DETERMINANTS OF ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH ON SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES ABOUT NEGATIVE NEWS ON CSR

Abstract

Social network sites are a new communication channel to convey CSR information. They are a multiple-way source that let users participate, spread content and generate electronic word-of-mouth about companies (eWOM) both positive and negative, that can dramatically affect their reputation and future business. To identify the factors behind this behaviour, we designed a causal model to explain the intention to both comment on and share a negative corporate social responsibility (CSR) news posted on Facebook. We included the following as explanatory variables: social consciousness, environmental consciousness, information usefulness, corporate image and attitude towards sharing and commenting on CSR news. We surveyed 208 Facebook users who evaluated a fictitious news item about an environmental issue. We observed that social and environmental consciousness influences the usefulness of information and the attitude towards behaviour, which may explain the eWOM intention of the specific news. However, corporate image can cause people to refrain from generating eWOM and spreading the news on their friend social network.

1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) implies "management of stakeholder concern for responsible and irresponsible acts related to environmental, ethical and social phenomena in a way that creates corporate benefit" (Vaaland et al., 2008, p. 931). Therefore, it is linked with the idea of "doing good", that allows corporations to meet societal expectations and to obtain competitive advantages as a responsible actor, as well as with "avoiding bad", in order to prevent corporate social irresponsibility and be able to benefit from "doing good" in the long run (Lin-Hi and Muller, 2013).

CSR is important because stakeholders demand it. Consumers are integrating this issue in their buying decision processes and their relations with companies, and there is a growing interest in learning more about these initiatives (Dawkins, 2004). With regard to this, the main communication channels to convey CSR information are (Du et al., 2010): a) corporate channels (company-controlled sources), such as CSR reports, corporate websites, public relations, point of purchase and advertising; and b) non-corporate channels (independent or third-party sources), such as media coverage and word-of-mouth. Non-corporate channels (as opposed to corporate ones) are less controllable, but more credible, because they are considered unbiased (Du et al. 2010; Eisend, 2012; Skard and Thorbjornsen, 2014). Whereas previous research has mainly focused on effectiveness of these sources to communicate CSR activities, there is one emerging channel scarcely analysed so far, social networks.

Social Networks Sites (SNSs) are a set of online spaces where users create personalised profiles, maintain a dynamic list of contacts for professional or social issues and actively interact, create and exchange user-generated content through text-based communication or multimedia content such as pictures or videos (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Chiang, 2013; Cortado and Chalmeta, 2016). Friend-based social networks, such

as Facebook or Twitter, represent an ideal tool for electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), as consumers can freely create and disseminate brand-related information within their established social networks (Vollmer and Precourt, 2008; Cheung and Thadani, 2012). Indeed, companies (and mass media) have begun to engage with online social networks as well, creating fan pages as an instrument of communication and relationship-building with their consumers (and audiences) (Herrero et al., 2018). Hundreds of millions of users, both people and companies, constantly interact, giving rise new levels of conversation impossible to achieve up to now (Cortado and Chalmeta, 2016). Specifically, Facebook is the largest SNS (Kesavan et al., 2013) and the most successful one (See-To and Ho, 2014). Currently, its usage penetration among Internet users in leading markets is above 80 per cent and it has 2.23 billion monthly active users around the world (https://www.statista.com, second quarter 2018). Among companies that use social media, Facebook is one of the most frequently used online platforms and the most valuable social tool for driving engagement with customers (Kesavan et al., 2013).

Social networks conform a new model of communication, because unlike the previous ones (one-way channels), they offer a multiple-way communication. With them, the distinction between company-controlled and third party-controlled media become blurred, because users are directly included in communication (Eberle et al., 2013). In the realm of CSR, companies cannot ignore these media. On the one hand, social networks can best help communicate these initiatives (Kesavan et al. 2013). The use of interactive media can increase effectiveness of communication about CSR, because the information can be easily spread by users (Du et al. 2010). The power of consumers using social media is undeniable (Kim and Johnson, 2016), aOn the other hand, SNSs are "people's media", they are the "final arbiter" of messages (Kesava et al. 2013, p. 61) and can freely express negative impressions about the organisations. In this last case, they can produce a very

damaging form of advertising that can significantly affect a company's reputation and future business (Chan and Ngai, 2011; Einwiller and Steilen, 2015; Balaji et al., 2016). This paper analyses this last issue. Individuals can use social networks to punish companies (Sweetin et al., 2013). We are facing a new type of eWOM with great influence on the performance and reputation of companies (Schultz et al., 2011), but despite its importance, it is not well documented in the literature (Ho and Dempsey, 2010; Chu and Kim, 2011; Lee and Ma, 2012), particularly regarding the generation of eWOM around CSR information. To contribute in this realm, our research focuses on the factors explaining eWOM on a SNS (Facebook) for a negative CRS news, that is, a piece of news that potentially shows an irresponsible behaviour – environmental dimension- of a company.

This paper makes three original contributions to the literature and business practices. First, company environmental performance is within the broader categories of CSR (Carrington et al., 2010) and one of the most frequently-used dimensions of the CSR construct (Klein and Dawar, 2004). There is a widespread public concern for the environment (Vermillion and Peart, 2010; Chen, 2010; Grimmer and Bingham, 2013), which explain the growing importance of the ecological conduct of companies (Schlegelmilch and Öberseder, 2010; Cronin et al. 2011). While a growing number of studies focus on the impact of companies' pro-environmental performance in consumer decision making (Jain and Kaur, 2004; Grimmer and Bingham, 2013; Martinez et al., 2018), there is a lack of studies about reactions to irresponsible behaviours on this matter (e.g. environmental degradation or pollution) (Jones et al. 2009).

Secondly, media coverage is accepted to be a non-corporate communication source highly credible to convey CSR information (Du et al. 2010; Eisend and Küster-Rohde, 2012). Coverage of business news raises corporate visibility, inviting further

public attention and scrutiny (Greening and Gray, 1994). There is a voluntary or intentional exposure to news and media outlets lend greater salience to information, which enhances the cognitive responses of the audience (Eisend and Küster-Rohde, 2012). The news media can be an ally in the promotion of CSR (Zhang and Swanson, 2006), but journalists will always cover irresponsible actions (Tench et al., 2007, Pérez, et al., 2018). In fact, on an almost daily basis, the media report small and large examples of irresponsible behaviour (Lin-Hi and Muller, 2013). With Internet and social networks consumers have greater access to information and media outlets than ever before (Kesavan, et al., 2013). Before irresponsible corporate behaviours, consumers can engage actively in negative word of mouth, complaining, boycotting companies (Grappi et al. 2013), and nowadays, eWOM. The analysis of the factors that can motivate users to share the information and produce eWOM about this type of news is underexplored.

Thirdly, unlike previous studies eWOM in social networks is measured as the intention to both share and comment the specific online content. One of the more attractive characteristics of social media is its support for user-generated content, transforming individuals from passive consumers of content to active producers (Nov et al., 2010). According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), if users press the 'like' or 'share' button they are engaging in replication of already existing content (e.g. posting a copy of an existing newspaper article), and they will be interacting with, but not generating content. We therefore decided to analyse this specific response—sharing and commenting a CSR new—and contribute to the field with this novel approach.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. First, we propose the conceptual model and the hypothesis to be tested in the research. Second, we describe the methodology. In the third section, we present the main findings of the paper and discuss

them in light of previous literature. We conclude by presenting the most relevant implications and limitations of the present study, as well as future lines of research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Traditionally, the discussion of CSR focuses predominantly on "doing good" (Lin-Hi and Müller, 2013) and enhancing the welfare of stakeholders (Freeman, 1984). However, CSR is also avoid irresponsible acts (Vaaland et al. 2008) or "avoiding bad" (Lin-Hi and Müller, 2013), an approach scarcely considered in literature (Campbell, 2007; Lange and Washburn, 2012; Lin-Hi and Müller, 2013). Corporations have long been criticized for irresponsible actions such as pollution, damage to environment, unfair treatment of employees and suppliers (Murphy and Schlegelmilch, 2013). According to Lin-Hi and Müller (2013) companies strongly declare themselves to be committed to their social responsibility can be irresponsible in some issues as well. In fact, and although some authors see it as two ends of a continuum (Jones et al., 2009) it is normal a simultaneous existence of responsible and irresponsible behaviors (Lin-Hi and Müller, 2013).

Whereas CSR translates into significant competitive advantages, in terms of reputation and loyalty of consumers, among other issues (Brown and Dacin, 1997; García-De los Salmones et al. 2005; Luo and Bhattacharya, 2009), the public disclosure of irresponsible behaviours entail a variety of negative consequences (Sweetin et al., 2013), such as customer losses, decreased employee motivation, reputational damage (Lin-Hi and Müller, 2013) and negative word of mouth (Grappi et al. 2013). Consumers appear to be particularly susceptible to a company's CSR initiatives, and it has been found that they are more sensitive and react in a higher extent to negative CSR information than to positive one (Mohr et al., 2001; Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004; Schultz, 2015). According to previous research, there is significant asymmetry between the cognitive processing that

people do before negative (adverse or threatening) events and the processing they do in response to positive ones (Baumeister et al. 2001; Fiske and Taylor, 2008). Specifically, when they are exposed to an irresponsible behaviour, people will spend more time thinking about it, they will search more extensively for causal information, and their resulting judgments and responses will be more extreme (Fiske and Taylor, 2008).

As it has been commented previously, one class of consumer reaction is word of mouth. It supposes sharing emotions with others, distaste, disapproval, or disparagement concerning irresponsible actions by corporations, and it envolves communication and social influence (Grappi et al. 2013). With Internet and social networks, people have new forms of expressing that companies have to take into account (Kesavan et al., 2013). Users can react to information about socially irresponsible corporate behaviours (e.g. by liking, commenting or sharing through their social profiles; see Chu and Kim, 2011; Chang et al., 2015), generating eWOM. This opinion-passing behaviour and generation of content facilitates the flow of information, multidirectional communication and the viralisation of content with a few clicks of the mouse (Dellarocas 2003; Norman and Russell 2006; Ho and Dempsey, 2010). This behaviour will directly and significantly affect corporate reputation (Einwiller and Steilen, 2014; Balaji et al., 2016). For example, environmental activists have taken the use of oil palm viral to force Nestlé to take corrective measures, and Nike also received unfavourable feedback about irresponsible labour practices of its suppliers, which forced it to change the way it does business (Kesavan et al., 2013).

Generally speaking, negative consumer reactions to corporate irresponsibility have been rarely studied (Grappi et al. 2013), and to our best knowledge, there have been no studies focused on CSR-specific news. Kümpel et al. (2015) carried out a literature review of papers about the relationship between news sharing and social media. Among other issues, they tried to characterise the user who shared news and to identify the

motivators of this behaviour. However, these studies did not differentiate among different types of news, and they did not take into account that individuals have different preferences that can influence their sharing behaviour (Mitchelstein and Boczkowski, 2010; Lee and Ma, 2012). Berger and Milkman (2012) investigated what types of New York Times articles are highly shared from its web-site, considering the article's valence and the extent to which it evokes various specific emotions. Almgren and Olson (2015, 2016) also analysed the interactions of users with online news and they found that users' practices in terms of commenting and passing along media content are connected to their preferences, that is, what they 'fancy' and 'care about' (Tenenboim and Cohen, 2015). For example, they found that online users do not interact with most news items, and only a few topics attracted their attention—among them stories related to 'changes in the physical space', that is, news pieces concerning events or courses of events taking place in the citizens' everyday environment, which seemed to have some type of encumbering effect. CSR activities in general, and environmental issues in particular could be included in this category. Companies are expected to benefit the natural order or at least to minimise any impact, and their actions concerning these issues can make users react. However, the factors behind this behaviour remain unknown.

Considering this gap, we try to contribute to the literature by studying the antecedents of the intention to generate eWOM (share and comment) on one SNS (Facebook) about a negative CSR piece of news, specifically about a potentially irresponsible environmental behaviour. According to Grappi et al. (2013), word of mouth involves communication and social influence. Therefore, we used Social Communication Theory (Hovland, 1948) and the integrative framework of the impact of eWOM communication (Cheung and Thadani, 2012) as a starting point to design the causal model. Social communication includes four major: communicator (source), stimulus

(content), receiver (audience) and response (main effect). We explore how factors related to the receiver (Facebook users) about the stimulus (post content) influence the response (intention to share and comment). Concretely, we include as explanatory variables users' beliefs, attitudes (Chang et al., 2015) and social and environmental consciousness as factors related to information processing (Cheung and Thadani, 2012).

The literature about eWOM is rather fragmented and the interrelationships among key variables have not been systematically reviewed and studied (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). Therefore, in order to support the causal relationships and frame our research we consider diverse theories of communication. Consumer reactions to CSR news about irresponsible behaviours are dependent upon the individual's attention and interpretation (Lange and Washburn, 2012), so we use human information processing theories, such as Elaboration Likelihood Model, commonly used in the study of the impact of eWOM communication (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). Furthermore, we support on the Uses and Gratifications Theory, one of the most influential theories in the study of communication that helps to understand the functions of the medium for the individual (Anderson and Meyer, 1975). According to this theory, social networks imply active participation of the users, and individuals expose themselves to the medium to obtain gratifications and satisfy different needs (Chen, 2011; Smock et al., 2011; Currás-Pérez et al., 2014)

2.1. Social and environmental consciousness and eWOM intention

The personal characteristics of receivers may influence their beliefs and attitudes toward the stimulus (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). The impact of information received may vary from person to person, and the same content can provoke different responses in different receivers (Chaung and Thadani, 2012). Communication about sustainability should resonate with consumers on the basis of their moral and other foundational

attitudes and beliefs (Watkins et al., 2015), so social and environmental consciousness can be key variables of the eWOM intention model.

On the one hand, social consciousness is defined as an individual's concern about the community and its people (Ladhari and Tchetgna, 2017). On the other hand, environmental consciousness involves specific psychological factors related to an individual's propensity to engage in pro-environmental behaviours and make green purchasing decisions (Schlegelmilch et al., 1996; Zelezny and Schultz, 2000; Martínez et al., 2018). Social and environmental consciousness are closely related variables. Socially conscious individuals are characterised by their understanding, tolerance and appreciation of the well-being of other people, increase in quality of life and economic progress in their communities and protection of nature (Webb et al., 2008; Pepper et al., 2009: Kim et al., 2010). Such individuals behave according to their interests and concern for social issues, with the environmental dimension being especially important (Pepper et al., 2009; Collins and Kearins, 2010; Pérez and García-De los Salmones, 2018). Allen and Ferrand (1999) hypothesised that to act pro-environmentally, individuals must focus beyond themselves and be concerned with the community at large. Pro-social consciousness can therefore lead to pro-environmental behaviours, because it entails that people benefit others, whereas often, no direct individual benefits are received by engaging in these behaviours (De Groot and Steg, 2009). We therefore propose that:

H1: Social consciousness positively influences environmental consciousness

A reader's motivation to process the information contained in a message—that is, the person's innate desire to think about such information—can influence their beliefs and attitudes towards opinion-passing behaviour (Gupta and Harris, 2010; Cheung and Thadani, 2012). This argument is supported by the elaboration likelihood model (ELM; Petty et al., 1983; Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), a dual process theory of persuasion that

researchers often use for behavioural changes among message receivers (Chang et al., 2014). ELM defines central and peripheral routes based on the type of information processed by a given user, and it explains the circumstances under which that user may be more influenced by one route than the other (Bhattacherjee and Sanford, 2006). Depending on a person's motivation, their elaboration likelihood will be either high or low, which will, in turn, determine the route through which persuasion may occur (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). The peripheral route involves little cognitive effort, and the subjects rely on cues regarding the target behaviour. People using central routes, however, evaluate the issue based on the relevant arguments presented to them and carry out more cognitive activity and elaboration (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). The central route processes message-related arguments, requires thoughtful comprehension of the information presented, evaluates the quality of the information and combines multiple arguments into an overall evaluative judgment. Due to this higher cognitive effort, people have to be motivated to engage with the information, and this motivation can fluctuate with situational contexts and time, even for the same individual (Bhattacherjee and Sanford, 2006).

In the realm of CSR communication, the segments of stakeholders who are pro-social, CSR advocates or activists will be more motivated to process such information, they will evaluate the message to a higher extent using central routes and the communication will be more effective (Du et al., 2010). If people view a given message (e.g. a post with a piece of news about CSR) as being important and relevant (e.g. due to their social and environmental consciousness), they are more likely to invest the necessary cognitive effort to scrutinise the information content, and they will carefully consider the quality of the arguments presented. Those who view the same message as having little personal relevance, however, may not be willing to spend the time and effort to analyse

it (Bhattacherjee and Sanford, 2006; Cheung and Thadani, 2012). Social and environmental consciousness will therefore enhance the usefulness of the news item, especially when it refers to a potentially irresponsible corporate behaviour. We propose that:

H2: Social consciousness positively influences the information usefulness of a news item about CSR on Facebook

H3: Environmental consciousness positively influences the information usefulness of a negative news item about CSR on Facebook

Social and environmental consciousness may explain attitudes towards participating in social networks, in this case, sharing and commenting on CSR news on SNSs. The uses and gratifications theory (Anderson and Meyer, 1975), focused on understanding the functions of the medium for the individual, support such an argument. People chose or expose themselves a particular medium because it gratifies one or more needs (Katz et al., 1974; Anderson and Meyer, 1975). Following, this theory, studies about social networks have reported that members of virtual communities participate and expose themselves to the medium to obtain certain gratification, satisfy needs (Currás-Pérez et al. 2014) and get something out of that experience (Chen, 2011). These needs can have a social (e.g. willingness to provide help and support or exchange ideas) and/or a psychological nature (e.g. belonging to a community, membership) (Stafford et al., 2004; Currás-Pérez et al., 2014). Furthermore, users can see the social network as a medium to express their personality, status and social or personal identity (Currás-Pérez et al., 2014).

In the context of our research, customer values such as feelings of self-esteem are essential for explaining pro-environmental behaviours (Karp, 1996; Martinez et al., 2018). Social and environmental consciousness imply a concern about the community at

large, and this state of 'actively caring' can only occur if the need for self-esteem, among other values, has been satisfied (Allen and Ferrand, 1999). Furthermore, behaviour on Facebook can connect with various personality traits (Soukup, 2018), and SNSs make it possible to exchange ideas, interests and create community (Chen, 2011; Chiang, 2013). Taking into account the previous arguments, it can be expected that users with social and environmental consciousness have a favourable attitude towards participating in the social network, sharing and commenting on CSR news, to get gratifications, as self-esteem and/or group membership, and satisfy personal needs, reinforcing features of their personality and personal relations. We therefore propose the following:

H4: Social consciousness positively influences attitudes towards sharing and commenting on news about CSR on Facebook

H5: Environmental consciousness positively influences attitudes towards sharing and commenting on news about CSR on Facebook

2.2. The effect of beliefs and attitudes on eWOM intention

Beliefs and attitude influence intention to like and share a post in Facebook (Chang et al. 2015). When users read a post, their beliefs about the usefulness of the content are formed (Chang et al., 2015). Information usefulness refers to its informative qualities and usefulness to the individual (Bhattacherjee and Sanford, 2006; Chang et al., 2015; Erkan and Evans, 2015), as well as the relevance, accuracy and comprehensiveness of the information available to the consumer (Cheung et al., 2008). We hypothesized previously that highly motivated people to process the information will use central routes, and this higher cognitive effort will be more predictive of subsequent behavior, as opposed to peripheral routes (Petty and Cacioppo, 1983). User perceptions of the value of the information available through eWOM sources have often been identified as a determinant of the influence exerted by these sources on their behaviour (Erkan and Evans, 2015;

Herrero et al., 2015; Herrero et al., 2018). Specifically, this variable has been found to have a positive relationship with eWOM adoption (Cheung and Thadani, 2012) and opinion-passing behaviour (Chang et al., 2015). On SNSs, people encounter a great quantity of information, so they might have a greater intention to adopt or react towards this information only so long as they find it useful and interesting (Erkan and Evans, 2015; Almgren and Olsson, 2016). In fact, it has been found that content that is considered interesting or contains high informational value factors such as surprise, controversy, relevance or unexpectedness, has a positive relation with sharing (Berger and Milkman, 2012; Rudat et al., 2014; Kümpel et al., 2015). Considering these arguments we propose that:

H6: Information usefulness positively influences the intention to share and comment on a negative news item about CSR on Facebook

When the negative information is related to a company, corporate image can play a role in eWOM intention. Previous research has found that a good corporate image—defined as an intangible asset resulting from the interaction of all the experiences, beliefs, feelings, knowledge and impressions that people have about a firm (Berstein, 1984)—provides a number of benefits to firms (Rhee and Haunschild, 2006), and it can be an important resource during a crisis (Beonit, 1997; Dean, 2004; Coombs and Holladay, 2006). Consumers spontaneously construct beliefs and attributions of blame for faulty or harmful products (Folkes and Kotsos, 1986) and these form the basis of consumers' brand judgments and behaviour. In constructing these attributions, consumers rely on information, including corporate associations (Folkes et al., 1987) and prior corporate image (Dean, 2004), which may have a halo effect, as benefit of the doubt and/or a shield (Klein and Dawar, 2004; Coombs and Holladay, 2006; Insch and Black, 2018). If a stakeholder holds a generally favourable view of the organisation, he or she might give

the organisation the 'benefit of the doubt' by assigning the organisation less responsibility for a crisis than would be assigned to an organisation with an unknown or unfavourable reputation (Fombrun, 1996); this will result in less damage to the organisation's reputation (Coombs and Holladay, 2003; Klein and Dawar, 2004). In order to have a different perspective, Rhee and Haunschild (2006) explore the possibility that companies with good reputation suffer more market penalty in certain circumstances. Specifically, they found a negative effect of a high-quality corporate reputation on market responses to product defects in the automobile industry. Therefore, it seems that not always a good reputation buffers firms from the "vagaries" of the market (Rhee and Haunschild, 2006). However, it is important to take into account that the study only focused on the quality dimension of reputation. As they authors point out, this can be a limitation of the study, so there are many other dimensions underlying organizational reputation. We adopt the perspective of the previous articles, that measured corporate reputation in a global way (Coombs and Holladay, 2006) or considered social responsibility reputation (Klein and Dawar, 2004; Insch and Black, 2018), and found a positive effect of corporate image, and extend the argument to the area under study. Concretely, we expect that, when people are exposed to a negative news item about a company, they can refrain from sharing and comment it—so long as the company has a prior good image—and wait to see what will happen next or to find more information about the issue. We explore this argument and propose that:

H7: Corporate image negatively influences the intention to share and comment on a negative news item about CSR on Facebook

Finally, the relationship between attitude and intention has been well established and validated in consumer behaviour research (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). In the online context, several studies have used the theory of reasoned action (TRA; Fishbein and

Ajzen, 1975) and the theory of planned behaviour (TPB; Ajzen, 1991) to link attitude and intention. For example, the attitude towards a behaviour explains consumers' engagement in eWOM on Facebook and/or Twitter (Wolney and Mulleer, 2013), individuals' intention to participate in viral marketing dynamics (Camarero and San José, 2014) and SNS use behaviour (Currás-Pérez et al., 2014). In the study context, attitude refers to an individual's predisposition to comment on and share news about CSR on his or her profile on Facebook. Based on the postulates of the TRA and TPB and previous studies we propose that:

H8: Attitude towards sharing and commenting on news about CSR on Facebook positively influences the intention to share and comment on a negative news item about CSR on Facebook

Figure 1. Research model
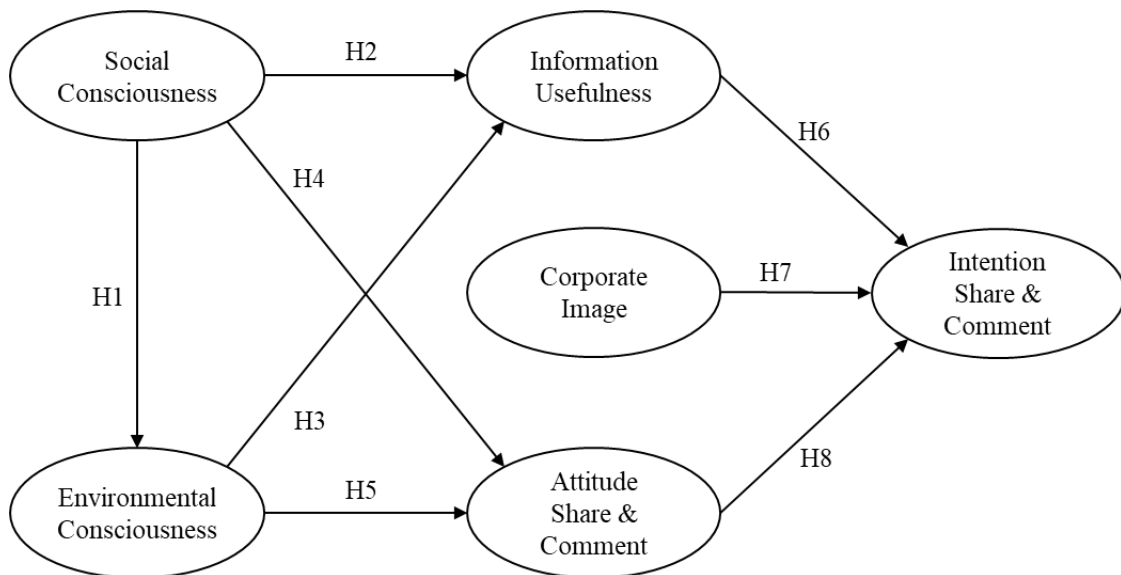
3. METHODOLOGY

We conducted a quantitative study based on interviewer-administered surveys in Spain. Data were collected between April and June 2018, after interviewers were properly

trained for the task. The empirical study focused on the tourism sector and, more concretely, the news item was about a hotel. Generally speaking, the tourism industry is strongly affected by eWOM and, within it, hotels are probably the most affected (Serra-Cantallops and Salvi, 2014). People are used to creating or using eWOM about their touristic activities, so it is interesting to analyse this area with a different focus.

Participants (Facebook users) were shown a stimulus in the form of a fictitious post from a newspaper (i.e. *Diario Montañés*) related to a negative piece of news about the CSR (environmental dimension) of a hotel (i.e. NH Hotels) and then responded to the questionnaire. Specifically, we elaborated a fictitious but realistic news item about an event in the city with consequences for the environment. The post provided information about the opening project of a new hotel for the chain in the city, which would have a possible environmental impact. According to the news item, the ecologists' associations had sounded the alarm (Appendix 1).

We analysed the antecedents of eWOM intention in a real context, so both the source and the hotel were well known to users. *Diario Montañés* is a regional printed newspaper, with an online version, and is the leader in the region where the empirical study was carried out, with almost 90,000 followers on Facebook. NH Hotels is a Spanish hotel chain (with one hotel located in the city where the empirical study was carried out) with strong CSR engagement, especially in the dimensions of environmental responsibility and sustainability. Energy, water, recycling and climate change are its main performance areas, and it conveys information about its initiatives in CSR reports and on its corporate website on a regular basis. At the end of the survey, the collaboration of respondents was appreciated and it was indicated that the content of the post was fictitious, and specifically created according research purposes.

The questionnaire used in this study included three-item measurement scales for all of the dependent and independent variables included in the research model. In particular, we used seven-point Likert scales, rating from strong disagreement to strong agreement with the statements presented. Intentions towards sharing and commenting on the news item were measured following Herrero et al. (2017). Three items based on Herrero et al. (2015) were used to measure information value. To assess the attitude towards sharing and commenting, a scale based on the studies by Venkatesh et al. (2003) and Herrero and San Martin (2012) were used. Three items based on Schlegelmilch and Bohlen (1996) were used to measure environmental consciousness. The measurement instrument for social consciousness was taken from Walker and Kent (2013). Finally, corporate image was measured with three items based on Lafferty et al. (2002). Appendix 2 shows the scales used for each factor.

We used a non-probabilistic sampling procedure to design the sample. To guarantee a more accurate representation of the data, we considered the age and gender of Facebook users (IAB, 2017) and we used multi-stage sampling by quotas. After data collection and processing, the final sample included 208 valid surveys (see Table 1 the profile of the sample).

Table 1. Profile of the sample

Gender	Male	47,1%
	Female	52,9%
Age	16 – 30	27,2%
	31 – 45	45,6%
	46 – 65	27,2%

4. RESULTS

A covariance-based structural equations model (CB-SEM) approach (software EQS 6.1.) was used to test the research hypotheses, using a robust maximum-likelihood estimation procedure. This method avoids the problems related to non-normality of data by providing the outputs 'robust chi-square statistic' and 'robust standard errors', which have been corrected for non-normality (Byrne, 1994) and which consequently guarantees the validity of the model estimation. First, the measurement model was estimated with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the psychometric properties of the measurement scales (reliability and validity). Next, the structural model was estimated to contrast the direct causal effects established in the research hypotheses.

4.1. Estimation of the measurement model

The results summarised in Table 1 confirm that the factorial model fits the empirical data, as the Bentler-Bonett normed fit index (BBNFI), Bentler-Bonett non-normed fit index (BBNNFI), incremental fit index (IFI) and comparative fit index (CFI) clearly exceeded the recommended minimum value of 0.9. Similarly, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was within the recommended limit of 0.08, and normed $\chi2$ takes a value clearly under the recommended value of 3.0 (Hair et al., 2010).

The reliability of the measurement scales was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, compound reliability and AVE coefficients (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). The values of these statistics were, in all cases, above the required minimum values of 0.7 and 0.5, respectively (Hair et al., 2010), supporting the inner reliability of the constructs (Table 1). The convergent validity of the scales was also confirmed, because all items were significant to a confidence level of 95% and their standardised lambda coefficients were higher than 0.5 (Steenkamp and Van Trijp 1991).

Table 1. Measurement model (confirmatory factor analysis)

Factor	Variable	Stand. Coeff.	R^2	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Goodness of fit indices
Intention Share&Comm	INT1	0,97	0,93	0,97	0,97	0,91	
	INT2	0,97	0,94				
	INT3	0,92	0,84				
Information Usefulness	INFU1	0,96	0,91	0,94	0,95	0,85	Normed χ^2 = 2,37
	INFU2	0,91	0,82				BBNFI = 0,92
	INFU3	0,90	0,81				BBNNFI = 0,94
Corporate Image	CIMA1	0,97	0,93	0,95	0,95	0,87	CFI = 0,95
	CIMA2	0,97	0,94				IFI = 0,95
	CIMA3	0,85	0,73				RMSEA = 0,08
Attitude Share&Comm	ATT1	0,98	0,95	0,97	0,97	0,92	
	ATT2	0,96	0,93				
	ATT3	0,93	0,86				
Social Consciousness	SOCC1	0,84	0,70	0,84	0,85	0,66	
	SOCC2	0,71	0,50				
	SOCC3	0,88	0,77				
Environmental Consciousness	ENVC1	0,86	0,74	0,78	0,78	0,55	
	ENVC2	0,63	0,40				
	ENVC3	0,71	0,50				

The discriminant validity of the scales was tested following the procedure proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981), which requires the comparison of the variance extracted for each pair of constructs (AVE coefficient) with the squared correlation estimate between these two constructs (Table 2). In all cases, the variances extracted for each construct were greater than the squared correlation between them, which supports the discriminant validity of the measurement scales.

Table 2. Results for Fornell and Larcker's criterion for discriminant validity

	Intention Share& Comm	Information Value	Corporate Image	Attitude Share&Comm	Social Consciousness	Environmental Consciousness
Intention Share&Comm	**0,91**[a]					
Information Usefulness	0,25	**0,92**[a]				
Corporate Image	0,03	0,00	**0,85**[a]			
Attitude Share&Comm	0,21	0,18	0,01	**0,55**[a]		
Social Consciousness	0,04	0,09	0,02	0,06	**0,66**[a]	
Environmental Consciousness	0,07	0,06	0,00	0,10	0,21	**0,66**[a]

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

## 4.2. Estimation of hypothesised structural model

Once the psychometric properties of the scales were tested, the model was estimated using robust maximum likelihood. A first estimation of the structural model showed that the consumer's environmental consciousness did not have any significant effect on the perceived usefulness of the information (hypothesis H3 is not supported). Consequently, and following the model development procedure suggested by Hair et al. (2010), we reformulated the research model and eliminated the non-significant relationship. Figure 2 summarises the results for the estimation of the proposed research model, indicating the goodness-of-fit indices of the structural model, the R^2 statistics for each dependent variable and the standardised coefficients and significance level (p-value) for each relationship.

The goodness-of-fit indices supported the correct definition of the structural model (Normed $\chi2$ = 2.34; BBNFI = 0.92; BBNNFI = 0.94; CFI = 0.95; IFI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.08). According to the empirical evidence obtained, social consciousness was a direct determinant of environmental consciousness (H1 is supported), perception of information usefulness (H2 is supported) and attitudes towards sharing and commenting (H4 is supported). Finally, environmental consciousness exerted a direct and positive influence on attitudes towards sharing and commenting about CSR news on Facebook (H5 H4 is supported), but not on perceived information usefulness (H4 H5 is not supported).

The direct antecedents of intention to share and comment on posts about hotels' CSR on Facebook are the perceived usefulness of the information contained in the post (H6 is supported) and the individual attitude towards sharing and commenting on information about these issues (H7 H8 is supported). In addition, corporate image had a direct and negative effect on the intention to share and comment on negative posts about hotels' CSR on Facebook (H7 is supported). Corporate image therefore mitigates the

potential spread of negative eWOM about the company, at least at an initial stage. In conclusion, and according to these results, both social and environmental consciousness have a significant influence on consumers' intention to share and comment on posts about hotels' CSR on Facebook, but this is mediated by other variables such as attitudes towards sharing and commenting about CSR or perceived information usefulness.

Figure 2. Structural model (causal effects)
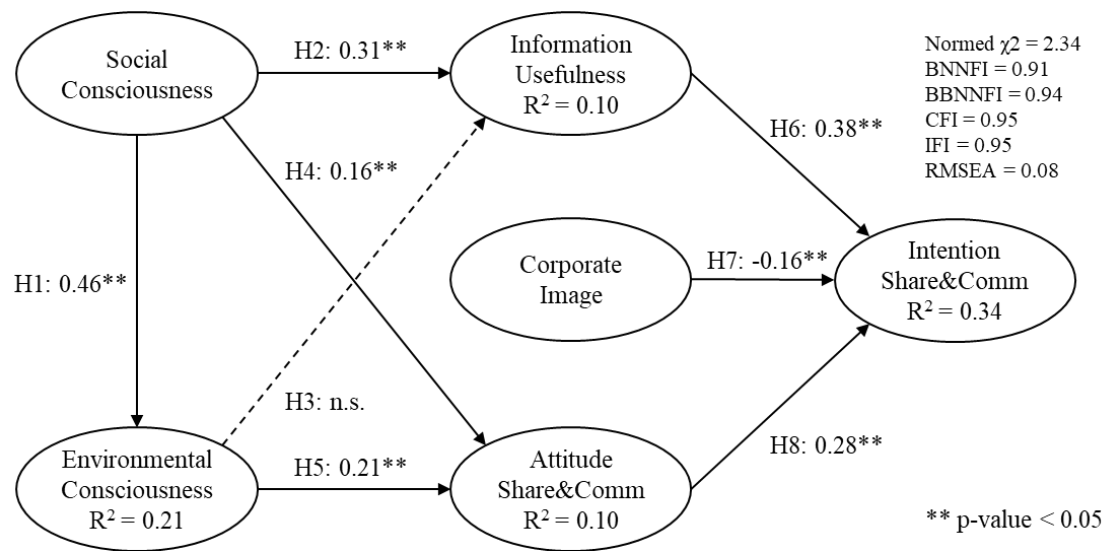
5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Theoretical implications

Nowadays, people are more and more concerned of corporate social responsibility, and they are expose to different channels to receive CSR information. The typical communication sources are one-way channels, such as advertising, CSR reports or media coverage (Du et al. 2010). However, there is an emerging channel, social networks, that has changed the way people and companies share information and communicate with each other. Social networks let users be integrated in the communication, creating and exchanging content about multiple subjects, including their consumption experiences and other relevant information that fits or reflects their personal values. Now, with only one

click of the mouse, users can support a company's communication or dramatically affect its reputation and future business.

The previous literature has shown that consumers expect companies to exhibit socially responsible behaviour and they react quickly to negative CSR information (Mohr et al., 2001). In fact, consumers are more sensitive to irresponsible than to responsible corporate behaviour and 'doing bad' hurts more than 'doing good' helps, so managers need to be cognisant of the hazards of being perceived as socially irresponsible (Bhattacharya and Chen, 2004). With the power of the Internet, the risks are even higher, because if people react to any negative CSR information through their social networks, this will have increasingly significant effects in terms of message diffusion and virality. Factors behind this behaviour are unexplored. Taking into account this gap in literature, we tried to identify the variables that would explain eWOM (intention to share and comment) on Facebook with regard to negative CSR information, that is, a piece of news about a possible irresponsible environmental behaviour.

We found that social and environmental consciousness are key variables to explain the intention to share and comment on a negative CSR news item. According to Du et al. (2010), these variables positively influence the effectiveness of CSR communication, because pro-social people will be more motivated to process the information and they will evaluate the message to a greater extent, using central routes. This theoretical argument was elaborated considering positive information and controlled communication, but it can be extended to negative information, publicity and generation of eWOM. Social consciousness is one of the most important variables of the intention model, due to its positive influence on perceived information usefulness and attitude towards sharing and commenting. Socially conscious people are concerned about and committed to society, so they are attentive to information that affects the community

where they live. A news item with information about the potentially irresponsible behaviour of a company will attract their attention, and they will consider it useful, valuable and important. This variable, information usefulness, has a direct impact on the intention to share and comment on such a news item. Pro-social people also tend to share and comment on CSR news on their social profile in general, and this attitude towards the behaviour influences their intention to spread the news. These results support the uses and gratifications perspective. SNSs like Facebook are personalised spaces, where users actively interact with and create content targeted to their list of contacts or 'friends', to obtain gratification and satisfy needs, including exchanging ideas, providing help and expressing personality, status and social or personal identity (Currás-Pérez et al., 2014). Socially conscious people use their SNSs as a vehicle to reflect their personality, so they have a positive attitude towards sharing and commenting on CSR information in general, and this news in particular, because from their point of view the information is useful and valuable. Spreading this CSR message and generating content about it allows them to be helpful and reinforce their personal values in front of their 'friends'.

We also found that social consciousness and environmental consciousness were closely related. Some studies have focused on one of the two dimensions to explain pro-environmental or socially responsible behaviour (Zelezny and Schultz, 2000; Martínez et al., 2018) or they have integrated social and environmental issues into only one dimension (Kim et al., 2010; Pérez and García-De los Salmones, 2018). The current study considers the two dimensions to have a better understanding of their role in the intention model. We found that social consciousness led to higher environmental consciousness, and these values also influenced attitudes towards sharing and commenting on CSR information on SNSs. It is striking, however, that the relationship between environmental consciousness and information usefulness was not significant. One reason to this finding can be in the

presentation of the stimulus. In order to be as realistic as possible, we made a post similar to a real one, that is, we gave little information at first, enough to understand the content, but without much details (they are supposed to be in the news and they would have to click). It is possible that environmental concerned people need more information to evaluate the magnitude of the event, which can explain the no significance. The social consciousness is something broader, less specific, it relates to concern about everything has to do with the well-being of the community at a large. The content of the post refers to a possible alteration of the natural order so, although brief, it can be enough for users to consider it valuable and usefulness. It would be interesting to deepen this issue with other types of messages.

Finally, in certain circumstances corporate reputation does not provide protection in a crisis (e.g. failures of product by companies with good quality reputation) (Rhee and Haunschild, 2006), but in other cases, it has been proved that corporate image can act as a halo against negative events (Klein and Dawar, 2004; Coombs and Holladay, 2006; Insch and Black, 2018). This finding can be extended to the generation of negative eWOM. When people are exposed to a piece of news about a possible irresponsible corporate behaviour, not related directly with service failures but with environmental issues, the corporate image inhibits them from sharing and commenting on the news, at least in the beginning. People are aware that with this behaviour they are spreading information that could damage the reputation of the company, and the corporate image seems to act as a shield, waiting for more information related to the event.

5.2. Managerial implications

Media, as independent communication channels, fulfil their function of informing society about the issues that may affect it, so the media will tend to cover companies' irresponsible initiatives through offline and online editions, including social networks. If

this type of news makes users react, the media will cover these issues to an even higher extent. Consumers, as users of SNSs, have channels to express their opinions or discontent with companies so they can be an ally in the promotion of a company's products or, on the contrary, seriously damage its reputation.

Companies need to enhance their relationship with media organizations as much as possible. The way in which a third party (e.g. media) present, filter and frame the CSR information can influence the effect of the information on the audience (Lange and Washburn, 2012), so public relations practices are always necessary. Nowadays, CSR is not only "doing good", but also "avoiding bad". Companies should avoid controversial events that could be covered with a negative tone by media, and continuously monitor the information published, including social networks. SNSs have the particularity that let companies know how many people react to the news and how they do it, so they have to monitor these channels as well. They provide important information about the "feeling" of people before certain events and circumstances. Furthermore, companies have to know how to respond to any negative information with transparency, honesty and empathy. They have to focus not only on media and journalists, but on people, so they have to change their language and adapt to this new social landscape. Any crisis communication strategy should include social networks, as a channel that allows a direct, unmediated relationship with the public.

CSR includes many areas and dimensions, so although companies try to minimise negative events, in the day-to-day running of the business, certain problems or situations that generate media attention may arise. The audience, however, decides about whether to share or comment on a negative news item about a company and support the spread of this information. This behaviour can be mitigated if the company has a good image. Corporate image can act as a guarantee at first, and depending of the problem, it can

cushion any possible crisis of communication or image in social networks, by restraining the user to share the information (to a certain extent and for a certain time). This finding supports the importance of maintaining a favourable reputation, but it is important to take into account that reputation does not provide a complete and continuous protection. The quick reaction of the company and an appropriate and timely communication strategy will be key for overcoming the situation.

5.3. Limitations and future research

This paper has several limitations that open up some future lines of research. First, the findings are limited to the context analysed. We used a well-known company (hotel) and a negative news item related to environment. Featuring other companies with different reputations and other CSR activities would extend the scope of the findings. Furthermore, it would be interesting to compare negative news with positive information, to analyse whether the audience reacts to a greater or lesser extent to the information depending on the tone of the news. The model could also be complete with new variables related to the transmitter (e.g. credibility of the source) and the communication channel (credibility of the social network or subjective norm, among others).

From a statistical perspective, the use of SEM approach can also be considered a limitation of this study, given the controversy existing about the effective capability of this statistical methods to test causal effects. In this regard, while different authors have highlighted the usefulness and value of SEM for causal modelling (Byrne, 2006; Barret, 2007; Martínez-López et al., 2013), the potential of statistical analyses based on correlations to establish causality has also been questioned. Therefore, and despite SEM approach is commonly used to empirically test theoretical models with a causal structure (Hair et al., 2010; Martínez-López et al., 2013), it would be interesting that future research

analyze the causal effects observed in this study using other techniques, such as experimental design, with a stronger power to test causality.

APPENDIX 1. Research stimulus
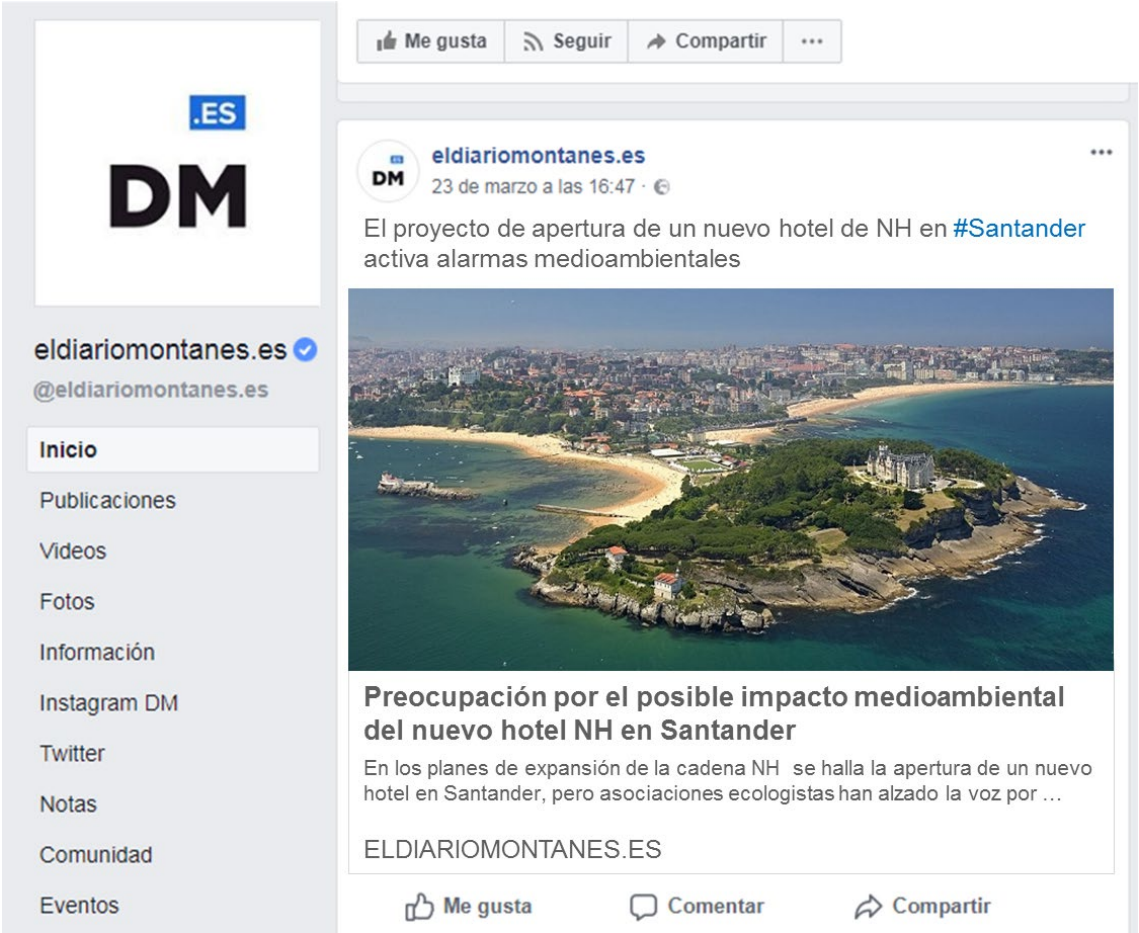
APPENDIX 2. MEASUREMENT SCALES

Behavioural Intentions (Herrero et al., 2017)

INT1	I intend to use SNSs to share and comment on this piece of news
INT2	I will probably use SNSs to share and comment on this piece of news
INT3	I decided to use SNSs to share and comment on this piece of news

Information value (Herrero et al., 2015)

INFV1	I consider that this piece of news provides useful information
INFV2	I consider that this piece of news provides valuable information
INFV3	I consider that this piece of news provides important information

Corporate image

CIMA1	I have a good image of the NH company
CIMA2	I value the NH company positively
CIMA3	My attitude towards the NH company is favourable

Attitude (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Herrero and San Martin, 2012)

ATT1	I think it is a good idea to share and comment on CSR news on SNSs
ATT2	I like the idea of sharing and commenting on CSR news on SNSs
ATT3	It seems interesting to share and comment on CSR news on SNSs

Social consciousness (Walker and Kent, 2013)

SOCC1	I consider myself a person concerned about what happens in society
SOCC2	I consider myself a person committed to my society
SOCC3	I consider myself to be a socially conscious person

Environmental consciousness (Schlegelmilch and Bohlen, 1996)

ENVC1	I consider myself to be a person sensitive to environmental problems
ENVC2	I think it is important to protect the environment
ENVC3	I am concerned about my impact on the environment

Ethical approval: This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

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