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Social network sites in the corporate communication of IBEX 35: uses, development and importance according to those responsible[1]

Redes sociales virtuales en la comunicación corporativa del IBEX 35: usos, desarrollo e importancia según sus responsables

Abstract
Social media offer an opportunity for corporate communication in the context of Web 2.0, where image and reputation are affected by the conversation within virtual communities. Previous research on this issue, based on content analysis, points out the interest of companies to have a corporate presence in social networks, but at the same time they emphasize the lack of harnessing of the interactive and dialogical potential.

In this article, we have conducted a survey to know the opinion of the most important Spanish companies about social network sites. With this method, we pretend to find out which professional profiles are in charge of the planning and management of the corporate presence in social media, to understand their uses and relevance and to study how the big companies are answering to the possibility of having dialogue relations with their publics. The results reveal that IBEX 35 companies consider of great relevance their corporate profiles on social networks, as well as their frequent updating and professionalized management. Also, the respondents understand the conversational nature of social networks, although, they are using these channels mainly for informative goals.

The findings allow us to see the lack of consistency between the understanding of the dialogical context, the importance given to social networking and the informational purposes that prevail in most cases.

Resumen
Los medios sociales ofrecen una oportunidad para la comunicación corporativa en el contexto de la Web 2.0, donde la imagen y reputación se ven afectadas por las conversaciones de las comunidades digitales. Las investigaciones previas, basadas en análisis de contenido, señalan el interés de las empresas por tener presencia corporativa en redes sociales, pero destacan la falta de aprovechamiento de las posibilidades interactivas y dialógicas. El propósito de este artículo consiste en mostrar, mediante una encuesta, la opinión de los departamentos de comunicación de las grandes empresas españolas sobre las redes sociales. Los objetivos incluyen conocer los perfiles profesionales responsables de la planificación y gestión de la presencia corporativa en redes, comprender sus usos e importancia y observar cómo responden ante la posibilidad de establecer relaciones dialógicas con sus públicos. Los resultados muestran que las empresas del IBEX 35 consideran fundamentales sus perfiles corporativos en redes sociales, su actualización frecuente y gestión profesionalizada. Además, entienden su carácter conversacional, sin embargo, los emplean principalmente para informar. Así, se observa la falta de coherencia entre la comprensión del contexto dialógico, la importancia concedida a las redes sociales y los usos informativos que priman en la mayoría de casos.

Keywords
Communication 2.0; communication strategies; community management; corporate communications; social network sites; virtual communities

Palabras clave
Comunicación 2.0; comunicación corporativa; estrategias de comunicación; gestión de comunidades virtuales; medios sociales virtuales; redes sociales

1. Introduction

The present research is based on the importance of virtual social media as a form of interaction between an organization and its public within the context of the participatory Web 2.0, in which corporate image and reputation are affected by the conversations in digital communities.

The objective of this study is to know the perception of those responsible for the corporate communication regarding such communication channels, which are found in the Social Web, as well as to know the uses given to them, and those people in charge of their planning and management. It is based on the hypothesis that, despite knowing the dialogical characteristics of social media, and incorporating new professionals specialized in their development, the largest Spanish companies hold on to a traditional view of relations with the public, in which they retain the control of information and stand apart from the possibility of establishing dialogic links.

1.1. Virtual social media on the current communicative context

Virtual social media, also known by the English expression *social media*, constitute a group of Internet-based applications built on the ideological basis of Web 2.0, which means: participatory, collaborative and social. The main feature of these tools is their allowing of the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010: 61). Concepts such as harnessing of collective intelligence, collaborative communities, co-creation, and enrichment of user´s experience, underlie Web 2.0 and its characteristic components (O'Reilly & Battelle, 2009).

Through social media, netizens have the power to share knowledge and experiences of consumption, to talk with each other and with the institutions with which they keep contact (Nicolás-Ojeda & Grandío-Pérez, 2012).

At the same time, the traditional media, namely *mass media*, with which virtual social media compete or which they complement, are especially affected by the economic crisis and the decrease of sales due to the change of population habits at the information consumption (Farias-Battle & Gómez-Aguilar, 2011), also derived from the crisis of credibility that these media undergo, because of the lowering, instability and de-professionalization within their staffs.

On the opposite, the Net offers the possibility of accessing at the moment the primary source of information –business, public institution, NGO, … rare is the case that these lack of some sort of space in the Net– wishes to do so, avoiding the journalist as the traditional intermediary. The essential form of virtual communication of the entities is the website, a page that may hold all the contents, or can be split into different sites in order to differentiate the commercial contents from the corporative ones.

On the other hand, digital media such as blogs and social networks stand as speakers for influential individuals and real consumers, whose opinions are of greater interest and credibility for society, than traditional marketing and advertising, whose techniques have finally saturated the receiver to which they are directed (Fresno-García, 2012; Del-Pino, Castelló & Ramos-Soler, 2013).

The current situation of mass media and the possibilities of creating contacts in a two-way and personalized form through social media mean that organizations of all kinds must adapt to the new environment, by treating stakeholders as individual people, through humanizing the institution, participating in markets – conversations, according to Cluetrain Manifesto– in a close, simple, sincere and transparent manner. The blogs and social networks used by their public are the ideal context to humanize the entity and develop those dialogic relationships that improve its image and reputation (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Noguera, 2006).

As indicated by Del-Pino, Castelló and Ramos-Soler, it is essential that the company monitors what is said about it in real time on platforms 2.0, as well as: "actively listens, participates in conversations with a familiar and accessible language, offers frequent updates with relevant and quality contents, respond quickly and convey transparency and reliability" (Del-Pino, Castelló & Ramos-Soler, 2013: 65).

In order to develop appropriate communication strategies for the new digital channels and their peculiarities, in recent years professional figures have emerged, specialized in the language and functioning of such platforms. In Spain, the community manager (Castelló-Martínez, 2010; Almansa-Martínez & Godoy-Martín, 2012; Silva-Robles, 2012) has become significant, and because of his/her conversational nature, summarizes the essence of these profiles. However, recently, the scope of specialists has grown, including experts such as the social media manager, the strategist, or the results analyst, among others (Aced, 2010; Noguera, 2012).

Commercial communication, aimed at engaging customers and retaining their loyalty, has experienced an outstanding growth through strategy in virtual social media. Through the entity's profiles in networks such as Facebook or Twitter, user´s experience and satisfaction are taken care of, with product promotion campaigns, personalized and immediate customer care services, and hyper-segmented marketing and advertising campaigns that bring better outcomes.

The contents that a company may share in social networks are really varied: corporate novelties, incorporations, product launches, promotions, contests, games ... what is important is to offer relevant materials of interest to the public. In addition, based on the data generated, free metrics and statistics are obtained, which allow the readjustment of strategies on an ongoing basis (Aced, 2013).

All over the world, companies have been implementing communication projects through social networks for years, so as to promote communities around their brand (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), even turning those platforms into another space from which sales may rise.

However, most studies reveal that, despite a strategy of great presence in social media, for-profit entities still do not meet the requirements of transparency and conversation of their audiences through these new tools (Kim, Park & Wertz, 2010; Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011).

1. 2. Digital corporate communication 2.0: application of social media

The aim of strategic communication is to create as well as to maintain good and optimal relationships with the organization´s public of interest, namely stakeholders, since within the framework of the general theory of systems, it is understood that entities develop their activity in a social environment which they affect and by which they are affected.

Current markets show how the competitiveness generated by globalization and the standardization of products means that companies no longer depend solely on the goods and services they offer. Intangible values, such as image, brand, reputation or CSR, influence more than ever in commercial survival and success. For this, it is essential to attend communication with the different kinds of public, known as corporate communication, integral communication, strategic communication, or public relations.

Public relations today has, thanks to social media, the effective ability to create the conversational links that its leading theorists have advocated as the ideal model for successful relationships between entity and public: an effective model of mutual understanding (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2001), and the relations or flows based on a symmetric two-way communication, (Grunig & Hunt, 2003), also known as a dialogic model (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Kent & Taylor, 2002; McAllister-Spooner, 2009).

In addition, according to Grunig, Grunig and Ferrari (2015: 5), excellent public relations "must count on professionals with communication training and specializations that provide them with the expertise to plan, coordinate, implement and evaluate public relations programs", being this reason why the responsible must suit a strategist profile, not a managerial / technical one.

Whereas corporate communication in the past was emphatically carried out through relations with the mass media as intermediaries to reach other stakeholders, today NICTs allow a direct relationship with the public. Within the corporate digital organizational communication, we find the remarkable role of websites as strategic axes, entity showcase, and information centralizers, or meeting point for all interest groups (Esrock & Leichty, 2000; Becerra-Muñoz, 2010). However, in the last decade there has been a significant growth of Web 2.0 tools: blogs and social networks.

For Childers and Grunig (1999), the organizational relationships with the different publics of interest can be measured through factors such as reliability, satisfaction, commitment or exchange. Some of these options, which involve a greater opening and transfer of control of the entity's own space so that users express themselves freely, are drifting towards external platforms, namely social networks, where there already exist stakeholders´ communities interested in the entity, which in turn generate conversations.

For this reason, it is of particular interest for companies to have a digital corporate communication strategy that takes into account the possibility of reinforcing and complementing the main site by means of the creation and maintenance of corporate profiles in virtual social networks. This way, they can somehow keep a certain control over their site and develop relationships of exchange and conversations with their stakeholders, meeting their demands, improving the brand´s image and reputation, and obtaining valuable feedback, through data analysis. Moreover, the linkage between both tools allows different degrees of opening to bidirectional communication from the website.

Corporate blogs are also an important mechanism for organizational communication, which forge a loyal community of readers and enable users to comment (Orihuela, 2006), but at the same time imply less freedom to propose issues and demand response. Therefore, despite the interest of the entities in employing these spaces as a means to attract traffic to the corporate website and improve their positioning, they become threatened by profiles from social networks, where communication is faster and viral.

Data from recent years demonstrate that the linkage between these media reinforces the effectiveness of the strategy as a whole, besides the fact of synergies set up between blogs and profiles in social networks lead to an increase in the former. According to Navarro-Ruiz (2011), social networks ease both instant and bidirectional communication, but blogs provide broader and more complex information, whose greatest advantage is that its permanence improves the positioning and visibility of the entity in the Net, when compared to the volatility of content in other social networks.

At the international level, there are several studies on the potential of corporate blogs as a dialogic tool (Kent, 2008; Yang & Lim, 2009). At the national level, the studies on blogs by Orihuela (2006), Noguera (2006) and Navarro-Ruiz and Humanes (2012) stand out.

On the other hand, the studies on companies and social media deal with issues such as the application of dialogic principles to the public of interest (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010), the visibility reached through the use of these channels (Yang & Kent, 2014) and their potential for establishing relationships (McAllister-Spooner, 2009; Taylor & Kent, 2014).

Other researches deal with the predominant themes in corporate communication, where CSR, corporate social responsibility, receives special attention (Esrock & Leichty, 1998; Capriotti & Moreno, 2007).

However, despite the expectations generated, the publications in the last years denounce that the promise of dialogue has not been fulfilled. Organizations continue to communicate in the 2.0 environment within a unidirectional approach, in most cases limiting themselves to disseminating content instead of encouraging participation, maintaining, this way, that spirit of control in accordance with the traditional kind of relationship with the public, as we will see in the next section.

1. 3. Corporate profiles of companies in social networks

Most researches on the use of corporate profiles in virtual social networks by companies, both nationally and internationally, indicate a great development that shows their interest and acknowledgement of their importance. However, it is not accompanied by a change of mentality that complies with the inherent conversational character of these platforms and applications.

In fact, some scholars consider that a "bubble" of virtual social media in public relations might be occurring, triggered by the perceptions of professionals themselves, which would overestimate the potential of these channels (Moreno *et al.*, 2015).

Recent works on corporate communication through social networks emphasize the role of Twitter over other platforms such as YouTube or Facebook. For Castelló-Martínez, Del-Pino-Rodríguez and Ramos-Soler (2014), Twitter has acquired a clear importance as a customer service channel, but these authors also highlight its potential and possibilities for a corporate communication that contributes to the brand's visibility and reputation.

As indicated by Hernández and Subiela (2012), not all social networks have the same characteristics nor target the same type of consumers. Facebook is best suited to promote events, organize pressure groups and reach collaborators, while Twitter proves useful to publicize projects or problems, as well as to generate debates around them.

According to García-Orosa (2013), in recent years IBEX 35 companies have strongly sought to commit to social networks, which has meant not solely their appearing in professional sites like LinkedIn or their employing profiles as showcases of their CSR activities and sponsorship, but also their deployment of comprehensive communication strategies on diverse networks, but with preference for the generalist and mainstream platforms: Twitter, Facebook or YouTube.

In 2012, 3 out of 10 IBEX 35 firms did not have a presence in social media, and among those with a corporate profile, in some cases they did not report their existence on their main website (Aced, 2013: 78). Therefore, four years ago, the usage of profiles in social networks by the members of this Spanish selective group was quite scarce and missed the existing opportunities.

An investigation about the profiles of IBEX 35 companies on Twitter in early 2015 reveals that, within a few years, the large Spanish companies have strongly turned to social networks (Alonso-González, 2016). Specifically, only 2 of the 35 IBEX firms, in early 2015, had no profile on Twitter, while a third one had restricted access. That is, 91.5% of the IBEX have open operational accounts in the mentioned network. However, certain qualitative studies must be added to the referred data, in terms of how these firms employ this channel, characterized by frequent updating and a dialogical nature. In this case, the research concludes that most entities carry out "a hierarchical and vertical communication model (tow-down) [top-down] that uses Twitter as a complementary platform for the unidirectional diffusion of messages (...), without taking advantage of the proactive peculiarities presented by this social network" (Alonso-González, 2016: 16).

A study conducted between 2014 and 2015 by Aced and Lalueza-Bosch, based on a qualitative comparison between the content published by the companies of IBEX 35 and Fortune 500 on blogs, Facebook and Twitter, also indicates that in the Spanish selective group they still miss the opportunities for interaction offered by social media. "Despite the capacity for dialogue and interaction offered by these platforms, many companies still use Twitter and Facebook in a unidirectional manner, thus only as dissemination tools..." (Aced & Lalueza-Bosch, 2016: 145).

The degree of real interaction, of conversation with the public, is really scarce, showing that the desire for control of messages persists, which actually seems more like an illusion, in such a context of open, collaborative, participatory and user-friendly Web 2.0.

In the research aforementioned, it is outstanding the fact that the type of content and format at the information emitted by the entity would influence the interaction: both in the Spanish and the U.S. firms, regarding Facebook, the publications related to corporate information generate greater activity than commercial ones and other types of content.

As for the format, both groups studied demonstrate the importance of including links and multimedia material, since adapting the discourse to the digital environment and its characteristics results in both a greater attractiveness and interaction.

Once exposed the relevance of this issue and after having observed similar studies, we can consider as justified the continuation of the research line on the development of dialogical communications through the capabilities of social networks in the largest private entities in Spain, since these companies generate a large volume of information of public interest, as well as have the resources to implement active strategies in the most suitable digital sites, and also, their image and reputation are first-class intangible assets for the listed companies.

For these reasons, the national selective IBEX 35 has been chosen, in an attempt to check what kind of progress has been made regarding the perception and use of social media by those responsible for the corporate communication of these entities, as well as which professionals specialized in social media are the most demanded by these companies.

The originality of the present paper is that it focuses on the view of the communication departments themselves, as opposed to the usual content studies on the digital channels of these companies. Thus, it will be possible to observe if the communication departments of the largest Spanish firms show coherence between the understanding of the new context, their objectives, and accordingly, the means and strategies to achieve them.

2. Method

The methodology of the research, descriptive and quantitative, is based on a survey directed to the communication departments of the entities that made up the Spanish IBEX 35 in the second half of 2014, as shown in table 1. In this empirical work, the perception and the usage of virtual social networks are presented as tools in the corporate communication strategy of the most important firms in the country.

This research technique was chosen because it fits in with the purposes of this study. The survey is one of the most used methods in the study of social reality thanks to its ability to collect quantitative measurements of objective and subjective traits within the studied population (García-Ferrando & Alvira-Martín, 1986), that is, both situations and facts, as well as valuations and opinions (Vinuesa, 2005).

The main objectives of the survey are:

- To know which professional profiles specialized in social media are being hired by IBEX 35 companies for their communication teams: to determine the variety of the present and most demanded figures.

- To find out whether they count on professionals specialized in the planning of the corporate presence in social networks, or this strategy is really elaborated by the traditional directors of communication.

- To pay attention to the name given to those professionals responsible for the daily management of social networks.

- To determine which are the purposes or uses of social networks within the IBEX corporate communication.

- To analyze the connection between the perception of these companies regarding the importance of the new 2.0 channels, their knowledge of the dialogical characteristics of the virtual networks, and their use of them.

The main hypothesis of the research is that, despite knowing the dialogical characteristics of social media and incorporating new professionals specialized in their development, the largest Spanish companies continue with a traditional view of the relations with the public, in which they maintain the control of information and avoid the possibility of establishing dialogic relations.

This hypothesis can be broken down into three sub-hypotheses:

- The IBEX 35 companies show great interest in having a corporate presence and activity in social networks (they concede great importance to these channels and count on professionals specialized in their management).

- Those responsible for the corporate communication of these companies know the characteristics of social networks: high updating and dialogical character.

- In spite of the above-mentioned, the IBEX corporate communication in social networks reveals an informative and non-conversational objective.

Table 1. Composition of the IBEX 35 at the time of the study

COMPANY NAME	TICKER	SECTOR
ABENGOA	ABG	2
ABERTIS	ABE	4
ACCIONA	ANA	2
ACS (Actividades de Construcción y Servicios)	ACS	2
AMADEUS	AMS	6
ARCELORMITTAL	MTS	2
BANCO POPULAR	POP	5
BANCO SABADELL	SAB	5
BANCO SANTANDER	SAN	5
BANKIA	BKIA	5
BANKINTER	BKT	5
BBVA (Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria)	BBVA	5
BME (Bolsas y Mercados Españoles)	BME	5
CAIXABANK	CABK	5
DIA (Distribuidora Internacional de Alimentación)	DIA	4
ENAGAS	ENG	1
FCC (Fomento de Construcciones y Contratas)	FCC	2
FERROVIAL	FER	2
GAMESA	GAM	2
GAS NATURAL	GAS	1

GRIFOLS	GRF	3
IAG (International Airlines Group)	IAG	4
IBERDROLA	IBE	1
INDITEX	ITX	3
INDRA	IDR	6
JAZZTEL	JAZ	6
MAPFRE	MAP	5
MEDIASET ESPAÑA	TL5	4
OHL (Obrascón Huarte Lain)	OHL	2
REE (Red Eléctrica Española)	REE	1
REPSOL	REP	1
SACYR	SCYR	2
TÉCNICAS REUNIDAS	TRE	2
TELEFÓNICA	TEF	6
VISCOFÁN	VIS	3

Source: Own elaboration based on the information of the Madrid Stock Market. Sector 1: Oil and Energy. Sector 2: Basic Materials, Industry and Construction. Sector 3: Consumer goods. Sector 4: Consumption services. Sector 5: Financial and real estate services. Sector 6: Technology and telecommunications.

The survey was designed with Google Docs questionnaires and self-administered by the Internet during the second half of 2014. In total, 26 responses were received from the 35 entities that are part of the population-object of study, accounting for 74.3% of the total. Although at first it seems an acceptable figure, close to the usual 80% for this type of studies on small populations[2] the sample error for finite populations is calculated, it results in a percentage higher than the desired 5% (an 8.6% for a confidence interval of 95%).

However, the organizations that filled in the questionnaire demonstrate the diversity of productive sectors and different digital corporate communication strategies of the IBEX 35 companies as a whole; thus, the results can be considered representative of the Spanish selective group.

The questionnaire requested several personal data from the respondent, such as the entity he/she represented, or the position he/she held in it.

Through the last question, it is possible to establish the professional profile of the people who completed the questionnaires received.

Chart 1. Profile of the respondents who answered, according to their position
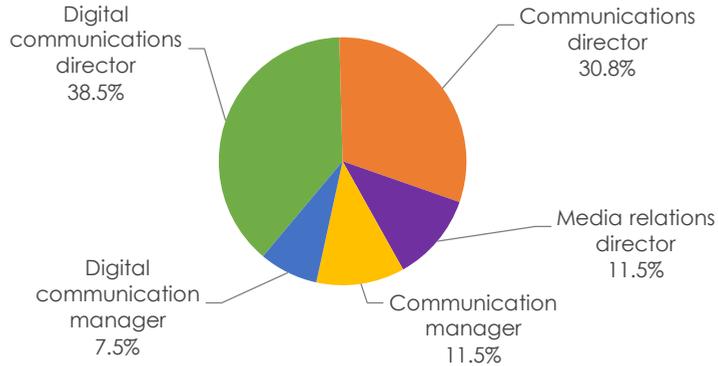
Source: Own elaboration.

As shown in chart 1, the most common positions were communications director (38.5% of the respondents) and digital communication director (30.8%). In a much smaller percentage we find the responses of other professionals, such as the director of media relations (11.5%) or management profiles both at a general level and at the level of digital communication.

The questions of the survey were structured by starting with general data about the strategy of virtual corporate communication, as those referred to their responsible, public and objectives. In addition, it was specifically asked for the inclusion of professional profiles specialized in digital communication in their staffs, such as blogger, web analyst, social media strategist, social media manager and community manager. In these cases, in order to simplify the process of response and data processing, a fixed set of options was offered, allowing multiple selection and including a free response as well.

The next block of questions had the purpose of knowing which professional profiles are responsible for the planning and the management of the corporate presence in social networks, as well as the objectives of its utilization. In these questions, in order not to predetermine the answer of the people surveyed, the free response was allowed, although it is more difficult to deal with.

Finally, it included a set of opinions on social networks and their usefulness for corporate communication, on which the participants had to indicate the degree of agreement on a scale of Likert type of 1 to 5, being 1 "totally disagree" and 5 "totally agree". At this point, it was a matter of observing whether IBEX 35 companies understand the relevance of these channels in context 2.0, and their characteristics, in order to compare the results with the objectives defined in the previous question.

The results obtained are detailed below.

3. Results

3.1. New professional profiles in digital corporate communication

The communication departments of IBEX 35 companies, according to the results of the survey, have an uneven number of new professional profiles in their staffs. While a third of them indicated that they only count on one type of specialist in digital communication, a fifth affirmed having all the profiles proposed in the question, as can be seen in chart 2.

Chart 2. Variety of specialists in digital communication at IBEX 35
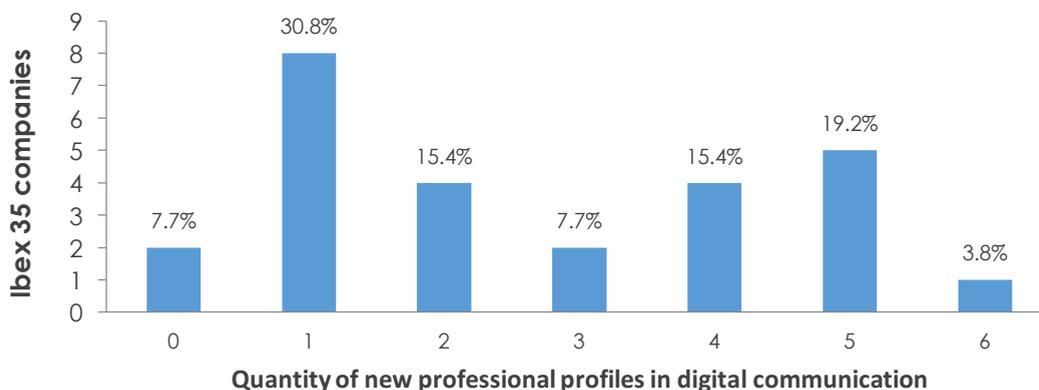
Source: Own elaboration.

Regarding the type of specialists in online communication, IBEX firms showed a tendency to consider executives as more necessary, such as the social media manager (SMM) and the community manager (CM). It means that, as shown in chart 3, the recruitment of profiles of a managerial nature predominates, rather than those of decision making or planning nature (social media strategist, or SMS).

Chart 3. Typology of new specialists in digital communication at IBEX 35
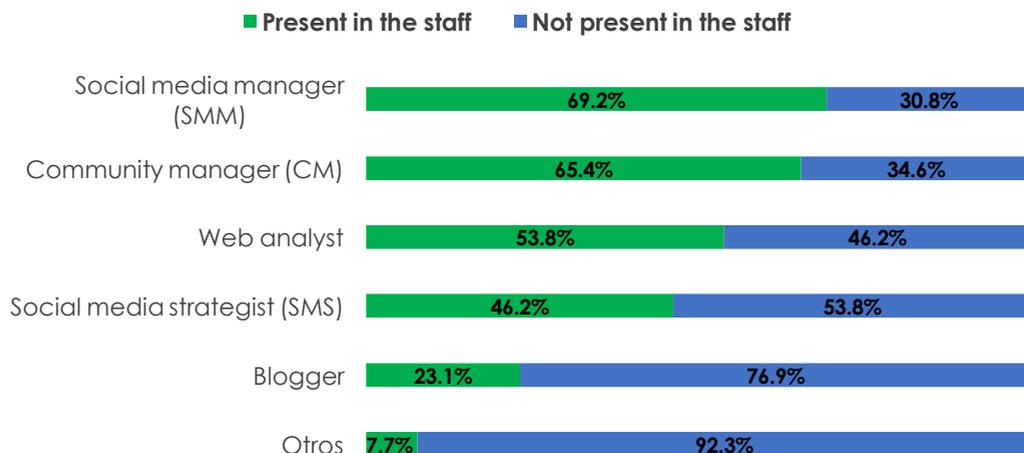
Source: Own elaboration.

In addition to the managerial profiles, it is also remarkable the inclusion of a data analyst in more than half of the companies. Having this professional in their ranks is of great interest so as to evaluate the results of proactive communication strategies, but, likewise, it is essential for those entities that only want to maintain a reactive presence in the networks, which implies listening or monitoring what is said about their brand, products or services in the Net.

The importance of these three figures gets reinforced by the fact that, within the 8 entities that reported having a unique professional profile specialized in digital communication, 4 of them had a CM, 3 had a SMM and 1 had an analyst.

Considerably distant from the rest of the profiles is the one of blogger: less than a quarter of the firms analyzed have one at their department.

The most frequent responses were:

- The company only has one community manager (CM): 4 cases
- The company only has one social media manager (SMM): 3 cases
- The company has the following combination of specialists: web analyst, social media manager (SMM), social media strategist (SMS) and community manager (CM): 3 cases.

To sum up, the results indicate that, although the communication departments of IBEX 35 firms have on average 3 different types of professional profiles derived from social media, almost a third of them only hire one specialist, this being either a community manager (mainly focused on the listening and the conversation in the Net) or a social media manager (creator of specific content for social networks).

On the other hand, a fifth of the entities attach great importance to having in their teams all the professionals qualified for communicating through virtual social media and analyzing the results.

3.2. Responsibility for the planning of corporate social networks

In the question concerning the competence of the communicative strategy in virtual social media, the answers reflect that these are tools of recent application and not having yet a certain position in the organizational chart. Only one of the entities denied counting on corporate profiles for virtual social media.

According to most respondents, the planning of corporate presence on virtual social network platforms is developed by a single department –65.4%– while a minority claimed that this responsibility is shared between various departments or areas –30.8 %–.

If we look at the departments and professionals involved in this planning, the role of communication directors –responsible in 68% of the cases, as can be seen in chart 4–, stands out, and to a lesser extent does the one of directors of digital communication strategy –responsible in 16% of cases–. Other profiles with competencies in the program of action for these virtual media are constituted by the executives of marketing, reputation, or human resources. It is noteworthy, therefore, that the corporate strategy for social networks is planned in almost 70% of the cases by means of a traditional communication director, and not a profile specialized in digital communication.

Chart 4. Planning of the corporate communication strategy in social media
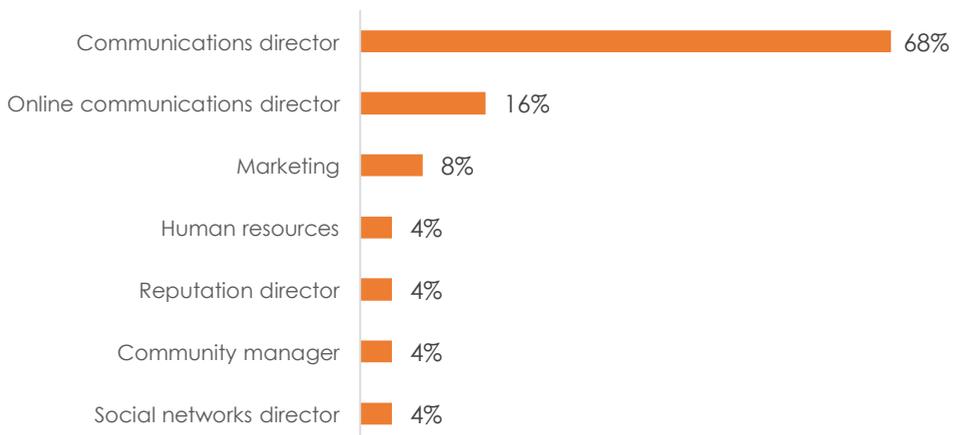
Source: Own elaboration. Note: Percentage data calculated from the companies that responded and had corporate profiles in virtual social networks. Some cases indicated more than one profile, implying that the percentages do not add up to 100%.

However, the fact that none of the entities responding to this section of the survey pointed out to the social media strategist, or SMS, as a planner, contrasts with the result obtained in the previous question, since 46.2 % of the companies claimed to count on such kind of specialist.

These data mean that either the names and functions of each of the new professional figures are not clear, or respondents chose to give a generic answer by referring to the communication department without clarifying which specific professionals are responsible for the planning of the corporate presence in social networks.

3.3. Daily management of corporate social profiles

The next question referred to the daily work, or daily management, regarding new media, which allowed free response. Within the 25 companies that had stated, in the previous question, to have profiles in virtual social network platforms, only one affirmed that they did not manage them on a daily basis, since its presence was passive and not active.

Of the remainder, the majority –60% of the cases– indicated relying upon several people, teams, or areas, involved in the management of these corporate profiles, sometimes depending on the platform, the profile, or the type of content to share. In contrast, a minority –36%– appointed one single person as responsible for the task, usually through the figure of community manager.

With respect to the habitual managers in the day-to-day administration of the entity's accounts in virtual social media, the responses indicated the profile of community manager –in 25% of the occasions– and the communication department in a broad sense –in a third of the cases–.

Chart 5. Management of corporate communication through social networks
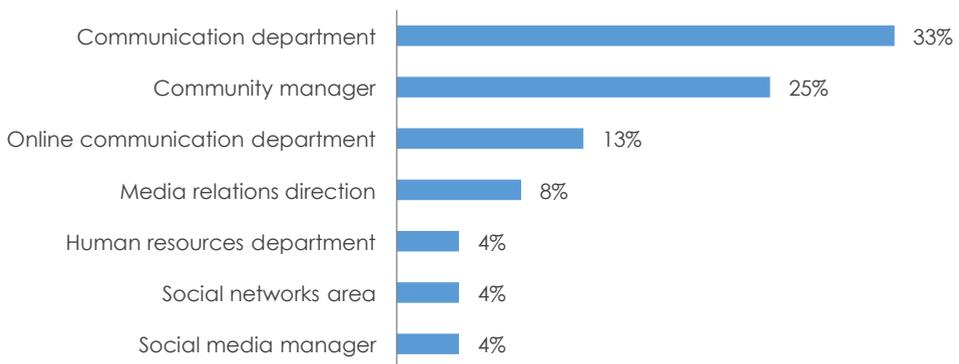
Source: Own elaboration. Note: Percentage-based data calculated on the companies that responded to the survey and had daily managers of the corporate profiles in virtual social networks (24). The percentages do not add up to 100% because there are responses indicating several unspecified areas or teams.

It is of particular relevance that, within the answers that indicated one single person as responsible for the management of corporate profiles in social networks, the majority of companies had a specialized professional, whether it was the community manager –in 5 of the 9 cases of single managers– or the social media manager –1 of the 9 cases–. In the three remaining cases, the respondent did not specify which training the manager had, but rather pointed out ambiguously "communication technician" or "responsible according to the department". In only one of the 9 cases, the daily manager of the profiles was described as also responsible for other functions, in this case, as director of informative relations.

These data reveal that the studied entities show great interest in the fact that corporate accounts in virtual social media might be managed by people especially trained and prepared for it, which reflects the

importance they give to these channels and their correct usage within the strategy of digital communication.

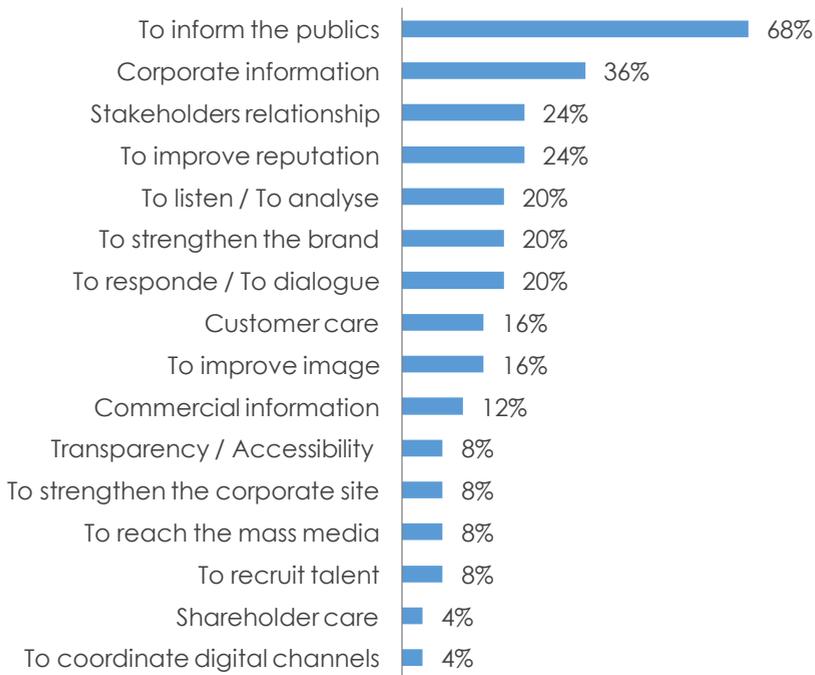### 3.4. Objectives of corporate communication in social media

The results of this open response field reflect, in the first place, objectives of action, such as informing, listening or communicating; secondly, the target audiences, such as clients, media or shareholders; and, thirdly, corporate values such as brand, image or reputation.

In addition to the generic objective of reporting –which is repeated in 68% of the cases and divided into corporate information and commercial information–; the goals of listening and responding to audiences, and those that reinforce corporate values such as image, brand or reputation, are found to be the most common.

However, there is something really noteworthy: the great difference between the information objectives (marked in at least 68% of the cases), compared to the ones of relations (24%) or listening / analysis (20%) and dialogue (20%).

According to the results obtained, it can be concluded that for IBEX 35 companies the purpose of corporate communication through virtual social media holds an informative character, given the lack of interest they show in having conversations with publics or listening and analyzing the already existing.

Chart 6. Objectives of corporate communication developed through social networks

Objective	Percentage
To inform the publics	68%
Corporate information	36%
Stakeholders relationship	24%
To improve reputation	24%
To listen / To analyse	20%
To strengthen the brand	20%
To responde / To dialogue	20%
Customer care	16%
To improve image	16%
Commercial information	12%
Transparency / Accessibility	8%
To strengthen the corporate site	8%
To reach the mass media	8%
To recruit talent	8%
Shareholder care	4%
To coordinate digital channels	4%

Source: Own elaboration. Note: Data calculated on the total number of companies that answered the questionnaire and employed corporate social networks (25). The percentages do not add up to 100% because most of them indicated various objectives.

3.5. Perception of the usefulness of corporate social networks

To understand the view of the communication directors regarding the role or importance of virtual networks in the strategy of corporate communication, the survey included a set of statements that respondents had to value according to their degree of agreement, on a Likert scale of 1 to 5 points, with 1 being "totally disagree" and 5 "totally agree".

The wording aimed at verifying the relevance of social networks sites within the strategy of digital corporate communication: its frequency and distinctive usage, its target audiences and the linkage with other tools. Specifically, the following was stated:

1. Corporate social profiles are updated very frequently.

2. They are primary for the digital communication of the entity.

3. They are informative, unidirectional.

4. They are conversational, bidirectional.

5. They address all stakeholders.

6. They focus on customer service as a priority.

7. They are linked, or re-directed, to the corporate website, and vice versa.

Considering the descriptive data, the greater degree of agreement of the respondents occurred in the affirmations about the updating of the profiles and their linkage to the corporate web, whereas the least support was given, by far, to the use of these tools only to inform and serve customers.

As can be seen in Table 2, most of the surveyed disagreed with the idea that corporate social networks are informative or unidirectional channels –third affirmation, averaging 2 points– while strongly preferring to support the opposite thesis, which means they must be of a communicative, conversational or bidirectional nature –fourth affirmation, with an average of 4.2 points out of 5–. However, despite this average score, the values obtained from the standard deviation and variance reflect divided opinions among the respondents regarding these characteristics.

Table 2. Degree of agreement with the characteristics of their corporate profiles in social networks

Corporate social networks characteristics	Answers		Min.	Max.	Sum	Mean	Stand. Dev.
	Valid	Lost					
(1) Updated	25	0	2	5	**109**	**4.4**	0.9
(2) Primary for the digital strategy	25	0	2	5	102	4.1	1.0
(3) Informative	25	0	1	5	**50**	**2.0**	1.1
(4) Conversational	25	0	1	5	105	4.2	**1.2**
(5) For all stakeholders service	25	0	1	5	105	4.2	1.0
(6) For customers care	25	0	1	5	72	2.9	1.0
(7) Linked with corporate site	25	0	3	5	106	4.2	**0.8**

Source: Own elaboration. Note: Shaded fields with the highest values (dark gray) and lowest values (light gray) regarding mean and standard deviation.

The majority of respondents showed their disagreement with the idea that corporate social networks are informative or unidirectional media –third affirmation, with 2 points on average–, while they were inclined to significantly support the opposite thesis, which states that they must be of a communicative, conversational or bidirectional character –fourth affirmation, with an average of 4.2 points out of 5–. However, despite this average score, the high values reached in the standard deviation and variance reflect a diversity of opinions among the respondents with respect to these characteristics.

Regarding the importance of these tools, the results indicate that these are channels with a high level of updating –affirmation 1, with 4.4 out of 5 points– and that are considered essential to the strategy of digital communication –affirmation 2 obtained an average of 4.1 points out of 5–.

With regard to the recipients of the communication made by this type of media, the responses indicate a high level of agreement –4.2 points– with the idea that all publics of interest should be addressed –fifth

affirmation– and not on a priority basis towards customers –sixth affirmation, averaging 2.9 points–. These data are consistent with the fact that we are talking about the entity's corporate communication and not its commercial communication.

Finally, the assertion that corporate profiles in social networks must be linked to the corporate website, to integrate and strengthen both communication channels, reached the second largest support, with 4.2 points on average, and furthermore, it achieved the lowest variance and standard deviation of all the options.

In other words, for IBEX members, corporate profiles in social networks must be characterized by a high updating, and be addressed to the whole set of stakeholders within the entity as well as be linked to the corporate website. In addition, they prove critical to most of today's corporate communication strategies. However, despite understanding their conversational nature, there is still a division of opinions when dealing with this issue.

To summarize, the data suppose that the organizations that responded to the questionnaire give great importance to the virtual social networks and make a correct use of them, keeping their profiles updated, targeting all stakeholders and reinforcing their digital strategy through the linkage between the corporate website and the entity´s profiles on social networks. The answers also point towards a clear understanding of the dialogical nature of these platforms.

4. Discussion

Through the results obtained, it is noted that, although IBEX 35 companies show progress in the use of social media and include specialists for their management, there is still a division of opinions about the relevance of these profiles being of a conversational character. Most respondents know that they are bidirectional means, but the informative aims of communication in social networks are maintained.

In spite of this, the data derived from the survey seem more optimistic than those obtained in researches on the digital content itself in the corporate profiles of companies in virtual media, such as the study carried out in late 2014 and early 2015 by Aced and Lalueza-Bosch, published in 2016. This may happen due to the fact that respondents have shown a greater understanding of the dialogical nature of social networks than what can be observed within the development of digital corporate communication strategies.

For this reason, it will be of special interest to carry out a study that contrasts the opinion of the communication directors with a content analysis of the interaction and participation that takes place through the corporate profiles of these companies in the future, strengthening the validity of results by means of methodological triangulation.

Another constraint to this research is both its reduced size and the population chosen, which impede the generalization and extrapolation of the findings to other types of organizations, since the needs and resources of large companies are not comparable to SMEs. However, it is considered that the data obtained constitute a sample of special interest in corporate communication 2.0 policies within large companies, since IBEX entities reflect different productive sectors, while at the same time they must take special care of their intangible values through the relationships with its publics.

5. Conclusions

Through this study, based on the survey method, it has been possible to draw the view from the communication departments within IBEX 35, as opposed to the usual content studies of their digital channels. The results allow us to observe the lack of coherence shown by large Spanish companies when connecting the great importance they give to social networks, the understanding of their dialogical nature, and the unidirectional information objectives that prevail in most cases.

We can break down these ideas by contrasting the three starting sub-hypotheses with the data finally collected:

In the first place, it is verified that IBEX 35 companies show great interest in having a corporate presence and activity in social networks. The data backing up this sub-hypothesis are the high degree of agreement on the importance of these channels in the corporate communication strategy –with an average of 4.1 points out of 5–, as well as the need to update its content frequently –4.4 points on 5–. In addition, most of them count on different professional profiles specialized in Web 2.0. However, in almost a third of these

companies, there is only one expert, who is usually an executor and not a planner: either a community manager or a social media manager.

Secondly, the sub-hypothesis that those responsible for the corporate communication of IBEX 35 understand the conversational nature of social networks is also validated. The majority of respondents show their rejection to the idea that they are means destined to inform in a unidirectional way, while they support the affirmation that they are conversational channels, of bidirectional communication.

Finally, it turns out that, despite the above-mentioned, IBEX 35 companies do not use their corporate profiles in social media to establish the dialogical links demanded by the model of excellence in public relations, but their main purposes follow the traditional asymmetrical model of unilateral emission of information.

Therefore, based on the state of the art and on the results of the present study, we can conclude that there is a lack of coherence between the growing importance of social networks in the corporate communication strategy and the resistance of organizations to adapt to the conversational characteristics of these media.

On the other hand, among the findings of the research the results on the new professional profiles at the communication departments of IBEX 35 are outstanding. Although it has been verified the high acceptance rate of profiles specialized in the management of social networks and virtual communities (present in almost 70% of the cases), it is really remarkable the fact that within the range of different figures specialized in communication 2.0, only one fifth of the companies has the main five (blogger, analyst, social media manager, online community manager and social media strategist). The most frequent situation found is having only one type of specialist.

Taking into account that IBEX 35 companies have high financial resources, it is advisable, in the forthcoming future, to boost the amount of staff with specific training and knowledge on the Social Web environment, either through the retraining of existing professionals, or through the hiring of new personnel. This way, it will be easier to adjust to the languages and singularities of social networks.

Also in relation to the referred above, there is the relevant fact that social media planning seems to be a responsibility of the traditional communication directors (68% of the cases), instead of being entrusted to directors specialized in digital communication (16%). In addition, despite the fact that almost half of the IBEX claim to have a social media strategist (SMS), none of the respondents pointed to this profile as responsible for planning on social networks. This contradiction in the answers may be due to the fact that their role is not clear or that the final responsibility of the strategy belongs to the chief communications officer, endorsed by the opinion of the SMS.

According to Grunig, Grunig and Ferrari (2015), in order to reach the excellence model in public relations, those responsible must be strategists with specific training. This leads us to consider the possibility that a greater implantation of specialized figures in social media planning within organizations will achieve results more suitable to the dialogical nature of such channels and, therefore, to a mutual understanding with stakeholders.

To verify the validity of this new hypothesis, it would be interesting to study how it affects the presence or absence of social media strategists within the aims of corporate communication through social networks and within the opening of entities to the interaction with the public, as well as to evaluate the future definition and implantation of this professional.

On the other hand, methodological triangulation can be used as a basis to contrast the reality of the communication developed in these media –studied through a content analysis– with the opinion of the providers and the satisfaction of the users –through surveys–.

Finally, another line of research is found in the comparison of these results on corporate communication with the dialogical stance that occurs in commercial communication on social networks, where it seems that institutions deploy more conversational strategies to engage or retain customers, solving doubts, responding to criticisms and encouraging participation by means of contests.

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Notas

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2. For instance, a work published in Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico (Studies on the journalistic message) in 2012, on the extent of implantation of the figure of the community manager among the companies of IBEX 35, obtained a response rate of 74.1 % (Almansa-Martínez & Godoy-Martín, 2012: 60).