CSR COMMUNICATION ON FACEBOOK: ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE COMPANY AND INTENTION TO SHARE

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Purpose

The paper analyses the factors that explain the effectiveness of a corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication on Facebook by a hospitality company. Taking the Affect Transfer Hypothesis model as a basis, we study the influence of beliefs about the company (attributions and corporate image) and variables related to the receiver (environmental consciousness and identification with the territory) as direct antecedents of the improvement of the attitude towards the company and attitude towards the post, which influence the intention to share the information.

Design/methodology/approach

We developed a quantitative study based on a structured questionnaire targeted at regular Facebook users. Specifically, we used a stimulus-based method, designing a fictitious post by a leading Spanish hotel chain about an environmental initiative. The post, which was shown to the participants before they answered the questionnaire, provided information about the development of an environmental programme by the hospitality company in the region where the study was carried out. Specifically, we measured two communication outcomes (the improvement in attitude towards the hospitality company and the user's intention to share the information) and variables related to the receiver (environmental consciousness and identification with the territory), to the message (information's usefulness) and to the company (image and attributions) as explanatory variables. We obtained a final sample of 239 valid surveys respecting the socio-demographic profile of the target population. The hypotheses were tested using a covariance-based structural equations model (CB-SEM) approach (software EQS 6.1).

Findings

We observed that the Affect Transfer Hypothesis model is valid to measure the effectiveness of CSR communication on Facebook. Thus, the intention to share a post about an environmental initiative of the hotel is explained by both the attitude towards the company and the attitude towards the information. Factors related to the company and the environmental consciousness of the individuals exert an indirect influence. We also found that the attitude towards the post has a double influence in the model, in the sense that it enhances the attitude towards the company and, at the same time, has a direct influence on the intention to share the information.

Research limitations

We must first mention the use of a non-probabilistic sampling procedure, which could condition the representativeness of the sample obtained. Another limitation of our research is the use of cross-sectional data instead of longitudinal data. We can also consider as a limitation the specific business and geographical context in which it was developed. In addition, it will be interesting to analyse other types of CSR initiatives, focused on other stakeholders, as well as to consider how the creativity of the post (text, image and/or video) could influence the effectiveness of the communication.

Practical implications

CSR information can reveal a mix of business and social attributions. The first of these, a source of scepticism and distrust, will always appear, but these extrinsic attibutions do not have a negative effect in all cases. In order to reach positive communication outcomes, in terms of an improvement in the attitude towards the hotel and the intention to share the post and viralize the information, it is important to assure that people perceive that the hotel has a real interest in benefiting society with its initiative. To achieve this, it is very important to have a good corporate image. Furthermore, CSR-related posts may catch the attention of and generate interest in environmentally conscious people, so we suggest including CSR information in companies' brand content strategy on social network sites (SNS) on a regular basis.

Social implications

Hospitality companies have to make people aware of CSR initiatives. We suggest including CSR information in companies' brand content strategy on SNS on a regular basis. These channels let companies create attractive and compelling stories, and if CSR initiatives are framed on them, companies will be able to generate emotional connection with consumers. Furthermore, social platforms are relational channels, so it is advisable to use a friendly tone to connect with the individuals. Their greater or lesser participation and the possible associated comments will give clues to companies about the feelings and perceptions of people regarding CSR, which has great value.

Originality

Social networks can be interesting vehicles to convey CSR information, although users' reactions towards a CSR post on these platforms has not yet been explored. This study tries to cover this gap and to contribute to the hospitality literature by studying the factors that would explain two communication outcomes of a CSR post on Facebook, one internal outcome (the improvement of the attitude towards the brand) and the other external (the intention to share the information). Furthermore, the study is a pioneer in the application of the Affect Transfer Hypothesis model to measure the marketing effectiveness of social media in the hotel industry.

KEYWORDS

social networks; attributions; CSR; environment; Affect Transfer Hypothesis

1. Introduction

A socially responsible company is one that maintains a voluntary commitment to minimizing or eliminating any harmful effect from its actions and maximizing its long-run beneficial impact on society (Mohr et al., 2001). In the tourist sector, companies are no strangers to the increasing pressure from stakeholders to adopt sustainable practices (Fatma et al., 2016; Font et al., 2012; Iyer and Jarvis, 2019). In particular, hotels are increasingly engaged in various social and environmental initiatives in order to present themselves as responsible global citizens (Font et al., 2012; Holcomb and Smith, 2015) and 'be *hospitable*, not only to their guests but also to society' (Holcomb et al., 2007, p. 473). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) in hotels has been growing, as well as the studies investigating these issues (Farmaki, 2019). However, research on CSR within hospitality still has a long way to go (He et al., 2019), and there are topics very under-researched, for example CSR communication (Font et al., 2012).

CSR disclosure is part of the dialogue between a company and their public that helps legitimize corporate behaviour (De Grosbois, 2012; Pérez et al., 2018). Although this communication remains a voluntary practice in many contexts (Camilleri, 2018), businesses of all sizes and types are expected to communicate, explain and justify their CSR credentials (Kucukusta et al., 2019; Tench and Jones, 2015). In addition to the traditional communication channels – CSR reports, corporate websites, advertising and non-corporate sources, such as media coverage – consideration should be given to an increasingly important channel that has created a new form of communication: social network sites (SNS).

In traditional channels, stakeholders receive the information, but they have no opportunity to respond to the messages (Zizka, 2017). In contrast, social networks, e.g. Facebook or Twitter, offer a virtual place where hundreds of millions of users – both people and companies – are connected, generating an authentic dialogue and levels of conversation never before seen (Leung et al., 2015; Zizka, 2017). With regard to this, Muntinga et al. (2011) introduced the COBRA (consumers' online brand-related activities) concept, as a behavioural construct including the whole of consumer activity pertaining to brand-related content on social media platforms: consumption (e.g. watching brand-related pictures or reading comments on brand profiles); contribution (e.g. engaging in branded conversations); and creation (e.g. writing product reviews). Following this model, the act of sharing or distributing a specific kind of content on a social network – a type of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) known as opinion-passing behaviour (Chu and Kim, 2011; Sun et al., 2006) – could be included in the middle level of activeness (level of contribution). In this case the action is related to the behavioural dimension of customer engagement, characterized by the active interactions of the customer, such as sharing (Dessart, 2017), which facilitates the viralization of the content and the long-term value co-creation (Ho and Dempsey, 2010).

In the realm of CSR, social networks represent a 'rupture in the communication' (Tench and Jones, 2015, p. 219). Where once there was one message and one-directional communication, there is now a multiple-way dialogue with many, or a polyphony of, voices which generates new insecurities (Tench

and Jones, 2015). CSR encompasses sensitive and controversial aspects, and by starting to engage openly with stakeholders about these issues on social media, companies face the risk of attracting critical comments from users that publicly question their legitimacy and harm their reputation (Etter, 2013). In fact, social networks can rapidly put in evidence what is called corporate hypocrisy, i.e. 'the belief that a firm claims to be something that it is not' (Wagner et al., 2009; p. 79). When people see inconsistencies between a brand's CSR information and its observed behaviour, they can perceive such a company as hypocritical (Marín et al., 2016; Santos and Casais, 2019), which generates negative attitudes (Wagner et al., 2009). However, SNS can be helpful to communicate socially responsible initiatives because they let a firm deliver its brand story (Su et al., 2015), as well as enhance customer engagement (Kang et al., 2015), and stakeholder engagement is precisely the very the essence of CSR (Abitbol and Lee, 2017; Etter, 2013). This apparent controversy makes it interesting to analyse users' reactions towards a CSR post on a social network, a topic still scarcely explored.

Specifically, this paper tries to contribute to the literature by analysing from the consumer perspective the determinants of the effectiveness of a CSR post on Facebook by a hospitality company. Its originality lies in four main issues. First, the topic of the study. It is a reality that SNS are a heavyweight communication tool for many hospitality brands (Ferrer-Rosell et al., 2020; Hsu, 2012; Leung et al., 2015; Su et al., 2015; Touni et al., 2020). However, the content posted by hotels on Facebook is mainly marketing-oriented (Kucukusta et al., 2019) and usually either emphasizes hotel services or aspects related to the destination where they are located (Ferrer-Rosell et al., 2020). The presence of CSR-related posts is minimal (Kucukusta et al., 2019), so it can be said that hospitality brands are not still fully capitalizing on the use of social media to encourage CSR engagement with consumers and value co-creation (Zizka, 2017). The analysis of this channel and the factors explaining its effectiveness can be helpful for companies and encourage them to include CSR information in their inbound marketing strategy.

Secondly, most of the previous articles have adopted an exploratory approach and have used content analysis techniques to study the social network strategy of a sample of hotels (Ferrer-Rosell et al., 2020; Hsu, 2012; Phelan et al., 2013). The few quantitative studies examining the effectiveness of this channel have adopted a general perspective (Leung et al., 2015; Touni et al., 2020). Past research has paid very little attention to CSR communication via social platforms (Kucukusta et al., 2019; Zizka, 2017) and, as far as we know, there are no empirical studies specifically focused on the motivators of the opinion-passing behaviour regarding this type of brand content. Only García de los Salmones et al. (2020) and Martínez et al. (2020) have studied the reaction of Facebook users to a negative piece of news about a potential irresponsible behaviour by a hotel, but their study had a closer approach to crisis communication. Future research needs to continue to investigate social media effectiveness (Leung et al., 2015), and this study tries to contribute to this field with a new perspective.

In the third place, the effectiveness of CSR communication can be measured by considering internal outcomes (e.g. improvement in trust, identification with or attitude towards the company) and/or external ones (e.g. purchase, loyalty or advocacy) (Du et al., 2010). Along with these returns, social networks can favour a new external outcome linked to the viralization and value co-creation, i.e. the contribution (Muntinga et al., 2011) or the opinion-passing behaviour (Chu and Kim, 2015; Sun et al., 2006). This research analyses thus two types of indicators – the improvement in attitude towards the hospitality company (internal outcome) and the user's intention to share the information (external outcome) – as well as the causal relationship between these two variables.

In the fourth place, we follow the research line of Leung et al. (2015) and we support our proposal on the traditional Hierarchy-of-Effects (HOE) models, which are extensively used in advertising studies. According to these models, advertising messages can take consumers through a sequence of cognitive, affective and conative phases (Mackenzie et al., 1986; Smith et al., 2008). We are aware that a post on Facebook is not advertising, but it is still a corporate message, and the company creates such messages to generate interest and obtain a behaviour/reaction on the part of users – for instance, to share the post. Therefore, and with the necessary adaptations, we consider this theoretical framework appropriate to our research purposes, which constitutes a novelty in this field.

Finally, the CSR content analysed refers to an environmental issue. The natural environment is increasingly being viewed as a pillar of CSR (Babiak and Trendafilova, 2011), and the most important concern for stakeholders in a company's CSR efforts (Kassinis and Vafeas, 2006). In an era in which sustainability seems to have emerged as a major social paradigm, various forms of sustainable tourism (e.g. ecotourism, green tourism) have gained increasing weight as more benign alternatives with the potential to ameliorate the negative impacts of conventional mass tourism (Choi and Sirakaya, 2005). According to the World Tourism Organisation (WTO, 2020), sustainable tourism is a type of 'tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities'. Sustainable tourism development is both supply-led and demand-driven; that is, the provision of tourist facilities and services may arise as a response to growing demand or aim to stimulate tourist demand (Liu, 2003).

With regard to this, it is observed that CSR activities in the acommodation industry mostly focus on environmental issues (Ettinger et al., 2018). Since the early 1990s, more and more hotels have adopted different discretionary activities to show their commitment to sustainable development and satisfy customers' environmental demands (Martínez, 2015), such as codes of conduct, best environmental practices, eco-labels, environmental management systems (EMSs) and environmental performance indicators (Ayuso, 2006). In fact, Kucukusta et al. (2013) found that environmental factors were one of the best indicators of a guest's attitudes and behaviour, and they suggested hotel managers should emphasize this area in their CSR programmes. Therefore, there is a growing concern for the environment and companies' environment-friendly conduct (Grimmer and Bingham, 2013).

2. Literature background and research hypotheses

The Hierarchy-of-Effects (HOE) models establish a possible sequence of exposure to an advertisement composed of cognitive, affective and conative stages. Specifically, cognition (beliefs) precedes the attitude towards the ad (affect), which has an influence on successive measures of advertising effectiveness, such as brand attitude (affect) and purchase intentions (conation) (Lutz et al., 1983; MacKenzie et al., 1986). Widely used in the advertising field, these models have also been expanded to analyse Web advertising effects, using the variable 'attitude towards the website' instead of 'attitude towards the ad' (Bruner and Kumar, 2000; Sicilia et al., 2006; Stevenson et al., 2000). In the social media area, Leung et al. (2015used the Affect Transfer Hypothesis (ATH) to explain the marketing effectiveness of social media for hotels. Specifically, these authors measured the construct 'attitude towards social media page' and, as conative variables, the intention to make a hotel booking and the intention to spread eWOM (willingness to recommend the hotel on Facebook/Twitter).

We also take into account the ATH to design our model. ATH considers that a recipient of an advertising message develops an attitude towards the ad, conditioned by consumer beliefs and evaluations about the ad, which influences the attitude towards the brand. The attitude towards the brand is also explained by beliefs and evaluations about such a brand. Finally, this attitude will influence purchase intentions (MacKenzie et al., 1986). Taking the ATH model as a reference, we maintain its essence and the proposed relationships but adapt the variables to the analysed context. We do not actually measure purchase intention, but the intention to share the post (external communication outcome) on the social network. With regard to attitudes, we consider the improvement in the attitude towards the company (internal communication outcome) and elements related to the information's usefulness (Cheung and Thadani, 2012) as a measurement of the attitude towards the Facebook post. Brand-related cognitions stimulated by the information exposure are measured with the attributions towards the company and corporate image (Du et al., 2010; García de los Salmones and Pérez, 2018). Finally, we include variables related to the receiver – environmental consciousness and identification with the territory (Cheung and Thadani, 2012; García de los Salmones et al., 2020) – as antecedents of the attitude towards the post (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

2.1 Factors related to the company as determinants of the improvement of the attitude towards the company

The increasing stakeholder pressure on CSR implementation has led companies to make a further effort to meet those demands, including in the matter of information (Odriozola and Baraibar-Diez, 2017). However, CSR communication may generate scepticism (Morsing and Schultz, 2006). From the

perspective of the public, many people suspect that these initiatives are deliberate attempts to improve corporate image (Kucukusta et al., 2019) and they do not trust the information received (Odriozola and Baraibar-Diez, 2017). This reaction by consumers explains why CSR communication is seen as a 'double-edged sword' (Morsing and Schultz, 2006, p. 331) because it may produce results that are the opposited to those expected (Du et al., 2010).

Taking into account that companies develop their activity in a digital and globalized environment, where the opinions of stakeholders are quickly spread (Odriozola and Baraibar-Diez, 2017), the provision of credible information about CSR becomes more than ever a necessary condition for the effectiveness of communication (Du et al., 2010). Many theories have emerged in the literature dealing with this aspect. Among them, attribution theory stands out. Specifically, attribution theory establishes that when people are exposed to any information, they make causal inferences regarding the purposes of the communicator and react in one way or another, according to such attributions (Kelley, 1973). In business-to-consumer communications, receivers generate attributions regarding the companies. In commercial advertising, people usually perceive extrinsic attributions – that is, they think that companies are trying to sell products and meet business objectives through the use of persuasive messages (Friestad and Wright, 1994). However, in the context of CSR communications, people can derive mixed motives because CSR initiatives involve a positive contribution to society. This means that two types of attributions can appear: extrinsic attributions related to the desire of companies to boost the corporate image, increase sales or make a profit; and/or intrinsic ones, which refer to the improvement of the general well-being of a community (Ellen et al., 2006). Extrinsic attributions favour scepticism and distrust, so it is important that consumers attribute solid intrinsic motives to the social initiative, with minimal perception of the extrinsic ones (García de los Salmones and Pérez, 2018). Corporate image can be key to this.

Corporate image becomes a frame of reference, a pre-existing mental schema, to judge the corporate behaviour (Elving, 2013). When consumers initiate an active attribution process to determine the motives of a company in carrying out a CSR initiative, they use their perceptions about the company to process the new information received (Elving, 2013). If a company with a good corporate image communicates a CSR initiative, consumers will tend to perceive it as sincere and honest because this action is in line with its corporate values and past records in this field. Therefore, it will fit with the consumers' expectations, and intrinsic attributions will appear (Ellen et al., 2006; García de los Salmones and Pérez, 2018; Tao and Ferguson, 2015). Although García de los Salmones and Pérez (2018) found that extrinsic motives also arise, according to the majority of studies the activation of these attributions can be reduced or remain the same (Ellen et al., 2006; Rifon et al., 2004). In any event, it is expected that intrinsic attributions have more strength when a company has a good image, and extrinsic attributions will constitute a smaller proportion of the total perceived motivations (Ellen et al., 2006; García de los Salmones and Pérez, 2018; Rifon et al., 2004). On the contrary, CSR communications

carried out by companies with a bad image could enhance the extrinsic attributions. These companies can be perceived as self-serving and manipulative (Elving, 2013; Lii and Lee, 2012) and people may think that the company is reacting to business demands without having a real, long-term commitment (Groza et al., 2011). Furthermore, in these circumstances people probably perceive the company as hypocritical (Wagner et al., 2009) because there will be inconsistency between the CSR claim and the company's regular behaviour (Marín et al., 2016; Santos and Casais, 2019).

As far as we know, there are no works dealing with this topic in the tourism sector. We thus propose that when Facebook users are exposed to a corporate post about a CSR initiative of a hospitality company, and specifically environmental information, corporate image will condition the perceived attributions. That is:

H1. Corporate image will positively influence intrinsic attributions towards an environmental post on Facebook by a hospitality company.

H2. Corporate image will negatively influence extrinsic attributions towards an environmental post on Facebook by a hospitality company.

In advertising, brand-related cognitions stimulated by ad exposure are posited as causal antecedents of brand attitude (MacKenzie et al., 1986). Therefore, we propose that beliefs about the company, measured as attributions, will influence the effects of communication. Specifically, intrinsic attributions are likely to be associated with positive emotions (García de los Salmones and Pérez, 2018) and favourable reactions towards the company (Forehand and Grier, 2003; Vlachos et al., 2009), while extrinsic attributions are linked to egoistic motives, which will provoke scepticism and other negative emotions, rendering the communication ineffective (Du et al., 2010). Following the Affect Transfer Hypothesis (ATH) model (MacKenzie et al., 1986; Shimp, 1981), we establish that when consumers see a CSR post on Facebook, the perceived attributions regarding the company will influence their attitudes towards the hospitality firm. Therefore, we propose that:

H3. Intrinsic attributions towards an environmental post on Facebook will positively influence the attitude towards the hospitality company.

H4. Extrinsic attributions towards an environmental post on Facebook will negatively influence the attitude towards the hospitality company.

2.2 Factors related to the users as determinants of attitudes towards the post

Attitude towards an ad is the predisposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an advertising stimulus during a particular exposure (MacKenzie et al., 1986). Attitude has two dimensions, one cognitive and another emotional (Shimp, 1981). Specifically, affective responses refer to feelings or emotions, whereas those based on cognitive aspects refer to thoughts and more rational arguments (Verplanken et al., 1998). It is to be expected that the cognitive and emotional dimensions of attitude

towards the message are non-equivalent in their impact on consumers. This fact is due to the different underlying mechanisms, one a more conscious process – the cognitive dimension – and the other non-volitional – the affective dimension (Shimp, 1981). In our research, we measure the attitude towards the post considering cognitive elements related to the information's usefulness (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). Specifically, information usefulness refers to an evaluation of the quality, usefulness, relevance and comprehensiveness of the information available to the receiver (Chang et al., 2015; Herrero et al., 2015).

Variables related to the receiver – Facebook users – can influence information usefulness (Cheung and Thadani, 2012), although these explanatory variables are still underexplored. Specifically, Muntinga et al. (2011) observed that, whereas the act of consuming brand-related content (first level of activeness of their COBRA model) is mainly linked to motivations of information, entertainment and/or remuneration, at the level of contribution other types of motivators emerge. In this case, users expose themselves in the social network, so factors related to personal identity, such as self-presentation and self-expression, can play an important role (Muntinga et al., 2011). One of the few works that studied this issue empirically in the CSR realm is García de los Salmones et al.'s (2020) study, in which they found that the perceived usefulness of a negative information about CSR is influenced by the social and environmental consciousness of the individual. Generally speaking, the amount of interest evoked by a piece of information determines the degree of attention and the processing strategy (Shimp, 1991). People who view the message as having little personal relevance may not make an effort to analyse it (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). On the contrary, pro-social people will be more predisposed to this type of communication and they will consider the informtation to a higher extent (Du et al., 2010). Therefore, we propose that when users are exposed to a corporate post about an environmental issue, the more environmentally conscious they are, the better their attitude towards the post will be, as stated in the following hypothesis:

H5. Environmental consciousness will positively influence the attitude towards an environmental post on Facebook by a hospitality company.

We also study the influence of identification with the territory on the attitude towards the information. The identification with the territory on the part of the residents has been analysed in tourism studies to understand the attitudes towards tourism and the advocacy of incoming tourism (Palmer et al., 2013; San Martín et al., 2018). Following the social identity theory, identification is achieved through a process of self-categorization and comparison (Ellemers et al., 1999). The self-categorization in the local community emphasizes the perceived physical and personal similarities within the community and the differences observed compared to other territories (Hogg et al., 1995). Identification also requires positive feelings and emotional connection derived from membership in the community. Finally, identification with the territory is complete when residents feel a better self-esteem when belonging to a group (Ellemers et al., 1999).

The level of residents' identification with their communities explains attitudes and support for tourism (San Martín et al., 2018), including the intention to promote inward tourism through word-of-mouth communication (Palmer et al., 2013). We propose, in an exploratory way, that this variable can also influence users' reactions to a CSR communication related to their place of residence. CSR activities and environmental initiatives can be included in the informative category of 'changes in the physical space' (García de los Salmones et al., 2020), defined as events taking place in the citizens' everyday environment, which can have some type of effect on the place (Almgren and Olsson, 2015). Almgren and Olsson focused on events with a potential encumbering effect – for example, pieces of information covering local construction plans, new installations or changes of perceptions of safety in public spaces; however, this category can actually cover any event with a potential impact on a community, whether negative or positive (García de los Salmones et al., 2020). Environmental initiatives in a territory can have a direct impact, so individuals who identify more with the territory may value the information to a higher extent. This relationship between identification and attitude towards the information has not been considered in previous studies. Considering all the arguments, we propose that:

H6. Identification with the territory will positively influence the attitude towards an environmental post on Facebook by a hospitality company.

2.3 Factors influencing the intention to share a hospitality company's post about CSR on Facebook

The Affect Transfer Hypothesis (ATH) has been used in advertising research to support the chain between attitude towards the ad, attitude towards the brand and purchase intentions (Homer, 1990; MacKenzie et al., 1986). According to this, a company will have to try to create a favourable attitude towards the message in order to leave consumers with a positive feeling about the company after processing the information that favours the behaviour (Shimp, 1981). The evidence strongly supports a positive and causal relationship between the constructs (Goldsmith et al., 2000; Lafferty et al., 2002). Following this framework, Leung et al. (2015) found that hotel users' attitudes towards social media pages influence their attitudes towards hotel brands, which enhances both the intention to book and to generate eWOM. Therefore, we expect the same sequence in the study of the effectiveness of CSR communications on social networks, considering as an external outcome the intention to share the post. We propose that:

H7. The attitude towards an environmental post on Facebook by a hospitality company will positively influence the attitude towards the company.

H8. The improvement in the attitude towards the hospitality company will positively influence the intention to share the environmental post.

3. Methodology

3.1. Measures and questionnaire

In order to test the research model, we carried out a quantitative study based on a structured questionnaire. Specifically, we designed a fictitious post by a leading Spanish hotel chain about an environmental initiative. The fictitious post, which was shown to the participants (regular users of Facebook) before they answered the questionnaire, provided information about the development of an environmental programme by the hospitality company in Cantabria, a region in northen Spain characterized by the richness and value of its natural resources and which was the place where the fieldwork was developed. The hotel chain has a solid CSR commitment, above all in the dimension of sustainability. At the end of the survey, we indicated that the post was created only for research purposes.

Specifically, the questionnaire included questions regarding all the variables of the model. The complete scales for each factor are detailed in the Appendix, indicating the original articles in which they were used in the previous literature. All the items were measured using seven-point Likert scales.

3.2. Sample

The target population were regular Facebook users who are, therefore, susceptible to being reached by company communications about CSR activities in this social network. A non-probabilistic sampling procedure was used, given the difficulty of obtaining a probabilistic sample of this population for which no census is available. In particular, we established sampling quotas following the socio-demographic profile of Facebook users in Spain described in the Annual Study of Social Networks 2018 (IAB Spain). Respondents were randomly approached in the main commercial streets of the biggest cities in Cantabria, respecting the quotas defined according to gender and age of Facebook users. Those respondents not fulfilling the condition of being regular users of Facebook were discarded. In this way, we obtained a final sample of 239 valid surveys. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the sample.

TABLE 1

4. Results

Prior to the estimation of the research model, we developed a descriptive analysis of the measurement scales. Table 2 summarizes the main descriptive statistics for all the variables, calculated for the average of the items forming each scale. The results obtained show that there are no problems related to asymmetry and kurtosis.

TABLE 2

In order to test the hypothesized relationships, we used a covariance-based structural equations model (CB-SEM) approach (software EQS 6.1) in two phases. First, we estimated the measurement model

(confirmatory factor analysis) to validate the psychometric properties of the scales (reliability and convergent and discriminant validity). Second, we analysed the structural model to test the research hypotheses. In both cases, we used a robust maximum likelihood estimation procedure, which allowed us to control the problems related to non-normality of data (Byrne, 2006).

4.1. Estimation of the measurement model

The results obtained in the estimation of the measurement model confirm the psychometric properties of the scales (Table 3). All the goodness-of-fit indices take values clearly above the minimum threshold of 0.9; the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is within the limit of 0.08, and normed $\chi 2$ takes a value under the recommended value of 3.0 (Hair et al., 2010).

Reliability of the measurement scales is confirmed for all the measurement instruments, given that Cronbach's alpha, compound reliability and AVE coefficients are above the minimum values of 0.7 and 0.5, respectively (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2010). The results obtained also support the convergent validity of the scales (all items are significant to a confidence level of 95%, with standardized lambda coefficients higher than 0.5).

TABLE 3

Finally, the discriminant validity was tested following the Fornell and Larcker (1981) procedure (Table 4). For all the scales, the variance extracted for each construct is bigger than the squared correlation between them, which supports the discriminant validity of the instruments.

TABLE 4

4.2. Estimation of hypothesized model

A first estimation of the structural model showed that the following proposed relationships were non-significant: 1) effect of corporate image on extrinsic attributions (H2); 2) effect of extrinsic attributions on attitude towards the company (H4); and 3) effect of individual's identification with the territory on attitude towards the post (H6). Moreover, the LM test suggested including a new relationship between attitude towards the post and intention to share the content. This effect was not initially proposed, but recent studies have supported that the intention to share content about CSR on social networks may be influenced by information value (Martínez et al., 2020). In this regard, the model was reformulated to eliminate those relationships that are not significant, and to incorporate significant relationships suggested by the LM test (Hair et al., 20210). The Figure 2 shows the goodness-of-fit indices, the R^2 statistics for each dependent variable and the standardized coefficients and significance level (p value) for each direct effect of the final structural model.

We can observe that corporate image positively influences intrinsic attributions (H1 is supported, t-student = 6.44 > 1.96) but not extrinsic attributions (H2 is rejected, t-student = -0.53 < 1.96). At the same time, intrinsic attributions have a direct effect on the improvement of attitudes towards the company (H3 is supported, t-student = 6.86 > 1.96). However, and contrary to expectations, extrinsic attributions do not have a significant influence on the attitude towards the company (H4 is rejected, t-student = -0.45 < 1.96). Therefore, and although individuals seem to perceive high extrinsic attributions in the company's behaviour (according to the descriptive statistics, Table 2), these attributions do not play a relevant role in the model. On the contrary, the corporate image – intrinsic attributions – attitude towards the hospitality company sequence is key.

In addition, and although the respondents show, on average, high levels of both identification with the territory and environmental consciousness, the attitude towards the post is only influenced by environmental consciousness (H5 is supported, t-student = 7.36 > 1.96; H6 is rejected, t-student = 0.78 < 1.96). We also found that attitude towards the post has a significant effect on the improvement in the attitude towards the company (H7 is supported, t-student = 7.59 > 1.96), which in turn influences the individual's intention to share the content about CSR (H8 is supported, t-student = 9.01 > 1.96). Finally, we have included a new causal relationship in the model, which links attitude towards the post with the intention to share it on Facebook (t-student = 2.89 > 1.96). Although this explanatory variable has a higher effect on the improvement of the attitude toward the company (0.47 versus 0.17), it is important to consider its direct influence on the intention to share. This result leads to highlighting the role of environmental consciousness in the model. Environmental consciousness seems to exert a 'lever effect' – that is, pro-environmental people will pay more attention to this type of information and will tend to consider it important and valuable, which favours both a better attitude towards the company and the intention to share this post with their 'friends'.

FIGURE 2

4. 5. Conclusions

This study analyses the marketing effectiveness of social media in the hotel industry considering two communication outcomes of an environmental post on Facebook, one internal outcome (the improvement of the attitude towards the brand) and the other external (the intention to share the content). Nowadays, it can be said that hotels are still not fully capitalizing on the use of social media to communicate this type of information (Zizka, 2017). Social-related CSR activities, and above all environmental-related posts, have a minimal presence on platforms such as Facebook, which does not necessarily mean that hotels do not carry out CSR initiatives (Kucukusta et al., 2019). Furthermore, it is striking that the popularity of CSR posts is not significantly lower than their marketing-oriented counterparts (Kucukusta et al. 2019), so this channel must be enhanced for CSR communication.

On the one hand, oline CSR communication can encompass arguable aspects, because if people perceive that companies' CSR claims are inconsistent with their observed behaviour, individuals can consider companies to be hypocritical (Santos and Casais, 2019; Wagner et al., 2009), they may feel that the company is trying to promote its own business without having a real commitment to society, and consequently react by publicly questioning their legitimacy and their credibility. However, social platforms have multiple advantages: they enable the creation of a brand story, promote closeness to the public, favour dialogue and the value co-creation and enhance customer engagement, among other aspects (Abitbol and Lee, 2017; Etter, 2013). When people share information, they are generating eWOM, and they become senders of the information, taking an active role. This controversy makes it interesting to analyse users' reactions toward a CSR post on Facebook by a hospitality company, a line not explored until now. Using the Affect Transfer Hypothesis model as theoretical framework, we observed that the intention to share a post about an environmental initiative is explained by factors related to the company (corporate image) and the attributions linked to the post (mainly intrinsic ones), as well as to personal factors related to the individual himself/herself, such as environmental consciousness and the perceived usefulness of the information.

5.1. *Theoretical implications*

The study of the so-called 'opinion-passing' behaviour on social media regarding CSR information posted by a hotel has been supported by the Affect Transfer Hypothesis model (MacKenzie et al., 1986), a Hierarchy-of-Effects model widely used in the advertising realm. Although Leung et al. (2015) previously used this framework to measure the marketing effectiveness of social media in the accommodation industry, our study is a pioneer in its application to study the opinion-passing behaviour of specific CSR information and in the inclusion of new variables related to both the consumer and the company.

With regard to this, we found that the ATH model is valid to analyse the effectiveness of communication on SNS, with a significant relation between attitude towards the post – attitude towards the brand – and intention to share. However, and unlike the original proposal, we observed that the attitude towards the post has a double influence – that is, it does not only improve the attitude towards the company but also the intention to share the CSR content. This finding is in line with previous studies on social networks (Chang et al., 2015; García de los Salmones et al., 2020; Martínez et al., 2020), which showed that content with high informational value or that is considered interesting, controversial or relevant, has a direct and positive relation with sharing behaviour (Kümpel et al., 2015; Rudat et al., 2014).

This double influence explains the importance of attitude towards the post. Although variables related to the receiver can influence information usefulness (Cheung and Thadani, 2012) and be motivators of contributing to brand-related content (Muntinga et al., 2011), these variables remain underexplored in the context of sharing specific CSR information. We proposed that environmental consciousness and

identification with the territory could be explanatory variables of attitude towards the post. On the one hand, we found that the influence of environmental consciousness was significant, a result that is consistent with previous findings (García de los Salmones et al., 2020). On the other hand, the identification with the territory does not explain the attitude towards the environmental post. Identification on the part of the residents has been widely analysed in tourism studies to understand the attitudes and support towards incoming tourism. Taking into account that environmental initiatives may directly impact the territory, we proposed that the stronger the identification an individual has with the place of residence, the better the attitude towards a CSR communication related to such a territory. This was a new relationship, thus far without empirical evidence to support it. The relationship among the variables was not significant, which means that the influence of identification cannot extend to this realm. However, we propose further research about this topic and the exploration of other possibilities.

In addition to the attitude towards the post, the improvement in the attitude towards the brand is influenced by other factors related to the company, such as corporate image and attributions (Du et al., 2010; Ellen et al., 1986; García de los Salmones and Pérez, 2018). Whereas there is a consensus in the fact that intrinsic attributions favour the effectiveness of CSR communication, more doubts arise regarding extrinsic ones, traditionally considered as sources of scepticism (Ellen et al., 1986). In relation to this, we did not find a causal relationship between corporate image – extrinsic attributions – and attitude toward the post, which ultimately means that this type of attribution does not act as a brake for individuals to share the information. García de los Salmones and Pérez (2018) observed in the financial sector that corporate reputation does not reduce extrinsic attributions but increases them. According to our results, in the hospitality area, and in the context analysed, these attributions remain the same, a result in line with the studies by Ellen et al. (2006) and Rifon et al. (2004). This means that although the company has a good image, attributions related to egoistic motives, like boosting the image or increasing sales, are likely to appear when people see CSR information. However, these attributions do not negatively affect the attitude towards the company, so they do not jeopardize the effectiveness of communication. The key is that corporate image enhances the intrinsic attributions, which in turn favour the attitude towards the company, a result consistent with previous findings (García de los Salmones and Pérez, 2018) and, consequently, the intention to share the post.

5.2. Managerial implications

Tourism companies are aware of the demands of stakeholders and increasingly implement social initiatives with an important weight placed on environmental actions (Font et al., 2012; Holcomb et al., 2007; Holcomb and Smith, 2015). The consolidation of social networks leads companies to the need to extract the full potential from this new channel. Whereas traditional communication sources have a unidirectional character, SNS let consumers generate and exchange content about multiple matters. In fact, with only one click of the mouse, users can enhance company's communication or seriously harm its reputation.

According to the results of our study, CSR information can reveal a mix of attributions, both for business and social character. In order to obtain a positive reaction on the part of the social network users, translated into the intention to share the post, it is important to assure that people perceive a real commitment by the company, that is, the perception that the hotel has a real interest in benefiting society – intrinsic attributions. Extrinsic attributions may inevitably arise, and people may think that hotels carry out CSR actions, such as environmental initiatives as illustrated in this case, because their stakeholders demand them, and the fact of meeting their expectations generates positive business results. Our findings show that these attributions do not have a negative effect on attitudes towards the company when intrinsic attributions appear as well, and it is thus very important to have a good corporate image. In this way, communication will be effective, it will reinforce the attitudes towards the company and the audience will feel motivated to share the post among their contacts. Furthermore, it is a reality that people are more and more environmentally conscious, so initiatives related to this topic may catch their attention and generate interest. If they consider the information useful and valuable, they will tend to share it, becoming allies in the promotion of the initiatives of the company.

In conclusion, hospitality companies have to build their corporate reputation maintaining ethical values that permeate all their behaviour, and implement a long-term strategy using traditional and new communication channels, such as SNS, to make people aware of these initiatives and perceive a real interest by the company in supporting society. We thus suggest including CSR information in companies' brand content strategy on SNS on a regular basis. Social platforms are relational channels, so it is advisable to use a friendly tone to connect with the audience. These channels let companies create attractive and compelling stories, and if CSR initiatives are framed on them, companies will be able to generate emotional connection with consumers and, consequently, promote a positive response to CSR messages, favouring their participation. Maybe other communication sources, such as CSR reports or public relations use more expositive discourses that lack emotional bases with which to engage consumers. Social networks offer just the opposite, a friendly way of dialoguing with the users, so it is important to extract their full potential. Their greater or lesser participation and the possible associated comments will give clues to companies about the feelings and perceptions of people regarding CSR, which has great value.

5.3. Limitations and future research lines

Despite the robust theoretical and methodological approach followed in this study, it is not free of limitations, which also implies opportunities for future research in the field of CSR communication in tourism. In this regard, we must first mention the use of a non-probabilistic sampling procedure, which could condition the representativeness of the sample obtained. In order to minimize this issue, and following a common method in the research on consumer behaviour, we used sampling quotas to maximize the correspondence between the sample and the target population in terms of socio-demographic profile. Another limitation of our research is the use of cross-sectional data instead of

longitudinal data, which has two main effects on the measurement of key variables in the research model. First, the improvement in attitudes towards the company is measured through a single construct, which reflects the change in individuals' attitudes as self-perceived by them, rather than measuring individuals' attitudes towards the firm before and after exposure to the stimulus. On the other hand, the final dependent variable in this study is intention to share, so we do not measure the actual behaviour of sharing company CSR communications on Facebook. Whereas both approaches are common in consumer research, the difficulties in developing longitudinal studies with a controlled stimulus indicates that future research should focus on overcoming this limitation by taking advantage of the new technological tools on social networks. We can also consider as a limitation of this research the specific business and geographical context in which it was developed. This study focused on a particular sector and territory, each with its own idiosyncrasy. In this regard, we have thoroughly argued the relevance of CSR communication and environmental issues in the hospitality industry, and the territory under study belongs to a country usually considered as a benchmark for tourism. However, it would be very interesting to analyse whether the results obtained are similar in other business contexts (within the tourism industry or even more generally) and in territories with other environmental and cultural characteristics. In addition, it will be interesting to analyse other types of CSR initiatives, focused on other stakeholders, as well as to consider how the creativity of the post (text, image and/or video) could influence the effectiveness of the communication.

Finally, new technologies allow direct observation of online users' behaviour, which open a new window of opportunity for research. In particular, it is possible to analyse users' interactions with CSR communication, such as giving 'likes', sharing and/or commenting on hotels' corporate contents in social media with a social responsibility approach. In this regard, future research should focus on which attributes of the communication (e.g. cognitive vs affective message, level of elaborateness and vividness, etc…) may influence the level of consumers' engagement with the CSR content and the hotel brand. Moreover, different social media should be taken into consideration, analysing possible differences in the communication of CSR on platforms such as Facebook, YouTube or Instagram, which have different characteristics and users' profiles.

APPENDIX
Measurement Scales

Intention to Share Content (Herrero et al., 2017; García de los Salmones et al., 2020)
ISC1 I intend to use Facebook to share this post
ISC2 I will possibly use Facebook to share this post
ISC3 I decided to use Facebook to share this post
Improvement of the Attitude toward the Company (Du et al., 2010; García de los Salmones and Pérez, 2018)
AtC1 My opinion on (Hotel chain name) has improved a lot.
AtC2 The image I have about (Hotel chain name) has improved a lot.
AtC3 My awareness of (Hotel chain name) has greatly improved.
AtC4 I feel greater identification with (Hotel chain name)
Intrinsic Attributions (Rifon et al., 2004; Ellen et al., 2006; Groza et al., 2011; García de los Salmones and Pérez, 2018)

IA1 The firm has a long-term interest in supporting society.
IA2 The firm is trying to give something back to the community
IA3 The firm feels morally obligated to help (thinks it is the right thing to do).
Extrinsic Attributions (Rifon et al., 2004; Ellen et al., 2006; Groza et al., 2011; García de los Salmones and Pérez, 2018)
EA1 The firm believes that by carrying out these initiatives it will get more clients.
EA2 The firm believes that by carrying out these initiatives, it will keep more of their clients.
EA3 The firm believes that doing these initiatives will increase profits.
Corporate Image (Lafferty et al., 2002; García de los Salmones et al., 2020)
CI1 I have a good image of the (Hotel chain name)
CI2 I value the chain (Hotel chain name) positively
CI3 My attitude towards the chain (Hotel chain name) is favorable
Attitude toward the Post (Herrero et al., 2015; García de los Salmones et al., 2020)
AtP1 I consider that this post provides useful information
AtP2 I consider that this post provides valuable information
AtP3 I consider that this post provides important information
Environmental Consciousness (Schlegelmilch and Bohlen, 1996)
EC1 I consider myself to be a person sensitive to environmental problems
EC2 I think it is important to protect the environment
EC3 I am concerned about my impact on the environment
Identification with Territory (Palmer et al., 2013; San Martín et al., 2018)
ID1 I am proud to live in the region of Cantabria
ID2 I identify with others who live in the region of Cantabria
ID3 I have great respect for the region of Cantabria

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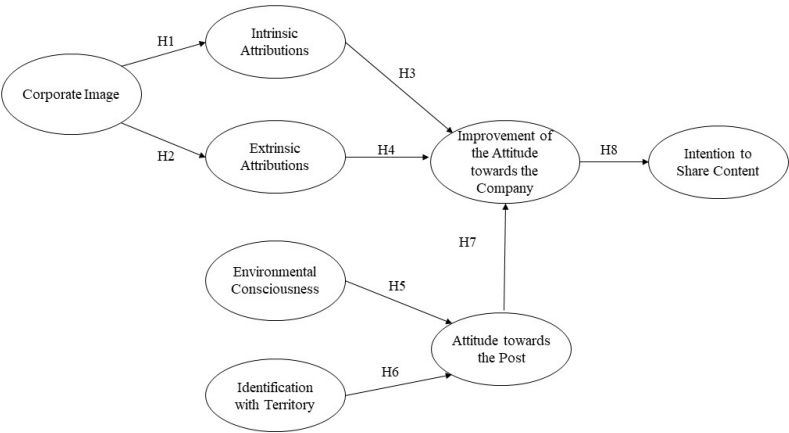43
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Figure 1. Research model

338x190mm (96 x 96 DPI)
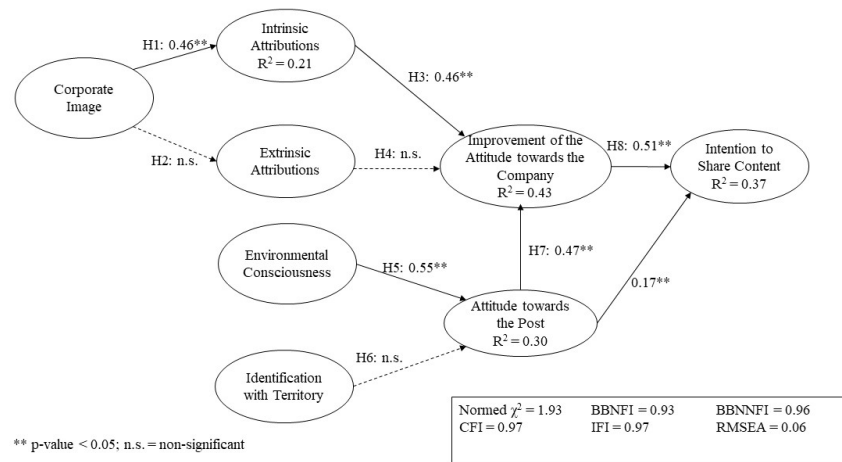
Figure 2. Measurement model

338x190mm (96 x 96 DPI)

TABLE 1.
Sample profile

Variable	%
Gender	
Male	49.4
Female	50.6
Age	
16 to 30 years	30.1
31 to 45 years	39.4
46 to 65 years	30.5

TABLE 2. **Descriptive statistics**

	Average	Std. Dev.	Asymmetry	Kurtosis
Intention to Share Content	3,42	1,79	0,20	-0,99
Improvement of the Attitude toward the Company	4,12	1,38	-0,48	-0,34
Intrinsic Attributions	4,68	1,22	-0,37	-0,27
Extrinsic Attributions	5,70	1,12	-1,20	1,90
Corporate Image	4,65	1,40	-0,69	0,02
Attitude toward the Post	5,04	1,45	-0,72	0,05
Environmental Consciouness	5,37	1,24	-0,62	-0,18
Identification with Territory	5,78	1,11	-0,87	0,17

TABLE 3.
Measurement model (Confirmatory Factor Analysis)

Factor	Variable	Stand. Coef.	R^2	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Goodness of fit indices
Intention to Share Content (ISC)	ISC1	0.93	0.86	0.97	0.97	0.90	
	ISC2	0.97	0.94				
	ISC3	0.95	0.91				
Improvement of the Attitude toward the company (AtC)	AtC1	0.91	0.83	0.95	0.96	0.85	
	AtC2	0.97	0.94				
	AtC3	0.95	0.90				
	AtC4	0.85	0.72				
Intrinsic Attributions (IA)	IA1	0.81	0.66	0.83	0.84	0.63	
	IA2	0.88	0.77				
	IA3	0.68	0.47				
Extrinsic Attributions (EA)	EA1	0.83	0.68	0.81	0.82	0.61	Normed χ^2 = 1.64
	EA2	0.81	0.65				BBNFI = 0.92
	EA3	0.69	0.47				BBNNFI = 0.96
Corporate Image (CI)	CI1	0.93	0.86	0.96	0.96	0.90	CFI = 0.96
	CI2	0.94	0.87				IFI = 0.97
	CI3	0.97	0.93				RMSEA = 0.05
Attitude towards the Post (AtP)	AtP1	0.87	0.86	0.94	0.94	0.84	
	AtP2	0.94	0.94				
	AtP3	0.93	0.91				
Environmental Consciousness (EC)	EC1	0.87	0.76	0.87	0.87	0.69	
	EC2	0.78	0.60				
	EC3	0.84	0.70				
Identification with Territory (IT)	IT1	0.66	0.43	0.73	0.76	0.52	
	IT2	0.68	0.46				
	IT3	0.81	0.66				

TABLE 4.
Results of Fornell and Larcker's criterion for discriminant validity

	ISC	ATC	IA	EA	CI	IU	EC	IT
Intention to Share Content (ISC)	**0.90**[a]							
Improvement of the Attitude toward the Company (AtC)	0.39	**0.85**						
Intrinsic Attributions (IA)	0.31	0.38	**0.63**					
Extrinsic Attributions (EA)	0.00	0.02	0.01	**0.61**				
Corporate Image (CI)	0.18	0.23	0.20	0.00	**0.90**			
Attitude towards the Post (AtP)	0.24	0.38	0.26	0.10	0.23	**0.84**		
Environmental Consciousness (EC)	0.14	0.18	0.12	0.02	0.15	0.30	**0.69**	
Identification with Territory (IT)	0.00	0.02	0.03	0.05	0.09	0.04	0.11	**0.52**

a= AVE Coefficient for the construct. Off diagonal elements are the squared correlations among constructs

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