies*, 29(2), 131-154.
- Janis, I. L. (1982). O problema da validação da análise de conteúdo. In *A linguagem da política*. Brasília: Editora da Universidade de Brasília.
- Kotler, P., & Lee, N. (2005). *Corporate social responsibility: Doing the most good for your company and your cause*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (Vol. 2). California: Sage publications.
- Kunsch, M. (2016). A comunicação nas organizações: dos fluxos lineares às dimensões humana e estratégica. *Comunicação organizacional estratégica: aportes conceituais e aplicados*, 37-58.
- Kunsch, M. (2018). A comunicação estratégica nas organizações contemporâneas. *Media Jornalismo*, 18(33), 13-24. doi:10.14195/2183-5462\_33\_1
- Levermore, R. (2010). CSR for development through sport: Examining its potential and limitations. *J Third world quarterly* 31(2), 223-241.
- Maia, R. C. M., Hauber, G., & de Paula, J. E. (2022). Análise de conteúdo. In R. Maia (Ed.), *Métodos de pesquisa em comunicação política* (pp. 39-80). Salvador, BA: Edufba.
- Martins, G. A. (2008). Estudo de caso: uma reflexão sobre a aplicabilidade em pesquisa no Brasil. *Revista de Contabilidade e Organizações*, 2(2), 9-18. doi:https://doi.org/10.11606/rco.v2i2.34702
- McGowan, R. A., & Mahon, J. (2009). Corporate social responsibility in professional sports: An analysis of the NBA, NFL, and MLB. *J Academy of Business Disciplines Journal* 1(1), 45-82.

- Mourão, R. M., Miranda, S., & Gonçalves, G. (2016). O estado da arte da comunicação organizacional. *Estudos em Comunicação*(23). doi:10.20287/ec.n23.a04
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2017). *The content analysis guidebook*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Paramio-Salcines, J. L., Babiak, K., & Walters, G. (2013). CSR within the sport industry: an overview of an emerging academic field. In J. L. Paramio-Salcines, K. Babiak, & G. Walters (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of sport corporate social responsibility* (pp. 1-13).
- Pedersen, P. M., Laucella, P., Geurin, A., & Kian, E. (2007). *Strategic sport communication*: Human Kinetics Publishers.
- Pérez, R. A. (2012). El estado del arte en la Comunicación Estratégica. *Mediaciones sociales*(10), 121-196.
- Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. (2015). External control of organizations—Resource dependence perspective. In J. B. Miner (Ed.), *Organizational behavior 2* (pp. 355-370): Routledge.
- Porter, M., & Kramer, M. (2006). *Strategy & Society*. Harvard Harvard Business Review.
- Porter, M. E. (1980). *Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors*. New York: Free Press.
- Ruão, T., & Kunsch, M. (2014). A comunicação organizacional e estratégica: nota introdutória. *Comunicação e Sociedade*, 26, 7-13. doi:https://doi.org/10.17231/comsoc.26(2014).2021
- Sampaio, R. C., & Lycarião, D. (2021). *Análise de conteúdo categorial: manual de aplicação*. Brasília: Enap.
- Scheid, D., Machado, J., & Pêrsigo, P. M. (2019). *Tendências em comunicação organizacional. Temas emergentes no contexto das organizações*. Santa Maria-RS.
- Sherwood, M., & Nicholson, M. (2013). Research methodologies in sport communication. In P. Pedersen (Ed.), *Routledge handbook of sport communication* (pp. 84-96).
- Silva, S. C. M., Ruão, T., & Gonçalves, G. (2020). O estado de arte da Comunicação Organizacional: as tendências do século XXI. doi:10.15847/obsOBS14420201652
- Skalski, P. D., Neuendorf, K. A., & Cajigas, J. A. (2017). The content analysis guidebook. In K. A. Neuendorf (Ed.), *The content analysis guidebook* (pp. 201-402). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Slack, T. (2014). The social and commercial impact of sport, the role of sport management. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 14(5), 454-463. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2014.974311
- Smith, A. C., & Westerbeek, H. M. (2007). Sport as a vehicle for deploying corporate social responsibility. *Journal of corporate citizenship*(25), 1-12.
- Torquato, G. (2004). *Tratado de comunicação organizacional e política*: Cengage Learning.
- Walters, G., & Tacon, R. (2011). Corporate social responsibility in European football. *Birkbeck Sport Business Centre Research Paper*, 4, 1-101.
- Yin, R. K. (2015). *Estudo de Caso-: Planejamento e métodos*: Bookman editora.

## Novos tons de verde: lógicas contemporâneas de *greenwashing* a partir da mineração

Daniel Reis Silva, Fábila Pereira Lima & Samora N'zinga Soares Cardoso

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Brasil

daniel.rs@hotmail.com.br / fabialima@gmail.com / samora.nzs@gmail.com

### Resumo

O artigo reflete sobre elementos contemporâneos do *greenwashing*, abordando a prática a partir de uma dimensão corporativa. Em termos específicos, promove uma revisão bibliográfica sobre o tema, destacando a necessidade de esforços científicos capazes de ir além de uma dimensão mais pontual dos produtos para abordar o fenômeno enquanto uma prática ambígua e conformada por multitudes de discursos. Na sequência, discute a metodologia e os procedimentos de um estudo piloto adaptado a partir de exemplos internacionais

para analisar postagens da mineradora Vale no Instagram. Adotando como categoria três narrativas, a de “Inovação Verde”, “Desorientação” e “Negócios como de costume”, a investigação revela marcadores e padrões discursivos que apontam para o apagamento dos impactos da mineração, a apropriação de imagens da natureza e o silenciamento sobre o clima e sobre barragens. Por fim, são discutidos passos para a evolução do modelo analítico visando novas pesquisas.

Palavras-chave: Greenwashing; Relações Públicas Críticas; Discursos; Mineração

## New shades of green: contemporary logics of greenwashing through the mining industry

### Abstract

The article reflects on contemporary elements of greenwashing, addressing the practice on a corporate/firm-level. Using a literature review on the topic, we highlight the need for scientific efforts capable of going beyond a more specific product-level to address the phenomenon as an ambiguous practice shaped by a multitude of discourses. Subsequently, we discuss the methodology and procedures of a pilot study adapted from international examples to analyze posts from the

mining company Vale on Instagram. Adopting three narratives as categories, namely “Green Innovation,” “Disorientation,” and “Business as Usual,” the investigation reveals markers and discursive patterns that point to the erasure of mining impacts, the appropriation of nature images, and silence about climate and dams. Finally, steps for the evolution of the analytical model for new research are discussed.

Keywords: Greenwashing; Critical Public Relations; Discourses; Mining.

Data de submissão: 2024-07-29. Data de aprovação: 2024-10-18.

Revista Estudos em Comunicação é financiada por Fundos FEDER através do Programa Operacional Factores de Competitividade – COMPETE e por Fundos Nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia no âmbito do projeto *LabCom – Comunicação e Artes*, UIDB/00661/2020.



## 1. Introdução

Em um cenário global marcado por crescentes discussões acerca das mudanças climáticas, e no qual tópicos como filosofias de investimentos sustentáveis e esforços de transição energética são lugar comum no universo corporativo, o *greenwashing* tem se tornado um tema cada vez mais presente na agenda política e acadêmica. Em um aspecto mais amplo, tal termo faz referência a um conjunto de práticas comunicacionais abusivas que operam a partir da projeção de uma aparência de sustentabilidade acerca de determinado ator ou produto sem que tal imagem tenha lastro em ações efetivas. Nesse sentido, pode ser tomado como uma resposta para a centralidade adquirida pelo ideal da sustentabilidade, permitindo que empresas respondam a demandas sociais e legais ainda que não alterem significativamente seus modelos de negócio.

Com os primeiros estudos sobre *greenwashing* datados da década de 1990 (Karlner, 1997), a literatura que aborda o tema ainda está em pleno processo de formação, com lacunas significativas e transformações recentes (Lyon & Montgomery, 2015). Santos et al. (2023) apontam, a partir de um estudo bibliométrico, que 69% dos trabalhos sobre a prática em periódicos científicos internacionais foram publicados entre 2017 e 2021, com crescimento anual notável no número de entradas. Seus dados ecoam ainda o resultado de outros esforços similares, como de Freitas Netto et al. (2020), acerca do amplo predomínio de estudos que abordam uma dimensão de produto (*product level*) e das poucas reflexões acerca do chamado nível corporativo (*firm-level/corporate-level*) de *greenwashing*.

O presente artigo procura contribuir para os esforços de fechamento dessa lacuna, abordando especificamente as dimensões corporativas do fenômeno. Trata-se, em última medida, de reconhecer que mais do que promover falsos atributos verdes de um produto, uma versão contemporânea de *greenwashing* ocorre em formações discursivas amplas acerca da sustentabilidade das empresas, por meio de discursos que, como nas práticas de propaganda e relações públicas abusivas, “constituem um jogo complexo de informações e contrainformações, atuam ocultadas pela barreira do segredo e são calcadas em ambiguidades capazes de construir cenários que oscilam entre aspectos reais e falsos, criando trilhas difíceis de serem seguidas” (Henriques & Silva, 2014). Elas tornam visíveis e ocultam elementos específicos com base nos interesses em questão, trazendo distorções que ganham força a partir das vulnerabilidades dos públicos e da dificuldade de fiscalização/regulamentação.

Ancorados nesse entendimento, nossa proposta é refletir sobre os elementos contemporâneos do *greenwashing* corporativo a partir de dois movimentos. No primeiro, realizamos uma revisão teórica acerca dos diferentes níveis de *greenwashing*, salientando os entraves para a compreensão das abordagens contemporâneas que vão além dos produtos. Em seguida, apresentamos um estudo de natureza quali-quantitativa sobre a comunicação da mineradora Vale no Instagram. Em termos metodológicos, recorreremos especialmente às reflexões de Mickey (2003) e Supran & Hickey (2022), utilizando as três narrativas propostas pelos autores, “Inovação Verde”, “Desorientação” e “Negócios como de costume”, como marcadores que são somados às noções de *nature-rising* e silêncio climático e sobre barragens, como operadores para a análise textual e imagética de postagens realizadas entre 2021 e 2024 pela empresa. Por fim, são discutidos resultados e possíveis direções futuras de pesquisa.

## 2. *Greenwashing*: desafios e vulnerabilidades

Reconhecendo a amplitude de artigos e estudos desenvolvidos nas últimas duas décadas acerca do fenômeno do *greenwashing*, o tratamento teórico aqui delineado evitou a reconstrução histórica extensiva sobre o tema, trabalhando, ao contrário, a partir dos dados originados por revisões sistêmicas e bibliométricas empreendidas por outros pesquisadores. Dessa forma, nosso primeiro passo foi



identificar esses metaestudos a partir de portais internacionais de periódicos e da busca cruzada de referências. Em seguida, foi realizada uma leitura sistemática das pesquisas identificadas, observando, especialmente, seus apontamentos acerca de tendências, fragilidades e obstáculos epistemológicos.

Optamos por trabalhar com cinco esforços de revisão distintos que possuem considerável reconhecimento na área: Lyon & Montgomery (2015); Gatti, Seele & Rademacher (2019); Freitas Netto et al. (2020); Montero-Navarro et al. (2021); e Santos, Coelho & Marques (2023). Importante a ressalva de que a delimitação nesses cinco não implica a inexistência de outras revisões sistemáticas. Em termos gerais, essas pesquisas identificaram um campo ainda em construção e marcado pela pluralidade, especialmente após o considerável crescimento no número e no escopo das pesquisas na década passada (Montero-Navarro et al., 2021). Gatti, Seele & Rademacher (2019) sistematizam as investigações sobre o tema em cinco abordagens centrais: (a) os esforços para definição do fenômeno, (b) os estudos sobre os antecedentes e condições que favorecem sua difusão, (c) as explorações acerca das consequências e efeitos da prática, (d) as reflexões sobre como diminuir o *greenwashing* e, por fim, (e) as tentativas de construir estratégias para identificação de casos.

Operando a partir da identificação de linhas investigativas semelhantes nos estudos do tema, Lyon & Montgomery (2015) apontam para a fragilidade sistemática das mesmas, reforçando que “o campo necessita urgentemente de uma análise empírica minuciosa e cuidadosa sobre os impactos do *greenwash*, o que requer tanto a capacidade de identificar claramente a prática como medir seus efeitos” (2015, p. 243, tradução nossa). Na visão dos autores, é necessário ampliar o diálogo interdisciplinar e reconhecer a existência de múltiplas variedades de *greenwashing*, especialmente daquelas que vão além da divulgação de informações falsas sobre um produto – ressoando uma preocupação comum de múltiplos pesquisadores (Bowen, 2014; de Jong, Huluba & Beldad, 2020). Ecoando e atualizando esse resultado, Freitas et al (2020) observam que o campo ainda é marcado pelo amplo predomínio dos estudos focados na dimensão dos produtos (*product-level*), especialmente quando comparados com aqueles que adotam uma dimensão corporativa/institucional (*firm-level*).

Essas divisões estão ancoradas na proposta de Delmas & Burbano (2011), que reconhecem que as práticas de *greenwashing* podem ocorrer tanto acerca de produtos e campanhas publicitárias, aproximando o tema das relações de consumo, das práticas publicitárias e do marketing, quanto no discurso organizacional mais amplo. Conforme Freitas Netto et al (2020), é sobre a primeira dimensão que versam textos clássicos sobre “pecados do *greenwashing*”, como o formulado pela consultoria ambiental TerraChoice (2007) e que até hoje é destaque na literatura por apresentar critérios para verificar situações em que empresas tentam fraudar as relações com seus consumidores. A dimensão do produto ressoa fortemente também nos estudos acerca de efeitos do *greenwashing* nas relações de consumos.

A segunda, e ainda pouco explorada, dimensão apresentada por Delmas & Burbano (2011) é a corporativa/institucional, também chamada na literatura de *firm-level*. Ela parte do reconhecimento sobre como as organizações contemporâneas adotam práticas de *greenwashing* orientadas para a construção de sua própria legitimidade e reputação (Almeida, 2005). Nesse sentido, o fenômeno não se trata de um problema restrito à rotulagem ou uma divulgação limitada de informações em uma campanha de vendas, mas de todo um conjunto de discursos organizacionais difusos conformados por uma retórica preparada à medida para enquadrar ações e promover uma percepção distorcida sobre as características e atuação daquela empresa.

Argumentamos aqui que dois motivos ajudam a explicar o amplo predomínio da dimensão de produtos na literatura sobre o tema: a mudança de olhar necessária para abordar o nível corporativo da prática e a ambiguidade que marca essa dimensão. Acerca do primeiro aspecto, é válido considerar que o foco no *greenwashing* sobre produtos promove uma forma mais acessível e pontual de encarar o estudo empírico do fenômeno, com base em campanhas publicitárias e estratégias de *marketing* enganosas. Faz sentido, assim, que esses esforços sejam conduzidos por pesquisadores ligados com campos de negócios, e publicados em periódicos dessa natureza – Santos, Coelho & Marques (2023) constataam que

dentre as dez publicações com mais citações no campo do *greenwashing* estão o Journal of Business Ethics, o Business Strategy and The Environment e o Journal of Advertising, enquanto Gatti, Seele & Rademacher (2019) observam que o principal escopo das pesquisas sobre o tema está relacionado com o *marketing*.

Pensar a dimensão corporativa, porém, requer um deslocamento de olhar que amplia sobremaneira o escopo da prática, aproximando o *greenwashing* das preocupações de vertentes críticas das relações públicas e da comunicação organizacional. Tratam-se, porém, de correntes de pensamento ainda recentes, que ganharam força especialmente nas últimas duas décadas (L'Etang et al, 2016; Mumby, 2013). No caso das Relações Públicas, em especial, tais estudos marcam uma forte ruptura com tradições funcionalistas, procurando compreender os impactos das práticas da área nos processos sociais de criação de sentido e de disputa de poder, abordando o nível macrosocial e as interfaces entre a prática e sistemas políticos e socioculturais (L'Etang et al., 2016; Silva, 2017; Cronin, 2018).

No cerne desse deslocamento está a necessidade de acionar arcabouços que possibilitem pensar de forma mais ampla os objetos a serem trabalhados. Para além de anúncios e campanhas pontuais, entender o *greenwashing* na dimensão corporativa implica abordar uma verdadeira teia discursiva composta por práticas comunicacionais que ocorrem em diferentes formatos (imprensa, plataformas de mídias sociais, eventos, relatórios) e com ênfase em públicos diversos, como investidores, trabalhadores, comunidades, sistema político e organizações civis. Nesse ponto, podemos retomar a caracterização das relações públicas enquanto *fluxos* proposta por Edwards (2011), entendendo como ela indica a natureza dinâmica e reforça as dimensões temporais e espaciais da prática. Tais fluxos intencionais são plurais (ou seja, abarcam um emaranhado de práticas) e encontram e interagem, no decorrer do tempo, com outros fluxos culturais impactando os contextos sociais, políticos e econômicos (Edwards, 2011). Pensando nesses termos, podemos propor o *greenwashing* como *fluxos de comunicação nas quais estratégias e táticas discursivas e de relacionamento atuam de forma difusa no sentido promover, para públicos diversos, imagens positivas de sustentabilidade ao mesmo tempo em que ocultam impactos socioambientais negativos decorrentes das práticas de determinado ator*.

A adoção da ideia de fluxos para encarar a pluralidade discursiva das práticas de *greenwashing* é importante também para enfrentar um segundo desafio que a abordagem corporativa sobre o tema deve encarar: a ambiguidade. A dimensão de produtos, ao circunscrever seus objetos, acaba incentivando certos julgamentos pontuais sobre a facticidade de apelos. Afastando-se dessa noção, a ideia de fluxos permite pensar proferimentos ao longo do tempo, marcados por distintas temporalidades. Mais ainda, amplia os elementos estratégicos que entram em cena, aproximando-se das características das práticas abusivas de propaganda mencionadas por Henriques & Silva (2014), em especial acerca dos jogos de sombra/visibilidade e do acionamento intercalado de informações verdadeiras, distorcidas e falsas – ou as zonas cinzentas do *greenwashing*, como mencionado por Gatti, Seele & Rademacher (2019). Em última medida, essa ambiguidade aumenta a vulnerabilidade dos públicos perante essas práticas, na medida em que tornam mais difícil identificar quando o *greenwashing* ocorre e quais seus efeitos nas disputas de sentido. Tal elemento é ainda mais grave quando tomamos modelos analíticos que elencam, entre suas categorias, a busca por identificar mentiras, dados falsos ou afirmações sobre como dado produto ecológico causa danos às pessoas (Pagotto, 2013) – todos esses aspectos que não estão imediatamente disponíveis aos pesquisadores.

Com base na lacuna identificada nas revisões sistemáticas sobre o tema, e munidos de uma lógica de fluxos como forma de pensar o fenômeno, nossa intenção é avançar no desafio de identificação do *greenwashing* em uma dimensão corporativa. Nesse sentido, a aposta reside na tentativa de isolar e compreender elementos que se repetem no tempo e nos discursos, destacando marcadores transversais que apontem para como as estratégias organizacionais contemporâneas salientam determinados aspectos ao mesmo tempo em que ocultam impactos sobre o meio ambiente.

Um desses marcadores pode ser pensado a partir do nível executório (*executional greenwashing*) da prática de *greenwashing*. Nessa modalidade, proposta por Parguel et al. (2015), o foco sai das alegações sobre ações específicas para o uso sistêmico de elementos que evocam aspectos naturais, como imagens e sons da natureza, por corporações. Seja a partir de cores, de paisagens naturais ou de espécies ameaçadas de extinção, a ideia é criar uma associação entre uma marca e noções de sustentabilidade – especialmente a partir de um recorte temporal longitudinal. Mais do que apenas sugerir tal efeito, Parguel et al. (2015) apresentam evidências, baseadas em três experimentos com consumidores franceses, sobre como a evocação de imagens naturais faz com os sujeitos sejam levados a superestimar os atributos ambientais de marcas. Schmuck et al. (2018) demonstram como tal efeito ocorre inclusive com cidadãos considerados como muito bem-informados acerca de questões ambientais e climáticas.

Outros marcadores promissores podem ser identificados no trabalho recente de Supran & Hickey (2022), que amplia a compreensão acerca da interface entre mudanças climáticas e *greenwashing*. Podemos considerar que em seus esforços dos autores é alinhado com as preocupações apresentadas no presente artigo, na medida em que acabam deslocando o foco metodológico da detecção de exemplos pontuais de mentiras e exageros ambientais para a identificação e compreensão de elementos discursivos transversais que sugerem marcações de *greenwashing*. Para tanto, desenvolvem uma taxionomia centrada em três narrativas – “Inovação Verde”, “Desorientação” e “Negócios como de costume” – que são somadas em seu modelo às noções do silêncio climático e de “*nature-rising*”, termo que seria análogo à dimensão executória de Parguel et al. (2015) sobre o uso imagético da natureza.

Supran e Hickey (2022) aplicaram suas categorias em um modelo analítico híbrido que investigou, a partir tanto de textos quanto de imagens, postagens realizadas por vinte e duas corporações europeias de três indústrias (combustíveis fósseis, veículos automotivos e empresas áreas), em plataformas de mídia digital, durante o verão de 2022. Os resultados agregados reforçam diversos aspectos apontados anteriormente sobre a dimensão corporativa da prática, desvelando como o *greenwashing* contemporâneo é focado em uma teia discursiva que, sucessivamente, busca a ocultação de atividades poluentes, o discurso das inovações verdes, a ênfase em envolvimento positivos em outras atividades sociais e na associação ampla com o imagético da natureza. Nesse sentido, temos uma mudança no fenômeno, que deixa de ser sobre produtos e campanhas pontuais para assumir a ideia de posicionamentos corporativos estratégicos que tentam construir a reputação daquelas empresas baseada em projeções delas como verdes, inovativas e alinhadas com pautas sociais.

Apesar de focar apenas na análise de postagens em plataformas de mídias digitais, os esforços de Supran & Hickey (2022) oferecem um ponto de partida propício para investigações do tema que busquem ampliar ainda mais seu escopo. Apresentamos, nas próximas páginas, uma proposta de estudo análogo, centrado na dimensão corporativa e abordando uma organização de relevante setor produtivo no cenário brasileiro. Mais do que a mera replicação da metodologia dos autores, propomos adaptações voltadas para a realidade do Brasil, utilizando a mineração, e especificamente uma empresa, a Vale, para a proposição de um modelo analítico que traga aspectos quantitativos e qualitativos e possa ser aplicado de forma mais ampla.

### 3. Desenho metodológico

O presente estudo busca investigar o *greenwashing* em sua dimensão corporativa, e é ancorado, em termos mais amplos, na perspectiva crítica da “desconstrução” de práticas de relações públicas proposta por Mickey (2003), que visa desvelar camadas estratégicas de modo a compreender como a atividade opera, observando suas lógicas internas e ambiguidades. Em termos mais específicos, o estudo é inspirado nos esforços de Supran e Hickey (2022) sobre o *greenwashing*. Conforme mencionado, o estudo dos autores traz uma forte ligação com o debate sobre as mudanças climáticas, o que reflete na escolha das indústrias a serem pesquisadas (combustíveis, automóveis e transporte aéreo). Acreditamos

que tal recorte faz sentido em um cenário europeu, mas que ficaria prejudicado no caso brasileiro – as discussões que envolvem esses setores no país caminham por trilhas bastante distintas, como o preço de veículos e o fechamento de montadoras, ou os imbricamentos políticos da Petrobras. Por esse motivo, optamos por focar nosso estudo piloto em um setor no qual os debates sobre sustentabilidade e responsabilidade corporativa estão mais aflorados no cenário nacional: a mineração.

A mineração é uma das principais atividades industriais brasileiras, responsável pela exportação de mais de 47 bilhões de dólares anuais, segundo dados da Agência Nacional da Mineração. A produção é concentrada nos estados do Pará e de Minas Gerais, que correspondem a 89,5% do montante total. Segundo um estudo do Instituto de Energia e Meio Ambiente e do Observatório do Clima, o setor é responsável por 5% das emissões brasileiras de gases que causam efeito estufa (Angelo, 2022), e esse número pode ser muito maior quando consideradas as emissões indiretas. Além disso, o setor está no epicentro de controvérsias ligadas à segurança das barragens de rejeitos, especialmente após os trágicos incidentes de rompimento em Minas Gerais, e propôs, nos últimos anos, a adoção discursiva de uma “mineração do futuro” (Silva, Lima & Amaral, 2023), alinhada com preocupações socioambientais. Como objeto específico selecionamos a Vale, maior mineradora brasileira, terceira maior do mundo e diretamente vinculada com os rompimentos das barragens recentes no país, com a hipótese de que, por conta dos danos socioambientais causados, a pauta da sustentabilidade é estrategicamente enfatizada pela empresa na tentativa de construir sua legitimidade.

Como *corpus*, selecionamos postagens da Vale em seu Instagram oficial, @valenobrasil, que atualmente conta com mais de 463 mil seguidores. A pesquisa foi estruturada em duas etapas. A primeira, com maior volume de dados, foi centrada em observar de forma longitudinal a presença e pertinência das narrativas que abordaremos nos próximos parágrafos, e contou com um *corpus* das 236 publicações postadas entre 1 de janeiro de 2021 e 16 de junho de 2023. A segunda, pensada para desvelar elementos específicos das narrativas empregadas em um período subsequente de forma qualiquantitativa e imagética, contou com as 116 postagens realizadas entre 17 de junho de 2023 e 15 de março de 2024. Esse segundo momento abarca o período da onda de calor que atingiu o Brasil a partir do segundo semestre de 2023 e da COP28, realizada pelas Nações Unidas entre novembro e dezembro de 2023. Cada *post* funciona como uma unidade de análise, composto de textos e imagens.

As postagens foram analisadas segundo uma versão simplificada, utilizada como teste, do modelo de Supran e Hickey (2022). Assim, foram consideradas as três grandes narrativas propostas pelos autores. A primeira, de “Inovação Verde”, é a combinação de elementos que busca construir a imagem da empresa como ambientalmente consciente e engajada, especialmente a partir de novas tecnologias. Os marcadores centrais para essa categoria são a ênfase em novas soluções sustentáveis para elementos pontuais de sua cadeia de produção, geralmente destacando eventuais cortes na emissão de carbono, e as medidas de preservação ambiental a partir de parcerias ou de áreas não necessariamente impactadas pelas atividades da empresa. Importante reforçar que a existência de postagens nesta categoria não implica, por si, a presença de *greenwashing*. Ao contrário, é a observação da repetição de determinados padrões e estratégias que sugere a presença de tais lógicas.

A narrativa da “Desorientação”, por sua vez, é caracterizada por mensagens enfatizando aspectos da empresa que não estão relacionados diretamente com seu negócio central. Os marcadores para essa narrativa são referências a projetos sociais, esportivos e culturais, assim como o uso de celebridades e a abordagem de direitos humanos (questões de gênero, LGBTQ+, acessibilidade) descolada das práticas do *core business* da empresa. Por fim, os “Negócios como de costume” envolve a descrição não problematizada acerca de operações centrais ao modelo de negócio da empresa em questão.

Durante a primeira fase, essas narrativas foram desmembradas em seis categorias: (1) Tecnologias verdes; (2) Preservação e sustentabilidade; (3) Cultura; (4) Direitos Humanos; (5) Trabalho; (6) Atividade Minerária. A segunda fase da análise, por sua vez, procurou abrir cada uma dessas categorias, observando a presença de *clusters* de forma mais qualitativa. Tais subdivisões foram observadas a partir

de uma análise flutuante do material, e posteriormente categorizadas e aprofundadas. Além disso, a segunda fase engloba a análise de imagens das postagens, assim como duas questões relacionadas com o silêncio: o climático e o sobre as barragens. O primeiro é derivado das conclusões do estudo original de Supran e Hickey (2022). O segundo, por sua vez, parte da hipótese de que, de forma análoga ao apagamento climático por parte da indústria de combustíveis fósseis, a mineração silenciaria as discussões sobre barragens e suas seguranças, devido às tragédias dos últimos anos.

As análises foram conduzidas pelos próprios autores, de forma manual, e cada postagem foi categorizada em apenas um indicador identificado como preponderante. Como se trata de um estudo preliminar visando testar a adequação e adaptação dos procedimentos metodológicos à realidade brasileira, optou-se por não investir, no momento, na automatização da análise. Como dificuldades, notamos que as narrativas aparecem de forma concomitante em algumas postagens, o que amplia o trabalho de categorização e demanda maior alinhamento entre os codificadores.

#### 4. Resultados e discussões

A partir do primeiro movimento analítico foi possível observar um predomínio de postagens conformando as narrativas de Desorientação (51,3%) e Inovação Verde (32,2%), e um baixo volume de postagens sobre os negócios centrais da Vale (11,8%), conforme Tabela 1.

**Tabela 1. Narrativas e categorias do perfil @valenobrasil, primeira etapa de análise.**

| Narrativa                       | Categorias               | N  | Porcentagem |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----|-------------|
| Desorientação (51,3%)           | Cultura                  | 62 | 26,3%       |
|                                 | Direitos Humanos         | 59 | 25%         |
| Inovação Verde (32,2%)          | Preservação ambiental    | 66 | 28%         |
|                                 | Tecnologia Verde         | 10 | 4,2%        |
| Negócio como de costume (11,8%) | Trabalho e Trabalhadores | 23 | 9,7%        |
|                                 | Atividade Mineração      | 5  | 2,1%        |
| Não identificado (4,7%)         | Comunicados              | 3  | 1,3%        |
|                                 | Outros                   | 8  | 3,4%        |

A categoria da desorientação foi conformada por dois *clusters* centrais de postagens, enfatizando aspectos culturais e questões envolvendo direitos humanos. Constatamos que 26,3% das postagens analisadas traziam textos relacionados diretamente com aspectos de cultura, especialmente conferindo visibilidade para ações do Instituto Cultural Vale e divulgando peças de teatro, artesanato, receitas culinárias típicas brasileiras e espetáculos musicais financiados pelo grupo. Por outro lado, 25% das postagens traziam foco em questões de direitos humanos, falando sobre protagonismo feminino, igualdade racial, diversidade de gênero e acessibilidade, além de ações de combate à fome e doações de seringas.

Sobre a inovação verde, 28% dos *posts* analisados apresentavam algum de seus marcadores, envolvendo a adoção futura de novas tecnologias (otimismo tecnológico), compromissos ou ações visando o corte de emissões, e a transição energética. Além dessa porcentagem elevada, notamos um amplo predomínio de imagens da natureza, que será tratado mais à frente. Por fim, cabe mencionar que as



postagens acerca da atividade minerária em si estão praticamente ausentes em nossa análise, conformando 2,1% do *corpus*. Outros 9,7% das postagens versam sobre questões de trabalho na empresa, mas a maioria desses (>70%) são focados em esforços de recrutamento de empregados.

A segunda etapa analítica, por sua vez, foi composta de 116 postagens contínuas no perfil, e os dados macro ecoam os resultados da primeira análise, conforme pode ser observado na Figura 1. A narrativa com maior presença foi a de Desorientação, com 48,3% das postagens, seguida de Inovação Verde, com 35,3% e Negócios como de costume, com 12,9%.

**Tabela 2. Narrativas e categorias do perfil @valenobrasil, segunda etapa de análise.**

| Narrativa                       | Categorias                     | N  | Porcentagem |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|----|-------------|
| Desorientação (48,3%)           | Cultura                        | 30 | 25,9%       |
|                                 | Direitos Humanos               | 26 | 22,5%       |
| Inovação Verde (35,3%)          | Preservação ambiental          | 23 | 19,8%       |
|                                 | Tecnologia Verde               | 18 | 15,5%       |
| Negócio como de costume (12,9%) | Trabalho e Trabalhadores       | 7  | 6%          |
|                                 | Atividade Mineração            | 8  | 6,9%        |
| Não identificado (3,4%)         | Não há presença das categorias | 4  | 3,4%        |

Na narrativa de Desorientação, a análise aponta para duas linhas discursivas centrais: a cultura e os direitos humanos, responsáveis, respectivamente, por 25,9% e 22,5% das postagens. Acerca da cultura (N = 30), são destaques os chamados para eventos financiados pela Vale, especialmente por meio de sua fundação, como espetáculos de teatro, música, editais, concursos e exposições. As postagens culturais são, em geral, bastante variadas, cabendo mencionar os poucos *clusters* identificados: o Festival Vale Amazônia, com sete postagens, o Museu Inhotim e o Memorial Minas Gerais Vale, cada um com três menções. Também foram identificadas três postagens sobre turismo em cidades de mineração, e duas sobre esporte.

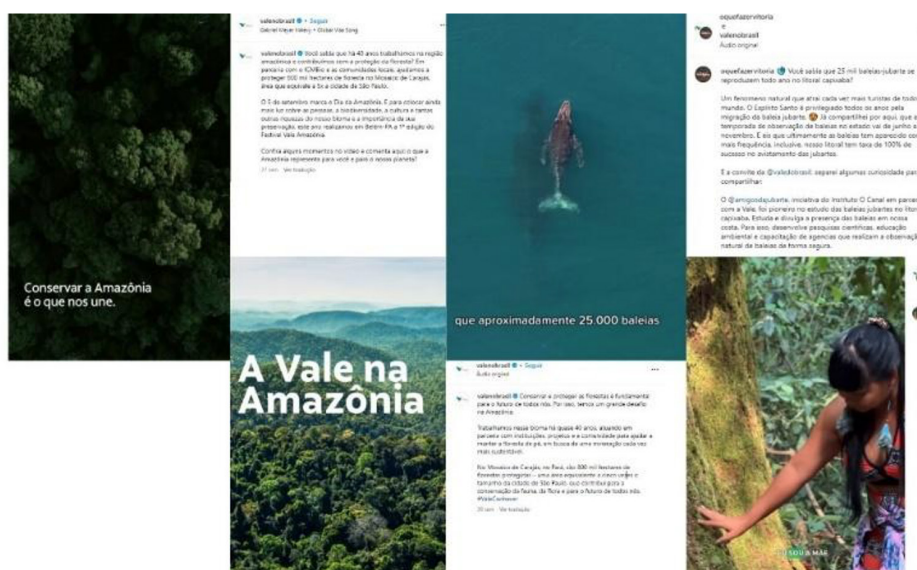
Já os discursos acerca dos Direitos Humanos (N = 26) foram categorizados em cinco subgrupos: (a) direitos das mulheres (4 postagens); (b) questões raciais (13 postagens); (c) questões LGBTQIA+ (6 postagens); (d) Inclusão de pessoas com deficiência (1 postagem) e (e) campanha contra fome (2 postagens). Importante observar que essas postagens podem ser caracterizadas, em geral, como discursos genéricos sobre a necessidade de respeitar direitos ou a reafirmação de que a Vale possui alguma política voltada para determinado grupo, direcionando os leitores para o *site* da empresa onde mais informações ou aspectos específicos podem ser encontrados. Polêmicas mais pontuais ou discussões específicas, até mesmo sobre a inclusão de minorias na empresa, são evitadas – e mesmo quando comentários dos públicos levantam o tópico, a resposta apenas direciona para o site da empresa e suas políticas. Igualmente ausentes estão discussões sobre populações tradicionais atingidas pela mineração, como indígenas, quilombolas e ribeirinhos. Os discursos com maior frequência foram ligados a questões raciais, que ocorreram especialmente no mês da consciência negra, com postagens que afirmavam a necessidade de ser antirracista, um glossário de termos racistas e um debate sobre o tema feito em parceria com a Folha de São Paulo, e que abarcavam um episódio específico: a renomeação da mina Capitão do Mato.

O caso da alteração do nome da mina é ilustrativo do estilo adotado pela empresa acerca dos direitos humanos. Apesar dos *posts* sobre o tema dialogarem, a princípio, com aspectos do negócio da empresa, os textos rapidamente deixam essa dimensão em segundo plano para focar em definições sobre

o processo de ressignificação urbana e sua importância, afirmando apenas a origem racista do nome da mina. Não são mencionados aspectos históricos da mineradora ou daquele local, ou mesmo questões mais específicas e controversas sobre o tema, e a troca do nome é tratada como o único exemplo concreto da política antirracista da empresa.

A segunda grande narrativa presente é a da Inovação Verde, com dois *clusters* discursivos: a preservação de florestas, parques e outros biomas (N = 23) e a inovação tecnológica para sustentabilidade (N = 18). Os textos acerca da preservação buscam reforçar o caráter verde da empresa por meio dos parques e unidades de conservação com os quais ele possui ligação, reafirmando e sugerindo a existência de uma suposta prática de mineração sustentável. A maior parte dessas postagens está focada na região amazônica, especialmente no Mosaico de Carajás, e colocam a Vale como guardiã da floresta e dos seus animais. Em 90% dos *posts* acerca da preservação, o foco imagético é em florestas e animais selvagens, e a Figura 1, abaixo, traz alguns exemplos dessa utilização, sobre a qual retornaremos adiante.

**Figura 1. Exemplos de postagens no perfil @valenobrasil utilizando imagens da natureza.**



O segundo grupo de postagens sobre inovação verde são centrados em avanços tecnológicos apresentados como sustentáveis, em geral sinalizando que eles diminuem os impactos da mineração. Dessas inovações, apenas dois casos versam sobre a diminuição de emissões de gases que causam o efeito estufa – a adaptação de um navio cargueiro para utilização de energia eólica e a criação de briquetes de minério de ferro, apresentados como uma invenção da Vale resultante de dezoito anos de pesquisa e que pode diminuir em até 10% as emissões na produção de aço. Diferentemente dos resultados apontados por Supran e Hickey (2022) em sua investigação europeia, a transição energética e a adoção de fontes renováveis não ganham proeminência no discurso da Vale, cabendo investigar se tal questão está relacionada com estratégias da empresa, do setor específico ou mesmo relacionadas com aspectos do cenário sociocultural brasileiro. As demais postagens nesta categoria mencionam tecnologias para diminuir a poeira causada pelo transporte do minério, uma areia que seria sustentável e promoveria a economia circular, e veículos autônomos para ampliar a segurança das operações, salientando que estes trariam ganhos de sustentabilidade (ainda que os textos não especifiquem quais seriam os mesmos, evitando, assim, mencionar aspectos negativos da mineração atual).



quetes de minério de ferro apoiam a luta para reversão do quadro atual. As outras duas, por sua vez, estão relacionadas com calendários e eventos: um *post* sobre a COP28 (Conferência das Nações Unidas sobre Mudanças Climáticas), em que a empresa afirma que a agenda do clima é desafiadora e que eles trabalham em inovação para diminuir a emissão de CO<sub>2</sub>, e uma postagem no Dia da Conscientização sobre as Mudanças Climáticas. Essa última, por sinal, traz um discurso bastante revelador, em que funcionários da empresa aparecem em um vídeo informando suas funções e afirmando ser “óbvio” que eles atuam na preservação do meio ambiente e na questão climática. Um deles, por exemplo, se apresenta como responsável por projetos de descarbonização, destacando “ser óbvio” que ele colabora com a redução de carbono na atmosfera. Em última medida, trata-se de uma projeção que naturaliza a Vale como uma empresa preocupada com questões ambientais, assim como esvazia a discussão sobre o tema e ações específicas – afinal, “é óbvia” sua atuação e comprometimento.

O segundo achado confirma nossa hipótese sobre outra forma de silenciamento, dessa vez acerca das barragens. De todas as postagens coletadas, apenas cinco mencionam essas estruturas. Em três delas, a Vale simplesmente comunica a conclusão da descaracterização de uma barragem, trazendo a imagem de um campo verde e reforçando que esse processo é importante para a segurança dos públicos. Apesar de ser uma obrigação legal da empresa após os rompimentos, apenas uma postagem menciona esse fato diretamente, com as demais colocando a Vale como protagonista para, apenas no final do texto, mencionar brevemente que o processo está de acordo com a legislação atual sobre o tema.

Para além destas, duas postagens fazem referência ao rompimento da barragem em Brumadinho. Em ambos os casos, o foco é na reparação, com vídeos e textos que evitam mencionar aspectos negativos – ao contrário, ilustram pessoas felizes e centram nos esforços da empresa para ampliar a geração de riqueza a partir de pequenos negócios e artesanato (fator econômico) e na “ressignificação do Córrego do Feijão”, sem nunca deixar claro o que seria isso. A menção à prevenção de outros casos ocorre pela afirmação do compromisso da Vale na descaracterização de barragens. Importante notar a ausência completa de postagens que discutem consequências do rompimento ou as realidades e preocupações atuais dos moradores de locais que convivem em seu cotidiano com o risco de novos incidentes (Machado, 2023) ou mesmo textos trazendo informações sobre as barragens da empresa que ainda estão em nível de alerta crítico.

Por fim, a análise revelou ainda uma questão sobre a representatividade nas imagens / desenhos selecionados pela Vale para ilustrar os *posts*. No universo analisado na segunda etapa da pesquisa, observou-se que a razão de mulheres para homens retratados é de 2:1, e mais da metade das mulheres presentes no perfil da empresa são negras. Trata-se de uma constatação curiosa, especialmente perante a informação, presente nos relatórios da empresa, de que apenas 22,1% dos postos de trabalho são ocupados por mulheres. Ao mesmo tempo que mulheres ganham visibilidade, as negras especialmente, indígenas são apagadas, aparecendo em apenas duas imagens (sendo uma delas uma fotografia de arquivo, não identificada).

Ao mesmo tempo, 66% dos homens que aparecem nos *thumbnails* foram identificados como influenciadores digitais, produtores de conteúdo ou artistas contratados pela empresa. No total, foi possível observar a presença de influenciadores digitais em 31% das unidades de análise, incluindo um número significativo de mulheres negras. Dos dois *posts* com imagens de mulheres indígenas, uma era com uma influenciadora digital contratada. Esses números apontam para dois aspectos. O primeiro está relacionado com uma estratégia pautada no uso recorrente de influenciadores digitais, construindo colaborações com pessoas que, em geral, não possuem ligação com a mineração e que apenas parecem ler um texto criado pela empresa. Trata-se, em última medida, de uma modalidade de influência indireta (Henriques & Silva, 2021) que tanto procura capturar a atenção dos públicos quanto conferir maior legitimidade e organicidade para os discursos da empresa. O segundo ponto é o que Supran e Hickey (2022) chamaram de “Desorientação demográfica”, que complementa a narrativa de desorientação apresentada



anteriormente por meio da exploração de imagens de determinados segmentos, especialmente minorias, como forma de atenuar aspectos negativos e controvérsias envolvendo a empresa (como a desigualdade de gênero, por exemplo) e projetar uma imagem de ator socialmente responsável.

## 5. Considerações e próximos passos

O presente artigo procurou lançar um renovado olhar para a prática de *greenwashing*, conduzindo uma reflexão teórica e um exercício empírico sobre o tema. A partir da revisão bibliográfica, destacamos lacunas importantes acerca do fenômeno em sua dimensão corporativa, na medida em que a maior parte dos trabalhos sobre o tema versam sobre produtos, e apontamos para alguns dos desafios relacionados com essa abordagem. Em especial, propomos que as relações públicas críticas e seu arcabouço teórico-metodológico podem pavimentar um caminho fértil para estudos, auxiliando no tratamento do fenômeno enquanto uma prática ambígua, conformada por uma multitude de discursos e que requer novos *frameworks* analíticos.

O estudo empírico, por sua vez, consistiu em uma adaptação para a realidade nacional da metodologia proposta por Supran e Hickey (2022), operando com a análise de postagens realizadas pela mineradora Vale em seu perfil no Instagram entre 2021 e 2024 de forma qualiquantitativa. A partir de um modelo focado em três narrativas – “Inovação verde”, “Desorientação” e “Negócios como de costume” – e que levou em consideração textos e imagens, buscamos desvelar aspectos discursivos transversais que sugerem marcações de *greenwashing* corporativo. O estudo foi realizado em duas etapas, a primeira exploratória visando verificar a pertinência das três narrativas, e a segunda com maior profundidade com o objetivo de compreender como elas se conformam no caso da Vale.

Entre os principais resultados, foi possível constatar a ampla presença dos marcadores previamente identificados por Supran e Hickey (2022), ainda que em proporção diversa. Enquanto no estudo europeu há um amplo predomínio da narrativa de “Inovação verde”, no caso da Vale a maioria das postagens traz a característica de Desorientação, salientando contribuições para a cultura, para discussões sobre direitos humanos, para a preservação florestal de áreas em que não atua diretamente. Um fator comum encontrado nos dois estudos é o apagamento dos impactos negativos dessas corporações, e o baixo nível de postagens da categoria “Negócio como de costume”.

Apesar de menos presentes no caso da Vale, foi possível constatar, em uma leitura qualitativa, que postagens sobre avanços de tecnologias sustentáveis tenderam a um âmbito genérico, evitando pontos conflituosos ou comprometimentos específicos da empresa. No geral, os discursos da organização na plataforma analisada são inconsistentes com características do setor produtivo da mineração, projetando uma versão higienizada da atuação da empresa. Importante ressaltar, novamente, que não estamos afirmando que a existência de esforços da empresa visando financiar apresentações culturais sejam negativos – ao contrário, caso sejam verdade, são bem-vindos. Porém, quando observada a repetição desses elementos desviando a atenção de impactos ambientais e somada com outros marcadores, desvela-se uma faceta importante do *greenwashing* corporativo como uma prática essencialmente ambígua.

Além disso, a pesquisa revelou que a Vale faz uso extensivo do chamado *greenwashing* executório em pelo menos dois aspectos. O primeiro está relacionado com o emprego constante de imagens da natureza (*nature-rising*) em suas postagens, sugerindo uma associação com elementos imagéticos ambientais e revestindo sua própria marca com atributos verdes. Esse uso é acompanhado, novamente, por um apagamento da mineração, em que cenas de suas atividades específicas não são acionadas. A razão encontrada entre a utilização de imagens “verdes” e “sujas”, de 10 para 1 – bem maior do que no resultado das empresas europeias do estudo de Supran e Hickey (2022). Para além desse uso, foi possível verificar também o predomínio de imagens de minorias nos *posts*, especialmente mulheres negras, construindo uma ideia de “Desorientação demográfica” que visa reforçar sua reputação como ator socialmente responsável.



Ao final da análise, novos tons da prática de *greenwashing* ganham nitidez, especialmente quando os achados acima são somados com constatações dos silenciamentos acerca do clima e de barragens. Nesse sentido, parte do fenômeno em sua dimensão corporativa é desvelado em sua essência estratégica mais sutil e ambígua, promovendo narrativas que reforçam posicionamentos genéricos, muitas vezes pelas vozes de influenciadores digitais, sobre pautas sociais importantes e promovem a associação com imagens naturais e progressistas ao mesmo tempo em que apagam controvérsias e impactos vinculados com a atividade industrial em questão. A discussão da ética empresarial e dessas práticas, assim, deve ser realizada com base no reconhecimento das características e naturezas desses marcadores nos fluxos discursivos.

Podemos concluir o presente texto afirmando que os resultados encontrados dialogam com os de Supran & Hickey (2022), contribuindo tanto para ampliar a reflexão sobre o tema quanto para revelar aspectos da realidade brasileira acerca das disputas ambientais. Em comum com os resultados europeus estão o silenciamento climático e uso demográfico de minorias. Por outro lado, no caso brasileiro encontramos um foco reduzido em questões de tecnologias e sustentabilidade, um uso ainda maior de imagens da natureza e uma aposta maior em lógicas de desorientação – e é possível que isso reflita certos aspectos sobre como o lugar e o desenvolvimento do debate ambiental no país, cabendo novos estudos para confirmar e compreender tais elementos.

Apesar disso, o presente estudo apresenta pelo menos três limitações que devem ser trabalhadas visando a continuidade e ampliação da investigação. A primeira está relacionada com o processo de codificação. Conforme mencionado anteriormente, as duas etapas do estudo aqui apresentado foram codificadas pelos autores de forma manual e com relativa liberdade, testando adaptações das categorias e códigos de Supran e Hickey (2022). É evidente que esse processo não é o mais adequado visando a replicabilidade geral e a própria expansão do *corpus*.

Uma segunda limitação da presente pesquisa é a definição restrita de seu *corpus*, constituído por discursos realizados em uma única plataforma de mídia digital. Conforme estipulado, o *greenwashing* corporativo é por natureza multifacetado, e nossa intenção é avançar o aparato analítico de forma a possibilitar a expansão do escopo investigativo. Reconhecemos que é preciso pensar em provisões para que sejam incluídos proferimentos de *sites* das organizações e de seus relatórios, assim como eventos e entrevistas. Também é importante pensar em outros atores correlacionados, como as instituições que representam setores produtivos. Um desafio, assim, é compor um modelo capaz de abarcar essa diversidade de materiais, inclusive vídeos – que acabaram reduzidos, no atual estudo, aos seus *thumbnails*.

Por fim, a terceira limitação está relacionada com a análise de uma única empresa. Conforme Supran e Hickey (2022) demonstram, o olhar setorial pode revelar minúcias e expandir o entendimento sobre aspectos transversais que conformam o *greenwashing* contemporâneo. Assim, surgem direções futuras. A primeira consiste em um estudo ampliado do setor da mineração, abarcando outras empresas e tentando observar rastros de metanarrativas que balizam suas práticas discursivas. Outra possibilidade é abarcar outros setores produtivos relevantes na discussão ambiental brasileira, como o agronegócio. Acreditamos, em última medida, que o presente artigo esboça contornos de uma agenda de pesquisas sobre o *greenwashing* na dimensão corporativa, pavimentando trilhas e indicando possibilidades a serem exploradas como forma de expandir a compreensão sobre práticas comunicacionais de organizações em nossa realidade.

## Referências Bibliográficas

- Angelo, M. (2022, 11 de agosto). Mineração responde por 5% das emissões do Brasil. *Observatório do Clima*. <https://oc.eco.br/mineracao-responde-por-5-das-emissoes-do-brasil/>.
- Bowen, F. (2014). *After Greenwashing: Symbolic Corporate Environmentalism and Society*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cronin, A. (2018). *Public Relations Capitalism: promotional culture, publics and comertial democracy*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- de Jong, M. D. T., Huluba, G., & Beldad, A. D. (2020). Different Shades of Greenwashing: Consumers' Reactions to Environmental Lies, Half-Lies, and Organizations Taking Credit for Following Legal Obligations. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 34(1), 38-76. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1050651919874105>
- Delmas, M. A., & Burbano, V. C. (2011). The Drivers of Greenwashing. *California Management Review*, 54(1), 64-87. <https://doi.org/10.1525/cmr.2011.54.1.64>
- Edwards, L. (2012). Defining the 'object' of public relations research: A new starting point. *Public Relations Inquiry*, 1(1), 7-30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2046147X11422149>
- L'Etang, J., McKie, D., Nancy, S., & Xifra, J. (2016). *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Public Relations*. Routledge.
- Freitas Netto, S., Sobral, M., Ribeiro, A., & Soares, G. (2020). Concepts and forms of greenwashing: a systematic review. *Environmental Sciences Europe*, 32(19):1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12302-020-0300-3>
- Gatti, L., Seele, P. & Rademacher, L. (2019). Grey zone in – greenwash out. A review of greenwashing research and implications for the voluntary-mandatory transition of CSR. *Int J Corporate Soc Responsibility* 4(6). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-019-0044-9>
- Henriques, M. & Silva, D. (2021). Influência indireta e estratégia: notas sobre o sistema de interinfluências e suas possibilidades para a comunicação organizacional. *Anais do 30º Compós*.
- Henriques, M. S., & Silva, D. R. (2014). Vulnerabilidade dos públicos frente a práticas abusivas de comunicação empregadas por organizações: limitações para o monitoramento civil. *Comunicação E Sociedade*, 26, 162–176. [https://doi.org/10.17231/comsoc.26\(2014\).2031](https://doi.org/10.17231/comsoc.26(2014).2031)
- Karliner, J. (1997). *The Corporate Planet: ecology and politics in the age of globalization*. Sieera Club Books.
- Levigard, E. (2023, 11 de novembro). Brasil vive 8ª onda de calor em 2023 e temperaturas ficam altas até janeiro. *O Globo*. <https://oglobo.globo.com/brasil/noticia/2023/11/11/brasil-vive-8a-onda-de-calor-em-2023-e-temperaturas-ficam-altas-ate-janeiro-veja-a-previsao-do-fim-de-semana.ghtml>
- Lyon, T. P., & Montgomery, A. W. (2015). The Means and End of Greenwash. *Organization & Environment*, 28(2), 223-249. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026615575332>
- Machado, M. (2023). *Interações comunicacionais em Itabira em função da expectativa de dois acontecimentos: a exaustão das minas de minério de ferro e o rompimento de barragens de rejeitos*. Tese de Doutorado, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais.
- Mickey, T. (2003). *Deconstructing Public Relations*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Montero-Navarro, A., González-Torres, T., Rodríguez-Sánchez, J.-L. and Gallego-Losada, R. (2021), "A bibliometric analysis of greenwashing research: a closer look at agriculture, food industry and food retail", *British Food Journal*, Vol. 123 No. 13, pp. 547-560. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-06-2021-0708>
- Mumby, D. (2013). *Organizational Communication: a critical approach*. Sage.
- Pagotto, E. (2013). *Greenwashing: os conflitos éticos da propaganda ambiental*. Dissertação de Mestrado, Universidade de São Paulo.

- Parguel, B., Benoit-Moreau, F., & Russell, C. A. (2015). Can evoking nature in advertising mislead consumers? The power of ‘executional greenwashing’. *International Journal of Advertising*, 34(1), 107–134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2014.996116>
- Santos, C., Coelho, A. & Marques, A. A systematic literature review on greenwashing and its relationship to stakeholders: state of art and future research agenda. *Manag Rev Q* (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-023-00337-5>
- Schmuck, D., Matthes, J., & Naderer, B. (2018). Misleading Consumers with Green Advertising? An Affect–Reason–Involvement Account of Greenwashing Effects in Environmental Advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 47(2), 127–145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2018.1452652>
- Silva, D. (2017). *Relações Públicas, Ciência e Opinião: lógicas de influência na produção de (in)certezas*. Tese de Doutorado, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais.
- Silva, D., Lima, F., & Amaral, L. (2023). A “mineração do futuro” em disputa: estratégias organizacionais, apagamentos discursivos e a influência indireta. *Contemporanea Revista de Comunicação e Cultura*, 21(1) <https://doi.org/10.9771/contemporanea.v21i1.50309>
- Supran, G. & Hickey C (2022) *Three Shades of Green(washing): Content Analysis of Social Media Discourse by European Oil, Car, and Airline Companies*. Available at <https://ati.io/three-shades-of-greenwashing/>
- TerraChoice (2007). *The Six Sins of Greenwashing – a study of environmental claims in North American Consumer Markets*. [https://sustainability.usask.ca/documents/Six\\_Sins\\_of\\_Greenwashing\\_nov2007.pdf](https://sustainability.usask.ca/documents/Six_Sins_of_Greenwashing_nov2007.pdf)

# Communicating the Italian recovery and resilience plan through social media: challenges, strategies and practices

Leonardo Piromalli, Dario Germani & Alessandro Lovari

IREF (Istituto di Ricerche Educative e Formative, Rome, Italy) / Institute for Research on Population and Social Policies (Rome, Italy) / University of Cagliari (Cagliari, Italy)

leonardo.piromalli@uniroma1.it / dario.germani@unica.it / alessandro.lovari@unica.it

## Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic prompted a significant shift in Italian Public Sector Communication (PSC). Institutions had to rapidly adopt digital communication tools, leading to both acceleration and resistance in technology adoption. This study thoroughly examines the communication strategy surrounding Italy's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) launch in July 2021. Employing a mixed-method approach, it encompasses qualitative interviews with key stakeholders involved in the official NRRP communication project (*Italia Domani*) and a content analysis of *Italia Domani*'s Facebook posts. The research addresses two main questions: (1) What are the key features of NRRP's social media communication? (2) How does hybridization between PSC and political communication (PC) unfold? Findings indicate that despite serving as the government's designated communication channel, *Italia Domani* exhibited a comparatively modest level of social media engagement and a catch-all messaging approach, with limited public awareness of the NRRP. Moreover, it maintains a clear separation between public sector and political communication, reflecting efforts for transparency and accountability amidst complex challenges (e.g., the Covid-19 pandemic). While acknowledging limitations such as data collection constraints due to government updates, the research underscores the importance of tailored communication strategies and the need for clarity and transparency in governmental digital initiatives.

Keywords: public sector communication; Recovery Plan; mixed methods; Facebook; social media

## Introduction

Nowadays public sector communication plays a crucial role for governments and public institutions in Western democracies. The OECD (2021) has highlighted how public communication represents a leverage for policymaking and a strategic tool to strengthen open government principles such as transparency, collaboration, and participation (Lathrop & Ruma, 2010). These factors are increasingly important in a current context characterised by low levels of trust in government, declining levels of media freedom, the rapid spread of disinformation (Lovari & Bellauti, 2023), and a growing demand for information and participation opportunities by citizens and strategic stakeholders. For these reasons, public sector communication (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019) or public communication (OECD, 2021) play a key role in fostering trust and inclusive growth, as well as amplifying stakeholder participation and supporting government reforms.

Data de submissão: 2023-10-19. Data de aprovação: 2024-11-15.

Revista Estudos em Comunicação é financiada por Fundos FEDER através do Programa Operacional Factores de Competitividade – COMPETE e por Fundos Nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia no âmbito do projeto *LabCom – Comunicação e Artes*, UIDB/00661/2020.



In this new scenario, scholars at the international level (Bessieres, 2008; Graber, 1992, 2003; Ducci & Lovari, 2021; Luoma-aho & Canel, 2020) have highlighted how the communicative function of public sector organisations has always been characterised by two tensions: a) the controversial relationship between public communication and political communication within government and administrations (Sanders & Canel, 2013), a theme that has been amplified by the presence of institutions and politicians on social media; b) the communicative model adopted by institutions, which tends to be transmissive and unidirectional (one-way), even in the face of opportunities for dialogue, conversation, and participation (two-ways) brought about by digitization and social media institutionalisation (Grunig, 2009; Lovari & Valentini, 2020).

These tensions become crucial and visible in the case of a new and significant communicative challenge for governments and public institutions in Europe: the communication programs adopted for the National Plans related to NextGenerationEU, the European fund for post-pandemic recovery.

In this scenario, this article focuses on the communicative challenges related to the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) (in Italian, PNRR) launched on July 2021, by the Italian government after a complex set of steps at the political, social, and economic levels in Italy and within the European Union's governing bodies. This ambitious reform plan has posed new challenges for public sector communication as it requires specific efforts to communicate complex issues such as a six-year investment program that will change the face of the country, as well as the need for developing interactive and multi-stakeholder communication that allows different social actors to participate inclusively and actively in the opportunities offered by the reform project.

Despite its relevance, the PNRR seems to have not yet received adequate attention at the scientific level, particularly in communicative processes. Currently, research appears to be predominantly focused on economic and industrial dimensions (Pianta, 2021; Bubbico, 2022; Ombuen, 2023), legal aspects (Poggi, 2021; Lupo, 2022), and governance (Profeti & Baldi, 2021; Barone & Manganaro, 2022), while publications dedicated to communicative dimensions are rare (Aragona & Acampa, 2023). In this exploratory article, within the theoretical framework of public sector communication (PSC) and using a mixed methods approach, we focus on the communication activities set up by the Italian government around the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, particularly focusing on the strategies and practices implemented on the official Facebook channel of *Italia Domani*.

## 1. Literature review

### 1.1 The changing scenario of Public Sector Communication in Italy

To better understand the impact of the launch of NRRP from a communication point of view, it is important to highlight the characteristics of PSC in Italy that unfolds in hybrid communication ecologies, shaped by a plurality of actors and flows (Rizzuto et al, 2020). Indeed, contemporary ecologies are becoming increasingly complex and interconnected while the boundaries between languages, genres, and professions are increasingly overlapping and intertwined (Chadwick, 2013). These processes not only concern the media system but also have impacts on the communication of public sector organisations at all levels, from governmental to local administrations. One of the most studied overlaps in the literature has been between public and political communication (PC), a topic also present in international literature. The debate is still open whether PC should be kept separate from PSC within institutions due to its peculiarities of partisanship and controversy (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019; Graber, 2003). This is particularly interesting to study in Italy due to the fact that law n.150/2000 obliged public sector organisations to clearly separate political and public sector communication for enhancing transparency and accountability toward citizens and media in an open government framework (Ducci, Solito



& Materassi, 2020). As recently noted (Lovari, 2022), aspects of hybridization between public sector communication and political communication (PC) are particularly visible in the Italian scenario and in digital and social media communication. Indeed, the use of social media for increasing the popularity of elected figures within public organisations (i.e., mayors, governors, ministries, etc.), the adoption of branding strategies for enhancing institutional visibility, and the subsequent disintermediation of communication may have stressed overlapping processes with detrimental effects on citizens' perceptions of institutional communication (Materassi & Solito, 2015; Rizzuto et al., 2020), due to the unclear intertwining between the two communicative flows (Solito, 2018). These factors have been fostered by the platformization of public sector communication (Lovari & Ducci, 2021), a process by which public sector communication flows are visible, filtered and distributed online, according to social media logics, shaped by their algorithms, and influenced by platforms' business models.

## 1.2 Digital challenges in public sector communication practices

Digitalization processes have strongly expanded after the Covid-19 pandemic that has fostered the use of digital communication in the public sector. As a matter of fact, the national lockdown in the spring of 2020 in Italy has pushed public administrations to abruptly transition to digital communication in their everyday practices, professional languages, expressive repertoires, technical tools, and organisational arrangements, and to do so quickly in order to provide citizens and mass media with timely and clear information. PSC has thus become ever more strategic for governments and public institutions (Lovari, D'Ambrosi & Bowen, 2020). The pandemic crisis has also accelerated the processes of institutionalisation of digital technologies in the public sector, underlining the existence of best practices and resilience tactics among many public communicators, especially at central governmental level (Massa et al., 2022). At the same time, the Covid-19 emergency also highlighted multiple forms of delay in digitization processes, as well as organisational resistance to digital transformation, and overlapping between public sector and political communication in social media environments overseen by public administrations.

Another factor that has clearly emerged in the processes of digitalization of public sector communication is the tension between transmissive and interactive communication, between unidirectional and bidirectional models. In fact, Italian public sector communication has suffered for many years from a lack of interaction with its stakeholders, favouring models of press agency or public information (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) over more participatory ones able to cultivate relationships with both internal and external strategic publics more effectively than one-way and asymmetrical communication (Grunig, 2009). This process is still present today in a large portion of Italian public communication within social media, with numerous institutions not fully leveraging the potential of digital platforms and their affordances, or not being able to employ adequate strategies to stimulate participation and engagement of digital publics (Agostino, 2013; Ducci & Lovari, 2021), either due to a lack of trained personnel, political choice, or shortage of strategic vision (Lovari & Valentini, 2020).

## 1.3 The National Recovery and Resilience Plan: a new communication challenge

European governments were also faced with another major challenge that impacts on communication strategies. They had to set up the communication programs for the national qualification Plans for NextGenerationEU, i.e., the European fund for post-pandemic recovery. These are inherently multi-actor projects developed by the single countries that interconnect national governments with a variety of stakeholders including enterprises, associations and citizens. Therefore, the establishment of cooperative and concerted communication governance models is required to promote the objectives, the

opportunities and the potential impacts of these complex plans in an open government perspective. In fact, it is necessary to activate processes of multi-stakeholder coordination (Janssen & Estevez, 2013) in order to effectively inform and inclusively communicate these multilevel plans (OECD, 2021; Lovari & Belluati, 2023), not least for accountability and transparency imperatives toward citizens and the media. These governance models have to inform both intra-organizational and professional cultures and the public administration's own governance logics (Comunello et al., 2021).

The tensions brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the challenges of engaging different stakeholders set by the post-pandemic Recovery Plans and the hybridization's processes in contemporary communication ecologies, have placed public sector communication in Italy at the crossroads of intricate transformations.

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) was launched on July 13, 2021, by the Italian Council of Ministers, in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. It envisaged a total allocation of 235 billion euros between European resources (to be used in the period 2021-2026) and national funds. The main core of the project revolves around three strategically shared axes at the European level: digitalization and innovation, ecological transition, social inclusion. The NRRP is poised to address the urgent need of fostering a strong recovery through a set of reforms and investments<sup>1</sup> tailored to confront Italy's specific challenges. These endeavours seek to facilitate lasting and sustainable growth, drive the digital and green transition, and bridge social and territorial gaps. All reforms and investments must be executed within a tight timeframe, as prescribed by the NRRP regulation, with completion slated for August 2026. In particular, the Italian Recovery and Resilience Plan is structured around six distinct Missions:

1. Digitalization, innovation, competitiveness, culture and tourism. This mission supports the country's transition to a digitalized landscape by modernising public administration, communication infrastructure, and the production system. Its objectives encompass ensuring nationwide coverage with ultra-wideband networks, enhancing the competitiveness of industrial sectors, and investing in the revitalization of tourism and culture;
2. Green revolution and ecological transition. This mission is crafted to drive the green and ecological transition of society and the economy, with the aim of establishing a sustainable system that ensures competitiveness. It encompasses measures for sustainable agriculture and improvements in waste management capacity, as well as investment programs and research into renewable energy sources, safeguarding and promoting biodiversity;
3. Infrastructure for sustainable mobility. This mission is intended to fortify and expand the national high-speed rail network, with a particular emphasis on the Southern regions. It also advocates for the optimization and digitalization of air traffic, promotes transport services for goods through an intermodal approach in connection with the airport system, and aims to ensure the interoperability for the port network;
4. Education and research. It is designed to address structural gaps in the provision of education services throughout the entire educational cycle. It encompasses provisions for increasing the availability of places in kindergartens, facilitating university access, strengthening orientation tools, and reforming the recruitment of teachers. Furthermore, it includes a significant

1. Italy is the primary beneficiary of the two main instruments of the *NextGeneration EU* (NGEU): the *Recovery and Resilience Facility* (RRF) and the *Recovery Assistance for Cohesion and the Territories of Europe* (REACT-EU) package. The first allocation utilizes an EU-wide envelope of EUR 50.6 billion in current prices, to be disbursed in two installments (2021 and 2022) to member countries. The second allocation offers resources totaling 191.5 billion euros, designated for utilization between 2021 and 2026, with 68.9 billion euros provided as non-repayable grants. In addition to these allocations, Italy plans to fully leverage its financing capacity through RRF loans, estimated at 122.6 billion euros for the country.

strengthening of research systems and technology transfer;

5. Inclusion and cohesion. This mission leverages social infrastructure, enhances active labor policies, and supports the dual system and female entrepreneurship. It also seeks to improve the protection system for socially and economically vulnerable situations for families and parenthood, as well as promoting the role of sport. Specific attention is devoted to territorial cohesion;
6. Health. This mission outlines provisions for supporting prevention and care within the territory, integrating health and social services, and upgrading the technological equipment of the national health service. It also promotes the development of telemedicine, supports the digital, and managerial skills of health system personnel, and advances scientific research in the biomedical field.

It is evident that the implementation of NRRP has produced an opportunity for public sector communication since it has enforced the need for a multi-stakeholder perspective and, therefore, for a concerted communication strategy that empowers the actors in the system to engage as active participants in the opportunities brought into play by the reform project. Thus, communicating the NRRP requires a strategic communication approach to inform different stakeholders of the activities, tenders, grants, potential impacts and financial opportunities related to the Plan until the end of 2026. Furthermore, the complexity of the topics of the Recovery Plan, as well as the technical languages adopted by the official documents, represent a challenge for Italian public sector communicators at central, regional and local level.

For these reasons, following also European guidelines, the Italian Government created a dedicated task force for PS communication, composed of government staff and professionals hired ad hoc for these activities. In the communicative project, the PNRR has been named *Italia Domani* (Italy Tomorrow), adopting a multichannel strategy (roadshows, campaigns, official website and social media channels, etc.) to foster transparency, participation and accountability. *Italia Domani* represented the central hub for the communication of the NRRP, interconnecting the government, ministries, regions, municipalities, citizens, and enterprises.

### 3. Research questions and methods

In this context, we decided to investigate the characteristics of the Italian NRRP digital communication, focusing the attention on the *Italia Domani* official social media flows to identify possible tensions between political and public communication, as well as detecting themes and models adopted to inform and engage digital publics about its different missions and activities.

In particular, the two research questions that guided this exploratory study on the social media communication of the PNRR by the Italian government were:

RQ1) What were the main themes of the NRRP on the *Italia Domani* Facebook channel? Did digital communication practices stimulate engagement among online publics?

RQ2) How did the tension between public sector communication and political communication unfold in the official *Italia Domani* Facebook channel?

At the methodological level, we chose to proceed via a triangulation of qualitative interviews with relevant *Italia Domani* actors and quantitative strategies through content analysis on Facebook posts by *Italia Domani*. This mixed-method approach allowed the research team to obtain a richer understanding of the focused phenomena and thereby add depth and breadth to the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

First, two in-depth interviews were carried out with elite publics (Hertz & Imber, 1995; Semenova, 2018) who coordinated the communication strategies of the *Italia Domani* project. Élite interviews are generally conducted with individuals who possess unique knowledge or are in privileged positions, and can thus potentially provide the researcher with information that is hardly—if not at all—obtainable through other sources (Natow, 2020). These interviews have been based on a thematic guide covering professional training, online and offline communication practices in the NRRP project, organisation and coordination between structures and stakeholders, and visions of public communication between normative imperatives and corporate languages. The interviews were transcribed using the transcription capabilities of NVivo 14. A thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was then performed with the support of NVivo 14 with the aim of identifying the predominant themes and issues. They have been particularly useful in deducing information about communicative models and specific strategies concerning the tension between public and political communication (Graber, 1992; 2003; Sanders & Canel, 2013; Leone & Delli Paoli, 2016; Solito, 2018; Lovari, 2022)

As a second step, the Meta CrowdTangle monitoring and analysis tool (2023) was employed to identify and export all the Facebook posts issued by the *Italia Domani* Facebook page in the time range of 14 months from the approval of the NRRP to the establishment of the new government led by Giorgia Meloni (01/09/2022-31/10/2022), which stopped updating the official channel. A *corpus* of 155 Facebook posts was thus constructed, manually coded, and elaborated through content analysis techniques (Krippendorff, 1983). Content analysis is frequently used for online data since it allows for effective elaboration through qualitative and quantitative approaches (McMillan, 2000). Although web content poses inherent challenges mainly related to the instability and multiformity of online texts, content analysis is still broadly used for the investigation of data *corpora* extracted from social network sites (Stemler, 2015). At the operational level, a codebook was constructed to support the detection of thematic and semantic dimensions in our *corpus* (Figure 1): in this phase, we have conceptualised the features to be detected by referring to the communicative style and type of content present in each individual post. Each variable has been encoded according to certain modalities that correspond to numerical values capable of producing outputs through data analysis. Methodological (Carley, 1993; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; McMillan, 2000) and analytical (Gadotti & Bernocchi, 2010; DePaula et al., 2018) insights found in relevant literature were considered in the development of this tool. Several joint sessions have been carried out within the research team in order to ensure maximum inter-coder reliability, ascertain mutual understanding of the codebook and determine the approach (Krippendorff, 1983). The codebook has been further refined through a series of pre-tests conducted by the researchers on a small sample of the available data.

**Table 1.** Codebook elaborated by the research team for the analysis of the Crowdtangle *corpus*.

| <b>Post feature</b> | <b>Modalities</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Purpose</b>                                               |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sharing             | 1. Yes<br>2. No                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Investigating whether the post is native or shared           |
| Text content        | 1. Yes<br>2. No                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Investigating the text content                               |
| Visual content      | 1. Visual not available<br>2. Image/Photograph<br>3. Graphic<br>4. Video<br>5. Infographic                                                                                                                                                | Investigating the type of visual content                     |
| Type of post        | 1. Initiative/event<br>2. Press conference<br>3. Announcement/opportunity<br>4. Report<br>5. Storytelling/testimony                                                                                                                       | Investigating the type of post                               |
| Missions            | 1. Digitalization, innovation, competitiveness, culture and tourism<br>2. Green revolution and ecological transition<br>3. Infrastructure for sustainable mobility<br>4. Education and research<br>5. Inclusion and cohesion<br>6. Health | Investigating NRRP missions                                  |
| Priorities          | 1. Young people<br>2. Gender equality<br>3. Reducing the citizenship gap<br>4. Undefined                                                                                                                                                  | Investigate NRRP priorities                                  |
| Aim of the post     | 1. Transmission of information<br>2. Requesting input<br>3. Online dialogue/offline interaction<br>4. Symbolic presentation                                                                                                               | Investigating the purpose of the post (DePaula et al., 2018) |
| Relationship style  | 1. Formal<br>2. Informal                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Investigating the communication style                        |
| Hashtag & links     | 1. Yes<br>2. No                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Investigating the hashtags and links                         |



#### 4. Communicating the NRRP: Key findings

This section outlines the results of the exploratory study with special focus on the two research questions that guided this investigation.

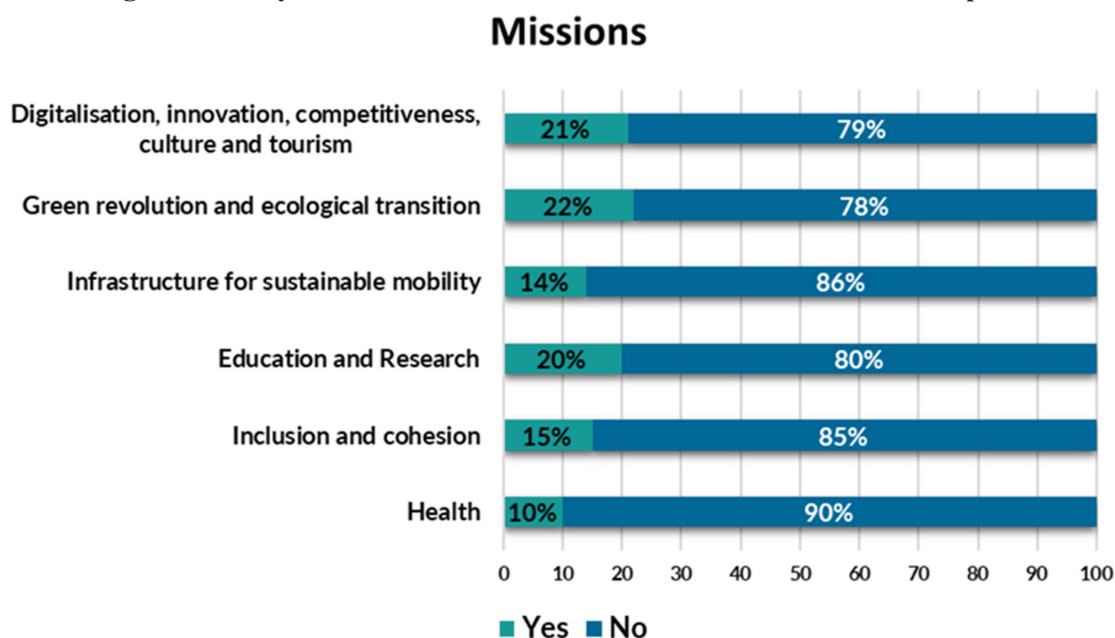
##### 4.1. NRRP's social media communication: Practices and themes

As previously stated, the first research question of this article deals with the main themes and features in the NRRP's social media communication. The content analysis carried out on *Italia Domani*'s Facebook posts can help shed light on this issue.

An initial examination approached the data from a semantic perspective. The posts often incorporate text (92%), images (89%), hashtags (89%), and external links (92%). An informal relational style is often adopted (80%), incorporating elements like emojis, hashtags, and various forms of call-to-action for online publics. The language employed is primarily informative and descriptive (Gadotti & Bernocchi, 2010).

Another element of interest pertains to the communication strategies with reference to the NRRP. In fact, *Italia Domani*'s communication flow is seemingly partially misaligned with the NRRP priorities. In fact, a large share of posts cannot be attributed to any priority (87%). Roughly equal salience is attributed to the various NRRP Missions in *Italia Domani*'s Facebook posting, although the 'Health Mission' is seemingly the least communicated (Figure 3). The various Missions received roughly equal average likes (between 10 and 12) by *Italia Domani*'s page fans.

Figure 3. Analysis of NRRP Missions within *Italia Domani* Facebook posts.



Lastly, *Italia Domani*'s communication on Facebook has been analysed in terms of social media engagement. The *corpus* has initially been examined using the following descriptive statistics (Table 2): a) lowest and highest reaction value for each individual post; b) total of each reaction on all posts; c) average value of each reaction on each post; d) indices of variation and dispersion on the total number of posts. As of the article's writing, *Italia Domani*'s Facebook page features 4195 followers in total.

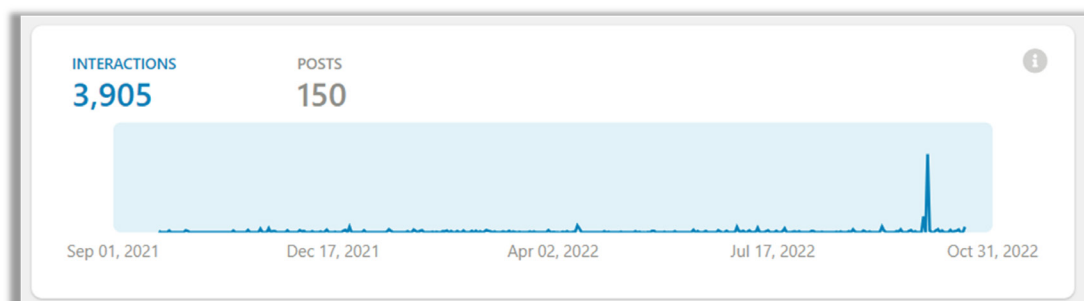
**Table 2. Analysis of the interactions of *Italia Domani*'s posts on Facebook. Source: Elaboration by the authors on CrowdTangle Team (2024).**

|                    | Number of posts | Min. | Max. | Sum  | Mean  | Std. Dev. |
|--------------------|-----------------|------|------|------|-------|-----------|
| Likes              | 155             | 1    | 62   | 1812 | 11.69 | 8.014     |
| Shares             | 155             | 0    | 120  | 1086 | 5.93  | 12.488    |
| Comments           | 155             | 0    | 904  | 919  | 7.01  | 72.57     |
| Love               | 155             | 0    | 3    | 41   | 0.26  | 0.5       |
| Wow                | 155             | 0    | 1    | 3    | 0.02  | 0.1       |
| Haha               | 155             | 0    | 5    | 20   | 0.13  | 0.5       |
| Sad                | 155             | 0    | 0    | 0    | 0     | 0         |
| Angry              | 155             | 0    | 83   | 92   | 0.59  | 6.6       |
| Care               | 155             | 0    | 2    | 11   | 0.07  | 0.2       |
| Total interactions | 155             | 1    | 1009 | 3984 | 25.7  | 82.159    |

Notably, the vast majority of social media interaction on the *Italia Domani* page was the result of an organised effort involving a ‘message bombing’ endeavour against a specific *Italia Domani* post featuring the hashtag #Agenda2030 which generated a number of negative remarks. This post garnered over 25% (N=1009) of the total interactions, comprising 98% of the total comments (N=904) and 57% of the reactions (N=96), with the maximum values for angry reactions and comments in particular significantly exceeding their respective means (Table 2). While every post has at least one ‘like’ reaction, the minimum values for shares and comments drop to zero showing scarce interactions and engagement of the fans with the NRRP’s digital communication.

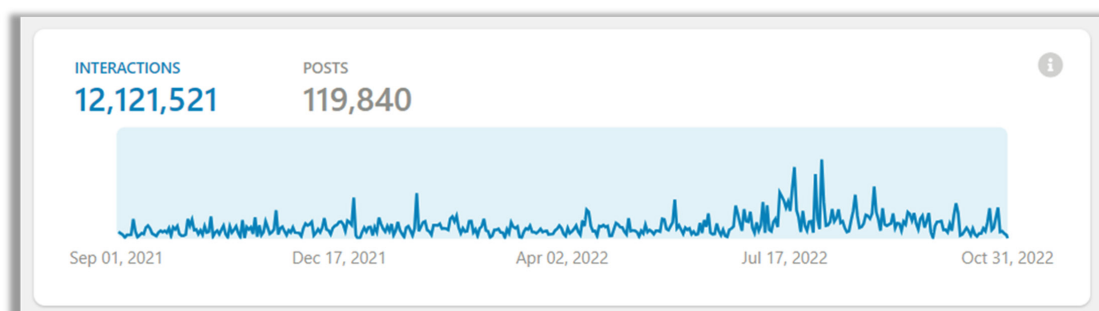
This limited engagement capacity of *Italia Domani* page is further substantiated when comparing the level of interactions centered around the keyword “NRRP” within Facebook posts overall (Figure 1 and Figure 2) during the timeframe of the study.

**Figure 1. Mentions of the keyword “NRRP” within *Italia Domani*’s Facebook page from 09-01-2021 to 10-31-2022.**



Source: CrowdTangle Team (2024).

**Figure 2. Mentions of the keyword “NRRP” on Italian Facebook posts from 09-01-2021 to 10-31-2022**



Source: CrowdTangle Team (2024).

Significant positive correlations may also be observed between the users’ reactions, and in particular between *likes & shares* and between *angry & comments* (Table 3): as one reaction increases, so does the other. In particular, the strongest relationship is between ‘*angry*’ and ‘*comments*’, as illustrated by the message bombing case discussed above.

**Table 3. Correlation analysis (Pearson coefficient) of user interactions in *Italia Domani* posts on Facebook.**

|          | Likes          | Shares         | Comments       | Love           | Wow    | Haha           | Angry          | Care   |
|----------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------|----------------|----------------|--------|
| Likes    | 1              | <b>0.723**</b> | 0.025          | <b>0.388**</b> | 0.07   | <b>0.314**</b> | 0.02           | -0.013 |
|          | 155            | <b>0.000</b>   | 0.759          | <b>0.000</b>   | 0.387  | <b>0.000</b>   | 0.805          | 0.870  |
|          |                | <b>155</b>     | 155            | <b>155</b>     | 155    | <b>155</b>     | 155            | 155    |
| Shares   | <b>0.723**</b> | 1              | 0.034          | 0.242**        | 0.095  | <b>0.323**</b> | 0.022          | 0.009  |
|          | <b>0.000</b>   | 155            | 0.672          | 0.002          | 0.240  | <b>0.000</b>   | 0.785          | 0.913  |
|          | <b>155</b>     |                | 155            | 155            | 155    | <b>155</b>     | 155            | 155    |
| Comments | 0.025          | 0.034          | 1              | -0.032         | -0.008 | 0.000          | <b>0.999**</b> | -0.02  |
|          | 0.759          | 0.672          | 155            | 0.692          | 0.917  | 0.995          | <b>0.000</b>   | 0.808  |
|          | 155            | 155            |                | 155            | 155    | 155            | <b>155</b>     | 155    |
| Love     | <b>0.388**</b> | <b>0.242**</b> | -0.032         | 1              | -0.073 | <b>0.274**</b> | -0.037         | -0.041 |
|          | <b>0.000</b>   | <b>0.002</b>   | 0.692          | 155            | 0.367  | <b>0.001</b>   | 0.649          | 0.612  |
|          | <b>155</b>     | <b>155</b>     | 155            |                | 155    | <b>155</b>     | 155            | 155    |
| Wow      | 0.07           | 0.095          | -0.008         | -0.073         | 1      | -0.033         | -0.013         | -0.036 |
|          | 0.387          | 0.240          | 0.917          | 0.367          | 155    | 0.679          | 0.877          | 0.661  |
|          | 155            | 155            | 155            | 155            |        | 155            | 155            | 155    |
| Haha     | <b>0.314**</b> | <b>0.323**</b> | 0.000          | <b>0.274**</b> | -0.033 | 1              | -0.009         | -0.06  |
|          | <b>0.000</b>   | <b>0.000</b>   | 0.995          | <b>0.001</b>   | 0.679  | 155            | 0.914          | 0.456  |
|          | <b>155</b>     | <b>155</b>     | 155            | <b>155</b>     | 155    |                | 155            | 155    |
| Angry    | 0.02           | 0.022          | <b>0.999**</b> | -0.037         | -0.013 | -0.009         | 1              | -0.023 |
|          | 0.805          | 0.785          | <b>0.000</b>   | 0.649          | 0.877  | 0.914          | 155            | 0.780  |
|          | 155            | 155            | <b>155</b>     | 155            | 155    | 155            |                | 155    |
| Care     | -0.013         | 0.009          | -0.02          | -0.041         | -0.036 | -0.06          | -0.023         | 1      |
|          | 0.870          | 0.913          | 0.808          | 0.612          | 0.661  | 0.456          | 0.780          | 155    |
|          | 155            | 155            | 155            | 155            | 155    | 155            | 155            |        |

Source: Elaboration by the authors on CrowdTangle Team (2024).

Overall, the content analysis carried out reveals a limited level of engagement on *Italia Domani*'s Facebook page. Despite its designation as the official channel for PNRR communication, it seems to have struggled in garnering significant users' attention and interaction. These insights have been further explored through an in-depth examination employing qualitative research techniques.

#### 4.2. Communicating the NRRP: In-between public and political communication

The second research question has further examined shifting boundaries between public sector and political communication (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019) in the empirical case considered.

The elite publics interviewed claim that *Italia Domani* has introduced in Italian institutions a strategy of decoupling between PSC and PC. This resulted in a major transition with respect to previous experiences of institutional communication in Italy, which they characterise referring to self-branding and personalistic rhetoric:

“I find it inappropriate that the institution which is called upon to speak in terms of PSC to everybody is addressing a particular audience in an extemporaneous way as is the case of the sudden Facebook or Twitter live broadcasts—I can say: I do a live broadcast, I sing my own praises, and whoever is there is there. And then we measure the effectiveness of this communication through interactions.” (Int. A)

“They used the potential of social media in a season when there had been a whole effervescence of live broadcasts—of Facebook live broadcasts, of Twitter live broadcasts—in favour of the leader’s personal accounts.” (Int. A)

According to the interviewees, in the construction of *Italia Domani*’s communicative strategy the withdrawal of political agendas from public sector communication was encouraged through the selection of skills, channels, and tones of communication to be mobilised also on social media channels:

“Those who were politically engaged left the office with the establishment of the Draghi government.” (Int. A)

“PSC can only be supported by the existence of (...) official institutional communication channels.” (Int. A)

To ensure the separation between PC and PSC, transparency, accountability, and no-partisanship were reportedly adopted as a guiding principles for the NRRP communication:

“In data communication and information I see certified, valid communication.” (Int. A)

“Communication is (...) understandable, measurable through evidence (...) transparent, pragmatic, based on facts.” (Int. B)

“This involves always following a criterion of transparency (...) and no-partisanship towards the recipients.” (Int. A)

In the interviewees’ narratives, this communication strategy was inspired by the very character of the bipartisan technical government headed by Premier Mario Draghi (February 2021-October 2022):

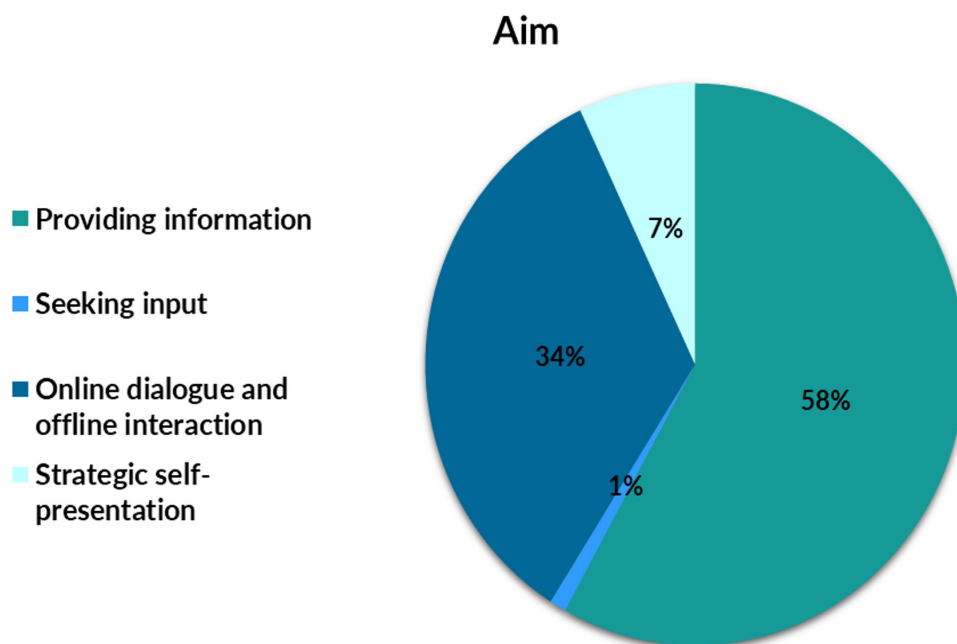
“The institution discouraged it [the politicization of PSC] precisely because it was committed to national unity” (Int. B).



The quantitative analysis on *Italia Domani*'s Facebook posts confirms the interviewees' narrative about the separation of the public and political domains in the NRRP communication (Figure 4). Indeed, the vast majority of posts' aims may be ascribed to PSC functions (such as 'providing information' and 'seeking input'), while only a rare part (7%) tend toward PC purposes such as strategic 'self-presentation' (DePaula et al., 2018) of 'authoritative' figures in the Italian and international political arena - for the vast majority, the ruling prime minister Mario Draghi:

“📅 February 9, 2022 📍 Genoa 🇮🇹 Official visit of Prime Minister Mario Draghi. 🗣️ “Last year we achieved all the planned targets. The same will happen again this year. It is a matter of seriousness - to the citizens, and to our European partners. And it is a matter of reliability - because sustained, equitable, sustainable growth is the best guardian of stability,” the premier's words during the visit to St. George's Palace. 📺 Check out the full speech: <https://youtu.be/qAuDZHLvzps>:=<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAuDZHLvzps> #italiadomani #pnrr #future #innovation Palazzo Chigi - Presidency of the Council of Ministers” (@ItaliaDomaniGov, 09/02/2022).

**Figure 4. Aim of the *Italia Domani* Facebook posts.**

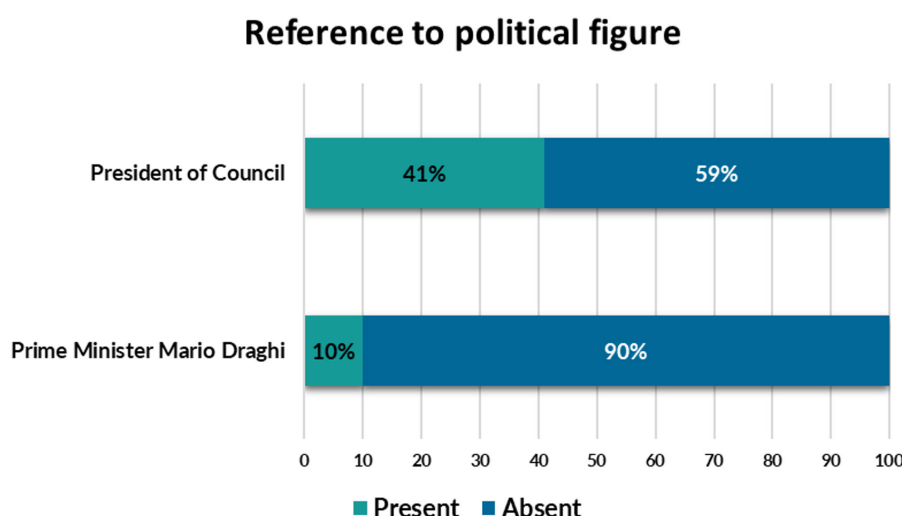


Source: Elaboration by the authors on CrowdTangle Team (2024).

Interestingly, Mario Draghi is most often evoked in Facebook posts as an institutional figure (90% of the posts) and only rarely as a political figure (10% of the posts). This is evident, for example, in the following excerpt as well as in Figure 5, which provides a perspective at the qualitative level:

“📢”*Italia Domani* for Municipalities and Metropolitan Cities” is the initiative of Palazzo Chigi - Presidency of the Council of Ministers in collaboration with Anci, to share communication activities on #NRRP projects related to the territories of the 14 Metropolitan Cities, recipients of more than 12 billion euros of already allocated funds. (...) Find out more: <https://bit.ly/3yvQonC> (...) #ItaliaDomani #Anci #Comuni #CittàMetropolitane” (@ItaliaDomaniGov, 12/10/2022).

**Figure 5. Reference to a political figure in the *Italia Domani* Facebook posts.**



Source: Elaboration by the authors on CrowdTangle Team (2024).

The NRRP communication strategy thus strategically prioritized the institutional role of the Prime Minister over political aspects. While underpinned by a dedication to national unity, public sector communication is then effectively distinct from political discourse, also on *Italia Domani* Facebook page.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

We are aware that this study has some limitations. The choice to analyse the content of the *Italia Domani* Facebook page may not provide a comprehensive picture of government digital strategies. Additionally, the decision by the Meloni government to stop updating the *Italia Domani* Facebook channel in October 2022, hindered the opportunity to collect a more substantial amount of data. Moreover, more in-depth insights may have become available as the research progresses over the final two years of the NRRP implementation. Future research may take these aspects into account and consider the communicative evolution of the Italian Plan in an integrated manner, as well as to compare National Recovery Plans' digital communication strategies in different European countries.

At the same time, this article represents one of the first studies aimed to investigate the management of PS communication related to the Italian Recovery and Resilience Plan, during the first two years of its implementation, employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. *Italia Domani* was envisioned to serve as the focal point for disseminating information to various stakeholders and engaging them in participating in various grants, funding opportunities, and events.

The content analysis on Facebook posts yielded useful evidence regarding the semantics of public communication and its entanglement with political communication. Content analysis has focused on themes, practices, visuals, types of engagement and posts' languages, and highlighted the presence and characteristics of 'authoritative' political figures in textual or iconographic form. Then, the qualitative data outlined relevant information about the NRRP communication governance. Notably, the lack of shared standards on communication both in the NextGenerationEU program (on the European level) and in the NRRP (on the Italian level) resulted in the *Italia Domani* agency having wide margins of discretionality when designing and implementing communication strategies for the project and its stakeholders. A fluid and networked communication model thus emerged that intertwined different actors – ministries, municipalities, citizens, companies – across a variety of communication tools.

In relation to the two research questions, it is interesting to consider the possible factors behind the low interaction and engagement rates for the Facebook content of *Italia Domani* Page. One contributing factor could be the complexity of the themes and interventions discussed in the NRRP posts. Despite efforts by the communication team to improve the clarity and quality of the content with emojis, visuals, and infographics, the topics remain often challenging for a large portion of the population, especially in a context of uncertainty and crisis induced by the pandemic. Some posts are technical in nature, such as the publication of tenders and grants, which may not be of interest to citizens more concerned with the concrete impact of measures that require several years to become visible.

Furthermore, our analysis suggests that *Italia Domani* exhibited a tendency towards 'catch-all' messaging, displaying a degree of redundancy and a standardised approach to content management, rather than tailoring its communication to specific stakeholders and actively involving them in NRRP initiatives. This phenomenon may be attributed to the challenges of conveying a complex and articulated Plan with a high level of technicality, which may not have resonated with the general public. This could lead to variations in the visibility of certain institutional organic content influenced by Facebook's algorithm and by the general processes of platformization of public sector communication (Ducci & Lovari, 2021). From a strategic perspective, beyond European guidelines, social media may therefore not represent a primary tool in PSC strategies on complex topics such as Recovery and Resilience Plans.

In this sense, it appears that *Italia Domani* may lack a distinct digital strategy for engaging online publics, potentially adhering to a more traditional one-way communication model (Grunig, 2009) often adopted by government and public sector organisations (Lovari & Valentini, 2020). At the same time the attempt to include several calls to action within the NRRP Facebook posts does not seem to achieve results in terms of engagement, which remains limited. This outcome may also be attributed to the limited awareness of what the NRRP is among Italian citizens. Indeed, according to a study commissioned by Italia Digitale Foundation (2022), only 37% of Italians consider themselves informed about the NRRP, with 38% of the population completely unaware of its existence. The report also highlights that only 26% of the sample are satisfied with the communication about the NRRP, a percentage that increases up to 28% only among the age group over 55 years, which represents the segment of the Italian population less present on social media. Thus, despite the potentiality of its pivotal role, the *Italia Domani* page has displayed a limited ability to shape the social media agenda, remaining a peripheral actor unable to stimulate NRRP visibility and engagement on digital avenues as it would have been expected.

The study also qualitatively explored the forms of possible overlapping between public sector communication and political communication (Canel & Louma-aho, 2019; Graber, 2003; Lovari, 2022) in the *Italia Domani* social media storytelling. Empirical findings highlighted a narrative in the NRRP communication strategy emphasising the clear distinction between PSC and PC. The NRRP communication managers uphold the perspective that public sector communication should remain distinct and independent from political communication in offline and digital strategies. Indeed, the Draghi government, being a bipartisan and 'technical' government, made a clear effort to keep NRRP communication free from political undertones in order to be more transparent, accountable and more resilient to disinforma-

tion (OECD, 2021). Overall, the analyses offered valuable insights suggesting that public sector communication should fundamentally differ from the practices and language of political communication, even on social media platforms and amid complex national situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic that require a clear sense of ethics and responsibility (Lovari, D'Ambrosi & Bowen, 2020).

## Acknowledgments

This work stems from the research project *Quality of Public Sector Communication – QCPS*, which has received financial support from the Italian Ministry of Economic Development - DGTCSI-ISCTI.

## References

- Agostino, D. (2013). Using social media to engage citizens: A study of Italian municipalities. *Public relations review*, 39(3), 232-234. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2013.02.009>
- Aragona, B. & Acampa, S. (2023). PNRR: il meglio deve ancora venire. La narrazione dei futuri digitali su Facebook. *Rivista Trimestrale di Scienze dell'Amministrazione*, 4: 1. DOI: 10.32049/RTSA.2023.4.03.
- Bessières, D. (2018). “L’hybridité: une composante ancienne mais aujourd’hui démultipliée de la communication publique”. *Recherches en Communication*, 47, 5-21.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Bubbico D. (2022). Il Pnrr italiano e l’industria nazionale: alla ricerca di una politica industriale. *Autonomie locali e servizi sociali*, 45, 2: 309. DOI: 10.1447/105087.
- Canel, M. J., & Luoma-aho, V. (Eds.). (2019). *Public sector communication*. Wiley Blackwell.
- Carley, K. (1993). Coding Choices for Textual Analysis: A Comparison of Content Analysis and Map Analysis. *Sociological Methodology*, 23, 75–126. <https://doi.org/10.2307/271007>
- Chadwick, A. (2013). *The Hybrid Media System: Politics and Power*. Oxford University Press.
- Comunello, F., Massa, A., Ieracitano, F., & Marinelli, A. (2021). Public sector communication professions in the Twitter-sphere. *Sociologia della Comunicazione*, 61, 90–108.
- CrowdTangle Team (2024). *CrowdTangle*. Facebook, Menlo Park, California, United States.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.) (1998). *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. Sage.
- DePaula, N., Dincelli, E., & Harrison, T. M. (2018). Toward a typology of government social media communication: Democratic goals, symbolic acts and self-presentation. *Government Information Quarterly*, 35(1), 98–108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2017.10.003>
- Ducci, G. & Lovari, A. (2021). The challenges of public sector communication in the face of the pandemic crisis: Professional roles, competencies and platformization. *Sociologia della comunicazione*, 61, 9–19. <https://doi.org/10.3280/SC2021-061002>
- Ducci, G., Materassi, L., & Solito, L. (2020). Re-Connecting Scholars’ Voices: An historical Review of Public Communication in Italy and New Challenges in the Open Government Framework. *Partecipazione e conflitto*, 13(2), 1062-1084. <https://doi.org/10.1285/i20356609v13i2p1062>
- Fondazione Italia Digitale (2022). PNRR, cosa fanno i cittadini? Available at [https://www.fondazioneitaliadigitale.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/FID\\_TDB\\_2022\\_PNRR-1.pdf](https://www.fondazioneitaliadigitale.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/FID_TDB_2022_PNRR-1.pdf)
- Gadotti, G., & Bernocchi, R. (2010). *La pubblicità sociale. Maneggiare con cura*. Carocci.
- Graber, D.A. (1992). *Public sector communication*. Washington. CQ Press.
- Graber, D.A. (2003). *The power of communication. Managing Information in public organizations*. CQPress.

- Grunig, J. E. (2009). Paradigms of global public relations in an age of digitalisation. *PRism*, 6(2), 1-19.
- Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. Fort Worth, TX: Holt. Rinehart and Winston.
- Hertz, R., & Imber, J. B. (1995). *Studying elites using qualitative methods*. Sage Publications.
- Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
- Janssen, M., & Estevez, E. (2013). Lean government and platform-based governance—Doing more with less. *Government Information Quarterly*, 30, 17-25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2012.11.003>
- Krippendorff, K. (1983). *Content analysis: An Introduction to its methodology*. Sage.
- Lathrop, D., & Ruma, L. (2010). *Open government: Collaboration, transparency, and participation in practice*. O'Reilly Media, Inc..
- Leone, S., & Delli Paoli, A. (2016). The social media communication ows of Italian Institutions. A framework analysis for public and political communication on Twitter. *Comunicazione politica*, 17(3), 393-424. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3270/84680>
- Lovari, A., D'Ambrosi, L., & Bowen, S. (2020). Re-connecting voices. The (new) strategic role of public sector communication after Covid-19 crisis. *Partecipazione e conflitto*, 13(2), 970-989. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1285/i20356609v13i2p970>
- Lovari, A. (2022). Le ibridazioni della comunicazione pubblica: Percorsi di ricerca e pratiche comunicative tra digitalizzazione e crisi pandemica. *Mediascapes journal*, 19(1), 16-35.
- Lovari, A., & Belluati, M. (2023). We Are All Europeans. EU Institutions Facing the Covid-19 Pandemic and Information Crisis. In G. La Rocca, M. Carignan, & G. Boccia Artieri, *Infodemic Disorder: Covid-19 Coping Strategies in Europe, Canada and Mexico* (pp. 65-96). Springer International Publishing.
- Lovari, A., Ducci, G., & Righetti, N. (2021). Responding to fake news: The use of Facebook for public health communication during the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy. In M. Lewis, E. Govender, & K. Holland, *Communicating COVID-19: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (pp. 251-275). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lupo N. (2022). Il Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza (PNRR) e alcune prospettive di ricerca per i costituzionalisti. *Federalismi.it*, 1: iv.
- Luoma-aho, V., & Canel, M. J. (Eds.). (2020). *The handbook of public sector communication*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Massa, A., Ieracitano, F., Comunello, F., Marinelli, A., & Lovari, A. (2022). La comunicazione pubblica alla prova del Covid-19. Innovazioni e resistenze delle culture organizzative italiane. *Problemi dell'informazione*, 47(1), 3-30.
- Materassi, L., & Solito, L. (2015). Le strade della comunicazione pubblica. Assetti organizzativi nei Comuni toscani. *Problemi dell'informazione*, 2, 305-333. <https://doi.org/10.1445/80999>
- McMillan, S. J. (2000). The Microscope and the Moving Target: The Challenge of Applying Content Analysis to the World Wide Web. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 77(1), 80-98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900007700107>
- Natow, R. S. (2020). The use of triangulation in qualitative studies employing elite interviews. *Qualitative Research*, 20(2), 160-173. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794119830077>
- OECD (2021). *OECD Report on public communication. The global context and the way forward*. OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/22f8031c-en>.
- Ombuen, S. (2023). Il ruolo del Terzo Settore nella Rigenerazione urbana alla prova del PNRR. *Rivista Triennale di Scienze dell'Amministrazione*, 2: 1. DOI: 10.32049/RTSA.2023.2.08
- Pianta, M. (2021). *La politica industriale al tempo del PNRR*. Bologna. Il Mulino, 70, 2: 152.
- Poggi, A. (2021). Il PNRR come possibile collante dell'unità repubblicana? (riflessioni in margine al regionalismo e al divario Nord-Sud). *Le Regioni*, 49, 1-2): 199. DOI: 10.1443/101373.



- Rizzuto, F., Ducci, G., D'Ambrosi, L., Lovari, A. (2020). Paths of hybridization among journalism, politics, and public sector communication in Italy. *Sociologia della Comunicazione*, 60, 137-153.
- Sanders, K., & Canel, M.J. (Eds.) (2013). *Government communication: Cases and challenges*. New York–London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Semenova, E. (2018). Research methods for studying elites. *The Palgrave Handbook of Political Elites*, 71–77.
- Solito, L. (2018). Comunicazione istituzionale e società digitale. Un nuovo ruolo per i comunicatori pubblici. *Comunicazione Politica*, 19(3), pp. 393-412. <https://doi.org/10.3270/91637>
- Stemler, S. E. (2015). Content analysis. In Robert Scott & Stephan Kosslyn (Eds.), *Emerging trends in the social and behavioral sciences* (pp. 1-14). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118900772.etrds0053>

# Adapting Internal Communication to Hybrid Work: Identifying Strategies for Government Institutions

Vytautas Beniušis

Vilnius University, Lithuania

vytautas.beniušis@kf.vu.lt

## Abstract

The emergence of hybrid work, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, prompted organizations to transform their internal communication processes and structures. Ministries, as policy-making institutions, faced various challenges in managing internal communication, including increased stress levels, a lack of feedback from managers, and difficulties in fostering strong interpersonal relationships and a sense of teamwork. This paper analyzes the internal communication challenges faced by public sector organizations in the era of hybrid work and examines how a particular Lithuanian ministry

addressed these challenges. The study presents suggestions from semi-structured interviews with unit heads and internal communication specialists on improving internal communication management at both the organizational and unit levels within ministries, as hybrid work becomes part of the new normal. Based on the study's findings and academic literature, recommendations are provided on how internal communication management in governmental institutions could be structured during these turbulent times.

Keywords: internal communication, hybrid work, government sector, public sector, ministries.

## 1. Introduction

Over the past quarter of a century, communication has increasingly been identified as a part of strategic management of the organisation (Jakučionienė, 2023; Grunig, 2013; Verčič, Verčič & Sriramesh, 2012; Gudonienė, 2006), helping to achieve its strategic goals. Researchers highlight the importance of internal communication in organisations when structural, process management and other planned changes are taking place (Lewis, 2011; Miller, 2012), and emphasise the need for employees to be adequately informed when crises arise that are directly related to the organisation's activities, decisions or circumstances that the organisation could not have foreseen (Kim, 2018; Frandsen & Johansen, 2011). During crises, leaders are expected to communicate with staff, provide information, make sense of the crisis, and restore trust and confidence among employees (Opatska, Johansen & Gordon, 2024; Heide & Simonsson, 2019). Scientists claim that well managed internal communication is crucial for organisations during the time of war and ongoing uncertainty (Opatska, Johansen & Gordon, 2024) and as because of COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's invasion to Ukraine and intensified conflict in Middle East already affected people's health and healthcare systems worldwide (Kalaitzaki, Tamiolaki & Vintila, 2023; Kilgore, 2023; Ventriglio et al., 2024), organisations are expected to use internal communication to improve mental health of employees (Qin & Men, 2023).

Data de submissão: 2024-07-21. Data de aprovação: 2024-10-19.

Revista Estudos em Comunicação é financiada por Fundos FEDER através do Programa Operacional Factores de Competitividade – COMPETE e por Fundos Nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia no âmbito do projeto *LabCom – Comunicação e Artes*, UIDB/00661/2020.



Though the importance of internal communication is increasing, organisations are still learning to manage internal communication in a new hybrid work era (Černikovaitė & Karazijienė, 2023). Hybrid work is a term, which defines a working arrangement where an employee divides their time between working at a traditional workplace and working remotely (typically at home, or from ‘third places’ such as a coworking space, library, or local café, etc.), which attempts to combine the best parts of both telework and office-based work. It describes an employee’s ability to have some level of autonomy and flexibility over the location where they perform their work tasks (Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023; Moglia, Hopkins & Bardoel, 2021). The transition from office to remote working was rapid, without prior preparation, and the organisational resources that an employee could expect during the usual changes (e.g. training, workplace preparation, etc.) were unavailable (Lazauskaitė-Zabielskė et al., 2022), so managers had to quickly change the usual forms of communication, introduce new ones (e.g. meetings via Teams, Zoom platforms), and learn how to communicate with their employees without possibility to see them live, as was the norm before the pandemic. Later hybrid work became a new reality (Hopkins & Bardoel, 2023; Grzegorzczuk et al., 2021), organizations have to install cloud computing services, new equipment to store data, train employees to use new technologies and thus raise their competencies (Grzegorzczuk et al., 2021, p.13). The shift to hybrid work introduced several challenges for organizations and mid-level managers, such as issues with information technology, including cybersecurity and the integration of new software; concerns over employee productivity while working remotely; reduced social interaction among team members; difficulties in obtaining quick assistance and feedback; and questions on how to improve information-sharing processes as traditional communication methods were disrupted (Černikovaitė & Karazijienė, 2023; Lazauskaitė-Zabielskė et al., 2022; Žilienė et al., 2020).

Similar challenges and the need to keep employees informed and satisfied with the information they receive in recent years faced ministries (Bortkevičiūtė et al., 2021), which are known as institutions which implement executive-administrative and organizational activities aimed at the implementation of laws and other legal acts, execution and initiation (Bakaveckas, 2003) and are often assigned the role of policy-making advisors in the Government (Christensen, Lægrend & Røvik, 2020, p.15). The ministries are institutions responsible for the preparation and formation of the state policy in a certain area, the organizer of state’s policy implementation and the executor of its control. The Ministry prepares and forms policy in the assigned field by preparing, coordinating and submitting drafts of legal acts and other decisions to the Government (Marčinskas & Vaškelis, 2003). Despite the impact of ministries to society and the positive impact of well managed internal communication for employees productivity (Lee, 2022; Madlock, 2008), recently conducted research showed that in ministries the role of professional communicators is undervalued, and a central problem for communication is to get recognition for itself as an important sector, like other organizational areas. Italian experts claim that the problem is internal legitimization of communication and French experts believe that the presence of strategic/managerial role of communication is increasing in the public sector, though understanding of communication as technical/operational functions is still prevalent (Ducci, Lovari & Rizzuto, 2021, p.259). As public sector organisations, ministries differ from private business organisations in terms of their specific characteristics — control over other subordinate organisations, lower motivation capacity of employees, slower decision-making speed, the need to coordinate their actions with a wide range of stakeholders, including politicians, controlling and controlled organisations, business structures (Giedraitytė, 2016; Mullins, 2013; Masiulis, 2007; Boyne, 2002), they heavily depend on legitimacy, which means “a license to operate” that is given by citizens, the main stakeholders of these organizations (Reinikainen & Valentini, 2023; Wæraas, 2020; Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019), as well as the obligation of strict adherence to rules and directives (Baarspul & Wilderom, 2011). These fundamental differences also lead to a slightly different, stricter, more bureaucratic nature of internal communication, which differs from that of private business organisations (e.g. obligation for managers in public sector to organise compulsory quarterly interviews with each employee, obligation to record tasks in an internal system, etc.). Mo-

reover, it should be noted that during the period of the forced transition to teleworking and later hybrid work, ministries faced a double challenge: they had to find ways to inform stakeholders — business, society, subordinate organisations — promptly about the decisions being taken and the changes ahead because of a new reality, and, at the same time, to change the processes of internal communication management themselves, and to ensure that employees were well-informed and motivated to continue their work successfully (Beniušis, 2023, p.98-99). Therefore, given the above-mentioned characteristics of ministries as public policy-making institutions, and the lack of research and recommendations how to improve internal communication in public sector organisations in a period of change and uncertainty (Ndela & Madsbu, 2022; Madsen & Schmeltz, 2022; Trofimovas & Valackienė, 2015; Rubinstein et al., 2016), it is appropriate to carry out a new research on internal communication in this type of organisations during the period of uncertainty, rapid change entering a new hybrid work era.

Therefore, this paper raises a *research problem*: how to manage internal communication (IC) in a hybrid work era in the ministries?

*The aim of the paper* is to provide recommendations on how to improve the management of IC in ministries during the time of uncertainty when hybrid work enters arena, following an analysis of the changes of internal communication in such organisations in the new reality.

The paper has three *objectives*: (1) to identify how IC management in ministries has changed since the introduction of hybrid work; (2) to identify IC challenges in ministries when hybrid work is a new reality; (3) to identify how the ministry's IC specialists and heads of the units suggest to improve IC management in the era of hybrid work.

The methods used in the study were: analysis of scientific literature, synthesis, semi-structured interviews, generalization.

## 2. Theoretical framework

Internal communication is defined as a two-way process that involves the creation, transformation and transmission of information between individuals, groups and the organisation as a whole, and can take verbal, non-verbal or written forms (Rogala & Bialowas, 2016). It has a variety of functions, such as serving as a control and coordination function for employees, providing the information necessary for employees to perform their job functions and to organise work processes (Papa, Daniels, & Spiker, 2008; Kramer & Bisel, 2017; Rogala & Bialowas, 2016), and creating a trustworthy image of the organisation amongst its employees, and a good internal climate (Rogala & Bialowas, 2015; Santoso et al., 2022), fosters employee loyalty and identification with the organisation, explains the rules of belonging and the benefits of being part of the organisation (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007), emphasises the need for clear, fast and seamless communication to inform employees when crises occur that are directly related to the organisation's activities, decisions made by management, or the organisation is in a period of uncertainty it could not have foreseen (Coombs, 2012; Kim, 2018; Santoso et al., 2022), highlighting the importance of internal communication in the context of organisational change (Lewis, 2011).

In the scientific literature, internal communication is presented as having several directions — top-down, bottom-up, horizontal (Papa, Daniels & Spiker, 2008; Kramer & Bisel, 2017; Rogala & Bialowas, 2016), and some researchers also distinguish diagonal communication (Blažėnaitė, 2011; Papa, Daniels & Spiker, 2008). In this paper, top-down communication will be analysed. This is the direction in which messages are conveyed by senior managers to their subordinates. Information includes instructions about the work to be done and how to do it; information about the organisation's policies, rules, and benefits package; providing feedback to employees about their performance; and other similar information functions. This communication helps employees to resolve uncertainty about what exactly they are expected to do and how they will be evaluated, as well as to learn about the culture of the

organisation. These internal communication channels include face-to-face conversations, emails, newsletters, official organisation publications, the organisation's social networks and other similar means (Rogala & Bialowas, 2016, pp.58).

Before the era of hybrid work, researchers have analysed the impact of internal communication on employee engagement, productivity and job satisfaction (Sheridan, 2012; Marlow et al., 2018), searched for appropriate internal communication channels (Miller, 2011; Sheridan, 2012), and highlighted the importance of well-designed internal communication in organisations undergoing structural, process management and other planned changes (Burnes, 2009; Lewis, 2011). Sheridan (2012) identified a direct link between open communication between managers and employee engagement and job satisfaction, arguing that when managers communicate more openly and frequently with employees, they are more engaged in the organisation and more satisfied with their jobs (Sheridan, 2012, p.123). Marlow et al. (2018) investigated various aspects of internal communication in small teams working remotely and found that the quality of internal communication has a greater positive impact on employee productivity than the frequency of communication, and also identified that immediate, sincere and face-to-face internal communication contributes to organisational effectiveness. Research prior to the COVID-19 pandemic has focused on the selection of appropriate communication channels (Miller, 2011; Sheridan, 2012) and has highlighted the importance of agreeing on a common pattern of behaviour when working in teams for well-functioning internal communication, emphasising the importance for organisations to agree on how, when, and by what means communication is done (McKenna, 2006; Verbung et al., 2013).

Research on internal communication during the pandemic and entering new hybrid work era can be summarised in at least three groups — (1) the impact of internal communication on employee productivity, performance and engagement (Gomes et al., 2021; Mayfield et al., 2021; Špoljarić & Verčič, 2022); (2) on the role of internal communication in change communication (Opatska, Johansen & Gordon, 2024; Zainab, Akbar, & Siddiqui, 2022; Li et al., 2021); and (3) on the role of internal communication in employees' trust in the organisation (Men et al., 2021; Qin & Men, 2023).

Mayfield, Mayfield, and Walker (2021) analysed the impact of leaders' motivational speeches on employee productivity and found that leaders' motivational speeches have a positive impact on employees' productivity, job satisfaction, and contributes to employees' intention to stay in the organisation. Špoljarić and Verčič (2022) investigated the impact of internal communication on employee engagement, job satisfaction and employer attractiveness. A study of 1 800 employees in Croatia found that two-way communication is necessary to improve the attractiveness of an organisation as an employer and to increase employee engagement, managers should provide feedback to employees responsibly, organisations should focus more on informal communication as it allows employees to share information with each other, and employees' needs and preferences for the delivery of information should be taken into account to improve the quality of the information communicated (communication climate). Gomes, Lourenco, and Ribeiro (2021), in their analysis of the impact of internal communication on employee productivity, identified that internal communication, employee perceived organisational support and employee productivity are closely linked. Zainab, Akbar & Siddiqui (2022), who analysed the role of internal communication during change in the banking sector in Pakistan, found that managerial leadership during change and open internal communication before and during change positively influenced employees' attitudes towards the change, and that change was more easily implemented in such organisations. The impact of internal communication during change in organisations has been studied by Li et al. (2021), who surveyed nearly 500 US employees working in organisations of different sizes in the first wave of COVID-19, found that open internal communication helps employees to adapt to change in their organisations, helps them to reduce their anxiety about the change, and at the same time strengthens the bond between the organisation and the employees. Men, Kin, and Jin (2021) analysed the impact of language used by line managers on employees' trust in the organisation. They found that the use of empathy-oriented language by supervisors, and clear explanations of the tasks assigned and their



meaning, helped to strengthen employees' trust in the organisation and in the leaders themselves. Qin and Men (2022) investigated whether and how internal communication at the organisation and unit level during a pandemic, when working from different locations, correlates with trust in the organisation and employees' psychological health. To do so, an online questionnaire survey was carried out with 393 US employees working in different sectors across the country. A strong correlation was identified between effective internal communication when working remotely and employees' trust in the organisation.

Researchers point out that managing internal communication in teams working at a distance is not without its challenges. Teleworking organisations in the late 20th century were associated with innovative business enterprises, and even then, well before the COVID-19 pandemic, the internal communication challenges faced by these teams were of interest to researchers (Ginevičius et al., 2006; Miller, 2011; Sheridan, 2012; Mullins, 2013). Ginevičius et al. (2006, pp. 418-423) investigated the specificities of human resources management in virtual organisations and identified the following challenges for managers: miscommunication between remote members of the organisation; lack of reciprocity in terms of support, information and knowledge transfer; and the resulting lack of organisational culture. Miller (2011, pp. 206-208) identified the following challenges for managers of remote teams: setting priorities and delegating to people working in different locations, choosing the right communication methods, dealing with conflicts when they cannot be resolved face-to-face, misunderstandings related to different ways of reading emails. Sheridan (2012, pp.28) identified four challenges in team leadership: the communication challenge, the challenge of technology and tools, the challenge of building strong bonds and good relationships between team members, and the challenge of trust between manager and employee. Mullins (2013) identified a lack of socialisation of employees as a challenge, linking this to a lack of internal communication within the organisation, pointing out that an increasing number of homeworkers feel disconnected from their colleagues. Author also identified as a challenge the resulting difficulties in balancing work and family commitments, with homeworkers interviewed reporting that they experience stress and often feel exhausted (Mullins, 2013, pp.562).

Research conducted before, during and after COVID-19 pandemic shows that the key internal communication challenges of teleworking identified in the academic literature remain similar — ineffective communication and employee loneliness (Mullins, 2013; Wang et al., 2021; Nakrošienė & Butkevičienė, 2016; WorkAnywhere & Selina, 2022), the dilemma of how to form a team and ensure good relationships between colleagues (Ginevičius et al., 2006; Žilienė et al., 2020; Smoląg & Ślusarczyk, 2021), how to minimize heightened ambiguity and pressure (Coombs, 2012; Žilienė et al., 2020), how to ensure control over the performance of teleworkers but at the same time maintain trust in employees (Sheridan, 2012; Žilienė et al., 2020; Lebopo, Seymour & Knoesen, 2020), how to provide feedback in a timely and appropriate manner (Geister et al., 2006; Wang et al., 2021).

Effective internal communication is crucial for organizational success, yet there is a significant gap of research on its management within organizations funded by the state or municipal budget (Ndlela & Madsbu, 2022; Leijerholt et al., 2022; Madsen & Schmeltz, 2022). Nakash and Bouhnik (2023) after conducting a research in four ministries of Israel found out that remote work had the potential to negatively impact employee morale and engagement because of decline in informal encounters with co-workers in corridors or coffee corners. Researchers stated that decline in information management (IM) quality was reported by those continuing working from the office as IT departments had to focus addressing the challenges and complexities involved in accessing information their colleagues who worked remotely and those who stayed at offices got less attention. Research showed that IM quality was reported to decline in smaller ministries and the authors claimed that it was related with resources – large organisations have more manpower, infrastructure, and resources, this is why they could manage processes more effectively and to handle crisis better (Nakash & Bouhnik, 2023, p.8). Madsen and Schmeltz (2022) conducted a study in a Danish municipality to analyze whether departmental managers, after receiving training, could effectively use the intranet as an internal social network to reach

all employees and convey key messages. The study found that the use of the intranet in the municipality was not successful and that managers failed to use the intranet as a platform for discussion with employees for several reasons: there were too many and too diverse employees, and some employees did not find the communication platform attractive as they preferred live meetings or Facebook with their line managers, and managers themselves did not believe in the potential of intranets. The researchers also found that in order for a communication platform to work, the managers themselves have to believe in the meaningfulness of the platform, which makes it easier to convince employees to use the communication channel (Madsen & Schmeltz, 2022). Leijerholt, Biedenbach, and Hultén (2022) investigated the role of internal communication in enhancing the image of a public sector organisation among its members by analysing a public sector organisation working in the health sector in northern Sweden. They found that consistent and regular internal communication increased employee pride in the organisation, increased commitment to the organisation and increased employee support for the organisation's actions. Ndlela and Madsbu (2022) studied the management of internal communication at a Norwegian public university during the pandemic and discovered that it disrupted traditional communication structures and channels. This included the loss of in-person interactions with employees, the absence of bulletin boards, and the discontinuation of printed newsletters. As a result, new communication platforms such as Zoom and MS Teams were introduced, requiring employees to quickly learn and adjust to these tools. Remote meetings became shorter and more efficient than face-to-face meetings before pandemics. Similar findings regarding more concise and results-driven meetings, which became a new norm, were reported by Toleikienė, Rybnikova, and Juknevičienė (2020). They analyzed how internal communication changed following the introduction of telework in a Lithuanian municipality during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers found that, with the introduction of telework, managers expected employees to respond promptly — within 15 minutes — to assigned tasks. They also observed changes in traditional communication practices: peer-to-peer communication, where two individuals interact directly, became less frequent, while team communication, involving multiple participants, grew more common (Toleikienė, Rybnikova & Juknevičienė, 2020).

The literature analysis revealed various studies on internal communication management, focusing on the shift to hybrid work models. It emphasized the importance of internal communication for employee engagement, productivity, satisfaction, trust-building, and adaptation to change. The challenges of managing communication in remote and hybrid settings — such as miscommunication, employee isolation, and the maintenance of organizational culture — were also addressed. However, a notable gap exists in research exploring specific changes in internal communication within public policy-making organizations following the introduction of teleworking. This includes a lack of studies on the internal communication practices implemented by heads of units and communication specialists in these organizations. To address this gap, the research was conducted in the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania, an organization responsible for shaping public policy.

### **3. Research method**

A case study strategy was chosen to address the research problem. The most common use of the term 'case' associates the case study with a location, such as a community or organization. The emphasis tends to be upon an intensive examination of the setting (Bryman, 2012, p.67). Flyvbjerg identifies the following features of case study research: depth of investigation, understanding of context and processes, the ability to identify the phenomenon under investigation (determine causes and effects), and the potential to generate new hypotheses and research questions (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 314). Case studies are divided into descriptive, when the aim is to describe a particular phenomenon in a particular organisation or community in detail, explanatory and exploratory, when the aim is to formulate hypotheses by studying a particular phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Exploratory research is characterised by the aim of

gathering knowledge about a phenomenon about which little is known and, based on the results, aims to generate some hypotheses for future larger-scale studies (Swedberg, 2020). An exploratory study was carried out in this instance. Lithuania is a parliamentary democracy with a unitary structure of governance. The legislative power is vested in the unicameral Seimas, whose members are elected for a four-year term. Executive power is shared between the President, elected directly by the citizens, and the Government, headed by the Prime Minister appointed by the President with parliamentary approval. The Government consists of 14 ministries, which are institutions responsible for shaping state policy and overseeing different areas of public administration. Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania was chosen as a case study. This ministry is responsible for strategic areas of public transportation, including roads, railways, maritime, and air transport. Seventeen companies, institutions, and enterprises fall under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Transport and Communications. Consequently, its operational efficiency, closely linked to well-managed internal communication, directly impacts the daily lives of citizens and economic growth. Notably, the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania is considered a medium-sized ministry in the country based on the number of employees, with 182 employees as of December 2024, making it a relevant subject for analysis in the context of other ministries.

A qualitative study typically aims to identify the norms, values, and organizational culture of the group under investigation, placing particular emphasis on explaining human behavior (Bryman, 2010, p.48). Qualitative research is characterized by a small number of participants and the avoidance of pre-defined response categories (Kidd, 2002, p.126). Therefore, semi-structured interviews are well-suited for this type of research. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) in data collection process trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) is very important. They stress that semi-structured interviews help achieve this by enabling rapport-building and in-depth exploration of participants' realities. The authors advocate for a flexible approach to interviews, where researchers adapt questions and probes based on the interviewee's responses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Similar approach present Lindlof and Taylor (2017) as they stress the iterative nature of interviews, where follow-up questions arise organically from participants' responses, and add that this method allows depth and richness of data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). They defines semi-structured interviews as a flexible method for gathering in-depth qualitative data, particularly effective in understanding participants' experiences, values, and meanings within specific cultural or social contexts.

*Selection of Interviewees.* The interviews were conducted in 2022, during which the Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania consisted of ten structural units. The author randomly selected five unit heads for the interviews, along with two individuals responsible for internal communication at the Ministry level. In the following text, these two individuals are referred to as internal communication specialists. Thirteen questions were designed for internal communication specialists and seventeen have been prepared for heads of units. Some questions were repeated for both groups. For example, heads of units and internal communication specialists were asked how internal communication could be improved at ministry and unit level.

*Interview Techniques.* At the time, the Ministry operated under a hybrid working model, allowing staff to work remotely two to three days per week. Due to pandemic-related restrictions, all interviews were conducted remotely via the MS Teams platform with cameras enabled. Informants participated from their usual working environments, either at home or in the Ministry. The use of cameras facilitated the collection of valuable contextual information, including nonverbal cues, and allowed follow-up questions based on the emotional aspects of their responses. On average, each interview lasted 40 minutes to 1 hour. The interviews were recorded, transcribed for data analysis, and securely stored in separate computer files, ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

*Data interpretation.* Open coding is the process of mapping interview transcripts so that patterns in the data can be identified, retrieved, and analyzed. Unlike coding survey responses for quantitati-

ve analysis, which requires reducing responses to numeric values, the goal of coding semi-structured interview transcripts is to index the data to facilitate its retrieval, while retaining the context in which data was originally identified (Sankar & Jones, 2007). Researchers such as Strauss & Corbin (1990) and Charmaz (2006) describes open coding is an iterative process that requires constant comparison of data segments to uncover patterns, refine categories, and construct conceptual frameworks. This process is essential for theory-building, as it allows researchers to generate grounded concepts without relying on preconceived notions, making it a flexible and data-driven approach. Similarly, Saldana (2016) underscores the importance of open coding in qualitative analysis, noting that it not only helps in the organization of data but also in identifying initial themes that later inform more refined coding stages, such as axial and selective coding. These authors agree that open coding provides a foundation for deeper analysis and theory development by allowing the researcher to explore and refine categories inductively, contributing to a systematic approach in qualitative research. It is emphasized that open coding is an initial step that leads to the creation of categories and subcategories, key themes or patterns that emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Saldana, 2016). This process provides the foundation for further analysis and interpretation, eventually leading to the development of more complex categories or theories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Saldana, 2016). All informants were coded with numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Each informant was assigned a specific number to describe their perspective while anonymizing the data. Subsequently, names were assigned to qualitative data sets, such as sentences or their parts, as well as paragraphs. Thematic analysis was conducted following the transcription of the interviews to systematically identify, analyze, and interpret patterns of meaning within the data. The process began with familiarization, wherein the author repeatedly read the transcripts to gain a deep understanding of the content. Initial codes were then generated by systematically coding significant features of the data across the entire dataset. These codes were subsequently organized into potential themes by identifying broader patterns and relationships among them. A single response or unit could be assigned to multiple categories if the informant addressed several relevant topics within the same answer or sentence. This process helped to identify themes/subthemes and categories/subcategories. Data classification and analysis were then carried out, followed by data interpretation.

#### 4. Findings

***Changes in internal communication management entering hybrid work.*** The interviews identified the changes that have taken place at Ministry and unit level. At Ministry level it showed that the hybrid work has led to a new digital communication culture, with meetings taking place on MS Teams and Zoom platforms. Live meetings and staff training have been replaced by virtual meetings, which have become more efficient, structured and time-saving compared to the pre-pandemic period. The new meeting culture and the opportunities offered by remote meetings during the pandemic led to the involvement of more stakeholders in decision-making, such as business people, citizens, colleagues from other ministries or other public sector organisations. The Ministry also introduced a new format of communication between the Ministry's management and its staff — the so-called Ministry's Hour. It used to take place via the MS Teams platform about once a month. During this time, the political leadership of the Ministry briefed all employees on the most important Ministry's news and upcoming changes, the heads of the units presented their work, and employees could ask questions. During COVID-19, the Ministry launched a new internal communication channel, the Intranet. It was used to host training materials, information about colleagues starting and leaving the Ministry, information about upcoming and ongoing internal events, celebrations, and photos. Changes were also noted at units level, with the usual face-to-face conversations between managers and staff being replaced by emails, a significant increase in the number of emails, and the use of more communication channels by managers at units level (Messenger, Teamschat, etc.), new forms of communication have been introduced to reinforce the sense

of teamwork (e.g. once a week informal chatting among the members of the unit in front of the computer screens, sharing summer plans, showing pets, etc.). There was also a change in the way feedback was given: before the pandemic, managers were more likely to give feedback verbally and in person, whereas with the advent of teleworking, feedback was given in writing or by telephone.

The study identified several **key internal communication challenges** in the context of hybrid work as a new reality, including prolonged problem-solving processes, difficulties in building effective interpersonal relationships, heightened tension levels, and staff reluctance to address issues they once spoke about freely. Additionally, challenges in providing feedback and varying interpretations of information in email communication were also noted.

The interviews revealed that entering hybrid work era it takes longer to deal with the problems that arise, both in terms of the challenges of working from different locations and the challenges posed by technology. It was found that the emergence of teleworking made it more difficult to foster personal connection, especially for new members joining the team. During the pandemic there was a sense of pressure and anxiety in the Ministry. Informants highlighted an increased workload and mentioned that staff became hesitant to speak up about issues they previously addressed without fear before the pandemic. Managers were also found to be less likely to provide feedback due to teleworking, as it is more time-consuming to provide feedback when communicating remotely and without seeing the employee in person, and therefore less likely to use this tool. Informants also highlighted misunderstandings arising from different interpretations of information when communicating via email. Without the ability to see the interlocutor in person, the information was often read with varying tones, sometimes leading to conflicts.

Interviews with heads of units and internal communication specialists revealed *how they propose to improve internal communication management at Ministry and unit level*. The proposals are presented in tables and grouped according to the number of people who proposed them — ideas proposed by more people are presented at the beginning of the table, while those with the least support are listed at the end. The majority of proposals for improving internal communication at the ministry level focused on the regularity of the Ministry's Hour — as many as four informants emphasized this internal communication tool, suggesting it be held regularly, on a monthly basis. Three informants proposed strengthening collaboration between the ministry's structural units, while the same number suggested making better use of the intranet's potential for internal communication. Two informants highlighted the necessity of sharing important information with employees first, before communicating it to external stakeholders.



**Table 1. Suggestions for better internal communication at Ministry level.**

| Category                                                                | Subcategory                                                                                                              | Interview statement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Establish the regularity of the Ministry's hour</b>                  | Proposed to organise a regular, monthly presentation of the overall picture of the Ministry                              | <p>&lt;...&gt; <i>There is no official set time for the Ministry's hour. We'd like to see it every month. [Participant 6]</i></p> <p><i>What we hear from the staff, everyone loves (Ministry's hour). &lt;...&gt; You can see the minister and understand what he is thinking. &lt;...&gt; Someone who sits in his or her own sphere, feels distant and withdrawn, not part of the process. You don't see how your part contributes to the overall picture of the ministry. &lt;...&gt; That's why, as far as we hear from the staff, everybody is very keen on those Ministry's hours. [Participant 7]</i></p> <p><i>The format of the Ministry's hour should be maintained - presenting innovations, newcomers. [Participant 2]</i></p> <p><i>It's working – Ministry's hour - it helps you feel your pulse. [Participant 3]</i></p> |
| <b>Fostering cooperation between departments</b>                        | Suggested that departments should be more open about their expectations of each other                                    | <p><i>Inter-departmental cooperation should be encouraged - at the initiative of the internal customer. For example, employees from one department meets with colleagues from another and sets out their expectations - we expect this from you, we expect that from you. [Participant 3]</i></p> <p><i>Periodic meetings once a week would be helpful to better understand each other's work. [Participant 7]</i></p> <p><i>&lt;...&gt; talking and negotiating - if employees can't agree, then managers must step in. [Participant 4]</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Better use of the Intranet</b>                                       | Suggested to put as much information as possible on the Intranet                                                         | <p><i>It needs to give as much information as possible - put it on the Intranet. Who joined the team, who left, colleague awards, organisational changes in the structure, invitations to training. The internal kitchen should be put on the Intranet. [Participant 3]</i></p> <p><i>In another institution, the Intranet used to be warmer - birthdays, it was alive, everyone could write on it. [Participant 2]</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|                                                                         | Proposed to make the Intranet more user-friendly                                                                         | <p><i>The Intranet is embedded as a browser homepage, but people don't develop that skill. [Participant 6]</i></p> <p><i>&lt;...&gt; It's annoying that when you want to go to Google, you have to close your Intranet. &lt;...&gt; [Participant 2]</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Informing Ministry staff before information is shared externally</b> | Suggested ensuring that employees are the first to know key information                                                  | <p><i>&lt;...&gt; it is good practice for people to learn from the inside, which was not the case here, we learn a lot from the outside - from the media. People complain that they don't know a lot inside. [Participant 5]</i></p> <p><i>&lt;...&gt; It would be a good idea to send press releases to all staff first before they are distributed to the media. [Participant 2]</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Providing training relevant to all staff</b>                         | Offered meetings with experts to help address the challenges of a period of uncertainty                                  | <i>Meetings should be organised for staff with specialists in mental health, emergency management and other fields. [Participant 2]</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Organise creative presentations of Unit activities</b>               | It is proposed to regularly present each unit's activities, using creativity and involving all the staff of the Ministry | <i>Regular meetings and activities could be held to present the activities of each division. &lt;...&gt; present the work of the division from the inside, in a fun way. [Participant 6]</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

Source: compiled by the author

The study also highlighted the informants' perspectives on improving internal communication at the unit level. Four informants suggested that regular informal conversations within units on non-work-related topics — such as discussing team members' leisure activities, holiday plans, or books they have read — would be beneficial. Notably, this finding supplements existing research on public sector organizations, which emphasizes the value of strengthening interpersonal relationships through virtual coffee breaks. These informal discussions on non-work-related issues help mitigate stress and reinforce team spirit during challenging times (Jämsen, Sivunen, & Blomqvist, 2022; Babapour Chafi, Hultberg,

& Bozic Yams, 2021). The study's findings revealed that managers in the Ministry view such non-work-related discussions with all unit members as essential for maintaining team cohesion and productivity. Among other suggestions for improving internal communication, it is important to highlight that two informants emphasized the need for more frequent verbal communication rather than relying solely on email exchanges, as this approach allows managers to better assess employees' moods. Similarly, two other informants stressed the importance of providing regular feedback to team members, particularly in the context of hybrid work models. Additional recommendations are outlined in the accompanying table.

**Table 2. Suggestions for improving internal communication at unit level.**

| Category                                                                                                    | Subcategory                                                                             | Interview statement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>The importance of regular conversations within units, including the sharing of non-work-related news</b> | Helps maintain team spirit                                                              | <i>In our division a new format has emerged, we call it "At the Coffee", we connect via Teams, every two or three weeks: we share non-work related news, i.e. who will go on holiday where, about the books we read. [Participant 3]</i><br><br><i>Ask people about their personal lives at meetings - show each other's puppies and kittens, tell a joke. [Participant 2]</i><br><br><i>It could be done informal online meetings - have a fun detail and a drink in everyone's hand and have a topic, e.g. about a film, about a book. [Participant 6].</i> |
|                                                                                                             | Keeping track of the pulse of the unit, who lives what                                  | <i>At unit level, periodic meetings once a week would be an improvement - to better understand each other's work &lt;...&gt; to find out what the challenges are. [Participant 7]</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>The importance of talking more often instead of communicating in writing</b>                             | Better identification of employees' emotions and well-being                             | <i>During a pandemic, people were more sensitive and it is harder to implement change&lt;...&gt;. People want to do what they are used to doing. When you see employees live, you can see their moods. When we work remotely, it's every man for himself. [Participant 3]</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                                                                                                             | It helps to avoid different interpretations of information and conflicts                | <i>&lt;...&gt; You need to pay a lot of attention to humanity, to communicate as often as possible, because there are misunderstandings in emails about who understood what. [Participant 5]</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Benefits of providing more frequent feedback to employees</b>                                            | The importance of individual talks with staff                                           | <i>I would recommend to supervisors to have regular conversations with each employee individually about the work, the goals, the difficulties the employee is facing, the expectations, the well-being, the atmosphere &lt;...&gt; [Participant 7]</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                                                                                             | The importance of regular remote contact when talking                                   | <i>Middle managers need to call at least once a week to ask how they feel. [Participant 3]</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>The importance of sharing information with the Unit</b>                                                  | Information got from the top management of the Ministry should be communicated to staff | <i>&lt;...&gt; Managers should share what they hear in meetings with top management with their colleagues in the unit, so that there are no secrets. [Participant 3]</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Encouraging informal communication outside work</b>                                                      | Joint events and trips, contributing to the team spirit of the Unit                     | <i>I would suggest that all departments in the Ministry have a tradition of informal conversations. For example, in one department, every few months each unit organises a different activity. They go to the theatre, they go on a tour together. Then people get to know each other better. I would very much like to encourage this among other departments in the Ministry as well. [Participant 7]</i>                                                                                                                                                   |

Source: compiled by the author

## 6. Discussion

In the context of hybrid work, a new digital communication culture has emerged in ministries, as well as in other organizations, characterized by remote meetings predominantly conducted via platforms such as MS Teams or Zoom. These meetings have become shorter, more structured, and more productive compared to in-person meetings held before the pandemic, as noted in previous studies (Babapour Chafi, Hultberg, & Bozic Yams, 2021; Toileikienė, Rybnikova & Juknevičienė, 2020). Moreover, the rise of email-based communication culture in the era of hybrid work has revealed new challenges. It has been observed that managers provide employees with feedback less frequently (Jämsen, Sivunen, & Blomqvist, 2022), which can result in feelings of frustration and lower motivation among employees (Geister, Konradt & Hertel, 2006). The study revealed that entering new hybrid work era, and with a change in the usual communication environment, employees particularly value the feedback from line managers, as well as the opportunity to hear about organisational news and upcoming changes from the organisation's top management in regular remote meetings, and to ask any questions they have. Additionally, conflicts over differing interpretations of information have become more common, as communication increasingly relies on emails rather than face-to-face interactions (Smolağ & Ślusarczyk, 2021). To improve internal communication within public policy-making institutions in the context of organizing hybrid work in a changing environment, several recommendations can be proposed. First, it is essential to identify the primary objectives of internal communication that the political leadership seeks to achieve within the ministry. These objectives might include enhancing staff loyalty to the organization, increasing employee engagement, or improving psychological well-being. Additionally, the institution should map the main internal communication channels and directions within the organization, identifying and addressing weaknesses in the management of internal communication.

Appointing dedicated internal communication officers in public policy-making institutions is also recommended. These officers would focus exclusively on internal communication at the ministry level, addressing the challenge faced by organizations where such responsibilities are either unassigned or combined with other duties, leaving insufficient time for effective communication planning and management. A structured internal communication management plan should be established, with specific responsibilities assigned for its implementation. The heads of units should be directly accountable for the quality of internal communication within their respective units. To ensure a consistent approach across the organization, training programs should be provided for individuals responsible for internal communication. These may include the internal communication officer, the ministry's political leadership, and unit heads who handle communication within their departments. Such training could cover the significance of internal communication, the impact of interpersonal communication at the unit level, and strategies for improving communication skills. Clear rules for remote meetings should also be established, covering aspects such as the use of cameras, pre-distribution of meeting agendas, and defined meeting durations. Finally, it is essential to implement a system that ensures regular feedback for every team member, provided by their manager. Such a system would foster a culture of continuous improvement and support in the workplace. These recommendations aim to enhance internal communication and promote a cohesive organizational culture in the context of hybrid work environments.

The development of a comprehensive internal communication management and evaluation system is also recommended. This system would regularly evaluate the effectiveness of internal communication across the organization and within individual units, ensuring that the stated objectives are met. Since well-managed internal communication is linked to employee productivity and job satisfaction (Lee, 2022; Madlock, 2008), one of the annual performance evaluation criteria for middle managers could be their internal communication management skills.

Furthermore, it would be beneficial to establish a regular format for the ministry's top management to address all staff simultaneously, perhaps on a monthly basis. These sessions, which could be conducted online, would provide updates on the ministry's current situation and upcoming changes, while also offering employees an opportunity to voice their concerns. Such initiatives could help mitigate stress in the face of global uncertainties, such as military conflicts, pandemics, and economic instability. At the unit level, it is critical to agree on standardized channels for task allocation and, if necessary, guidelines for task completion. For instance, tasks could be consistently assigned via email to ensure clarity.

Simulating crisis situations relevant to the organization's operations through structured exercises is another key recommendation. These simulations should focus on timely and appropriate staff communication, followed by debriefing sessions to analyze successes, challenges, and lessons learned. Establishing agreed-upon response times for emails (e.g., within one working day) and codifying these practices in internal documentation can further enhance efficiency.

Limitations of the study include the fact that middle managers and internal communication specialists were present at the study, but not employees. A survey of all staff could provide a better picture of how employees feel about internal communication solutions and what could be improved in internal communication in a period of uncertainty and rapid change.

By identifying the challenges and solutions to internal communication management in a particular ministry, the recommendations could be useful for other public policy-making institutions. It should be noted, however, that it is not possible to generalise from this case study that the challenges of internal communication are being addressed in a similar way by the majority of public policy-making institutions. This would require more in-depth research in other ministries and in more countries.

## 7. Conclusions

The study is one of the first qualitative case studies of its kind to analyse the challenges faced by ministries as policy-making institution in a period of uncertainty, entering hybrid work era, and to reveal how these challenges are addressed by internal communication specialists and managers. The study assesses existing practices described in scientific literature and gathers recommendations from ministry staff on how to improve internal communication management. The study provides answers on how internal communication could be improved in such organisations in these turbulent times and by applying hybrid work formats. The research is also useful for the results obtained — ministries, as public policy-making institutions, are usually seen as rather closed organisations, and the results could serve as hypotheses for future research on how to improve internal communication in other public policy-making organisations. The case study could stimulate the academic debate on the role of internal communication in a public sector organisation during contingencies such as a pandemic, and the recommendations made could contribute to the improvement of internal communication management in ministries.

The forced shift to teleworking and later implementation of hybrid work model required organisations to quickly change their usual internal communication management processes, and managers had to learn how to communicate with their employees in the new reality. Public policy makers also had to make changes, such as moving live meetings, briefings and trainings to the virtual space, and starting to use new communication platforms. The use of technology by ministries during the pandemic allowed them to involve more stakeholders in their meetings — entrepreneurs, citizens, other staff from public sector organisations — which facilitated internal communication between stakeholders who wanted to be involved in decision-making.

In public policy-making institutions, such as ministries, several internal communication management challenges have emerged. Firstly, hybrid work has significantly increased the time required to resolve problems. This delay stems from the fact that team members are working from different locations,



making it challenging to coordinate effectively and resolve issues promptly, as they can no longer meet physically to address problems in real-time as they did before the pandemic. Secondly, maintaining personal relationships between colleagues has become a major challenge, especially between long-standing employees and newer recruits. Working from different locations has limited opportunities for team members to build strong relationships and mutual trust. These interpersonal bonds are essential for fostering team spirit, ensuring psychological well-being, and enabling swift decision-making or efficient problem-solving. Thirdly, a reduction in the frequency of feedback from managers to employees was also observed due to hybrid work practices. Team leaders emphasized that providing feedback remotely is more time-consuming, as it often requires written communication. Unlike in-person feedback, where leaders could quickly share observations face-to-face, written feedback takes longer to compose. Consequently, some leaders admitted to providing feedback less frequently than before the pandemic. Miscommunication in email correspondence emerged as another significant issue, as written messages are sometimes interpreted differently by recipients. This study found that employees often misread the tone or intent of emails, leading to misunderstandings. It was argued that in-person or phone communication could help mitigate these issues; however, hybrid work increasingly fosters a reliance on email communication. Lastly, hybrid working has been associated with increased stress levels among employees. Informants reported that transitioning from traditional office-based work to teleworking or hybrid models has led to longer working hours, heightened stress, and uncertainty. The lack of in-person interaction with colleagues and Ministry leadership has further contributed to this stress.

## References

- Baarspul, H. C., & Wilderom, C. P. (2011). Do employees behave differently in public-vs private-sector organizations? A state-of-the-art review. *Public management review*, 13(7), 967-1002. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2011.589614>
- Bakaveckas, A. (2003). Lietuvos Respublikos ministerijos: jų steigimo bei veiklos teoriniai ir praktiniai aspektai. *Jurisprudencija*, 41(33), 118-129.
- Babapour Chafi, M., Hultberg, A., & Bozic Yams, N. (2021). Post-pandemic office work: Perceived challenges and opportunities for a sustainable work environment. *Sustainability*, 14(1), 294.
- Beniušis, V. (2023). Vidinės komunikacijos iššūkiai ir jų sprendimas įsigalint hibridiniam darbui viešojo sektoriaus organizacijoje: LR Susisiekimo ministerijos atvejis. *Information & Media*, 95, 94–115. <https://doi.org/10.15388/Im.2023.95.59>
- Blazenaite, A. (2011). Effective organizational communication: In search of a system. *Socialiniai mokslai*, 4(74), 34-44.
- Bortkevičiūtė, R., Kalkytė, P., Kuokštis, V., Nakrošis, V., Patkauskaitė-Tiuchtienė, I., ir Vilpišauskas, R. (2021). *Nuo greitų pergalių prie skaudžių pralaimėjimų. Lietuvos viešosios politikos atsakas į COVID-19 pandemiją ir šios krizės valdymas 2020 m.* Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla.
- Boyne, G. A. (2002). Public and Private Management: What's the Difference? *Journal of Management Studies*. 39 (1), 97-122. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6486.00284>
- Bryman, A. (2010). Quantitative vs. qualitative methods. *Sociology: introductory readings*, 47.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods*. Oxford university press.
- Burnes, B. (2009). *Managing change: a strategic approach to organisational dynamics* (5th ed.). PrenticeHall/Financial Times.
- Canel, M., & Luoma-aho, V. (2019). *Public sector communication. Closing gaps between public sector organizations and citizens*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Sage Publications.



- Christensen, T., Lægreid, P., & Røvik, K. A. (2020). *Organization theory and the public sector: Instrument, culture and myth*. Routledge.
- Coombs, W. T. (2012). *Ongoing crisis communication: planning, managing and responding*. SAGE Publications.
- Černikovaitė, M., & Karazijienė, Ž. (2023). Hybrid Communication as a Prospect for Organisation Development. *Review of Applied Socio-Economic Research*, 25(1), 5-19. <https://doi.org/10.54609/reaser.v25i1.286>
- Ducci, G., Lovari, A., & Rizzuto, F. (2021). The culture of communication in the public sector facing the challenge of digital media: an explorative research in Italy and France. *Comunicazioni sociali: journal of media, performing arts and cultural studies: nuova serie: XLIII*, 2, 2021, 251-262.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2011). Case study. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 4, 301-316.
- Frandsen, F., & Johansen, W. (2011). The study of internal crisis communication: towards an integrative framework. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, Vol. 16 No. 4, 347-361. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13563281111186977>
- Geister, S., Konradt, U., & Hertel, G. (2006). Effects of Process Feedback on Motivation, Satisfaction, and Performance in Virtual Teams. *Small Group Research*, 37(5), 459–489. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1046496406292337>
- Giedraitytė, V. (2016). Viešojo sektoriaus inovacijų proceso trikdžių valdymas Lietuvos savivaldybių administracijose (daktaro disertacija). <https://repository.mruni.eu/handle/007/14535>
- Ginevičius, R., Paliulis, N. K., Chlivickas, E., ir Merkevičius, J. (2006). *XXI amžiaus iššūkiai: organizacijų ir visuomenės pokyčiai* (p.19-101, 465-490). Vilnius: VGTU leidykla.
- Gomes, D.R., Lourenco P., & Ribeiro N. (2021). When COVID-19 Is the Invader and Internal Communication Is the Hero: Understanding the Influence of Internal Communication on Individual Performance and Evaluating the Mediating Role of Perceived Support. *Administrative Sciences*. Vol. 11 (4). <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci11040136>
- Grunig, J. E. (2013). Furnishing the edifice: Ongoing research on public relations as a strategic management function. In *Public relations and communication management* (pp. 1-26). Routledge.
- Grzegorzczak, M., Mariniello, M., Nurski, L., & Schraepen, T. (2021). Blending the physical and virtual: A hybrid model for the future of work, Bruegel Policy Contribution, No. 14/2021, Bruegel, Brussels. <https://www.econstor.eu/handle/10419/251067>
- Gudonienė, V. (2006). Corporate communication: communication or corporate governance integration?. *Informacijos mokslai*, (39), 82-92.
- Heide, M., & Simonsson, C. (2019). Internal crisis communication. Crisis awareness, leadership, and coworkership. Routledge.
- Hopkins, J.; Bardoel, A. (2023). The Future Is Hybrid: How Organisations Are Designing and Supporting Sustainable Hybrid Work Models in Post-Pandemic Australia. *Sustainability*, 15, 3086. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043086>
- Jakučionienė, L. (2023). The paradox of communication professionals: identifying the gap between theory and practice and its determining factors. *Information & media*, 96, 161-178.
- Jämsen, R., Sivunen, A., & Blomqvist, K. (2022). Employees' perceptions of relational communication in full-time remote work in the public sector. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 132, 107240.
- Kalaitzaki, A. E., Tamiolaki, A., & Vintila, M. (2023). The compounding effect of COVID-19 and war in Ukraine on mental health: A global time bomb soon to explode?. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 28(3), 270-272. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15325024.2022.2114654>
- Kidd, S. A. (2002). The role of qualitative research in psychological journals. *Psychological methods*, 7(1), 126.
- Kilgore, W. (2023). The Far-Reaching Impact of Global Conflict on Mental Health. Wellbeings.org <https://wellbeings.org/the-far-reaching-impact-of-global-conflict-on-mental-health/>

- Kim, Y. (2018). Enhancing employee communication behaviors for sensemaking and sense giving in crisis situations: Strategic management approach for effective internal crisis communication. *Journal of Communication Management*, Vol. 22, No. 4, 451-475. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-03-2018-0025>
- Kramer, M. W., & Bisel, R. S. (2017). *Organizational communication*. Oxford University Press.
- Lazauskaitė-Zabielskė, J., Žiedelis, A., & Urbanavičiūtė, I. (2022). Sėkmingas darbas nuotoliniu būdu: kokie darbuotojų įgūdžiai jam svarbūs? *Psichologija*, 67, 125-137. <https://epublications.vu.lt/object/elaba:157377749/>
- Lebopo, C. M., Seymour, L. F., & Knoesen, H. (2020, September). Explaining factors affecting telework adoption in South African organisations pre-COVID-19. In *Conference of the South African Institute of Computer Scientists and Information Technologists 2020* (pp. 94-101).
- Lee, Y. (2022). How dialogic internal communication fosters employees' safety behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Public Relations Review*. Vol. 48, No. 1. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2022.102156>
- Leijerholt, U., Biedenbach, G., & Hultén, P. (2022). Internal brand management in the public sector: the effects of internal communication, organizational practices, and PSM on employees' brand perceptions. *Public Management Review*, 24:3, 442-465. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2020.1834607>
- Lewis, L. K. (2011). *Organizational Change: Creating Change Through Strategic Communication*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Li, J. Y., Sun, R., Tao, W., & Lee, Y. (2021). Employee coping with organizational change in the face of a pandemic: The role of transparent internal communication. *Public relations review*, 47 (1), 101984. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2020.101984>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.
- Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2017). *Qualitative communication research methods*. Sage publications.
- Madlock, P. E. (2008). The link between leadership style, communicator competence, and employee satisfaction. *The Journal of Business Communication* (1973), 45(1), 61-78.
- Madsen, V. T., & Schmeltz, L. (2022). Six ways to leave a lover: how sensemaking of the purpose of internal social media changes over time in a public sector organization. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 27(1), 71-90. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CCIJ-11-2020-0156>
- Marlow, S. L., Lacerenza, Ch. N., Paoletti, J., Burke, C. S., & Salas, E. (2018). Does team communication represent a one-size-fits-all approach? A meta-analysis of team communication and performance. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*. Vol. 144. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2017.08.001>
- Marčinskas, A., & Vaškešis, V. (2003). Lietuvos valstybės valdymo sistema europiniame kontekste. In *Tiltai. Priedas* (Vol. 2, No. 13, pp. 287-292).
- Masiulis, K. (2007). XXI amžiaus iššūkiai Lietuvos valstybės tarnybai. *Public Policy and Administration*, 1(22), 68-77. <https://ojs.mruni.eu/ojs/public-policy-and-administration/article/view/2251>
- Mayfield, M., Mayfield J., & Walker R. (2021). Leader Communication and Follower Identity: How Leader Motivating Language Shapes Organizational Identification through Cultural Knowledge and Fit. *International Journal of Business Communication*. Vol. 58, 221-253. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F2329488420979285>
- McKenna, M. (2006). *Business Psychology and Organisational Behaviour*. Fourth edition (p.354-355; 487-490). Hove & New York: Psychology Press.

- Men, L. R., Kin, Y. S., & Jin, J. (2021). Fostering Employee Trust via Effective Supervisory communication during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Through the Lens of Motivating Language Theory. *International Journal of Business Communication*. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/23294884211020491>
- Miller, D. (2011). Brilliant teams. What to know, do and say to make a brilliant team (pp.203-212). Harlow: Pearson.
- Miller, K. (2012). Organizational Communication: Approaches and Processes. Sixth Edition (pp. 1-17; 179-197). Boston: Wadsworth.
- Moglia, M., Hopkins, J. & Bardoel, A. (2021). Telework, Hybrid Work and the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals: Towards Policy Coherence. *Sustainability*, 13, 9222.
- Mullins, L. J. (2013). Management & Organisational Behaviour. Tenth Edition (p.84-85, 432-433, 556-563, 596-601). Harlow: Pearson.
- Nakash, M., & Bouhnik, D. (2023). The effects of COVID-19 on information management in remote and hybrid work environments. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 74(9), 1067-1080.
- Nakrošienė, A., & Butkevičienė, E. (2016). Nuotolinis darbas Lietuvoje: samprata, privalumai ir iššūkiai darbuotojams. *Filosofija. Sociologija*, 27(4), 364–372. <https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=525192>
- Ndlela, M. N., & Madsbu, J. P. (2022). Internal Communications During the Pandemic: Challenges and Implications. In *Organizational Communication and Technology in the Time of Coronavirus: Ethnographies from the First Year of the Pandemic* (pp. 231-249). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Opatska, S., Johansen, W., & Gordon, A. (2024). Business crisis management in wartime: Insights from Ukraine. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 32(1), e12513. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5973.12513>
- Papa, M. J., Daniels, T. D., & Spiker, B. K. (2008). Organizational communication: Perspectives and trends.
- Qin, Y.S., & Men, L.R. (2023). Exploring the Impact of Internal Communication on Employee Psychological Well-Being During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Mediating Role of Employee Organizational Trust. *International Journal of Business Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23294884221081838>
- Reinikainen, H., & Valentini, Ch. (2023). Digital corporate communication and public sector organizations. In V. Luoma-aho, & M. Badham (Eds.), *Handbook on Digital Corporate Communication* (pp. 400-412). Edward Elgar. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781802201963.00040>
- Rogala, A., & Bialowas S. (2016). Communication in Organizational Environments. Functions, Determinants and Areas of Influence (p. 65-72, p. 75-89, p. 170-203). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rubinstein, S., Martin-Rios, C., Erhardt, N., Gittell, J. H., & George, V. P. (2016). Organizational Responses to Uncertainty in the Airline Industry: Changes in Patterns of Communication Networks. *Journal of air transport management*, 57, 217–227. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jairtraman.2016.07.021>
- Saldaña, J. (2016). The coding manual for qualitative researchers (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Sankar, P., & Jones, N. L. (2007). Semi-structured interviews in bioethics research. In *Empirical methods for bioethics: A primer* (pp. 117-136). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Santoso, N. R., Sulistyningtyas, I. D., & Pratama, B. P. (2022). Transformational Leadership During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Strengthening Employee Engagement Through Internal Communication. *The Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/01968599221095182>
- Sheridan, K. (2012). *The Virtual Manager* (p.16-208). Pompton Plains: Career Press.

- Smolağ, K., & Ślusarczyk, O. (2021). Communication Technologies and Internal Communication in an Organization during the Covid-19 Pandemic. *Business Informatics*, (2). [https://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.ojs-doi-10\\_15611\\_ie\\_2021\\_2\\_04](https://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.ojs-doi-10_15611_ie_2021_2_04)
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Sage Publications.
- Śpoljarić, A., & Tkalac Verčić, A. (2022). Internal communication satisfaction and employee engagement as determinants of the employer brand. *Journal of Communication Management*, 26(1), 130-148. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-01-2021-0011>
- Swedberg, R. (2020). Exploratory research. In C. Elman, J. Gerring, & J. Mahoney (Eds.), *The production of knowledge: Enhancing progress in social science* (pp. 17–41). Cambridge University Press.
- Toleikienė, R., Rybnikova, I., & Juknevičienė, V. (2020). Whether and how Does the Crisis-induced Situation Change E-leadership in the Public Sector? Evidence from Lithuanian Public Administration. *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, 16(SI), 149–166. <http://dx.doi.org/10.24193/tras.SI2020.9>
- Trofimovas, V., & Valackienė, A. (2015). Pokyčių komunikacija viešajame sektoriuje: tyrimo metodologinis konstruktas. *Organizacijų vadyba: sisteminiai tyrimai*, 73, 121–140. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7220/MOSR.2335.8750.2015.73.7>
- Van Riel, C. B., & Fombrun, C. J. (2007). *Essentials of corporate communication: Implementing practices for effective reputation management*. Routledge.
- Ventriglio, A., Ricci, F., Torales, J., Castaldelli-Maia, J. M., Bener, A., Smith, A., & Liebreinz, M. (2024). Navigating a world in conflict: The mental health implications of contemporary geopolitical crises. *Industrial Psychiatry Journal*, 10-4103.
- Verburg, R. M., Bosch-Sijtsema, P., & Vartiainen, M. (2013). Getting It Done: Critical Success Factors for Project Managers in Virtual Work Settings. *International Journal of Project Management*, 31(1), 68–79. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijproman.2012.04.005>
- Verčić, A., Verčić, D., & Sriramesh, K. (2012). Internal communication: Definition, parameters, and the future. *Public relations review*, 38(2), 223-230.
- Wæraas, A. (2020). Public sector communication and organizational legitimacy. In V. Luoma-aho & M.- J. Canel (Eds.), *The handbook of public sector communication* (pp. 245–258). John Wiley & Sons, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119263203>
- Wang, B., Liu, Y., Qian, J., Parker, S. K. (2021). Achieving Effective Remote Working During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Work Design Perspective. *Applied Psychology: an International Review*. Vol. 70 (1), p.16-59. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12290>
- WorkAnywhere & Selina. *Social Connection in Remote Work. Report 2022*. <https://www.workanywhere.org/social-connection-in-remote-work>
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case Study Research Design and Methods* (5th ed.). Sage.
- Zainab, B., Akbar, W., & Siddiqui, F. (2022). Impact of transformational leadership and transparent communication on employee openness to change: mediating role of employee organization trust and moderated role of change-related self-efficacy. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 43(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-08-2020-0355>
- Žilienė, R., Skarbalė, J., Labanauskaitė, D., Šneiderienė, A. ir kt. (2020). Su COVID-19 susijusių ekonominės veiklos apribojimų ir valstybės intervencinių priemonių poveikio Klaipėdos regiono įmonėms efektyvumo vertinimas. <https://www.ku.lt/shmf/wp-content/uploads/sites/60/2020/12/mokslo-studija-su-isvadamis-ir-rekomendacijos-P-COV-20-51.pdf>



# The impact of CEO Activism in brand reputation: the PROZIS case

Alexandre Duarte

*Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal*

*alexandre\_arte@yahoo.co.uk*

## Abstract

Citizens are increasingly demanding that companies take a stand on controversial socio-political issues. But CEOs face a major dilemma, as their opinions are those of a citizen and a leader, with no clear boundaries. After posting an opinion welcoming the repeal of the law protecting the right to abortion, the CEO of Prozis created a case that dominated social media trends in Portugal for weeks. As a result, Prozis suffered numerous censorship, cancellations of contracts with influencers who didn't want to be associated with these statements, and thousands of ordinary people who publicly declared that they would stop consuming Prozis products and unfollowed the brand on social networks. This study aims to understand Portuguese society's perception, under-

standing and level of agreement with this phenomenon. Based on a quantitative approach (n=550), through an online questionnaire, this study concludes that although 69.1% of the participants disagree or strongly disagree with the statements made by the CEO of Prozis, 73.5% believe that any CEO has the right to publicly express his or her opinion. Also, more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  believe that Prozis' reputation has been affected by these statements, but more than half (51.6%) said that they have not (or would not) stop buying Prozis' products. A significant difference was found in that only 34.7% of Baby Boomers felt they had stopped buying Prozis products, compared to 58.5% of Gen Z.

Keywords: CEO activism; digital marketing; brand activism; political consumerism; Prozis.

## 1. Introduction

Marketing has changed rapidly in recent years (Swaminathan et al., 2020; Kalaignanam et al., 2021). According to Mertz et al. (2009), the focus of companies and brands shifted from a goods and services perspective (1900-1930), where brands were seen as mere identifiers, to an era where the focus shifted to their value (between the 1930s and 1990s of the last century). At this stage, brands began to recognize the importance of the image and its functional but also symbolic value. In a third phase, somewhere between 1990 and 2000, the focus shifted to the relationship. According to the authors, from the year 2000 we entered what they call the stakeholder focus, where brands are seen as dynamic and social processes. In this current era of marketing and branding, consumers are becoming more driven and motivated by their own personal values and beliefs every day, and demanding that organizations behave in a moral, ethical, and sustainable way (Duarte, 2023). In this context, they are forcing companies to take positions on often controversial issues.

---

Data de submissão: 2023-08-26. Data de aprovação: 2024-11-15.

Revista Estudos em Comunicação é financiada por Fundos FEDER através do Programa Operacional Factores de Competitividade – COMPETE e por Fundos Nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia no âmbito do projeto *LabCom – Comunicação e Artes*, UIDB/00661/2020.





Nevertheless, taking a public stance is often a true double-edged sword, as organizations are made up of people, who are first and foremost citizens, and the line between private and public is often blurred. CEOs (Chief Executive Officers), the “most visible face” of organizations, now face the dilemma that their private opinions and attitudes are often confused with those of the organizations they lead, without clear bonderies, as seen in the case of the CEO of Prozis, analyzed in detail in this article.

The public declaration by Miguel Milhão, CEO of Prozis, in favour of the anti-abortion laws in the United States, has generated a huge debate in Portuguese society, with several news stories in the main Portuguese media and, consequently, the brand he manages has become a “victim” of these statements, with many people stopping following the brand on social media, publicly criticising it, consumers boycotting it and even celebrities cancelling their advertising contracts with Prozis.

Starting from the framing of the construct of CEO activism, this study explores Portuguese perceptions of the phenomenon, their attitudes towards the personal vs. institutional role of corporate leaders, and their political consumption response. A second part is dedicated to the “Prozis case” itself, where the reactions to the situation and to the brand were studied and analyzed by age, gender, professional situation and political identification.

## **2. Activism in marketing**

The notoriety, focus and importance given to social causes is something that cannot be denied today (Chan, 2023). No person, community, organization, government or even brand can remain immune to this reality. Global issues have invaded the public sphere in a very significant way and the debate takes place every day, on all channels, on the most diversified topics, which no longer concern only the small community, region or even country, but the entire planet in a transversal and global way. As observed by Duarte and Chambel (2023), a quick look at history shows that companies and brands have always been outside the public debate, outside the external controversies, away from socio-political discussions. It happens that consumers today are more aware, more concerned, and more exigent, demanding that organizations take a stand on issues that affect people’s lives, that are beyond their own sphere of influence or control, and therefore demanding a clear position from brands and companies, that are now under pressure to take a stand (Paris, 2022).

Companies engage in brand activism for three main reasons. The first one is to respond to the increasing pressure from consumers, who are becoming more aware of social, political, and environmental issues, and are demanding that companies and brands respond to the global challenges. The second is positioning. By choosing and publicly defending a particular cause, a company can create a distinctive image in the marketplace by occupying this space in the minds of consumer, thereby differentiating itself from its competitors. Finally, by using a specific cause, companies are likely to attract consumers who identify with these values and defend the same causes, benefiting these brands and companies by choosing to buy their products over those of the competition. In this way, it helps to increase the sense of trust and further loyalty (Eyada, 2020), as consumers perceive the company not just as a profit-driven organisation, but as an entity committed to something ‘bigger’.

### **2.1. From brand activism to CEO activism**

Despite the importance that brand activism has recently received, another phenomenon has been increasingly discussed in academia: CEO activism. According to Rumstadt and Kanbach (2022), the public expects CEOs to take a stand on social debates, regardless of their business connection, with 65% of consumers assuming that they want CEOs to speak out on important social issues (Hou & Poliquin, 2023). Thus, the authors hypothesize (H1) that consumers want CEOs to take a stand on socio-political issues.

Although conventional wisdom holds that CEOs should avoid wading into society's debates (Hambrick & Wowak, 2021), CEOs of major companies around the world, such as Disney, Nike, IBM, Starbucks, GAP, Amazon, Patagonia, Microsoft, Unilever, Siemens, Netflix, or Apple, among others, have taken public positions on some controversial issues, such as politics, diversity, gun control, immigration, abortion, or equal pay, just to name a few. Mark Benioff, the CEO of Salesforce, for example, holds periodic dinners to explain why he believes public activism is part of the modern CEO's job.

By publishing a list of numerous CEOs who have recently become involved in socio-political causes, Mkrtchyan et al. (2022) showed an upward trend in the proportion of CEOs who have engaged in some form of activism, rising from 0.98% in 2011 to 37.53% in 2019. In fact, CEOs speaking out to influence social issues seems to be here to stay, with an increasing number of leaders speaking out every day about causes that are not directly related to the core business of the organization they lead, on topics ranging from climate change to respect for sexual orientation, from race to gender equality, among others (Chatterji & Toffel, 2019).

Furthermore, CEOs' socio-political activism attracts a great deal of public interest, mainly due to their extreme influence, which is a consequence of their enormous public visibility and positional power (Branicki et al., 2020). These public positions have given rise to the so-called "CEO activism", which Hambrick and Wowak (2021, p.34) define as "a business leader's personal and public expression of a stance on some matter of current social or political debate, with the primary aims of visibly weighing in on the issue and influencing opinions in the espoused direction". This definition highlights the "*symbolic dimension*" of a leader's role, whose actions affect the trajectories of their organizations at least as much as their substantive actions (Pfeffer, 1977, 1981, cited in Wowak et al., 2022).

Although Kathy Bloomgarden (2019) questioned on the World Economic Forum website, whether CEOs – whom she called activists – should talk about social issues that affect the whole community and, ultimately, the entire planet, the fact is that CEO activism, probably because of its impact, leads to positive market reactions and higher company valuations (Mkrtchyan et al., 2022). The same conclusions were reached by Rumstadt and Kanbach (2022), who found that CEO activism appears to have a direct impact on consumers' willingness to buy from a company. Perhaps as a result, business leaders have become increasingly involved in taking public positions on various social and political issues affecting their employees, customers, communities, the environment, etc. over the past decade. To investigate this, it is hypothesized (H2) that the public's reaction to Prozis' CEO statements has been positive. Interestingly, as Melloni et al. (2019) refers, when a CEO takes a position on one side of a debate, is considered as "CEO activism", but when they don't take a position, it is considered as "strategic ambiguity".

Nevertheless, it's important to remember that taking a stand on controversial issues is different from simply supporting some social issues, even if they are related to global social problems, as is the case with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). It is generally accepted that CSR is better accepted than corporate activism, mainly because the former is usually associated with causes that everyone agrees on (protecting the environment, supporting local communities, etc.), while the latter is associated with divisive issues that polarise society. Another difference is that activism is unapologetically visible, not discreetly hidden like some other forms of corporate influence, such as donations or lobbying (Hambrick & Wowak, 2021), to name a few.

But what prompts a CEO to speak out? For Hambrick and Wowak (2021), the CEO's own values system is of paramount importance, but CEOs also analyse the possible reactions of the closest and most important stakeholders, such as employees and customers, by weighing up the extent to which these publics share the same values and would (or would not) support a specific action. In this way, they try to reduce the potential for backlash. Even so, taking a stand always raises a number of issues. For Melloni et al. (2019), there are at least two consequences: the first is that, of course, there will always be audiences that don't agree with the CEO's point of view and therefore may refuse to buy products from that company. This is corroborated by Rumstadt and Kanbach (2022), who remind us that one of the possi-

ble risks that executives take when they publicly comment on political issues is to irritate stakeholders, which can lead to negative reactions or sales boycotts. This reaction of buying products to express an opinion or to make a statement, as an extension of their beliefs, values, and lifestyles, known as political consumerism (Clarke, 2008; Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019; van Deth, 2014, Vázquez, 2014), is growing (Stolle & Micheletti, 2005) and it is an opportunity for consumers to make an impact and exercise their power (Eyada, 2020).

The second consequence is that CEO activism may be seen as profit-driven, and if so, consumers tend to avoid or, at least, relativize CEOs communications. Even so, for Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020), although brand activism may involve a degree of uncertainty, the potential payoff is usually worth the risk. The author hypothesize that the Prozis' CEO statement influenced brand consumption (political consumerism) (H3).

## 2.2. Brand Reputation

To be successful in the market, brands need to have a good reputation, since brands and organizations with a better reputation attract more customers (Herbig & Milewicz, 1993). To this benefit, Doorley and Garcia (2020, p. 4), added “the attraction of more and better candidates for employment, pay less for supplies, gain essentially free press and social media coverage that can be worth much more than advertising, and accrue other benefits that actually contribute to profits.”

For the present study, we'll use the definition of corporate reputation as “a collective assessment of the attractiveness of a company for a specific group of stakeholders relative to a reference group of companies with which the company competes for resources” (Fombrun, 2012: 100). Although the construct of corporate reputation has been defined in several different ways over the years, and therefore, makes it difficult to agree in a concrete and single definition, it is commonly accepted that a good reputation enhances the value of the organization (Dowling, 2016). In 2019, Veh et al. have analysed 5885 publications on corporate reputation, published until 2016, and found that this construct is a valuable intangible asset that contributes to a competitive advantage in the market, which enhances a superior financial performance (p. 316).

Doorley and Garcia (2020, p.37) advanced with this interesting formula of reputation:  $R = (P+B+C) \times Af$ . For the authors, reputation is the sum of Performance, Behaviour and Communication, all of this multiplied by the Authenticity factor. Authenticity is the indicator of how well an organization lives up to its intrinsic identity. This is, when there is authenticity, the organization is whole, undiminished, but when it fails, its reputation will decline, once it will be a fraction of the sum of  $P + B + C$ . So, if any one of these factors is pinched, this has consequences on the company's reputation.

Therefore, it is hypothesized (H4.1) that the Prozis' reputation has been affected by the statements of his CEO. Moreover, it is also hypothesized (H4.2) that even if this specific CEO leaves the company, the reputation won't be changed, and that if this same CEO moved to another company, the new one will be affected (H4.3).

Since performance can be seen as the functionality (in this case of Prozis' products) and those didn't have any functional problem, change, or decrease in quality, this research focus on communication and behaviour, to try to understand its impact in this specific case. By one hand, how the CEO statements were received by the consumers. On the other hand, which consequences it brought in terms of costumers' conduct, both in buying behaviour and attitude towards the brand.

The fact that the Prozis' CEO statements have, or not - and which - consequences on the organization's reputation is precisely the relationship that this study aims to unravel.

### 2.3. The Prozis case

Prozis is a Portuguese brand, founded in 2007 by Miguel Milhão (CEO) which operates in the field of sports food supplements. Based in Esposende, Portugal, it is one of the biggest sports nutrition brands in Europe. In addition to the online sale of sports food supplements, it is also dedicated to their production at its factory located in Póvoa de Lanhoso, also in Portugal.

On June 26, 2022, Miguel Milhão posted on his personal LinkedIn page, a message (figure 1) in support of the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States of America that reversed the decision in the case “*Roe vs. Wad*”, allowing several states to move forward with anti-abortion laws.



This controversial opinion gave rise to a chorus of criticism from the most varied sectors, with numerous personalities publicly criticizing this action, several digital influencers distanced themselves from this statement, many of which even broke the large advertising contracts they had with the brand. Also, thousands of common people unfollowed the brand on social networks and publicly assumed that they would no longer consume products from that company.

The case made the news and had the spotlight in the press and especially on social media for a couple of weeks in Portugal.

As seen in this case, the line that separates what's private from what is public is not clear. Although Miguel Milhão affirmed, in an interview<sup>1</sup> to the economic Portuguese newspaper *Jornal de Negócios* that their personal opinion has nothing to do with the company he leads: “These are my ideas, not those of Prozis. It is a private company, it has shareholders, it has workers, and everyone has different opinions. I am a person who is against abortion.”, the fact is that those statements have had consequences, as seen back the backlash in several social media platforms.

### 3. Research Question and Methodology

To answer the research question “What was the impact of the so-called “*Prozis case*” in Portuguese society and on brand reputation?”, this study relies on a quantitative approach, conducted in Portugal between March 13 and April 12, 2023, carried out through an (online) questionnaire survey, available via *Google Forms*. Initially tested by two respondents, the organization, presentation and understanding of the questions were validated.

1. <https://www.jornaldenegocios.pt/multimedia/negocios-tv/detalhe/entrevista-na-integra-a-miguel-milhao-dono-da-prozis>

Also, the following hypothesis were proposed:

- (H1) Consumers want that company leaders (CEOs) take a stand on socio-political issues.
- (H2) The reaction of the public to the Prozis' CEO statements have been positive.
- (H3) Prozis' CEO declaration affected brand consume (political consumerism).
- (H4) A leader's reputation directly affects the company he leads:
  - (H4.1) Prozis' reputation has been affected by the statements of his CEO.
  - (H4.2) Even if this specific CEO leaves the company, Prozis' reputation won't be changed.
  - (H4.3) If this specific CEO moved to another company, the new one will be affected.
- (H5) There are differences between the perception and attitudes towards CEO activism regarding: age, gender, professional status, and political identification.

### 3.1. Participants

To obtain a convenience sample (Kalton, 2020), a non-probability sampling technique was applied - resorting to participants who were more accessible and more easily available, belonging to the researcher's network of contacts (Taherdoost, 2016). Then, the snowball technique was applied, through encouragement of participants to encourage others to participate. In the end, the participation of 550 valid responses was verified. All respondents agreed, through an expressed informed consent, with participation, framework, purpose of the study and subsequent data processing, respecting the guidelines of the EU General Data Protection Regulation (April 27, 2016/679) and the Portuguese law (58/2019) on data protection.

Regarding the age distribution, 33.3% of the participants belongs to Gen Z (born between 1997 and 2010), 22% belongs to Gen Y (born between 1981 and 1996), 35.8% belongs to Gen X (born between 1965 and 1980), and 8.9% belongs to Baby Boomers Generation (born before 1965). Looking to the groups in the extremes, it's important to distinguish their characteristics, as literature shows us that generational differences matter. According to Seifert et al. (2023), Baby Boomers are positive, optimistic, and idealistic, but also intellectually arrogant with a superior, important and powerful sense of self. They consider themselves as having a "live to work" philosophy and hold that hard work is the key to individual success. In contrast, Gen Z values intelligence/knowledge more than any degree, prefers a flexible schedule, is tech-oriented, more motivated by challenging projects than money, and is community minded.

In terms of gender, women represent 60.9%, men represent 37.3%, and 1.8% of the surveyed individuals prefer not to answer this question.

47.5% of the sample identified himself as an employee, 25.3% as student, 11.8% as self-employed without any dependent workers, 8.9% as self-employed with dependent workers, 3.6% as trainees and 2.9% declared unemployed.

Finally, regarding the political spectrum, the results (fig. 2) show an almost perfect normal distribution curve: 0.5% declare themselves as extreme left, 7.3% left, 23.8% center left, 37.6% center, 21.6% center right, 7.8% right and 1.3% extreme right.



Se 1 for o mais à esquerda, e 7 o mais à direita, onde se identifica/situa no espectro político?

550 respostas

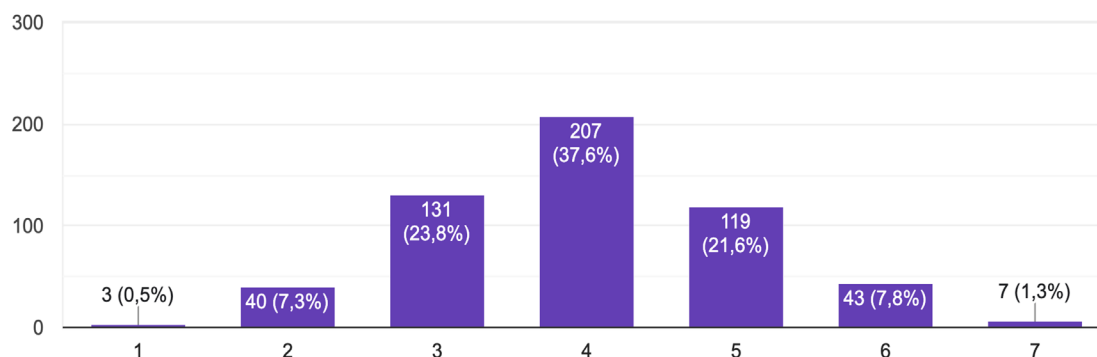


Fig. 2 – Political spectrum self-identification

### 3.2. Data collection procedures and tools

Data collection was conducted through a self-administrated questionnaire available online (Bryman, 2012), through the link provided by the author, and shared throughout email, WhatsApp groups and social media networks. The survey was written in Portuguese, it was completely anonymous and did not collect any names, e-mail addresses or geo-locations.

The questionnaire (annex 1) consisted of the three sections: (1) general questions regarding perceptions and attitudes to “CEO activism”; (2) feelings regarding the impact of the so-called “*Prozis case*” and brand reputation; (3) socio-demographic data regarding gender, age, professional status, and political identification.

The statistical analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistic software version 28.0.0.0.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. CEO Activism

From the 550 valid answers, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the respondents (72.4%) consider that CEOs should use their power and influence to take public positions on social, environmental, or political causes in which they are personally concerned. With no significant difference, almost the same number (72%) consider they should talk on causes that affects their businesses or employees.

When asked if they can differentiate the personal opinion of a leader of a company from the opinion of the organization he leads, 66.4% answered yes, against 33.6% who said no. Nevertheless, when analyzed and compared by gender, age, professional situation and political identification, some differences are noticed. 69.3% of male participants answered that they can differentiate, compared to 64.5% of female respondents. In terms of age, the percentage of answers that assume they can differentiate the opinions of the citizen from the opinion of the company he/she leads, were distributed this way: Baby Boomers, 63.3%; Gen X, 68%, Gen Y, 65,3%; and Gen Z, 66.1%.

As to the professional situation, while 81.3% of the unemployed and 80% of the trainees answered they can differentiate the opinions, only 64% of employed participants answered the same. Finally, more people from the extreme right (57.1%) assumed they can differentiate the opinions, compared with only 33.3% of the extreme left.

Regarding the causes people consider more adequate to be spoken by the CEO's, Environmental issues (with an average of 3,86 in a scale from 1 – least important, to 5 – most important), Diversity and Inclusion (with an average of 3,71), and Immigration and Human Rights (with an average of 3,61), were the most ranked causes. Around the middle of the scale appears Other Causes such as abortion, animal rights, or wage inequality (with an average of 3,08), and at least, above the scale middle point was Politics, with an average of 2,69.

About the channels where respondents think CEOs should speak out about a social issue, 73.6% consider they should use their own personal channels, such as twitter, Social Media Networks, LinkedIn, etc., and 13.6% assuming they should use institutional channels such as the organization's website, newsletters, internal publications, or corporate events. 12.7% said that they should use traditional media as TV, press, etc. While 74.9% of Gen Z think they should use personal channels, only 61.2% of Baby Boomers answered the same. On the other hand, more Baby Boomers (16.3%) think they should use traditional media vs. 10.9% of Gen Z. The same results appear regarding the use of the organization channels, with 22.4% of the Baby Boomers assuming CEOs could/should use them vs. only 14.2% of Gen Z.

As to the political identification, 0% of the extreme left think they should use the organization channels, but 42.9% of the extreme right said they can/should. About the use of personal channels, it was approved by 66.7% of the extreme left vs. 42.9% of the extreme right. Finally,

More than the double (33.3%) of the extreme left compared to the extreme right (14.3%) think they should use traditional media.

#### 4.2. Political Consumerism

In a Likert scale from 1 (not likely) to 5 (very likely), when asked about their attitude towards a company or brand whose CEO had made public statements contrary to their personal values/beliefs, more than half of the respondents (53.1%) assumed they likely (28.9%) or very likely (24.2%) consider stop buying/consuming products from that organization. 30.2% answered neither likely nor not likely, while 10.9% said unlikely and 5.8% answered not at all likely.

When cross compared these results with the age, 20.4% of the Baby Boomers said not at all likely (6.1%) or unlikely (14.3%), while only 15.8% of the Gen Z answered the same (4.9% not at all likely and 10.9% unlikely). On the other side, 48.9% of the Baby Boomers said it is Likely (22.4%) or Very Likely (26.5%) to stop buying/consuming, compared to 53% of the Gen Z (34.4% Likely and 18.6% Very Likely).

Regarding the gender, 23.9% of the male respondents assumed that it is not at all likely (7.3%) or unlikely (16.6%), while only 12% of the female respondents answered the same (4.2% not at all likely and 7.8% unlikely). On the opposite side, more female respondents (54.6%) said that it is Likely (30.1%) or Very Likely (24.5%) to stop buying/consuming, compared to 50.2% of male respondents (27.3% Likely and 22.9% Very Likely).

As to the political identification, 33.3% of the extreme left respondents answered that is not at all likely to stop buying or consuming, with only 28.6% of the extreme right answered the same, but on the other hand, 42.9% of the extreme right respondents said it is very likely to stop buying/consuming products from a company or brand whose CEO had made public statements contrary to their personal values/beliefs, against 0% of the extreme left.

To compare the attitudes on boycotting and buycotting, another question was made, but reversing the action: "To what extent (1- not likely to 5 - very likely) would you consider buying/consuming products from a company/brand whose CEO *had made public statements* aligned with your personal values/beliefs?"

In this case, even more people (58.9%) answered they likely (30%) or very likely (28.9%) consider start buying/consuming products from that organization. 28.9% answered neither likely nor not likely, while 7.5% said unlikely and 4.7% answered not at all likely.

The cross comparison with age, gender and political identification was repeated, and again more respondents of the Baby Boomers (18.4%) said that is not at all likely (10.2%) or unlikely (8.2%), comparing to only 9.9% of the Gen Z (4.4% not at all likely and 5.5% unlikely). When analyzing the opposite answers, only 40.8% of the Baby Boomers said it is Likely (24.5%) or Very Likely (16.3%) to start buying/consuming, compared to 63.9% of the Gen Z (33.3% Likely and 30.6% Very Likely).

As to the gender, less than half of the female respondents (7.8%) answered that it is not at all likely (3.9%) or unlikely (3.9%), compared to the male respondents (19.1%) that assumed the same (5.4% not at all likely and 13.7% unlikely). On the opposite side, again, more female respondents (64.4%) said that it is Likely (32.8%) or Very Likely (31.6%) to start buying/consuming, compared to 50.8% of male respondents (25.9% Likely and 24.9% Very Likely).

When we look to the political identification, less than half (14.3%) of the extreme right respondents answered that is not at all likely to start buying or consuming, comparing to 33.3% of the extreme right that answered the same. Again, 26.8% of the extreme right respondents said it is very likely to start buying/consuming products from a company or brand whose CEO had made public statements aligned to their personal values/beliefs, against 0% of the extreme left.

Finally, the professional situation was also analyzed, as there were some significant differences: 25% of the unemployed respondents considered not likely (12.5%) or unlikely (12.5%) to start buying/consuming products from a brand whose CEO had statements aligned with their own values/beliefs, compared to only 11.9% of employed respondents (6.2% not at all likely and 7.7% unlikely). On the opposite side, 57.5% of the employed assumed they consider start buying/consuming (32.3% Likely and 27.7% Very Likely), against only 31.3% of the unemployed (18.8% Likely and 12.5% Very Likely).

In the total, the average of answers that assume to consider stop buying/consuming products from a company or brand whose CEO had made statements against their values is 3,55 (in a 5 points scale), while the average of answers that assume to consider start buying/consuming products from a company or brand whose CEO had made statements aligned with their beliefs is higher: 3,71.

#### 4.3. Attitude towards the “Prozis case”

The second part of the questionnaire is focused on the so-called “Prozis case”. The first question asks directly how respondents assess the position of the Prozis’ CEO regarding the discussed issue in this research. Using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), the results were: 58.9%, 10.2%, 20.2%, 6.5% and 4.2% respectively from 1 to 5.

From the total, more female respondents (72%) answered disagree (9.6%) or strongly disagree (62.4%), comparing to male respondents that answered the same (64.9%), with 53.7% strongly disagreeing and 11.2% disagreeing. On the opposite side, 9.3% of female respondents agreed (5.1%) or totally agreed (4.2%), while 13.7% of male respondents agreed (9.3%) or strongly agreed (4.4%).

Regarding group age, 80.4% of Gen Z disagree (11.5%) or strongly disagree (68.9%) comparing to 63.3% of Baby Boomers that disagrees (10.2%) or strongly disagrees (53.1%).

On the opposite position, 16.3% Baby Boomers agrees (12.2%) or strongly agrees (4.1%), while only 6.5% of Gen Z agrees (3.8%) or strongly agrees (2.7%).

As to the political identification, 0% of extreme left respondents disagree or strongly disagree with Prozis’ CEO statements vs. 42.9% of the extreme right. Interestingly, also 0% of participants from the extreme left fully agree with the statements vs. 42.9% of the extreme right.

Regardless of whether they agree, or not, with the public position of the Prozis’ CEO, around 3/4 (73.5%) affirm that any CEO has the right to publicly express their opinion, against 26.5% who affirms

that a CEO, as a company leader cannot/should not express personal opinions publicly. When analyzing the difference by age, we found that more Baby Boomers (73.5%) than Gen Z (67.8%) believe that CEO should be able to express himself freely. The gender doesn't show significant differences, with 72.8% of female participants agreeing with the freedom of expression, and 74.1% of male respondents. As to the professional situation, 40% of the trainees assume that CEOs should not share their personal opinions publicly, as 32.4% of students and 23% of employed, but only 12.5% of unemployed surveyed individuals having the same opinion.

Regarding the political spectrum, 100% of extreme left respondents agree that a CEO should be able to speak out freely vs. 57.1% of the extreme right. In the opposite direction, 0% of the extreme left respondents think that a CEO should not speak out publicly vs. 42.9% of the extreme right.

#### 4.4. Prozis' Reputation

About PROZIS' reputation, more than 3/4 (76.7%) believe that the brand has been affected by its CEO's statements. When this question was analyzed by age groups, the results showed that over 3 times more Baby Boomers than Gen Z believe the brand was not affected. In fact, the older the age, the more percentage of respondents thinks the brand was not affected, with 36.7% of Baby Boomers, 32.5% of Gen X, 21.5% of Gen Y and only 10.9% of Gen Z.

As for the gender, 29.3% of males vs. 19.4% of females consider that the brand was not affected.

Regarding the political spectrum, 100% of the extreme left respondents consider that the brand was not affected vs. 57.1% of the extreme right. In the opposite direction, 0% of the extreme left respondents think that the brand was affected vs. 42.9% of the extreme right.

55.8% of respondents consider that, even if the company changed its CEO, its image/reputation would not be the same vs. 44.2% who think so.

When asked if the Prozis' CEO moved to another organization, would this affect the new organization, 69.8% of respondents consider that yes vs. 30.2% who think not.

#### 4.5. Prozis' Boycott and Buycott

Despite the difference not being very significant, when asked about whether they stopped (or would stop) buying Prozis' products, due to the statements of its CEO, more than half (51.6%) said no vs. 48.4% who said yes.

Comparing age groups, only 34.7% of B.B. stopped/would buy, while 58.5% of Gen Z stated that they did/would.

As for gender, more female respondents (54%) stopped/would buy, compared to just 39% of males who did/would do the same.

Regarding the political spectrum identification, 100% of the extreme left respondents did not stop or would stop buying vs. 71.4% of the extreme right. However, 77.5% of left (77.5%) extreme left (0%) respondents have or would stop buying vs. 51.9% of right (23.3%) and extreme right (28.6%).

### 5. Discussion

The data collected in this research showed that almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the participants consider that *CEOs should use their power and influence to take public positions* on social, environmental, or political causes (even if they are divisive or controversial), without distinction between what are *causes that concerns them personally* (72.4%) vs. *causes involving the organization or employees* (72%). Although this is in line with the everyday higher consumers' public conscience about societal problems, it's

activist involvement in several socio-political causes, and the bigger exigence from consumers that are demanding brands and companies to take a stance, the indifference between what is personal concerns and what is of the company and the employees is something new.

The social causes considered the most appropriate to be talked about by CEOs are, in order of importance: Environmental Issues, Diversity and Inclusion, Immigration and Human Rights, Other Social Causes, and finally Political Issues with averages of 3.86, 3, 71, 3.61, 3.08 and 2.69 respectively, on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 is least important and 5 is most important. These results reflect the major social concerns, shown every day on the news, and social media networks. The little importance given to political issues, such as laws, taxes, justice, education, etc., reflects the distance between citizens and politics, demonstrated by the high abstention rates in most elections (for example, in Portugal, in the last elections for the European parliament, in 2019, there were 69.3% abstention<sup>2</sup>, confirming the constant upward trend since 1999).

Regarding the channels in which CEOs should speak, although the majority of the respondents (66.4%) answered that they are able to differentiate the personal opinions of the CEO from those of the company he leads, and 73.5% assumed that like any citizen, a CEO has every right to publicly express his opinions, most (73.6%) assume that the channel through which he should speak is the personal one. These percentages shows that people differentiate the importance and impact of the channel from which the message is told and therefore should be something that CEOs should pay attention.

As for the general political consumerism, although there are no differences regarding stop or start buying products or services depending on whether the CEOs' statements are aligned with people's personal values, it's interesting to see that the average of those who say will going to buy when the values are aligned is higher (3.71) than that of those who say they stop buying when the positions are opposite (3.55). These results reinforce the findings of Mkrtchyan et al. (2022) and Rumstadt and Kanbach (2022) who found that CEO activism results in positive market reactions and have a direct influence on consumers' willingness to purchase.

When analysing the specific Prozis' consumerism, more than half (51.6%) stated that they did not stop (or would stop) buying PROZIS products, due to the declarations of its CEO. Comparing generations, results show that only 34.7% of Baby Boomers stopped buying Prozis' products, while 58.5% of Gen Z did it. As for gender, only 39% of males vs. 54% of females stopped buying. When analyzed the political identification, results show that 77% of respondents from the left and extreme left would stop buying vs. 51.9% of right and extreme right who assume the same. This numbers provide valuable insights about the behavior of Portuguese population regarding age, gender, and political identification towards specific socio-political causes.

Looking to the reaction of the public towards the public statement of the CEO of PROZIS, we see that 69.1% disagree or strongly disagree, and only 10.7% agree or strongly agree. Maybe this specific case can have been influenced by the huge media coverage that the case had have, and by the fact that the subject has to do - despite the arguments of the opposite positions - with human lives (abortion). Even so, this study showed that Portuguese society seems mind-opened to different opinions, as regardless of whether agreeing or not with Miguel Milhão, almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the respondents (73.5%) assume that any CEO has the right to publicly express his opinions.

When analyzing the impact of this case on Prozis' reputation, interesting findings were made when comparing age, gender, and political identification. Despite 76.7% believe that the brand was affected by these statements, more than three times Baby Boomers (36.7%) than Gen Z (10.9%) respondents believe that the brand was not affected. This could be explained by the biggest involvement of the youngster generations in socio-political causes. As for gender, 29.3% of males vs. 19.4% of females consider that

2. <https://www.pordata.pt/portugal/taxa+de+abstencao+nas+eleicoes+para+o+parlamento+europeu+total++residentes+em+portugal+e+residentes+no+estrangeiro-2209>



the brand was not affected, suggesting that the feminine participants can be more involved in maternity/abortion subject than masculine ones. Regarding the political identification, 100% of the extreme left respondents consider that the brand was not affected vs. only 57.1% of the extreme right. Maybe there's a lesson in this once some social causes are directly associated with different political positions. This way, these results can help CEOs decide which causes they choose to speak about and/or what consequences they can expect from sympathizers/supporters of different political spectrums.

Focusing specifically on reputation, more than half (55.8%) of the respondents consider that even if Prozis changed its CEO, this particular construct would not be the same again. Also, seven in each ten respondents (69.8%) consider that if Prozis' CEO would move to another organization, this would affect the new organization. From these respondents, 77% of Gen Z believe that the CEO change would affect the new organization vs. only 55% of Baby Boomers.

This confirms that reputation is a communication framework that takes time to be changed and once it gets a stain, it's not easy to remove it. Also, it shows that the new generations are more willing to feel and get involved with societal issues than the oldest ones.

## Conclusions

This research confirms H1, H4 and partially H5. H2 and H3 were not confirmed. Regarding H1, this study proved that consumers want that company leaders (CEOs) take a stand on socio-political issues. Besides confirming vast past literature, this research adds a new layer to CEO activism, not just by confirming its impact on consumers' behaviors but also showing - and this is new - that people don't make a distinction whether its causes that concerns CEOs personally or causes exclusively related to their business or employees.

As for H2, unlike previous studies (e.g., Mkrtchyan et al., 2022; Rumstadt & Kanbach, 2022), the results exposed a negative public reaction to the Prozis CEO's statements. As discussed above, several reasons can be pointed out to justify this, but it is important to highlight how a leader's public posture can create a wave of negative attitude towards the brand, even if it does not generate a consequent boycott, as seen in this case.

Indeed, regarding political consumerism, H3 was also not confirmed, since more than half of the respondents assumed that they did not and would not stop buying the brand's products, even though they did not agree with the leader's position. An insight that can be drawn from this case is that, although consumers may not identify with (and even criticize) some public statements by a company leader, this does not imply immediate negative consumption behavior.

When analyzing the impact of this case on the Brand's reputation, all H4 were confirmed. In fact, although  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the interviewees answered that they can differentiate a personal opinion from the company's position when a leader speaks out, the results show that people umbilically associate these statements with the company, affecting its reputation. Furthermore, not only is the company directly and inevitably affected, but also the "reputational stain" attaches itself to the leader and "dirty" the next companies to which he (if applicable) moves.

Finally, H5 was only partially confirmed, as the perception and attitudes towards CEO activism and the Prozis' case regarding age, gender, professional situation, and political identification shows some in different questions, but one cannot assume clear assumptions as a whole.

Looking to the importance given to the different causes, it is not surprisingly that environmental issues and diversity and inclusion are the most rated ones, as they are the most spoken and discussed themes in the media and social media. The political issues ranked below the medium scale point is also, somehow, expect, due the low esteem that these themes are receiving from the public opinion.

It is also relevant to understand the channels that the population expects to be used by CEOs to convey their messages, as well as understanding the difference in perception due to age and political identification. That is, depending on the target that the company/CEO wants to reach, it can choose different channels, since they have different impacts on different audiences.

The fact that there is no significant difference in political consumption, either in the intention to start buying/consuming, if the message is aligned with their values, or the opposite, is surprising, especially when the total average of respondents who assumed to pass to buy is greater (3.71) than that of those who assumed to stop buying (3.55). This may mean that political consumerism has a greater impact when values are aligned than the other way around.

When analyzing the reputation of the Prozis brand because of its CEO's statement, and even when more than 3 out of 4 believe that it has been affected, some differences are worth highlighting: firstly, the fact that more than 3 times more Baby Boomers than that Gen Z considered that a brand was not affected reveals the generational importance in understanding these issues. On the other hand, gender and political identification also reveals curious differences. In the first case, 10% more male than female respondents considered that the brand was not affected, suggesting a gender bias on interpreting CEO activism. In the second case, extreme right respondents are more willing to consider that the brand was affected than those of the extreme left. Again, political identification has a direct impact on CEO activism perception.

About political consumerism, this specific case revealed unexpected data: that is, contrary to most of the existing literature, and despite the difference not being very significant, when asked about whether they stopped (or would stop buying) Prozis' products, due to statements from its CEO, more than half say no. In other words, this demonstrates an incongruity between the interpretation of the act (the vast majority do not agree) and the consequent reaction (more than half would not take any action towards the brand) regarding the consumption of its products. This has a meaning that cannot/should not be overlooked, since it shows that, also in political consumerism, there is often a great distance between what people say and what they do.

From a managerial point of view, this study is particularly relevant for companies, since the leaders' statements (eventually controversial) will become associated with the organization, as well as the CEOs themselves will be stuck with their statements for a long period of time. This study proves, therefore, the relationship between CEO activism and corporate reputation.

### **Limitations and further developments**

In further research, several aspects can be developed and/or could be deepened. From the outset, it would be interesting to compare these results with a situation in which the CEO's statements were not as controversial as in the Prozis' case, to see if the impact and degree of involvement of society with the cause affect the resulting reactions and attitudes.

Secondly, although this study did not confirm H3, the results were not clear about the intention of consumers to consider stopping consuming the brand's products, after the declarations of its founder and leader. That is, even with almost 7 out of 10 people surveyed (69.1%) responding that they disagree or completely disagree with the statements made by the CEO of Prozis, more than half (51.6%) assume that they did not and would not stop consuming the brand's products due to this fact. Also, the opposite question could also be studied, i.e., the public who agrees with the position of the Prozis' CEO are more willing to buy Prozis' products? This issue could deserve further investigation.

Finally, one can also analyze and try to understand whether, in addition to differences in gender, age, professional occupation and political identification, there are other variables that could influence and differ in the results.

## References

- Bloomgarden, Kathy (2019, February 21), *CEOs as activists: should leaders speak up about social causes?* World Economic Forum. <https://bit.ly/2GDjBnC>
- Branicki, L., Brammer, S., Pullen, A. & Rhodes, C. The Morality of “new” CEO Activism. *J Bus Ethics* 170, 269–285 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-020-04656-5>
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods*. Oxford University Press. <https://bit.ly/3kynzDt>
- Chan, T. H. (2023). How brands can succeed communicating social purpose: engaging consumers through empathy and self-involving gamification. *International Journal of Advertising*, 42(5), 801-834. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2022.2116846>
- Chatterji, A. K., & Toffel, M. W. (2019). Assessing the Impact of CEO Activism. *Organization & Environment*, 32(2), 159–185. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026619848144>
- Clarke, N. (2008). *From ethical consumerism to political consumption*. *Geography Compass*, 2(6), 1870–1884. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2008.00170.x>
- Duarte, A. (2023). The relationship between brands and consumers. In *Social Brand Management in a Post Covid-19 Era* (pp. 3-16). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003382331-2>
- Duarte, A. & Chambel, S. (2023). Brand Activertising: From Profit-Purpose to Social Positioning. In R. Correia, D. Venciūtė, & B. Sousa (Eds.), *The Role of Brands in an Era of Over-Information* (pp. 198-215). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-8351-0.ch009>
- Doorley, J., & Garcia, H. F. (2020). *Reputation management: The key to successful public relations and corporate communication*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351235020>
- Dowling, G. R. (2016). Defining and measuring corporate reputations. *European management review*, 13(3), 207-223. <https://doi.org/10.1111/emre.12081>
- Eyada, B. (2020). Brand activism, the relation and impact on consumer perception: A case study on nike advertising. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 12(4), 30-42. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijms.v12n4p30>
- Fombrun, C. J., (2012). “The building blocks of corporate reputation”. In Barnett M. L. and T. G. Pollock (eds.), *Oxford handbook of corporate reputation*. Oxford: *Oxford University Press*, pp. 94–113. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199596706.013.0005>
- Hambrick, D. C., & Wowak, A. J. (2021). CEO sociopolitical activism: A stakeholder alignment model. *Academy of Management Review*, 46(1), 33-59. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2018.0084>
- Herbig, P., & Milewicz, J. (1993). The relationship of reputation and credibility to brand success. *Journal of consumer marketing*, 10(3), 18-24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/eum00000000002601>
- Hou, Y., & Poliquin, C. W. (2023). The effects of CEO activism: Partisan consumer behavior and its duration. *Strategic Management Journal*, 44(3), 672-703. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3451>
- Kalaighnam, K., Tuli, K. R., Kushwaha, T., Lee, L., & Gal, D. (2021). Marketing agility: The concept, antecedents, and a research agenda. *Journal of Marketing*, 85(1), 35-58. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242920952760>
- Kalton, G. (2020). *Introduction to survey sampling*. Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412984683>
- Manfredi-Sánchez, J. L. (2019). El activismo político de las marcas. *Comunicación & Society*, 32(4), 343-359. <https://doi.org/10.15581/003.32.4.343-359>
- Melloni, G., Pataconi, A. and Vikander, N. (2019), CEO Activism as Communication to Multiple Audiences. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3455330>
- Mukherjee, S., & Althuizen, N. (2020). Brand activism: Does courting controversy help or hurt a brand? *International journal of research in marketing*, 37(4), 772-788. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2020.02.008>

- Mkrtchyan, A., Sandvik, J., & Zhu, V. (2022). CEO activism and firm value. *Available at SSRN 3699082*. <https://bit.ly/3yIu4qV>
- Paris, C. (2022). *Achieving Brand Authenticity in the Age of Cancel Culture: Why Brands Can No Longer Be Neutral Without Being Seen as Complicit*. Marketing Undergraduate Honors Theses. Accessed September 12, 2022, in <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/mktguht/54>
- Rumstadt, F., & Kanbach, D. (2022). CEO activism. What do we know? What don't we know? A systematic literature review. *Society and business review*, 17(2), 307-330. <https://doi.org/10.1108/sbr-10-2021-0194>
- Stolle, D., & Micheletti, M. (2013). *Political consumerism: global responsibility in action*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511844553>
- Seifert, C. F., Van Ness, R. K., Eddy, E. R., Buff, C., & D'Abate, C. P. (2023). Generational Work Ethic Differences: From Baby Boomers to Gen Z. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 35(4), 401-422.
- Swaminathan, V., Sorescu, A., Steenkamp, J. B. E., O'Guinn, T. C. G., & Schmitt, B. (2020). Branding in a hyperconnected world: Refocusing theories and rethinking boundaries. *Journal of Marketing*, 84(2), 24-46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429198999>
- Taherdoost, H. (2016). Sampling Methods in Research Methodology; How to Choose a Sampling Technique for Research. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3205035>
- van Deth, J. W. (2014). *A conceptual map of political participation*. *Acta Política*, 49(3), 349–367. <https://doi.org/10.1057/ap.2014.6>
- Vázquez, A. N. (2014). “Consumocracia”. El consumo político como forma de participación de la ciudadanía. *Política y Sociedad*, 51(1), 121-146. [https://doi.org/10.5209/rev\\_poso.2014.v51.n1.42481](https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_poso.2014.v51.n1.42481)
- Veh, A., Göbel, M., & Vogel, R. (2019). Corporate reputation in management research: a review of the literature and assessment of the concept. *Business research*, 12(2), 315-353. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40685-018-0080-4>

# Unlocking the Power of Inclusive Communication in Public Relations: A Comprehensive Review of Strategies

Jonathan Jacob Paul Latupeirissa, Nadia Aura Ardyansyah,  
Kadek Ayu Dewi Pratiwi & Made Jasmine Regita Nareswari

*Universitas Pendidikan Nasional (Indonesia)*

jonathanlatupeirissa@undiknas.ac.id / nadia73aura@gmail.com / ayudewipratiwi1804@gmail.com / jasminergt06@gmail.com

## Abstract

Effective communication is the cornerstone of successful public relations, yet traditional approaches often need to pay more attention to the nuances of inclusive communication. However, in some cases, more than focusing on inclusive communication may dilute the intended message or alienate specific target audiences. Additionally, there may be instances where the pursuit of inclusive communication inadvertently results in tokenism or superficial representation rather than genuine inclusivity. This study investigates the effect of inclusive communication on audience engagement and attitudes. It also aims to offer practical recommendations for enhancing inclusive communication practices and pinpoint potential barriers to their implementation. Systematic literature review using the Scopus database covers multiple countries: Indonesia, Finland, United Arab Emirates, Russia, Zimbabwe, Ukraine, Canada, United Kingdom, Spain, Brazil, USA, China, Hongkong, Kazakhstan, and North African Countries. The findings reveal that inclusive communication can enhance audience perceptions of organizational authenticity, credibility, and trustworthiness, leading to greater engagement and positive attitudes. However, the study also highlights the need for a balanced approach, where inclusive communication is thoughtfully integrated with other strategic communication objectives.

Keywords: Public; Relation; Strategies; Communication; Inclusivity; Trust and Credibility.

## 1. Introduction

As a public relations professional, one must understand the crucial role of communication in shaping perceptions, building relationships, and driving successful outcomes. However, in today's diverse and rapidly evolving landscape, traditional communication approaches often fail to engage and resonate with all stakeholders (Koivumäki & Wilkinson, 2020). In public relations, professionals increasingly recognize their ethical and moral responsibility to address topics of public interest, contributing to cultivating trust in science and technology beyond the organization. This shift towards a broader societal impact underscores the need for public relations practitioners to adapt their strategies to engage with a broader audience and build meaningful relationships. The evolving role of digital platforms and social media in communication strategies has significantly influenced the field of public relations. The definitions of Public Relations (PR) and Advertising are expanding to include digital activities, leading to a blurring of boundaries and causing confusion within the industry and academic spheres (Laurie et

---

Data de submissão: 2024-06-04. Data de aprovação: 2024-12-05.

Revista Estudos em Comunicação é financiada por Fundos FEDER através do Programa Operacional Factores de Competitividade – COMPETE e por Fundos Nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia no âmbito do projeto *LabCom – Comunicação e Artes*, UIDB/00661/2020.





al., 2024). In corporate communication, Corporate Public Transparency (CPT) plays a pivotal role in fostering communication and trust by disclosing information on environmental and social impacts (Li et al., 2019). This transparency enhances organizational reputation and demonstrates a commitment to accountability and openness, which are essential to effective public relations practices. Influencers have emerged as key players in public relations, shaping public perceptions and driving engagement. Understanding how influencers can enhance brand visibility and credibility is crucial for modern PR professionals (Máiz-Bar & Abuín-Penas, 2022). Integrating digital marketing into public relations practices has become increasingly prevalent, emphasizing the need for businesses to utilize digital techniques effectively to convey their organizational vision (Nuseir et al., 2022).

In this comprehensive article, we explore the importance of inclusive communication in public relations, delve into the challenges and barriers that organizations often face, and uncover the strategies and initiatives that can help us unlock the full potential of this transformative approach. Organizations that embrace inclusive communication strategies are better equipped to navigate the complexities of modern society and connect with stakeholders on a deeper level. However, despite its significance, the organizational role of science communication in public relations has often been overlooked (Koivumäki & Wilkinson, 2020). This gap highlights the need for a more comprehensive exploration of how communication professionals and researchers can collaborate to enhance public relations practices. One of the key challenges organizations face in implementing inclusive communication practices is the stigma surrounding mental health, particularly among public safety personnel. Research indicates that individuals who perceive their peers with mental health disorders as unstable or risky are less likely to disclose their struggles, leading to a lack of social support and reluctance to seek treatment (Krakauer et al., 2020). Addressing such barriers is essential for creating a supportive environment where individuals feel comfortable sharing their experiences and accessing the necessary resources. Corporate public transparency (CPT) emerges as a critical component in establishing trust and credibility with the public. By openly communicating information about environmental and social impacts, companies can build stronger relationships with stakeholders and demonstrate their commitment to ethical practices (Li et al., 2019). Transparency enhances organizational reputation and fosters a culture of accountability and responsibility, essential elements in effective public relations. Intercultural communication emerges as a critical driver of community participation in local governance, particularly in the European Union. Organizations can harness social capital and strengthen community relationships by recognizing and responding to public demand through intercultural exchanges (Peresada et al., 2022). This approach underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity and inclusivity in public relations initiatives to foster community engagement and collaboration. The evolving landscape of social media marketing presents new opportunities for integrating advertising and public relations strategies. Social media platforms have become integral to modern communication practices, with social media often referred to as "Marketing Public Relations' new best friend" (Laurie et al., 2024). Leveraging social media effectively requires a nuanced understanding of audience behavior, communication trends, and the dynamic nature of online interactions.

Embracing inclusive communication in public relations has its challenges. As we strive to create a more inclusive and accessible communication landscape, we must first acknowledge and address the barriers that often hinder our progress. In public relations, the journey towards fostering inclusive communication is laden with challenges that necessitate a deep understanding of the barriers impeding progress. As organizations increasingly professionalize their PR efforts, the fusion of corporate communication practices into academia encounters hurdles that demand attention and resolution. The significance of corporate public transparency (CPT) emerges as a pivotal tool for companies to cultivate trust and rapport with the public by divulging information on environmental and social impacts (Li et al., 2019). This transparency is a bridge for effective communication, establishing credibility, and fostering inclusive dialogues within the public sphere.

Moreover, the evolution of PR in the digital age has expanded the definitions of traditional PR and advertising, leading to a blurring of boundaries and causing confusion within the industry and academic realms (Laurie et al., 2024). This shift underscores the need for clarity and adaptability in communication strategies to navigate the changing public relations landscape. Embracing digital marketing to enhance public relations values has become imperative for modern businesses seeking to convey a distinct organizational message to their target audience (Nuseir et al., 2022). This highlights the interconnectedness of digital tools and communication strategies in shaping inclusive PR practices that resonate with diverse stakeholders. In exploring the role of influencers in public relations, a comparative analysis between Spain and the USA sheds light on the evolving dynamics within the PR domain (Máiz-Bar & Abuín-Penas, 2022). Understanding the influence and impact of influencers on public relations strategies is crucial in devising inclusive communication approaches that engage audiences effectively.

One of the primary barriers is a need for more understanding and awareness. Many organizations and public relations professionals may need to fully comprehend the importance of inclusive communication or its impact on their stakeholders. In organizational communication, a significant barrier that hinders effective engagement with stakeholders is the need for more understanding and awareness regarding the importance of inclusive communication practices and their profound impact on various stakeholders (Krupa et al., 2020). This deficiency in comprehension is prevalent among many organizations and public relations professionals, highlighting a critical need for education and awareness initiatives to enhance the understanding of the significance of inclusive communication strategies. Research emphasizes the pivotal role of scientific knowledge in decision-making processes within organizations, framing this knowledge as a valuable "service" provided to stakeholders, including businesses (Koivumäki & Wilkinson, 2020). This underscores the importance of informed decision-making based on scientific evidence, which can be facilitated through effective communication strategies that ensure stakeholders are well-informed and engaged in decision-making.

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of crisis communication planning in ensuring that crisis awareness is effectively disseminated to all stakeholders during emergencies & Yusmanizar, 2019). In corporate communication, emphasize the significance of corporate public transparency (CPT) in establishing trust and fostering effective communication with the public by disclosing information related to corporate environmental and social impacts (Li et al., 2019). Transparency in communication is essential for building credibility and trust with stakeholders, underscoring the importance of inclusive communication practices prioritizing openness and honesty.

While transparency is often touted as an ethical ideal in communication, a critical approach reveals its potential pitfalls and the need for more nuanced ethical frameworks. Transparency can be overly simplistic, neglecting the potential harm of full disclosure in sensitive situations. It can also be strategically manipulative, creating a facade of openness while concealing problematic information (Seo et al., 2020). Furthermore, a singular notion of transparency can be culturally insensitive, failing to account for diverse cultural communication norms. Alternative ethical perspectives offer a more robust approach. As discussed by (Wellman et al., 2020), reflexivity encourages critical self-awareness of one's biases and assumptions, promoting more ethical communication practices. Authenticity emphasizes genuine and sincere dialogue, even in difficult conversations, prioritizing trust-building over mere information disclosure. Ethical listening, a core component of effective communication, involves actively engaging with and valuing diverse perspectives. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of intercultural communication and community participation in local governance for achieving effective community development and inclusive management of territorial development (Peresada et al., 2022). Understanding the social structure and cultural dynamics of communities is crucial for fostering inclusive communication practices that cater to the diverse needs of stakeholders and promote active participation in governance processes.

Another significant barrier is the persistence of biases and preconceptions. Unconscious biases, whether based on gender, race, age, or other demographic factors, can inadvertently shape how we communicate and convey messages. These biases and preconceptions can significantly impede effective communication by influencing how messages are conveyed and received. Biases can lead to the use of insensitive language, the exclusion of diverse perspectives, and the perpetuation of stereotypes, all of which can create barriers to open and inclusive communication. Recognizing and addressing these biases at the individual and institutional levels is crucial for fostering a more equitable and accessible communication landscape (Ngueajio & Washington, 2022). These biases, whether related to gender, race, age, or other demographic factors, can subconsciously impact interactions in various settings (Krakauer et al., 2020). The persistence of biases can hinder open and inclusive communication, affecting relationships and decision-making processes. For example, in the realm of public safety personnel, stigma related to mental health can prevent individuals from seeking necessary treatment, demonstrating the real-world consequences of biases. Institutional biases can also become deeply rooted within organizations, influencing stakeholder engagement processes. The institutionalization of practices may inadvertently perpetuate biases, such as environmental racism, which can skew decision-making and hinder equitable participation (Krupa et al., 2020). Recognizing and addressing biases within institutional frameworks is crucial to ensure fair and effective communication channels. Trust is a fundamental element in shaping interactions in public relations. Communicators rely on the trust of internal stakeholders like top executives and external audiences, such as the public and journalists, to achieve their communication goals (Moreno et al., 2021). Building and maintaining trust is essential for successful communication strategies, highlighting the importance of navigating biases and preconceptions that could erode trust over time. Creating a shared sense of identity and purpose among stakeholders is essential for effective communication. In the collaboration between researchers and communication professionals, challenges arise in aligning diverse perspectives and goals towards a common objective (Koivumäki & Wilkinson, 2020). Overcoming biases and preconceptions is vital for fostering collaboration and synergy among the different parties involved in communication. In corporate communication, the evolving landscape, as observed in Russian public relations, underscores the need for adaptability and strategic restructuring in response to crises and uncertainties (Shilina & Volkova, 2021). Companies must navigate biases and preconceptions to effectively communicate strategies and maintain transparency in their interactions with various stakeholders.

Inclusive communication becomes increasingly paramount as we navigate the evolving public relations landscape. While the barriers we have discussed present significant challenges, the future holds promising opportunities for those willing to embrace the transformative power of inclusive communication. The field of public relations is constantly evolving, highlighting the crucial need for inclusive communication strategies to engage diverse audiences and stakeholders. Despite challenges like mistrusted media and the integration of influencers into public relations activities, there are promising opportunities for those embracing inclusive communication (Moreno et al., 2021); (Máiz-Bar & Abuín-Penas, 2022). Information and communication technologies are central in modern public relations, emphasizing their significance in shaping communication practices (Pantserov et al., 2019). Trust is fundamental in public relations, especially when media trust is questioned. Understanding the interdisciplinary nature of public relations theory, drawing from fields like mass communication, psychology, and sociology, is essential for effective public interest service (Moreno et al., 2021). Incorporating influencers into public relations activities is increasingly common, with many practitioners regularly utilizing influencer marketing (Máiz-Bar & Abuín-Penas, 2022). Further exploration is needed at the intersection of organizational strategies for public relations, communication professionals, and researchers to enhance organizational communication practices (Koivumäki & Wilkinson, 2020).

One of the key challenges lies in staying ahead of the curve. The demographic landscape constantly shifts, with emerging generations and diverse communities shaping the communication landscape. Lea-

leadership excellence in corporate communications is essential for fostering multicultural sensitivity and supporting diverse organizational groups (Meng, 2021). Understanding social media marketing and using advertising and public relations terminology is vital in integrated marketing communications, where influencers play a crucial role in corporate communications (Laurie et al., 2024); (Máiz-Bar & Abuín-Penas, 2022). Assessing stakeholder engagement processes globally is imperative to ensure equity, efficiency, and effectiveness in communication strategies (Krupa et al., 2020). Maintaining peaceful relationships between nations becomes increasingly essential as international relations evolve with technological advancements and a globalized economy (Wahid et al., 2023). Information technologies have the power to disrupt existing political orders and regimes, highlighting the need for effective communication strategies in the face of such challenges (Pantserev et al., 2019). Effective emergency response communication during crises like floods involves locals and stakeholders to ensure public understanding and appropriate actions (Saleh & Yusmanizar, 2019).

Another challenge is the increasing complexity of communication channels and platforms. As technology continues to advance, how we engage with audiences is becoming more diverse and fragmented. The increasing complexity of communication channels and platforms presents a significant challenge as technology advances, leading to a more diverse and fragmented landscape for engaging with audiences. This complexity impacts various aspects of communication, from the shared sense of identity and purpose among researchers and communication professionals (Koivumäki & Wilkinson, 2020) to the mental health implications public safety personnel face due to work-related stress (Krakauer et al., 2020). Moreover, corporate public transparency plays a crucial role in establishing trust with the public by disclosing information on environmental and social impacts (Li et al., 2019). The challenges posed by the evolving communication landscape extend to stakeholder engagement processes, which, while offering advantages, can also present disadvantages that must be carefully considered (Krupa et al., 2020). Furthermore, the loss of trust in public relations and other communicators in an era of mistrusted media underscores the importance of credibility and public trust in communication efforts (Moreno et al., 2021).

Moreover, the rise of social media and the amplification of diverse voices have brought inclusivity to the forefront of public discourse. Public relations professionals must be prepared to navigate the nuances of inclusive communication in the digital realm, where the stakes are high, and the potential for both positive and negative impact is magnified. In today's digital age, the landscape of public relations has been significantly influenced by the rise of social media and the amplification of diverse voices, bringing inclusivity to the forefront of public discourse. As highlighted, social media is now considered "Marketing Public Relations' new best friend," emphasizing these platforms' crucial role in modern communication strategies (Laurie et al., 2024). The impact of social media on public relations is further underscored by those who discuss how digital platforms have transformed the policing landscape, showcasing the far-reaching effects of social media in various sectors (Walsh et al., 2022). One key aspect that public relations professionals must navigate in the digital realm is inclusive communication. Understanding the nuances of inclusive communication is essential in leveraging the potential of social media while mitigating negative impacts. Influencers, as highlighted, have emerged as valuable tools in PR campaigns, emphasizing the importance of incorporating diverse voices and perspectives in communication strategies (Máiz-Bar & Abuín-Penas, 2022).

Additionally, it stresses the evolving nature of social media's strategic role in communication work, indicating the ongoing development and exploration of effective communication practices in the digital sphere (Koivumäki & Wilkinson, 2020). Trust is fundamental to successful public relations, especially in an era where traditional media faces increasing mistrust. Argue that social media channels, by embodying authenticity and the principle of trusting "a person like me," have been perceived as more credible than traditional media, highlighting the shifting dynamics of trust in communication channels (Moreno et al., 2021).



Looking ahead, the future of inclusive communication in public relations holds exciting possibilities. As organizations and professionals embrace the value of diversity, equity, and inclusion, we will see a greater emphasis on data-driven insights, personalized communication strategies, and the integration of inclusive practices across all aspects of the public relations function. The future of inclusive communication in public relations is poised to undergo significant transformations as organizations and professionals increasingly recognize the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (Pantserev et al., 2019). This shift towards inclusivity will likely manifest in various ways, including a heightened focus on leveraging data-driven insights to tailor communication strategies. The future of inclusive communication in public relations is poised to undergo significant transformations as organizations and professionals increasingly recognize the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (Pantserev et al., 2019). This shift towards inclusivity will likely manifest in various ways, including a heightened focus on leveraging data-driven insights to tailor communication strategies. Advances in technology and the rapid evolution of social media platforms have outpaced the development of precise terminology in public relations (Laurie et al., 2024). This gap between technological advancements and terminological clarity underscores the need for continuous learning and adaptation within the PR domain. In crisis communication, involving local communities and stakeholders is essential for fostering public understanding and trust (Saleh & Yusmanizar, 2019). The literature emphasizes the importance of transparent and inclusive communication practices during crises, such as natural disasters or emergencies. The intersection of social media, influencer marketing, and audience engagement is reshaping communication dynamics in public relations (Catalina-García & Suárez-álvarez, 2022).

A detailed counterexample to the importance of involving local communities and stakeholders in crisis communication could be a situation where a company must effectively engage with these groups, leading to misinformation, distrust, and poor decision-making during a crisis. This lack of transparency and inclusion could further damage the organization's reputation and hinder its ability to manage the crisis effectively. This study is critical because it highlights the potential challenges that PR professionals may face when communicating inclusively and offers strategies for overcoming these obstacles. Communicating inclusively is crucial for building strong relationships with diverse audiences. This study aims to explore the impact of inclusive communication on audience engagement and attitudes, provide actionable recommendations for improving inclusive communication practices, and identify any potential barriers that may hinder the implementation of inclusive communication strategies.

## 2. Methodology

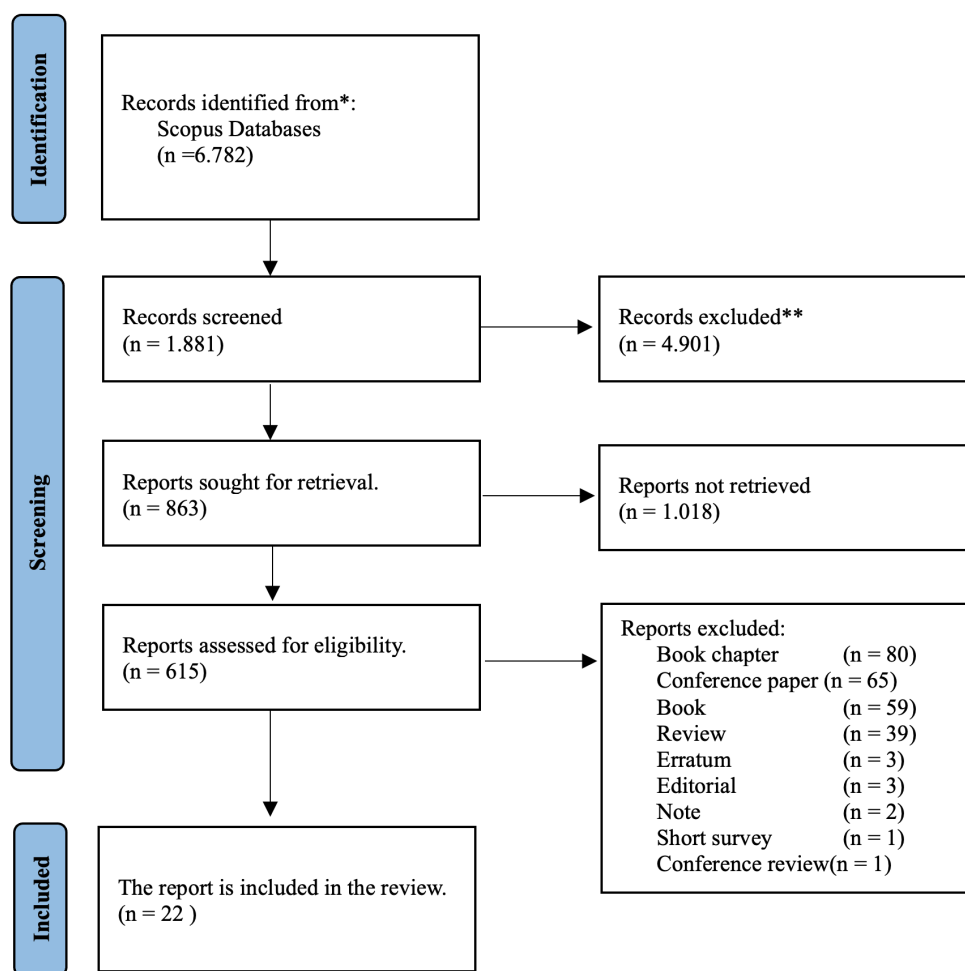
This research uses a systematic literature review methodology to comprehensively examine the power of inclusive communication in public relations. We conduct a comprehensive review of the existing literature on public relations communication to identify the critical challenges and barriers to adoption and the potential opportunities and best practices to increase the power of inclusive communication in public relations. The selected publications were then analyzed and categorized based on their titles and authors, Origin, Study Objectives, Methodology, results, and outcomes. Additionally, the literature review highlighted the importance of knowledge communication practices in public relations success. Furthermore, the literature review revealed that there still needs more consensus and clarity in defining communication transformation in public relations. Therefore, further empirical investigation is needed to understand communication and interpret the term "inclusive the power of communication in public relations" and its implications for any communication in the public relations sector.

To conduct this systematic literature review, a comprehensive search was performed using the Scopus database, renowned for its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed social sciences and public relations literature. The search utilized a combination of keywords: "public," "relation," "communication," and "communications," which yielded a total of 6,782 records. After applying a filter for publication



years from 2019 to 2024, the number of relevant records was reduced to 1,881. Further screening based on subject areas, specifically focusing on "Social Science," "Art and Humanities," and "Psychology," resulted in the selection of 863 publications. Subsequently, the search was refined to include only articles, narrowing the selection to 615 records. A thorough review of the full texts of these articles was conducted, identifying 22 articles that met the criteria for inclusion in the review. Data extraction was systematically performed using a standardized form to capture essential information, including author(s), publication year, origin, study objectives, methodology, results, and outcomes. This structured approach facilitated the organization and management of the data, allowing for a focused content analysis that qualitatively identified common themes, challenges, and best practices related to inclusive communication in public relations. By coding the data from the selected studies and categorizing it into thematic areas, this methodology provided a robust framework for understanding the impact of inclusive communication on audience engagement and attitudes in the field of public relations.

Indonesia, Finland, United Arab Emirates, Russia, Zimbabwe, Ukraine, Canada, United Kingdom, Spain, Brazil, USA, China, Hongkong, Kazakhstan, and North African countries are included in this analysis, as they have actively implemented communication initiatives in their respective public relation. The studies offer valuable insights into the challenges, success factors, and best practices related to inclusive communication in public relations. The search strategy involved identifying relevant literature using the Scopus database and thoroughly reviewing existing studies, reports, and publications in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** PRISMA flowchart of identification and selected studies

### 3. Result and Discussion

In today's dynamic business landscape, the significance of inclusive communication strategies cannot be overstated. Effective communication is not just about conveying messages; it is about building relationships, fostering trust, and engaging diverse audiences. Organizations prioritizing inclusivity in their communication practices are better positioned to stay relevant and competitive and establish authentic connections with their stakeholders. One key aspect of inclusive communication is transcending traditional sales tactics. Companies must go beyond mere transactions in a marketplace filled with many products and services. By immersing themselves in political discourse and championing inclusivity, organizations can showcase their commitment to shared values and principles. This level of engagement not only facilitates transformative progress but also cultivates deeper connections with a diverse array of individuals.

Nurturing authentic relationships with customers is essential for sustained relevance and competitiveness. Companies increasingly realize that their role goes beyond just selling products and services. By actively participating in political discussions and advocating for inclusivity, organizations can demonstrate that they stand for more than profit-making. This level of engagement helps foster deeper connections with a wide range of individuals, leading to transformative progress and long-lasting relationships. Identifying and addressing potential barriers to inclusive communication is crucial for organizational success. Factors such as organizational influences, trust issues, stigma, intercultural communication challenges, and mismatches between communication preferences and public expectations can hinder the implementation of inclusive communication strategies. Understanding these barriers and proactively working to overcome them is essential for fostering a culture of openness, collaboration, and inclusivity within organizations.

Leadership plays a pivotal role in driving the implementation of inclusive communication strategies. Influential leaders understand the importance of communication, transparency, trust-building, and leveraging digital tools to enhance outreach and engagement. Leadership development programs that promote a culture of inclusivity and effective communication can set the tone for organizational success in today's diverse and fast-paced environment. In conclusion, fostering inclusive communication strategies is not just a choice but a necessity for organizations looking to thrive in a competitive marketplace. Organizations can create a culture of openness, collaboration, and success by prioritizing inclusivity, embracing diversity, and leveraging digital tools. In a world where communication is vital to building relationships and driving progress, inclusive communication practices are the cornerstone of organizational excellence. The research findings summary discussed in this report are supported by a comprehensive analysis of studies examining the impact of digitization on public service delivery, as shown in (Table 1) below.

**Table 1. Summary of Studies reviewed.**

| Title And Author                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Origin                      | Study Objectives                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Methodology                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Result                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Title: Exploring the intersections: researchers and communication professionals' perspectives on the organizational role of science communication</p> <p>Authors: Kaisu Koivumaki and Clare Wilkinson</p> <p>Year: 2020</p>                                                | Finland                     | The study on Chinese firms' Corporate Public Transparency and Financial Performance reveals that political embeddedness, particularly bureaucratic and ownership ties, moderates the relationship, suggesting potential adverse effects for state-owned companies.                                                                                                                             | The methodology involves conducting semi-structured interviews with researchers and communication professionals, followed by thematic analysis to identify patterns of meaning in the data. The research aims for sensitivity and flexibility in questioning.                                                                          | The study highlights challenges in large-scale research projects due to performance-based funding policies, emphasizes the need for more precise communication guidance, and provides valuable insights into the impact of funding on science communication practices.                                                                                                                                           | The article highlights the positive impact of funding bodies on science communication and the challenges posed by performance-based funding policies, which can disrupt management and affect the shared purpose and identity among researchers and communication professionals.                                                                             |
| <p>Title: Examining Mental Health Knowledge, Stigma, and Service Use Intentions Among Public Safety Personnel</p> <p>Authors: Krakauer, R. L., Stelnicki, A. M., &amp; Carleton, R. N.</p> <p>Year: 2020.</p>                                                                 | Canada                      | The study objectives include assessing mental health knowledge, stigma, and service use intentions among Canadian PSP, comparing these levels across different PSP categories, determining the relationship between mental health knowledge, stigma, and service use intentions, and testing hypotheses related to the impact of mental health knowledge and stigma on service use intentions. | The methodology involved using questionnaires to assess mental health knowledge, stigma, and service use intentions among PSPs. Participants were recruited through an online study, and the survey link was emailed to employed PSPs by specific agencies. Participation was voluntary and approved by the University's Ethics Board. | Correctional workers demonstrated the highest mental health knowledge, least stigma, and highest intentions to seek mental health services. At the same time, firefighters showed the lowest mental health knowledge, highest stigma, and lowest willingness to seek professional help. Individuals with mental health symptoms may be the most appropriate target for intervention strategies.                  | The study explores mental health knowledge, stigma, and service use intentions among public safety personnel, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address unique challenges like high stress levels and trauma exposure. It suggests identifying knowledge gaps, stigma barriers, and service intentions for adequate mental health support. |
| <p>Enhancing Students' Understanding of Social Media Marketing and the Use of Advertising and Public Relations Terminology Within IMC: A Participatory Action Research Project</p> <p>Authors: Sally Laurie, Kathleen Mortimer, Matthew Holtz and Billy</p> <p>Year: 2024</p> | UK                          | The study objectives are to examine the impact of social media marketing on PR and Advertising within IMC, study the use of the POEM framework in the classroom, and propose suitable terminology for teaching marketing communications activities in the context of social media marketing and IMC.                                                                                           | The study utilized a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, analyzing 40 student applications of the POEM framework while managing and teaching undergraduate modules using Active Blended Learning principles.                                                                                                              | The POEM model is helpful for students in understanding integrated campaigns and identifying social media marketing activities within them.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | The research project aimed to improve students' understanding of social media marketing and advertising terminology within IMC. By using the POEM model and aligning learning outcomes, students demonstrated a firm grasp of marketing communications and IMC, focusing on practical approaches.                                                            |
| <p>Intercultural Communications and Community Participation in Local Governance: EU Experience</p> <p>Authors: Olha Peresada, Oleksandra Severinova, Vitalii Serohin, Svitlana Serohina and Olga Shutova</p> <p>Year: 2022</p>                                                | EU Country's                | The study aims to analyze European community structures, understand intercultural communication in local governance, evaluate its impact, and enhance community engagement. The research seeks to improve governance practices, empower communities, and draw lessons from countries like Sweden and Denmark by exploring these aspects.                                                       | The methodology aims to analyze and systematize intercultural communications in Eastern and Western European countries using research methods and logical structure, identifying effective mechanisms for local governance through community participation in intercultural communication contexts.                                    | Intercultural communication shapes public demand, generates social capital, and influences community participation in local governance.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | The study focuses on the correlation between intercultural communication processes and community participation in local governance and the capacity of intercultural communication to create a public demand system that the community presents to local self-government bodies for territorial development.                                                 |
| <p>Title: Embracing Public Relations (PR) as Survival Panacea to private colleges' corporate image &amp; corporate identity erosion</p> <p>Authors: Brighton Nyagadza &amp; Gideon Mazuruse</p> <p>Year: 2021</p>                                                             | Zimbabwe                    | The study objectives include exploring the role of PR elements in creating a positive corporate image and identity, investigating how private colleges can leverage publicity for student enrollment, and examining the impact of PR activities on student enrollment.                                                                                                                         | The study used an exploratory approach with SEM analysis using AMOS software—a questionnaire collected data from directors, administrators, students, and teachers. The analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS, AMOS, and Exploratory Factor Analysis.                                                     | The study suggests that private colleges should increase the frequency of seminars and speeches to improve their public image and build trust and loyalty to their brand, as digital PR approaches are less effective.                                                                                                                                                                                           | Public relations strategies can significantly improve the corporate image of private colleges in Chitungwiza, Zimbabwe, by fostering positive relationships, leveraging communication systems, and enhancing student enrollment, retention, and overall reputation.                                                                                          |
| <p>Title: Digital marketing and public relations: A way to promote public relations value</p> <p>Authors: Nuseir, M. T., Aljumah, A. I., &amp; El-Refae, G. A.</p> <p>Year: 2022</p>                                                                                          | United Arab Emirates (UAE). | The study objectives are to determine the relationship of digital marketing in developing public relations values for modern businesses in mature markets, provide a unique and modern solution to the problems faced by businesses in developing public relations in the UAE, and increase business compatibility by providing a unique and distinguished message to the target market.       | The methodology involved collecting cross-sectional data from 450 respondents in the UAE using a questionnaire with scale items for variables based on the Likert scale. The study aimed to determine the relationship between digital marketing and public relations values.                                                          | The study by (Nuseir et al., 2022) highlights the crucial role of digital marketing in shaping business public relations values. Using targeted communication strategies and business intelligence, companies can effectively communicate their vision and mission to diverse consumer segments, enhancing brand perception, strengthening customer relationships, and driving sustainable business performance. | The study by Nuseir et al. (2022) emphasizes the importance of digital marketing in enhancing business public relations value. By effectively using digital sources, companies can strengthen their relationships with target markets and stakeholders, thereby gaining a competitive edge in the globalized business environment.                           |
| <p>Title: Communicating the volcanic eruption in La Palma from Spanish public institutions: communication strategies on Twitter</p> <p>Authors: Carmen Sedeño Alcántara, Lorena Vegas García, Francisco Javier Paniagua Rojano</p> <p>Year: 2023</p>                          | Spain                       | The study objectives are to examine the communication strategies of public agents during the volcano eruption in La Palma in 2021, evaluate the effectiveness of these communications, and perform a content analysis of tweets from specific official accounts.                                                                                                                               | The methodology involved using the SCCT and SMCC models for content analysis of tweets from specific official accounts, data collection through Twitter advanced search and Fanpage Karma, and a mixed perspective analysis of the social media data.                                                                                  | Spanish public institutions effectively used Twitter during the La Palma volcanic eruption in 2021. They shared practical and contextual information, highlighting the importance of coordination among critical agents and influencer status on Twitter during crises.                                                                                                                                          | The study on Spanish public institutions' communication strategies during La Palma's volcanic eruption found they effectively engaged audiences on Twitter through text-based posts, photos, and infographics, emphasizing timely and informative content during crises.                                                                                     |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Title: Emergency Response and Communication During Bili-Bili Dam Flood Crisis in Indonesia</p> <p>Authors: Rahmita Saleh and Yusmanizar</p> <p>Year: 2019</p>                                                                                                                                | Indonesia    | <p>Based on the Emergency Action Plan and Standard Operational Procedures, the study analyzes BBWSPJ's emergency responses and communications during a crisis. It suggests the need for stakeholder awareness and crisis communication planning and emphasizes the importance of public relations in building trust.</p>                   | <p>The methodology used in the study involved a case study approach, utilizing in-depth interviews, document analysis, and a qualitative approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and analysis of relevant documents.</p>                                           | <p>The main findings emphasize the reliance on emergency response documents, the necessity of crisis awareness sharing through communication planning, and the significance of crisis communication in disaster management.</p>                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>The study on the Bili-Bili Dam flood crisis underscored the importance of crisis communication in disaster management, emphasizing the need for proactive preparedness and effective communication planning.</p>                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p>Russian Public Relations in 2020: Peculiar Features of Transformation</p> <p>Authors: Marina G. Shilina, and Irina I. Volkova</p> <p>Year: 2021</p>                                                                                                                                          | Russia       | <p>The study objectives are to identify the essential characteristics of Russian public relations in 2020, analyze the changes in these characteristics compared to the previous year, and determine whether public relations in 2020 operate within a marketing paradigm or can be classified as strategic communications.</p>            | <p>The methodology involved a desk study based on a survey of experts from communication agencies and an analysis of open data from professional associations in Russia for 2020.</p>                                                                                                                         | <p>The Russian public relations industry experienced significant transformations in 2020 due to the SARS-COVID-19 pandemic and remote work, requiring increased communication support and flexible formats. The adoption of the Barcelona Principles underscored social responsibility and strategic functions.</p>                                                                                        | <p>In 2020, Russian public relations experienced significant changes due to the SARS-COVID-19 pandemic and remote work. These necessitated flexible formats, stakeholder engagement, and digital efficiency assessment, leading to a shift towards integrated communication practices.</p>                                                                                                    |
| <p>Title: Policing and social media: The framing of technological use by Canadian newspapers (2005-2020)</p> <p>Authors: James P Walsh, Victoria Baker, and Brittany Frade</p> <p>Year: 2022</p>                                                                                                | Canada       | <p>The study aims to evaluate how Canadian newspapers have portrayed the policing-social media relationship over 15 years, understand its impact on public opinion and policy, and address the literature gap in policing construction amid social and technological changes.</p>                                                          | <p>The study analyzed Canadian newspapers' portrayal of police use of social media from 2005 to 2020, identifying key categories like intelligence and communication. It provided insights into media portrayals of technology in law enforcement and its influence on public views and policies.</p>         | <p>The study found that Canadian newspapers consistently prioritized police perspectives and portrayed social media as a valuable tool for crime prevention and control, with an overwhelmingly positive tone towards law enforcement's use of social media.</p>                                                                                                                                           | <p>Over the past 15 years, Canadian newspapers' portrayal of social media use by law enforcement has consistently shown positive trends, promoting its role in crime prevention and community engagement despite some concerns about biased enforcement and privacy issues.</p>                                                                                                               |
| <p>Title: Political Discourses as A Resource for Climate Change Education: Promoting Critical Thinking by Closing the Gap between Science Education and Political Education</p> <p>Authors: Maria Angélica Mejía-Cáceres, Marco Rieckmann and Monica Lopes Foleña Araújo</p> <p>Years: 2023</p> | Brazil       | <p>The study objectives include discussing political discourses as a resource for climate change education, exploring how they can promote critical thinking, analyzing specific presidential speeches in climate change education, and bridging the gap between science and political aspects of climate change education.</p>            | <p>The study incorporated political discourses into science education in a Brazilian high school, focusing on student engagement and critical thinking development. It used a qualitative approach, analyzing stakeholder communications, Board proposals, and an Alaskan case study dataset.</p>             | <p>Integrating political discourses into science education boosts critical thinking on climate change. This approach bridges the science-politics gap, encouraging students to consider broader societal implications and gain a holistic understanding of the issue.</p>                                                                                                                                  | <p>The study suggests that analyzing political discourses can enhance climate change education and foster critical thinking skills in students. This approach helps students understand political dimensions, discern intentions, form informed opinions, and empowers them to address environmental challenges as global citizens.</p>                                                       |
| <p>Title: Who is Winning the Public Process? How to Use Public Documents to Assess the Equity, Efficiency, and Effectiveness of Stakeholder Engagement</p> <p>Authors: Meagan Boltwood Krupa, Molly McCarthy Cunfer &amp; S. Jeanette Clark</p> <p>Year: 2019</p>                               | USA          | <p>The study objectives are to identify general goals and localized objectives that define successful stakeholder participation before the process occurs and to conduct quantitative and qualitative analyses to determine how existing and future stakeholder engagement systems could be improved to support these goals over time.</p> | <p>The methodology involves digitizing and coding stakeholder communications, logging and coding many Board proposals, utilizing R statistical software, focusing on an Alaskan case study, using a dataset with 19 variables, and addressing issues like conflict through potential process adaptations.</p> | <p>The main findings emphasize the importance of assessing stakeholder engagement processes globally, the low public participation and success rates in Alaska's Board proposal process, and the potential negative impacts of stakeholder engagement processes.</p>                                                                                                                                       | <p>The article emphasizes the importance of defining stakeholder engagement success, addressing potential disadvantages, conducting thorough analyses, setting clear goals, acknowledging harm, and promoting inclusivity in public processes.</p>                                                                                                                                            |
| <p>Title: Corporate Public Transparency on Financial Performance: The Moderating Role of Political Embeddedness</p> <p>Authors: Yuxuan Li, Xin Miao, Dequan Zheng and Yanhong Tang</p> <p>Year: 2019</p>                                                                                        | Chinese      | <p>The study objectives are to examine the moderating role of political embeddedness in the relationship between CPT and CFP, investigate the roles of bureaucratic and ownership embeddedness, and discuss the research implications.</p>                                                                                                 | <p>The study employs multiple regression models, Spearman correlations, variance inflation factors, and robustness tests to examine the relationship between CPT and CFP. It focuses on the moderating effects of political embeddedness and presents statistical summaries and results.</p>                  | <p>The study reveals that political embeddedness, particularly bureaucratic and ownership ties, significantly influences the relationship between Corporate Public Transparency (CPT) and Financial Performance (CFP) in Chinese enterprises. It suggests a potential negative association for companies with governmental or state-owned ownership, emphasizing the need for improved CSR strategies.</p> | <p>The study on Chinese firms' Corporate Public Transparency (CPT) and Financial Performance (CFP) reveals that political embeddedness, particularly bureaucratic and ownership ties, moderates the relationship. It suggests a potential negative link for companies with governmental or state-owned connections, emphasizing the need for different political embeddedness strategies.</p> |
| <p>Title: The current role of influencers in public relations: Comparing Spain and the USA</p> <p>Authors: Carmen Maíz-Bar Javier Abuin-Penas</p> <p>Year: 2022</p>                                                                                                                             | Spain<br>USA | <p>The study objectives include describing the role of influencers in PR activities as assigned by academia, understanding the perspectives of PR professionals in Spain and the USA regarding influencers, and comparing these perspectives to provide a comprehensive picture of the current situation of influencers in PR.</p>         | <p>The methodology involved a literature review using scientific databases, distributing surveys to PR professionals in Spain and the USA, validating survey samples, and conducting the surveys in March 2022.</p>                                                                                           | <p>Influencers significantly influence public relations in Spain and the USA, providing positive experiences and solid future relationships. Despite challenges, improvements have led to positive outcomes, particularly in Spain, with respondents intending to continue using them.</p>                                                                                                                 | <p>Influencers are crucial in Spain and the USA's public relations strategies, boosting media exposure, brand development, and audience engagement. However, adoption rates and effectiveness vary, highlighting the need for strategic integration.</p>                                                                                                                                      |
| <p>Title: State-society relations and government technology: a survey of public awareness and communication in Hong Kong</p> <p>Author: Kris Hartley</p> <p>Year: 2024</p>                                                                                                                      | Hong Kong    | <p>The study explores public perceptions of Hong Kong's smart cities, the relationship between public awareness, official communication, and support for innovative city policies, and identifies factors influencing their effectiveness.</p>                                                                                             | <p>The methodology involved designing a survey instrument, obtaining ethical approval, conducting telephone interviews, random selection of numbers, targeting Cantonese-speaking residents aged 18 or above, quality control measures, data verification, and an average interview time of 9.5 minutes.</p>  | <p>The study on Hong Kong's state-society relations and government technology reveals that public support for innovative city initiatives is linked to concept awareness and official communications, emphasizing the significance of transparent and engaging communication in urban governance.</p>                                                                                                      | <p>The study on Hong Kong's state-society relations and government technology highlights the significance of public awareness and communication in influencing support for innovative city initiatives. It emphasizes the role of effective communication strategies in shaping perceptions of government technology.</p>                                                                     |



|                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Relationships Are Built on Sunny Days: Uncovering Quiet Weather Communication Strategies<br><br>Authors: Brooke Fisher Liu, Anita Atwell Scate, Ji Youn Kim, Daniel Hawblitzel, Saymin Lee, And Xin Mao<br><br>Year: 2022  | USA                     | The study objectives are to propose the concept of quiet weather communication, operationalize quiet weather communication strategies through focus groups with NWS and broadcast meteorologists, report meteorologists' perceptions of these strategies, and suggest future research directions on quiet weather communication.  | The methodology involved conducting four virtual focus groups with NWS and broadcast meteorologists, receiving IRB approval, recruiting participants from specific WFOs and media partners, conducting virtual briefings, recording and transcribing focus groups, using NVivo for data analysis, and employing an iterative coding process.                                                                           | The study found that meteorologists use four strategies during quiet weather: humanizing the organization, providing weather education, sharing blue skies, and showcasing quiet weather trends. These strategies aim to engage the audience and maintain effective communication. The study highlights the need to assess communication effectiveness further and explore public perspectives.                                     | The study emphasizes the significance of quiet weather communication strategies in fostering relationships and engaging communities. Meteorologists emphasize humanizing organizations, sharing educational content, and showing community care to boost credibility, raise awareness, and promote disaster preparedness.                                             |
| Title: Leadership Excellence in Corporate Communications: A Multi-Group Test of Measurement Invariance<br><br>Author: Juan Meng<br><br>Year: 2021                                                                          | USA                     | The study objectives are to test whether communication professionals of different levels interpret leadership excellence similarly, validate item response scales, explore practical and theoretical implications of leadership excellence variations, and contribute methodological notes on measurement invariance.             | Meng's (2021) methodology uses multiple-group confirmatory factor analysis to evaluate measurement invariance in leadership excellence in corporate communications. The study tests configural, metric, and scalar invariance and then evaluates factor variances and latent factors, ensuring a comprehensive understanding.                                                                                          | The study found varying levels of measurement invariance across different communication professional groups assessing leadership excellence in corporate communications. Some aspects of the measurement model were consistent, while others differed, suggesting diverse interpretations of leadership excellence in this context.                                                                                                 | The research on leadership excellence in corporate communications confirms the validity of the measurement model across diverse sample groups, offering valuable insights for practitioners to assess and improve leadership capabilities within their organizations.                                                                                                 |
| Title: The publication of press releases as journalistic information. Comparative study of two Spanish newspapers<br><br>Authors: Jesús Martínez Fernández, Francesc Pozo Montero, Josep Lluís Micó Sanz<br><br>Year: 2019 | Spain                   | The study objectives are to compare press releases with news briefs in El Mundo and La Vanguardia's Economy sections and assess whether press releases undergo processing before publication.                                                                                                                                     | The methodology involves using the Maple program with its DetectPlagiarism command to compare press releases with news briefs in the Economy sections of El Mundo and La Vanguardia, covering the first half of 2014. The similarity algorithm is used to study the relationship between agency dispatches and press releases.                                                                                         | The study found that a significant proportion of news articles are derived from press releases, with many articles needing additional content beyond what the press release provided. There is a notable reliance on news agencies like Europa Press for authorship of news briefs, indicating a potential need for more originality in journalistic reporting.                                                                     | A study in El Mundo and La Vanguardia found a trend of news briefs resembling original press releases. This indicates a lack of editorial scrutiny and potential reliance on unaltered promotional content, raising questions about the authenticity and independence of news reporting in today's media landscape.                                                   |
| Twitter interaction between audiences and influencers. Sentiment, polarity, and communicative behavior analysis methodology<br><br>Authors: Beatriz Catalina-García; Rebeca Suárez-Álvarez<br><br>Year: 2022               | Spain                   | The study objectives are to analyze the communicative interaction, content generation, user responses, and the polarity and sentiment conveyed by communications on the profiles of Spanish influencers with the most followers on Twitter.                                                                                       | The study's methodology includes machine learning, opinion mining, and sentiment analysis through natural language processing. It is organized into two stages: the selection of influencers and the analysis of tweets, retweets, hashtags, and sentiment. Influencers were selected based on a study of social media users in Spain, and statistical analysis was performed using the Real Statistics Resource Pack. | The study on Twitter interaction between audiences and influencers reveals that Spanish influencers with more content, like @lbailanos, receive more active participation from their followers compared to those with fewer posts. This highlights the correlation between engagement and the amount of influencer-generated content.                                                                                               | The study on Twitter shows strong emotional influencers and their followers, with a predominantly positive sentiment. Influencers strategically use polarity in their content to attract and retain followers, highlighting the significant impact of emotional content on audience interaction.                                                                      |
| Title: Trust in Public Relations in the Age of Mistrusted Media: A European Perspective<br><br>Authors: Ángeles Moreno, Ralph Tench and Piet Verhoeven<br><br>Year: 2021                                                   | Europe                  | The study objectives are to explore the perception of trust in public relations/communication in Europe across different levels (macro, meso, micro) applied in New Institutionalism theories and to explore the concrete efforts to build organizational trust as a critical task of communication functions in Europe.          | The methodology involved conducting an online survey of 2383 European communication professionals, pre-testing with 67, and analyzing using SPSS. The survey was conducted in English over five weeks in February/March 2019, inviting respondents via personal emails and professional associations.                                                                                                                  | European public relations practitioners report low trust in the profession, with higher trust among individual stakeholders and influencers. Trust differences exist between regions, with Northern and Western Europe showing higher trust than Southern and Eastern Europe.                                                                                                                                                       | The study's outcomes on trust in European public relations show variations in trust levels among different stakeholder groups, countries, and organizational types. Building trust requires transparency, ethical practices, and addressing challenges in a hypermodern environment.                                                                                  |
| Title: Multichannel Communication in Kazakhstan Public Service: Examining the Role of Digital Tools<br><br>Authors: Baurzhan Bokayev, Zhadra Zhanzhigitova, Kurnalay Sadykova, Assel Balmanova<br><br>Year: 2023           | Kazakhstan              | The study objectives are to consider which channels civil servants use to interact with the public, explore the role of digital tools in public involvement in government decision-making, and analyze how digital tools affect the effectiveness of public service provision.                                                    | The methodology involved surveying 606 civil servants in Kazakhstan from September to December 2022, using a questionnaire with 42 questions covering various aspects of communication and digital tools.                                                                                                                                                                                                              | The study's main finding on multichannel communication in Kazakhstan public service administration is the critical reliance on digital tools, notably the E-Otinish system, to enable interactions between government bodies and the populace. This underscores the significance of integrating and coordinating diverse communication channels to ensure efficient service provision and enhance citizen engagement in Kazakhstan. | The study highlights the use of digital tools, particularly the E-Otinish system, in Kazakhstan public service administration to improve communication between government bodies and citizens. It emphasizes integrating different channels and addressing access barriers for a more responsive approach.                                                            |
| Title: African Countries in the Epoch of Information Globalization: New Challenges in the New Age<br><br>Author: Pantserov, K. A., Sidorova, G. M., & Zherlitsina<br><br>Year: 2019                                        | North African Countries | The study objectives include addressing the security of North and Central African countries, exploring the role of ICT in social and economic growth, analyzing the impact of ICT on the knowledge-based economy, and investigating the importance of national interests and cultural values in ensuring the survival of a State. | The methodology involves analyzing the impact of information globalization, examining challenges in developing ICT sectors, discussing methods used in information warfare, and emphasizing the importance of national ideas and citizen support.                                                                                                                                                                      | The paper emphasizes the transformative impact of information and communication technologies on society, particularly evident during events like the Arab Spring. It highlights their role in shaping public opinion and mobilizing protests.                                                                                                                                                                                       | The study underscores the importance of a national idea and societal information culture in countering information warfare for states with independent foreign policies. It emphasizes the need for African countries to prioritize information security, utilize technology, and enhance their informational culture for survival and success in the globalized era. |

### 3.1 Impact of Inclusive Communication on Audience Engagement

Inclusive communication is pivotal in enhancing audience engagement across various contexts, particularly in public relations, crisis management, and community participation. The effectiveness of inclusive communication is rooted in its ability to foster trust, facilitate understanding, and promote active participation among diverse audience groups. One significant aspect of inclusive communication is its impact on community participation and local governance. Peresada et al. emphasize that inter-cultural communications can give local authorities a broader understanding of community needs and expectations, thereby driving community development and enhancing local governance effectiveness (Peresada et al., 2022). This is echoed by Koivumäki and Wilkinson, who argue that effective communication strategies can enhance trust in scientific and organizational entities, ultimately leading to better engagement with the public (Koivumäki & Wilkinson, 2020). Integrating diverse perspectives through inclusive communication informs policy decisions and aligns them with the public's expectations, fostering a sense of ownership and participation among community members. In crisis communication,



the importance of inclusive communication becomes even more pronounced. Saleh and Yusmanizar highlight that effective crisis communication requires the involvement of local stakeholders to ensure that the public is well-informed about the nature of the crisis and the appropriate responses (Saleh & Yusmanizar, 2019). This participatory approach enhances public understanding and builds trust in the organizations managing the crisis. Furthermore, the study by Nyagadza and Mazuruse illustrates how public relations initiatives that prioritize inclusive communication can significantly improve corporate image and identity, which is crucial for maintaining audience engagement during challenging times (Nyagadza & Mazuruse, 2021).

Moreover, the role of digital tools in facilitating inclusive communication cannot be overstated. The research conducted in Kazakhstan indicates that the effectiveness of government communication is closely tied to the availability of preferred communication channels for citizens (Bokayev et al., 2023). This suggests that governments adopting a multichannel approach that aligns with citizen preferences can significantly enhance public engagement and trust. Similarly, Nuseir et al. discuss how digital marketing strategies can be leveraged to promote public relations values, thereby enhancing audience engagement through more inclusive and transparent communication practices (Nuseir et al., 2022). Finally, the evolving landscape of public relations, particularly with the rise of influencers, underscores the necessity for inclusive communication strategies. Bar and Abuín-Penas note that influencers play a crucial role in shaping corporate communications, and their ability to connect with diverse audiences can significantly enhance Engagement (Bar & Abuín-Penas, 2023). This highlights the need for organizations to adopt inclusive communication practices that resonate with various audience segments, ultimately fostering deeper connections and trust.

Inclusive communication is essential for enhancing audience engagement across various contexts, particularly in public relations, crisis management, and community participation. Here's a breakdown of its significance and impact:

#### 3.1.1. Fostering Trust and Understanding

Inclusive communication fundamentally ensures that all individuals, regardless of their background, feel valued and heard. This approach fosters trust among diverse audience groups, which is essential for effective engagement. When organizations prioritize inclusivity, they create an environment where stakeholders feel comfortable sharing their perspectives and concerns. This trust is built through transparency, active listening, and responsiveness to feedback. As a result, audiences are more likely to engage with the organization, participate in discussions, and contribute to decision-making processes. Trust also mitigates skepticism and resistance, making it easier for organizations to implement initiatives and policies that require public support.

#### 3.1.2 Impact on Community Participation

The role of inclusive communication in enhancing community participation cannot be overstated. Peresada *et al.* (2022) highlight that intercultural communication gives local authorities a broader understanding of community needs and expectations. This understanding is crucial for effective governance, as it allows authorities to tailor their initiatives to address the specific concerns of different community segments. Organizations can gather valuable insights that inform policy decisions by actively involving community members in the communication process. This participatory approach empowers marginalized voices and fosters a sense of ownership among community members as they see their input reflected in the decisions that affect their lives. Ultimately, inclusive communication drives community development by ensuring policies are relevant and responsive to the population's needs.

### 3.1.3. Crisis Communication

In times of crisis, the importance of inclusive communication becomes even more pronounced. Saleh and Yusmanizar (2019) emphasize that effective crisis communication requires the involvement of local stakeholders to ensure that the public is well-informed about the nature of the crisis and the appropriate responses. When organizations engage with stakeholders during a crisis, they can provide timely and accurate information that helps mitigate panic and confusion. This participatory approach enhances public understanding of the situation and builds trust in the organizations managing the crisis. Organizations can strengthen their credibility and foster a collaborative atmosphere that encourages community resilience by demonstrating a commitment to transparency and inclusivity. In essence, inclusive communication during crises not only informs but also reassures the public, facilitating a more effective response.

### 3.1.4. Enhancing Corporate Image

The impact of inclusive communication on corporate image is significant, particularly in the realm of public relations. Nyagadza and Mazuruse (2021) illustrate how initiatives prioritizing inclusivity can enhance an organization's reputation and identity. A positive corporate image is crucial for maintaining audience engagement, especially during challenging times when public scrutiny is heightened. Organizations can demonstrate their commitment to diversity, equity, and social responsibility by adopting inclusive communication strategies. This not only attracts a broader audience but also fosters loyalty among existing stakeholders who value inclusivity. Furthermore, a solid corporate image built on inclusive practices can increase trust and credibility, which is essential for long-term success in any industry.

### 3.1.5. Digital Tools and Multichannel Approaches

Integrating digital tools in facilitating inclusive communication is increasingly vital in today's interconnected world. Research conducted in Kazakhstan indicates that the effectiveness of government communication is closely tied to the availability of preferred communication channels for citizens (Bokayev et al., 2023). Organizations adopting a multichannel approach that aligns with citizen preferences can significantly enhance public engagement and trust. Digital platforms allow real-time interaction and feedback, enabling organizations to respond promptly to community needs and concerns. Moreover, these tools can help reach diverse audiences, including those needing help through traditional communication methods. By leveraging digital tools effectively, organizations can create a more inclusive communication environment that fosters greater participation and engagement.

### 3.1.6. Role of Influencers

The evolving landscape of public relations, particularly with the rise of influencers, underscores the necessity for inclusive communication strategies. Bar and Abuín-Penas (2023) note that influencers play a crucial role in shaping corporate communications and can connect with diverse audiences in ways that traditional media cannot. Influencers often have established trust and rapport with their followers, making them effective conduits for inclusive messaging. Organizations can enhance their engagement efforts and reach a broader demographic by collaborating with influencers who resonate with various audience segments. This approach amplifies the message and fosters more profound connections with audiences, as influencers can convey authenticity and relatability. As organizations navigate the complexities of modern communication, embracing the role of influencers in promoting inclusivity can lead to more effective and impactful public relations strategies.

Inclusive communication is a multifaceted approach that enhances audience engagement by fostering trust, facilitating understanding, and promoting active participation. Its significant

ce spans community governance, crisis management, corporate image enhancement, and the effective use of digital tools and influencers, making it an essential component of successful public relations strategies.

### 3.2 Impact of Inclusive Communication on Audience Attitudes

Inclusive communication significantly influences audience attitudes by fostering trust, enhancing understanding, and promoting engagement across various sectors. The effectiveness of inclusive communication is particularly evident in public relations, community governance, and crisis management, where it shapes perceptions and attitudes toward organizations and their messages. One of the primary ways inclusive communication impacts audience attitudes is through establishing trust. Koivumäki and Wilkinson highlight that communication professionals increasingly focus on managing the broader scientific trust portfolio rather than merely legitimizing their organizations (Koivumäki & Wilkinson, 2020). This shift emphasizes the importance of transparency and inclusivity in communication strategies, which can lead to enhanced public trust in scientific and organizational entities. Similarly, Moreno et al. discuss the challenges posed by mistrusted media, noting that trust in public relations becomes increasingly vital in a landscape rife with misinformation (Moreno et al., 2021). By prioritizing inclusive communication, organizations can mitigate skepticism and foster a more favorable attitude among their audiences.

Moreover, the role of intercultural communication in shaping audience attitudes must be considered. Peresada et al. argue that effective intercultural communication enhances community participation in local governance, influencing public attitudes toward governmental decisions (Peresada et al., 2022). When communities feel included and heard, their attitudes toward local governance improve, leading to greater civic engagement and policy support. This is particularly relevant in democratic societies where the level of community involvement is directly linked to the effectiveness of governance. In crisis communication, inclusive strategies are crucial for shaping audience attitudes during emergencies. Saleh and Yusmanizar emphasize that involving local stakeholders in crisis communication enhances public understanding and trust in the organizations managing the crisis (Saleh & Yusmanizar, 2019). By ensuring that communication is inclusive and addresses the needs and concerns of diverse audience segments, organizations can foster more positive attitudes and perceptions during challenging times.

Inclusive communication shapes audience attitudes by fostering trust, enhancing understanding, and promoting engagement across various sectors. Here is a detailed explanation of how this process works:

#### 3.2.1. Fostering Trust

One of the primary impacts of inclusive communication is its ability to establish and nurture trust between organizations and their audiences. Trust is a fundamental component of effective communication, mainly when skepticism exists. Koivumäki and Wilkinson (2020) highlight that communication professionals increasingly focus on managing a broader scientific trust portfolio rather than merely legitimizing their organizations. This shift underscores the importance of transparency and inclusivity in communication strategies. When organizations communicate openly and inclusively, they demonstrate a commitment to honesty and accountability, which can significantly enhance public trust in scientific and organizational entities.

As noted by Moreno et al. (2021), misinformation is rampant, making trust in public relations even more critical. By prioritizing inclusive communication, organizations can counteract skepticism and foster a more favorable attitude among their audiences. This is particularly important in building long-term relationships with stakeholders, as trust increases engagement and support for organizational initiatives.

### 3.3.2. Enhancing understanding

Inclusive communication also enhances understanding among diverse audience groups. By ensuring that communication is accessible and resonates with various segments of the population, organizations can bridge gaps in knowledge and perception. This is especially relevant in public relations and community governance, where transparent and inclusive messaging can help demystify complex issues and foster a shared understanding of organizational goals and policies.

Peresada et al. (2022) argue that effective intercultural communication enhances community participation in local governance. When communities feel included, and their voices are heard, they are more likely to understand and support governmental decisions. This improved understanding leads to greater civic engagement, as individuals feel more connected to the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

### 3.2.3. Promoting engagement

Engagement is another critical outcome of inclusive communication. When organizations actively involve their audiences in the communication process, they create opportunities for dialogue and interaction. This participatory approach empowers individuals and fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility towards community issues. In democratic societies, where community involvement is directly linked to the effectiveness of governance, inclusive communication becomes essential for promoting civic engagement.

In crisis communication, inclusive strategies are particularly vital. Saleh and Yusmanizar (2019) emphasize that involving local stakeholders in crisis communication enhances public understanding and trust in the organizations managing the crisis. Organizations can foster more positive attitudes and perceptions during challenging times by addressing the needs and concerns of diverse audience segments. This is crucial for maintaining public confidence and cooperation, especially when rapid responses are required.

Inclusive communication significantly influences audience attitudes by fostering trust, enhancing understanding, and promoting engagement. By prioritizing transparency and inclusivity, organizations can build stronger relationships with their audiences, mitigate skepticism, and encourage active participation in governance and community initiatives. This approach benefits the organizations and contributes to a more informed and engaged society, ultimately leading to better public relations, community governance, and crisis management outcomes.

## 3.3 To Provide Actionable Recommendations For Improving Inclusive Communication Practices

Improving inclusive communication practices is crucial for effective governance and public service delivery. A study on multichannel communication in Kazakhstani public service emphasized the need to align communication channels with citizens' preferences to enhance effectiveness (Bokayev et al., 2023). Addressing the gap between governmental and citizen-preferred communication channels requires a more citizen-centric approach to communication strategies. Understanding how civil servants interact with the public and the role of digital tools in government decision-making processes is essential for bridging this communication divide. Utilizing digital tools and modern communication techniques, such as digital marketing, can significantly enhance public relations values and convey a distinct organizational message to the target market (Nuseir et al., 2022). Organizations can build equity by employing digital marketing strategies and communicating their vision and mission to a broader audience. This underscores the importance of keeping pace with technological advancements and integrating them into communication practices to remain relevant and impactful in today's digital age. Intercultural communication is pivotal for community participation in local governance, as demonstrated by the EU experience (Peresada et al., 2022). Effective intercultural communica-

tion stimulates public demand and boosts social capital, leading to more inclusive and participatory governance processes. Embracing diversity and cultural differences in communication practices can bolster community engagement and foster a sense of belonging among diverse stakeholders.

Effective emergency response and communication are critical during crises, such as the Bili-Bili Dam flood crisis in Indonesia (Saleh & Yusmanizar, 2019). Recommendations to enhance crisis communication practices include ensuring timely and accurate information dissemination while upholding accountability and responsibility. Improving crisis communication strategies can mitigate the impact of emergencies and facilitate coordinated responses from public authorities, NGOs, and stakeholders. Leadership excellence is vital in corporate communications in nurturing multicultural sensitivity and inclusivity (Meng, 2021). Organizations prioritizing leadership development focused on multicultural and multi-group sensitivity are better equipped to navigate diverse communication landscapes and promote inclusive practices. Effective leadership in corporate communications establishes the foundation for inclusive communication strategies that resonate with diverse audiences. Trust is fundamental in public relations, particularly in an era of mistrusted media (Moreno et al., 2021). Cultivating trust among key stakeholders through transparent and credible communication is essential for maintaining positive relationships and upholding organizational reputation. Understanding the dynamics of trust in public relations can inform communication strategies that enhance credibility and stakeholder engagement. Influencers have become key players in modern public relations practices, presenting opportunities and challenges for practitioners (Máiz-Bar & Abuin-Penas, 2022). Collaborating with influencers necessitates adept management processes and a deep understanding of influencer marketing dynamics.

By effectively navigating these challenges, practitioners can leverage the power of influencers to amplify their communication efforts and reach broader audiences. Analyzing stakeholder engagement processes is crucial for evaluating communication practices' equity, efficiency, and effectiveness (Krupa et al., 2020). Establishing success metrics and devising innovative methods to assess stakeholder participation can enhance the impact of engagement initiatives. By prioritizing stakeholder feedback and engagement, organizations can tailor their communication strategies to meet the needs of diverse stakeholders better. In climate change education, leveraging political discourses as a resource can promote critical thinking and bridge the gap between science and political education (Mejía-Cáceres et al., 2023). Analyzing how political discourses influence climate change narratives can enhance students' comprehension of complex environmental issues and foster a more informed and engaged citizenry. Integrating political perspectives into climate change education can enrich learning experiences and empower individuals to take action.

In conclusion, actionable recommendations for enhancing inclusive communication practices involve a multifaceted approach that integrates digital tools, intercultural communication, crisis communication strategies, leadership excellence, trust-building in public relations, influencer collaborations, stakeholder engagement assessments, and leveraging political discourses for education. By embracing diverse communication strategies and staying abreast of evolving communication trends, organizations can enhance their inclusivity, engagement, and impact in an increasingly interconnected world. Enhancing inclusive communication practices requires a comprehensive strategy that goes beyond surface-level efforts. It involves utilizing various digital tools to reach diverse audiences, understanding and effectively navigating intercultural communication nuances, implementing proactive crisis communication strategies, fostering strong leadership skills in communication professionals, building trust through transparent public relations efforts, collaborating with influential individuals to amplify messages, conducting thorough assessments of stakeholder engagement, and using political discourses as educational opportunities.

By continuously evolving and adapting to new communication trends and embracing diversity in approaches, organizations can make a difference in promoting inclusivity and making a meaningful



impact in today's globalized society. Communication professionals can enhance their leadership skills by implementing effective communication strategies prioritizing transparency and trust-building in public relations efforts. By collaborating with influential individuals to amplify messages and conducting thorough stakeholder engagement assessments, they can ensure that their communication efforts are impactful and resonate with their target audience. Additionally, utilizing political discourses as educational opportunities allows organizations to promote inclusivity and create a meaningful impact in today's globalized society. Organizations can effectively communicate their message and make a positive difference in the world by continuously evolving and adapting to new communication trends while embracing diversity in approaches. By engaging individuals to amplify messages and conducting thorough stakeholder engagement assessments, organizations can ensure that their communication efforts are impactful and resonate with their target audience on a deeper level. Utilizing political discourses as educational opportunities allows organizations to promote inclusivity and create a meaningful impact in today's globalized society by fostering discussions and understanding among diverse groups. By continuously evolving and adapting to new communication trends while embracing diversity in approaches, organizations can effectively communicate their message and make a positive difference in the world by connecting with a broader range of audiences and addressing various perspectives. In order to effectively connect with their target audience and create a meaningful impact, organizations should seize opportunities to engage in political discourses to promote inclusivity and understanding among diverse groups. By staying current with communication trends and embracing diversity in their approaches, organizations can communicate their message more effectively and reach a broader range of audiences. This proactive approach can lead to positive change and foster deeper connections with their target audience in today's globalized society. In today's rapidly changing world, organizations must strive to connect with their target audience on a deeper level by engaging in political discourses and promoting inclusivity among diverse groups. By understanding and embracing various perspectives, organizations can better communicate their message and reach a broader range of audiences. This proactive approach leads to positive change and fosters more profound connections with the target audience in today's globalized society. Organizations can no longer rely on traditional marketing techniques to reach their target audience in today's globalized society. Companies must engage in political discussions and promote inclusivity among diverse groups to create meaningful connections with their audience. By embracing different perspectives and actively involving themselves in relevant conversations, organizations can effectively communicate their message and resonate with a broader range of people. This proactive approach drives positive change and fosters more profound connections with the target audience, ultimately leading to long-lasting relationships in the dynamic landscape of today's world.

Companies must go beyond simply selling products and services in today's globalized society. They must actively engage in political discussions and promote inclusivity among diverse groups to establish meaningful connections with their audience. By embracing different perspectives and participating in relevant conversations, organizations can effectively communicate their message and resonate with a broader range of people. This proactive approach drives positive change and fosters more profound connections with the target audience, leading to long-lasting relationships in the ever-evolving world we live in today. In today's fast-paced and interconnected world, businesses are realizing the importance of going beyond just selling products and services. They understand the need to actively engage in political discussions and promote inclusivity among diverse groups to establish meaningful connections with their audience. By embracing different perspectives and participating in relevant conversations, organizations can effectively communicate their message and resonate with a broader range of people. This proactive approach drives positive change and fosters more profound connections with the target audience, leading to long-lasting relationships in the ever-evolving world we live in today.

In today's rapidly changing world, businesses recognize the importance of engaging in political discussions and promoting inclusivity to connect with their audience. By actively participating in con-

versations that matter and embracing diverse perspectives, organizations can effectively communicate their message and resonate with a broader range of people. This proactive approach drives positive change and fosters more profound connections with its target audience, leading to long-lasting relationships crucial in the ever-evolving landscape of products and services. In today's dynamic business environment, companies realize the significance of being involved in political dialogues and advocating for inclusivity to establish meaningful connections with their customers. Organizations can effectively convey their values and connect with a broader audience by actively engaging in re-embracing discussions of various viewpoints. This proactive stance helps drive positive impact and cultivates stronger relationships with their target market, essential in the constantly changing realm of products and services. Companies must go beyond just selling products or services in today's competitive business landscape. By actively participating in political discussions and promoting inclusivity, organizations can show their customers that they are aligned with their values and beliefs. This engagement helps drive positive change and fosters stronger connections with a diverse audience. In a dynamic market, building meaningful customer relationships is critical to staying relevant and competitive in the long run. Companies must transcend traditional sales tactics in an ever-evolving marketplace with many products and services.

By immersing themselves in political discourse and championing inclusivity, organizations can demonstrate their commitment to shared values and principles with their customers. This level of engagement not only facilitates transformative progress but also cultivates deeper connections with a diverse array of individuals. In a dynamic business environment, nurturing authentic customer relationships is essential for sustained relevance and competitiveness. In today's competitive marketplace, companies are realizing the importance of going beyond just selling products and services. By actively participating in political discussions and advocating for inclusivity, organizations can show their customers that they stand for more than just making a profit. This level of engagement helps foster deeper connections with a wide range of individuals, leading to transformative progress and long-lasting relationships. In order to stay relevant and competitive in an ever-changing business landscape, companies must prioritize building authentic connections with their customers. In today's business environment, it is crucial for companies to understand that their role goes beyond just selling products and services.

### 3.4 To Identify Any Potential Barriers That May Hinder the Implementation of Inclusive Communication Strategies.

It is essential to consider various perspectives and factors that can impact the effectiveness of communication practices within organizations to identify potential barriers that may hinder the implementation of inclusive communication strategies. One significant aspect to explore is the intersection between researchers and communication professionals, as highlighted by (Koivumäki & Wilkinson, 2020). Their study delves into how performance-based funding policies, which often drive the proliferation of large-scale research projects, can create challenges. This finding is crucial as it indicates that organizational influences, such as funding structures, can hinder effective communication strategies. Moreover, understanding the role of trust and stigma in communication is vital, especially in contexts like mental health services, as discussed by Krakauer (Krakauer et al., 2020). The reluctance of individuals to disclose mental health struggles due to mistrust or stigma can hinder open communication and support-seeking behaviors. This insight underscores the importance of addressing trust issues and reducing stigma to facilitate inclusive communication within organizations.

Additionally, exploring intercultural communication and community participation, as highlighted by (Peresada et al., 2022), provides valuable insights into how public demand and community expectations can influence communication practices. Effective communication strategies must consider diverse cultural perspectives and community needs to ensure inclusivity and engagement.

Furthermore, examining the role of digital tools in public service communication, as discussed in a study on multichannel communication in Kazakhstani public service (Mejía-Cáceres et al., 2023), sheds light on the importance of aligning communication channels with citizens' preferences. A mismatch between governmental communication preferences and public expectations can pose significant barriers to inclusive communication strategies. Effective communication strategies are crucial in crisis situations, such as natural disasters like volcanic eruptions. Alcántara et al. (2023) highlight the importance of public institutions' coordinated communication efforts during crises to manage information effectively and ensure public safety. This underscores the significance of strategic communication planning in overcoming barriers to inclusive communication during emergencies.

Moreover, as discussed by uncertainties (Shilina & Volkova, 2021), the evolving landscape of public relations emphasizes the growing demand for adequate communication support and the optimization of corporate communication strategies. Understanding these changing dynamics is essential for organizations to adapt their communication approaches and address potential barriers to inclusivity. In the realm of corporate transparency and communication, (Li et al., 2019) emphasize the role of corporate public transparency in building trust and establishing effective communication with the public. Transparency in communication practices is crucial for overcoming barriers related to credibility and fostering inclusive dialogue with stakeholders. Furthermore, integrating digital marketing in public relations, as explored by (Nuseir et al., 2022), highlights the strong relationship between digital marketing strategies and the development of public relations values. Leveraging digital tools effectively can enhance communication outreach and address barriers to inclusive communication in the digital age. In the context of leadership in corporate communications, (Meng, 2021) discusses the importance of multicultural sensitivity in leadership development. Organizations must prioritize inclusive leadership training to overcome barriers related to cultural differences and promote effective communication across diverse groups. Additionally, examining the framing of technological use by law enforcement agencies in social media, as discussed by (Walsh et al., 2022), underscores the impact of media framing on public perceptions. Understanding how media portrayals influence communication can help organizations navigate potential barriers to inclusive communication strategies.

In conclusion, organizations can identify and address potential barriers that hinder the implementation of inclusive communication strategies by synthesizing insights from various studies on communication practices, organizational influences, trust, digital tools, crisis communication, and leadership development. In media framing and social perceptions, the portrayal of technology, such as social media, in policing practices can influence public attitudes and communication dynamics. Walsh et al. (2022) discuss how news organizations frame technological use by police, shaping public perceptions of social media as a tool for crime prevention. Understanding these framing effects and addressing potential biases in media representations can help organizations navigate communication barriers and promote inclusive messaging in partnership with the media. Weather communication strategies also play a role in shaping public perceptions and responses to environmental events. Liu et al. (2022) explore meteorologists' strategies for communicating quiet weather conditions, highlighting the importance of clear and compelling messaging in engaging audiences. By refining communication approaches to address varying weather scenarios, organizations can overcome barriers related to information dissemination and public engagement during different weather conditions. Organizations can enhance communication practices and promote inclusivity in their interactions with stakeholders by fostering transparency, trust, cultural sensitivity, and effective use of digital tools. By delving deeper into the nuances of communication practices, organizations can better understand the importance of being inclusive in their messaging. This involves considering not only the different ways people communicate but also organizational structures and dynamics that may impact how information is disseminated.

Additionally, by recognizing the role trust plays in effective communication, organizations can work towards building stronger relationships with their stakeholders. Embracing digital tools and leve-

raging them effectively can further enhance communication efforts, especially in times of crisis where clear and timely information is crucial. Ultimately, leadership development plays a key role in driving the implementation of inclusive communication strategies, as leaders set the tone for how communication is prioritized and executed within an organization. Effective communication within organizations is crucial for ensuring that information is disseminated accurately and promptly. Trust plays a significant role in establishing strong relationships with stakeholders, which can be achieved by prioritizing clear and transparent communication.

Utilizing digital tools can enhance communication efforts, particularly during times of crisis when timely information is essential. Leadership development is also crucial in driving the implementation of inclusive communication strategies, as leaders play a pivotal role in setting the tone for communication within an organization. Effective communication within organizations is not just about sharing information but also about building trust with stakeholders. Organizations can establish strong relationships essential for success by prioritizing clear and transparent communication. Utilizing digital tools can further enhance communication efforts, especially during times of crisis when timely information is crucial.

Additionally, investing in leadership development is critical to implementing inclusive communication strategies, as leaders set the tone for effective communication within an organization. Effective communication within organizations goes beyond just sharing information; it involves building stakeholder trust. Prioritizing clear and transparent communication helps establish strong relationships necessary for success. Digital tools can enhance communication efforts, especially during crises when timely information is crucial. Investing in leadership development is essential to implementing inclusive communication strategies, as leaders play a crucial role in setting the tone for effective organizational communication. Effective organizational communication is crucial for building stakeholder trust and establishing solid relationships. Prioritizing clear and transparent communication can lead to success, especially during times of crisis when timely information is essential. Utilizing digital tools can enhance communication efforts and ensure that information reaches the intended audience quickly. Investing in leadership development is also vital, as leaders set the tone for inclusive communication strategies within an organization. By focusing on these aspects, organizations can create a culture of effective communication that fosters collaboration and growth. Effective communication is not just about conveying information but also about building relationships with stakeholders. During times of crisis, clear and transparent communication becomes even more crucial for success. Utilizing digital tools can help ensure the timely dissemination of information to the intended audience. Investing in leadership development is critical, as leaders play a significant role in setting the tone for inclusive communication strategies within an organization.

By prioritizing these aspects, organizations can cultivate a culture of effective communication that promotes collaboration and growth. Effective communication is not just about conveying information but also about building relationships with stakeholders. Especially in times of crisis, clear and transparent communication is essential for success. Utilizing digital tools can aid in the timely dissemination of information to the intended audience. Investing in leadership development is crucial as leaders shape the tone for inclusive communication strategies within an organization. By prioritizing these aspects, organizations can foster a culture of effective communication that encourages collaboration and growth. Effective communication goes beyond just sharing facts and figures; it involves establishing trust and rapport with those you interact with. During challenging times, such as crises, being transparent and direct in communication can help navigate uncertainties and build resilience. Leveraging technology can streamline the flow of information, ensuring that messages reach the right people at the right time. Developing strong leaders who prioritize inclusive communication practices can set a positive example for others to follow, fostering a culture of openness and collaboration within the organization. By focusing on these critical elements, organizations can create an environment where effective communication is



valued and contributes to overall success. Effective communication is essential in navigating uncertainties and building resilience within an organization. By being transparent and direct in communication, employees can better understand their challenges and work together to find solutions. Leveraging technology to streamline information flow ensures essential messages are disseminated efficiently to the right people at the right time. Developing strong leaders who prioritize inclusive communication sets a positive example for others, creating a culture of openness and collaboration. By emphasizing these essential elements, organizations can foster an environment where effective communication is valued and contributes to overall success.

#### 4. Conclusions

In conclusion, prioritizing inclusive communication practices is essential for organizations to build trust, foster collaboration, and ultimately achieve success. Organizations can navigate uncertainties effectively and build resilience during challenging times by recognizing the importance of digital tools, transparency, and strong leadership. Embracing these key elements will help create a culture where effective communication is valued and contributes significantly to overall success. As organizations continue to evolve, the emphasis on inclusive communication will be crucial in shaping their relationships with stakeholders and maintaining a strong, cohesive workforce. As organizations continue to evolve, the emphasis on inclusive communication will be crucial in shaping their relationships with stakeholders and maintaining a robust and cohesive workforce. Future research could explore the specific impact of communication strategies on organizational outcomes, providing further insights to guide best practices in this area.

#### References

- Alcántara, C. S., García, L. V., & Rojano, F. J. P. (2023). Communicating the volcanic eruption in La Palma from Spanish public institutions: communication strategies on Twitter. *Estudios Sobre El Mensaje Periodístico*, 29(2), 357–368. <https://doi.org/10.5209/esmp.87391>
- Bokayev, B., Zhanzhigitova, Z., Sadykova, K., & Balmanova, A. (2023). Multichannel Communication in Kazakhstani Public Service: Examining the Role of Digital Tools. *Public Policy and Administration*, 22(4), 535–547. <https://doi.org/10.13165/VPA-23-22-4-11>
- Catalina-García, B., & Suárez-álvarez, R. (2022). Twitter interaction between audiences and influencers. Sentiment, polarity, and communicative behavior analysis methodology. *Profesional de La Informacion*, 31(6), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2022.nov.18>
- Fernández, J. M., Montero, F. P., & Micó Sanz, J. L. (2020). The publication of press releases as journalistic information : Comparative study of two Spanish newspapers. *Estudios Sobre El Mensaje Periodístico*, 26(1), 215–228. <https://doi.org/10.5209/esmp.67301>
- Hartley, K. (2024). State-society relations and government technology: A survey of public awareness and communication in Hong Kong. *Data and Policy*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.1017/dap.2024.15>
- Issers, O. S. (2021). Communicative strategies of an interviewer yury dud: A linguist's view of the media phenomenon in mass culture. *Vestnik NSU. Vestnik Novosibirskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta, Seriya: Istorija, Filologiya*, 20(6), 263–277. <https://doi.org/10.25205/1818-7919-2021-20-6-263-277>
- Koivumäki, K., & Wilkinson, C. (2020). Exploring the intersections: Researchers and communication professionals' perspectives on the organizational role of science communication. *Journal of Communication Management*, 24(3), 207–226. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-05-2019-0072>



- Krakauer, R. L., Stelnicki, A. M., & Carleton, R. N. (2020). Examining Mental Health Knowledge, Stigma, and Service Use Intentions Among Public Safety Personnel. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11(May), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00949>
- Krupa, M. B., McCarthy Cunfer, M., & Clark, S. J. (2020). Who is Winning the Public Process? How to Use Public Documents to Assess the Equity, Efficiency, and Effectiveness of Stakeholder Engagement. *Society and Natural Resources*, 33(5), 612–633. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2019.1665763>
- Laurie, S., Mortimer, K., Holtz, M., & Little, B. (2024). Enhancing Students' Understanding of Social Media Marketing and the Use of Advertising and Public Relations Terminology Within IMC: A Participatory Action Research Project. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 46(1), 45–56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02734753231162610>
- Li, Y., Miao, X., Zheng, D., & Tang, Y. (2019). Corporate public transparency on financial performance: The moderating role of political embeddedness. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 11(19). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11195531>
- Liu, B. F., Seate, A. A., Kim, J. Y., Hawblitzel, D., Lee, S., & Ma, X. (2022). Relationships Are Built on Sunny Days: Uncovering Quiet Weather Communication Strategies. *Weather, Climate, and Society*, 14(1), 223–236. <https://doi.org/10.1175/WCAS-D-21-0096.1>
- Máiz-Bar, C., & Abuín-Penas, J. (2022). The current role of influencers in public relations: Comparing Spain and the USA. *Analisi*, 67, 125–144. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/analisi.3554>
- Mejía-Cáceres, M. A., Rieckmann, M., & Foleña Araújo, M. L. (2023). Political Discourses as A Resource for Climate Change Education: Promoting Critical Thinking by Closing the Gap between Science Education and Political Education. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 15(8). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15086672>
- Meng, J. (2021). Leadership Excellence in Corporate Communications: A Multi-Group Test of Measurement Invariance. *SAGE Open*, 11(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211061375>
- Moreno, Á., Tench, R., & Verhoeven, P. (2021). Trust in public relations in the age of mistrusted media: A European perspective. *Publications*, 9(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.3390/publications9010007>
- Ngueajio, M. K., & Washington, G. (2022). Hey ASR System! Why Aren't You More Inclusive? Automatic Speech Recognition Systems' Bias and Proposed Bias Mitigation Techniques. A Literature Review. Cornell University. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arxiv.2211.09511>
- Nuseir, M. T., Aljumah, A. I., & El-Refae, G. A. (2022). Digital marketing and public relations: A way to promote public relations value. *International Journal of Data and Network Science*, 6(4), 1331–1340. <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.ijdns.2022.6.002>
- Nyagadza, B., & Mazuruse, G. (2021). Embracing public relations (PR) as survival panacea to private colleges' corporate image & corporate identity erosion. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2021.1974179>
- Pantsev, K. A., Sidorova, G. M., & Zherlitsina, N. A. (2019). African Countries in the Epoch of Information Globalization: New Challenges in the New Age. *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta Vostokovedenie i Afrikanistika*, 11(4), 590–605. <https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu13.2019.411>
- Peresada, O., Severinova, O., Serohin, V., Serohina, S., & Shutova, O. (2022). Intercultural Communications and Community Participation in Local Governance: EU Experience. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 11(5), 266–278. <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2022-0141>
- Saleh, R., & Yusmanizar. (2019). Emergency response and communication during the bili-bili dam flood crisis in Indonesia. *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication*, 35(4), 484–497. <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2019-3504-30>

- Seo, S., Ombengi, D., Sultan, D H., Kahaleh, A A., Nonyel, N P., Karwa, R., Abrons, J P., Lukas, S., Singhal, M K., Miller, M L., & Truong, H. (2020). An ethics-based approach to global health research part 1: Building partnerships in global health. *Elsevier BV*, 16(11), 1574-1579. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sapharm.2020.08.022>
- Shilina, M. G., & Volkova, I. I. (2021). Russian Public Relations in 2020: Peculiar Features of Transformation. *RUDN Journal of Studies in Literature and Journalism*, 26(2), 302–310. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-9220-2021-26-2-302-310>
- Wahid, R., Shukri, S., & Ahmad, M. Z. (2023). A Bibliometric Analysis on Trends, Directions and Major Players of International Relations Studies. *Journal of International Studies(Malaysia)*, 19(1), 201–230. <https://doi.org/10.32890/jis2023.19.1.8>
- Walsh, J. P., Baker, V., & Frade, B. (2022). Policing and social media: The framing of technological use by Canadian newspapers (2005–2020). *Criminology and Criminal Justice*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17488958221114254>
- Wellman, M L., Stoldt, R., Tully, M., & Ekdale, B. (2020). Ethics of Authenticity: Social Media Influencers and the Production of Sponsored Content. *Taylor & Francis*, 35(2), 68-82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23736992.2020.1736078>