

## Unconventional CSR communication and brand narrative construction elements of two case studies: La Fageda and La Casa de Carlota

La comunicación no convencional de la RSE y los elementos de construcción de la narrativa de marca a través de dos casos de estudio: La Fageda y La Casa de Carlota

A comunicação não convencional da RSE e os elementos de construção da narrativa da marca através de dois estudos de caso: La Fageda e La Casa de Carlota

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## Abstract

The evolution of social marketing and consumers' growing demand for a greater involvement of brands with social causes has made CSR communication essential. However, the effectiveness of investing in communication in paid media is debatable or whether, in contrast, it is more profitable to build a brand narrative in owned media and earned media through the creation of content, user experience, or the personal brand of the company's founders, among other strategies. In this sense, through a qualitative comparative interdisciplinary analysis, this research aims to analyse and determine which elements stimulate the construction and expansion of the brand narrative through two contrasting cases of companies that work with vulnerable groups and that have managed to differentiate themselves in their sectors through the incorporation of diversity as an added value: the La Fageda socio-entrepreneurial project and the transformative project La Casa de Carlota. Based on analytical generalization, we have been able to relate the results of our study with other similar cases with the aim of establishing generalized common guidelines that may form a theoretical basis for application for those companies or institutions wishing to communicate CSR by building and boosting their brand narratives through unpaid media.

**Keywords:** CSR; Communication; Strategy; Diversity; Brand Narrative; Storydoing

## Resumen

La evolución del marketing social y la creciente demanda de los consumidores acerca de una mayor implicación de las marcas con causas sociales ha hecho potencialmente necesaria la comunicación de la RSE. Sin embargo, es debatible la eficacia de invertir en comunicación en medios pagados o si, por el contrario, es más rentable construir una narrativa de marca en medios propios y ganados mediante la creación de contenido, la experiencia de usuario o la marca personal de sus fundadores, entre otras estrategias. En este sentido, mediante un análisis cualitativo comparativo e interdisciplinar, esta investigación pretende analizar y determinar qué elementos estimulan la construcción y expansión de la narrativa de marca mediante dos casos contrastados de empresas que trabajan con colectivos vulnerables y que han conseguido diferenciarse en sus sectores mediante la incorporación de la diversidad como un valor añadido: el proyecto socioempresarial La Fageda y el proyecto transformador La Casa de Carlota. A partir de la generalización analítica se ha podido relacionar los resultados de este estudio con otros casos similares, con el objetivo de establecer unas pautas comunes generalizadas que puedan llegar a constituir una base teórica de aplicación para aquellas empresas o

instituciones que quieran comunicar la RSE construyendo y potenciando su narrativa de marca mediante medios no pagados.

**Palabras clave:** RSE; Comunicación; Estrategia; Diversidad; Narrativa de marca; Storydoing

## Resumo

A evolução do marketing social e a crescente demanda dos consumidores por um maior envolvimento das marcas com causas sociais tornou a comunicação de RSE essencial. No entanto, é discutível a eficácia de investir em comunicação em mídia paga ou se, ao contrário, é mais lucrativo construir uma narrativa de marca em mídia própria e conquistada por meio da criação de conteúdo, da experiência do usuário ou da marca pessoal de seus fundadores, entre outras estratégias. Nesse sentido, por meio de uma análise qualitativa comparativa e interdisciplinar, esta pesquisa visa analisar e determinar quais elementos estimulam a construção e expansão da narrativa da marca por meio de dois casos contrastantes de empresas que trabalham com grupos vulneráveis e que conseguiram se diferenciar em seus setores através da incorporação da diversidade como valor agregado: o projeto socioempresarial La Fageda e o projeto transformador La Casa de Carlota. Com base na generalização analítica, pudemos relacionar os resultados de nosso estudo com outros casos semelhantes, com o objetivo de estabelecer diretrizes comuns generalizadas que possam se tornar uma base teórica de aplicação para aquelas empresas ou instituições que desejam comunicar a RSE construindo e impulsionar a narrativa de sua marca por meio de mídia não paga.

**Palavras-chave:** RSE; Comunicação; Estratégia; Diversidade; Narrativa da marca; Storydoing

## 1. Introduction

Of the innumerable meanings and definitions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) that have existed since Carroll proposed the first concepts in 1979 to the present, this study starts from the concept of CSR as a limited, applied, cross-cutting strategy that aims to impact positively on the holistic management of the different operational areas of organizations and companies and the inclusion of their workers (De-la-Cuesta-González and Sánchez-Paunero, 2012). It is thus recognized as a fundamental element in a company's interdisciplinary strategy, cutting across each organizational department (Barrio-Fraile and Enrique-Jiménez, 2021). CSR defines a way of making decisions that simultaneously involves the company's various departments and influences the management of the organization through the application of social, environmental and economic responsibility criteria (Durán et al., 2021). Regarding the climate and labour well-being, according to Giuliani et al., it is possible to state that CSR is directly related to "policies concerned with the company's stance to ensure the quality of life of its employees and other people" (2012, p. 25).

Currently, CSR must align with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framed within the United Nations 2030 Agenda. As Barrio-Fraile et al. state, “SDGs are intended to shape public policy, foster the progress of science, mobilize non-governmental organizations and influence business practices” (2022, p.8). It is possible to state that companies develop corporate cultures committed to SDGs through corporate purpose (Mañas-Viniegra et al., 2020b).

To this end, the following question is posed: How can CSR be communicated? Although enterprises must strategically convey their CSR through communication with the logical aim of progressing in the exercise of CSR to facilitate its correct application, they must also do so to optimize their relationship with their stakeholders and project their corporate reputations by adapting to the needs of their various audiences, understanding this reputation as the “consequence of a series of effective, committed relationships with various stakeholders” (García-Guardia and Llorente-Barroso, 2009, p. 25). CSR promotes the organization’s values and corporate purpose, which, according to Mañas-Viniegra et al. (2020b), makes it possible to provide a certain public benefit by solving environmental and social problems. This social application, therefore, generates interest in the brand, optimizing its visibility and developing a narrative based on truthful, verified information to achieve a real, transparent dialogue between the entity itself and its stakeholders (Babiak and Kihl, 2018; Barrio-Fraile, 2018; Durán et al., 2021).

Therefore, as with social marketing strategies and cause marketing, which refers to a company that “collaborates with a social cause in exchange for the consumer buying its products and services” (Buil et al., 2012, p.90), whether to communicate CSR or not is a now outdated issue. In this regard, researchers not only consider it necessary to communicate social commitment, but that it should be inherent to the corporate image and, as a strategic process of the business narrative itself (Freire et al., 2018), to the corporate purpose (Gartenberg et al., 2019) or to the brand purpose (Mirzaei et al., 2021).

However, it is interesting to study and compare the various CSR communication strategies that are currently being developed. Therefore, this study starts from the following hypothesis: Building a narrative around the purpose of CSR makes it possible to achieve earned media. To highlight this statement, this article focuses on two contrasting cases that do not invest in communication through paid media, although they have nevertheless managed to differentiate themselves within their sectors –advertising and food– and to be recognized internationally for their incorporation of inclusive diversity policies and social commitment to vulnerable groups.

Thus, the main aim of this research is to identify and analyse the elements that enable the construction and expansion of the brand narratives of two case studies, La Casa de Carlota and La Fageda and, in parallel, to discuss the main similarities of and differences between both models. It is also believed that this will make it possible to propose a guide or decalogue that allows the application and development of these elements in companies or institutions that want to implement a communication strategy based on brand narrative

through owned or earned media. The secondary objectives of this study are based on the identification of those general parameters that can help entities and companies define the correct relationship between their CSR and the communication of diversity in favour of their brand projection with respect to their stakeholders, including corporate volunteering (Mañas-Viniegra, 2018) and social commitment to the most vulnerable groups (Viñarás-Abad et al., 2021; Llorente-Barroso et al., 2022; Sánchez-Valle et al., 2022) and, therefore, achieve effective CSR communication actions that potentially favourably impact on the public's approval of the entity (Barrio-Fraile et al., 2017; García-Guardia and Llorente-Barroso, 2009), thus fostering transparency, trust and loyalty towards the organization on the part of its community (Marín, 2008).

## 2. Material and Methods

Starting from this theoretical basis, this study poses a series of research questions on how CSR is communicated from the different spheres and dimensions it encompasses:

RQ1: What communication strategies and actions in unpaid media have the brands developed to transmit and demonstrate their commitment to vulnerable groups?

RQ2: Are vulnerable groups involved in communicating the brand's social purpose?

RQ3: What are the brand's policies regarding the dissemination and disclosure of its social purpose on social media?

RQ4: Is there any reference to external elements?

RQ5: Is there a story that transmits the brand's values?

To answer these questions, the interdisciplinary qualitative analysis method applied by Castelló-Martínez (2020) is adapted such that the case studies are analysed from different disciplines, variables and leading authors in each field. The case studies are La Casa de Carlota and La Fageda. La Casa de Carlota is an advertising agency dedicated to the creation of advertising campaigns and is located in Barcelona (Spain) with offices in Seville (Spain), Medellín (Colombia), Sao Paulo (Brazil) and Lima (Peru). La Fageda, based in Olot (Spain), is a company in the food sector dedicated to the production of different dairy products. In this way, it is possible to study the communication characteristics of these two cases from their various disciplines that (in)directly influence the construction of their brand narratives: the characteristics of the company and its workers as members of a group of people with functional diversity, the construction of the brand narrative in its main communication tools, the communication trends used and the values of the product and/or service they offer, the use or not of a personal brand story, and storytelling brought to reality (storydoing), among other elements.

Therefore, interdisciplinary qualitative analysis is proposed in order to understand and present a specific current reality in its real environment (Barrio-Fraile et al., 2017). The aim is to obtain an 'analytical generalization' that allows the results to be related to a theory or

a set of theories (Coller, 2005 and Barrio-Fraile et al., 2017) and that enables the results to be extrapolated to other companies or institutions.

The analysis of these contrasting recognized cases that develop CSR strategies and policies within such diverse sectors of activity allows those key strategies that should be taken into account in order to carry out effective CSR communication in unpaid media to be identified. In this way, additional complementary arguments are provided to the previously proposed studies on this reality (García-Guardia and Llorente-Barroso, 2009; Barrio-Fraile et al., 2017; Viñarás-Abad et al., 2021; Sánchez-Valle et al., 2022).

Table 1. Matrix of research questions, dimensions, variables and references

<i>Research question</i>	<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Variables</i>	<i>References</i>
RQ1: What communication strategies and actions in unpaid media have the brands developed to transmit and demonstrate their commitment to vulnerable groups?	Format types	Transmedia narratives Transmedia worlds Value contents Interactive elements Storytelling and storydoing	Costa and Piñeiro, 2012; Yáñez, 2012; Scolari, 2013; Rodríguez-Ferrándiz et al., 2014; Rosendo, 2016; Mora-Fernández, 2017; Freire, 2017; Mañas-Viniegra, 2017.
RQ2: Are vulnerable groups involved in communicating the brand's social purpose?	Inclusion of functional diversity in communication / Protagonism of vulnerable collectives in the story	Testimonials Participation in communication Subjectivity Presence in user actions	Molpeceres and Rodríguez, 2014; Castelló-Martínez and Del Pino-Romero, 2019; Lastra, 2016; Viñarás-Abad et al., 2021; Sánchez-Valle et al., 2022.
RQ3: What are the brand's policies regarding the dissemination and disclosure of its social purpose on social media?	External communication	Social media actions Followers Websites Likes / Copies	Rodríguez-Ferrándiz et al., 2016; Castelló-Martínez, 2020.
RQ4: Is there any reference to external elements?	Environmental Contextual Demographic Social Current cultural	Cultural, ideological, demographic elements or social and cultural issues included in the content	Mañas-Viniegra, 2018; Castelló-Martínez and Del Pino-Romero, 2019; Llorente-Barroso et al., 2022.
RQ5: Is there a story that transmits the brand's values?	Brand and value narrative	Brand Values Brand Purpose Corporate Purpose	Gartenberg et al., 2019; Mañas-Viniegra et al., 2020a and 2020b; Mirzaei et al., 2021.

Source: adapted from Castelló-Martínez, 2020.

It should be noted that the choice of these two case studies responds to specific selection criteria:

- 1) They include the same SDGs in their strategies; specifically, goals 8 and 10: “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all” and “Reduce inequality within and among countries” (United Nations, 2022).
- 2) They share the same geographical variable: their headquarters are located in Catalonia.
- 3) They advocate for labour inclusion and the defence of equal rights of vulnerable groups with functional diversity.

For these reasons, both cases respond to the theories presented and are consistent with the research approaches.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The analysis of both cases is detailed below.

#### 3.1 La Casa de Carlota, a transformative project

La Casa de Carlota is defined as a BCorp (BCorp Spain, 2022), a transformative project in the form of a limited company with social criteria. It stands out for its innovative, original and different designs linked to its social project and for its positioning. Diversity values are introduced with descriptive concepts such as “creatives with autism and Down syndrome” and with other more abstract terms such as “transformative project” (La Casa de Carlota, 2022). It emphasises the idea of changing the philosophy of the advertising sector and the way it exercises its profession using the influence of brands in the improvement of social and environmental problems (La Casa de Carlota, 2022).

In relation to CSR communication, more radical activism values are introduced through the use of creativity as the backbone of all its actions, including the integration of the diversity of creative skills in the work team (La Casa de Carlota, 2022). The brand presents diversity as a central element of the company’s advertising creativity and its CSR, highlighting the virtues of a different work process. The tone of the story is informal, intimate and ironic, revealing through this narrative style the personality traits of its collaborators.

The company highlights the artistic skills of its employees with functional diversity and shows how its entire creative process is fully conditioned by its CSR. The project uses the concepts “thinking differently” or “challenging the status quo”, which are related not only to a new way of conceptualizing CSR, but also to a different way of practicing the advertising profession.

This type of narrative adds a unique and diverse component to La Casa de Carlota, positioning itself as a benchmark for a different way of creating: it constantly states that the process of developing its service and/or product is determined by the functional capacities

of its workers and, therefore, its CSR, which is a consequence of their way of understanding reality and capturing it through creative concepts.

However, in the construction of its account of the creative process, the decision-making capacity and, therefore, the abstraction or analytical thinking that validates the campaigns designed for each product and/or service was not determined. Nevertheless, the intention of La Casa de Carlota is to give CSR communication a new dimension that goes beyond aligning itself with certain values, but to raise awareness that CSR becomes activism, in this case, creative activism, which allows the brand to become a transformative project with a social dimension, a relevant social actor. We are not referring to a specific CSR communication, but as a company positioned as an activist. CSR thus becomes an integrating element that conditions its *raison d'être* and the conceptualization of its narrative in each of the brand's communication channels.

Table 2. Types of communication used by La Casa de Carlota

Owned media	Earned media
Content on social media	Media coverage
Content on official website	Reports in general media (e.g. The Guardian) and specialized advertising media.
Worker testimonials	Link to Roman Reputation Matters on its website through an international strategic alliance.
Video reports	Lectures by José María Batalla (co-founder).
	Appearance at the United Nations and national and international awards.

Source: Authors.

Since its inception, La Casa de Carlota has defended the differential capacities of groups with functional diversity such as autism, Down syndrome or cerebral palsy. It has become an exponential movement with an international presence. It aims to raise awareness among the population through the equal integration of people belonging to this group and also proposes an activist discourse for the recognition of advertising as a relevant actor with a social sense in its creative work methodology. The work of La Casa de Carlota cannot be understood without taking into account the special nature of its workers, who are always recognized at a professional and personal level in the agency's communication.



### 3.2 La Fageda, a socio-entrepreneurial project

La Fageda defines itself as a social project or as a company with a project. Unlike most companies, which create or propose CSR strategies and policies once their business models have reached maturity and optimal development, La Fageda emerged already with a corporate purpose. This is based on the integration of vulnerable groups into the labour market, offering them what, according to its founder and current president, Cristóbal Colón, is inherent to the dignity of every person, such as the right to work and feel part of society. With few resources and despite the adverse context in which it was created, La Fageda has grown progressively and distinguished itself from its competitors by being linked from its inception to a clear, transparent social project. What began as a small cooperative now employs more than 400 people belonging to vulnerable groups, is recognized throughout Catalonia and has become an international case study (Casadesus-Masanell et al., 2011).

Regarding the communication strategies and actions developed by La Fageda to transmit and demonstrate its commitment to vulnerable groups, it is important to highlight that, as Colón states, La Fageda does not believe in advertising or promotional actions, nor does it aim to get consumers to buy its brand simply because it contributes to a social cause; rather, it advocates differentiating itself through the quality of its products. Under this premise, most of the communication carried out by the dairy company through owned media is based on:

- 1) The creation of content that it distributes through its social media, helping them to expand from their original creation and grow as the audience grows (Castelló-Martínez, 2020).
- 2) The development of the brand story linked to Colón's personal brand.
- 3) Guided tours in which visitors are introduced to an immersive, interactive experience –so important today (Lastra, 2016)– in which the development of the brand's history through audiovisual content and photographs plays a large role, thus allowing them to discover the production process in order to understand the company's origin, values, the history of its founder and its distinctive features.

This user experience, which translates into more than 50,000 visitors annually, enables the brand's storytelling to be understood not simply as something hypothetical but as a reality linked to corporate values, thus becoming what is known as *storydoing* (Freire, 2017), and that this storytelling enhances emotional and experiential bonds with its stakeholders (Mañas-Viniegra, 2017).

At the same time, in terms of earned media, the importance of La Fageda has been so significant in its 40-year history that it has generated a great deal of media coverage, appearing countless times in newspapers and news programmes of various kinds and scopes. Its importance has evolved from being regional, as reflected in the 2018 documentary *Yogurt Utopía* produced by the Catalan television channel TV3, to an international scope, as reflected in the documentary *Turn the World Outward* made by The Arbinger Institute in 2019.

Table 3. Types of communication used by La Fageda

Owned media	Earned media
Content on social media	Media coverage
Content on official website	Documentaries
Video report	Media reports
User experiences	Interviews with Cristóbal Colón
Worker testimonials	Lectures by Cristóbal Colón
Development of the founder's personal brand	Testimonies and bibliographic references of his writings on the company's website.

Source: Authors.

La Fageda involves vulnerable groups in the communication of its social purpose, either as testimonials in some of the reports or documentaries that have been made, as protagonists of the posts or photographs that form part of the daily or weekly communication the company carries out on its social media or, above all, as vital elements in the experiences of visitors who come to La Fageda to get to know it from the inside and understand its operation and history. La Fageda's CSR contents have a mainly the formal tone and, rather than projecting the lives or particular situations of its workers with functional diversity, it focuses on explaining the opportunities that the project provides to people at risk of social exclusion.

Regarding its policies of dissemination and disclosure on social media of its social purpose, it is constant and follows a very consistent line with the message of Cristóbal Colón. The inclusion of diversity of origin is present through specific testimonials of its own workers. Emphasis is placed on the concept of 'labour insertion' and on the process of helping these people find work. Other content published by the company through its websites and social media is characterized by being coherent and aligned with the values that are applied in the work process and in the development of the product or service. The values are a determining element in defining the business itself; we are no longer talking of a company, but of a social, socio-entrepreneurial or transformative project. Formal, explanatory language is used that avoids emphasizing the personal lives of workers and that refuses to go into emotive issues.

Regarding the inclusion or reference to external elements of a different nature in its communication or in the development of the brand story, La Fageda takes into account the awareness of certain current social groups, such as learning sign language, the annual

social causes of TV3's La Marató, environmental sustainability, the cyclical economy, gender equality and, of course, functional diversity, among other social issues.

Similarly, La Fageda is deeply rooted in its belonging to the La Garrotxa region. Indeed, it derives its name from La Fageda d'en Jordà, the name of a forest close to Olot, the capital of this region.

In this sense, since its origins, La Fageda has been built through a narrative that transmitted its values thanks to the dream of its founder and that included concepts such as "supporting people in vulnerable situations" or "helping people with learning disabilities, mental illness or at risk of exclusion" (La Fageda, 2022). That dream, closely linked to Cristóbal Colón's personal brand and history, is the story on which much of the brand's narrative has hinged. It is not possible to understand La Fageda without understanding the history of its founder, as can be seen in the various reports and documentaries that have been made about the brand, or even in the report created by the company itself titled *La fàbrica de La Fageda per dins* (Inside the La Fageda factory), which can be seen on its YouTube channel.

Prior to the analysis of the common and different elements between the case studies, it is important to reveal some of the data that points to the effectiveness of the CSR actions described. SocialBlade and Hootsuite, two social media metrics analytics websites, show how the digital communities of La Fageda and La Casa de Carlota have been growing in terms of the number of followers, likes, comments, in short, in the engagement ratio, parallel to the actions carried out by unpaid media, showing the potentially positive impact that these actions have on the public.

### 3.3 Common and differential elements between both cases

The main element common to La Fageda and La Casa de Carlota is the transmission of the values of diversity, inclusion, sustainability and solidarity in all of their communications, with special emphasis on raising awareness of groups with functional diversities. They believe that the best way to normalize their inclusion in society and in the workplace is to show the process *in situ*. Therefore, day-to-day life in the companies, on the farm or in the studio, is made visible through photographs and videos, showing their capacities and including the first-person testimony of some members of their staff.

Comparatively, it is possible to say that La Casa de Carlota is in a more embryonic state than La Fageda, which currently has a larger, more consolidated community of followers. However, the scalability of its communication can match the figures in terms of awareness and brand recognition. The two entities have opted for particular communication strategies to give visibility to their CSR and to the professional activity of people with functional diversity who collaborate on their projects. Several differences can be discerned regarding

the exact way in which they carry out this action: while La Fageda opts for a formal, detailed style through photographs, La Casa de Carlota opts for a more informal style consisting of creative videos and photographs through clips made from the advertising images that the company offers its customers.

For the visibility of their CSR, the two case studies make use of their social media, using content created specifically as part of their brand narratives, seeking transmediality and user experience. They have their own websites, Instagram profiles and Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn pages (and YouTube in the case of La Fageda), with La Fageda accumulating more than 20,000 followers on each of its social media, while La Casa de Carlota has a total of 6,177 followers on Instagram, 9,400 on Facebook and 4,027 on LinkedIn.

It should be noted that the stories narrated by the brands are put into practice, resorting to storydoing as an important part of their CSR communication and involving consumers themselves in the generation of their content.

Table 4. Common and differential elements between La Casa de Carlota and La Fageda

Common elements	Differential elements	Main variables addressed
Presence on social media: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.	La Fageda has a YouTube channel.	Social media actions. Followers. Websites. Likes / Copies. Interactive elements
The brand story is brought to reality ( <i>storydoing</i> ).	La Fageda focuses its brand narrative through the story of its founder and his personal brand.	Transmedia narratives. Transmedia worlds. Value contents. Storytelling and storydoing.
Visibility of the workers' internal work in its contents.	La Casa de Carlota includes its workers in branded content creation and communication.	Testimonials. Participation of workers in communication. Value contents.
Inclusion of elements related to current trends or social issues.	La Fageda offers guided, experiential tours in which visitors can appreciate the production process and learn about the project and history of the brand and its values.	Value contents. Storytelling and storydoing.
Transmission of the values of diversity, inclusion, sustainability and solidarity.	The tone of La Casa de Carlota is more ground-breaking and radical, and uses more creative resources such as irony and metaphor to generate a relatable language.	Transmedia narratives. Transmedia worlds.
Presentation of the diverse functional characteristics and capacities and origin of its workers.	La Casa de Carlota presents new concepts related to CSR and brand activism linked to defending the capabilities of a social group.	Subjectivity. Presence in user actions.
Promotion of a different way of working, giving meaning to the business project with a social dimension.	La Casa de Carlota invites company workers, clients, or design students to participate in the creative process of its products and/or services.	Storytelling and storydoing.
	La Casa de Carlota encourages active participation and publicises calls to action in relation to social causes.	Transmedia narratives. Transmedia worlds. Subjectivity. Presence in user actions.

Source: Authors.

## 4. Conclusions

The main aim of this research has been to determine which elements form part of the construction of the brand content and narratives through owned media or earned media of two companies with different social projects and international recognition. Achieving this

objective has allowed us to answer the research questions posed, adding knowledge to the general study of cases sharing similar characteristics.

With regard to RQ1 (What communication strategies and actions in unpaid media have the brands developed to transmit and demonstrate their commitment to vulnerable groups?), the analysis of the cases has enabled us to confirm that companies dedicated to social projects can achieve their communication goals and transmit their values without having to invest in paid media or conventional advertising campaigns, such as commercials, billboards, print ads, among others. In contrast, creating interesting target-appropriate content of value that features people from disadvantaged groups is attractive both in terms of generating media coverage and helping to attract consumers/users to their content. The types of communication employed by the two case studies on owned media range widely from reports created by the companies themselves, content distributed on social media about their projects and their protagonists, and posts related to current trends through to testimonials from their employees, while in earned media, the types detected are, for the most part, reports or documentaries made by the media or production companies, or the creations of visitors or collaborators of the companies.

Regarding RQ2 (Are vulnerable groups involved in communicating the brand's social purpose?), it is considered that the inclusion of vulnerable groups within different CSR communication strategies or, specifically, within a social project, is vital insofar as, on the one hand, it enhances the transparency and credibility of the project while at the same time humanizing it, which enhances empathy and bonding with consumers. Similarly, it also helps to strengthen the brand and its narrative from the inside out (inbranding). Finally, by the very nature of the social project, it allows these people to feel part of it and of the company's CSR policies and strategies.

Regarding RQ3 (What are the brand's policies regarding the dissemination and disclosure of its social purpose on social media?), the most suitable channels for disseminating social projects are social media networks, as they allow dialogue and feedback to be established with users and thus fostering the creation of a community of followers who can regularly consume their content and keep up to date with the progress of the social project. It is also a way to boost the creation of user-generated content (UGC). However, it has been shown that creating experiences such as guided tours or collaborations in which companies can explain their processes and their brand stories is one of the most effective ways to generate links with the target audience and to be able to transmit the project and the values that encompass it in a more personal, intimate way.

With regard to RQ4 (Is there any reference to external elements?), the inclusion of external elements, whether demographic, social or related to current issues, is recommended as it shows that the company is not oblivious to other social causes or problems in society and that it keeps itself up to date while at the same time allowing a flow of communication to be maintained with its community and allowing a greater creation of content on social media. However, it must deal with other issues with the necessary

knowledge and sensitivity and without positioning its social project with ideological themes that could distort the social cause of its CSR or the tone of its communication, which should be coherent and recognizable by its own community.

Finally, regarding RQ5: (Is there a story that transmits the brand's values?), brand storytelling is necessary for the project to be better known, recognizable, emotive, memorable and credible. However, the story must be organic in that it should allow the company to build and nurture its narrative as it achieves small or large milestones related to its CSR strategy and its social project. No agreement was observed between the type of story, which is believed to be linked to the history of the founders or may be related to other more abstract topics. The story is the mechanism that unites all the content and creates a uniform characteristic brand and communication tone.

The results obtained through the analysis of the two cases are summarized below in a decalogue that can be adapted to those companies or institutions that want to communicate their CSR strategy and their social project through owned media and, in the long term, achieve a presence in earned media or those created by the community of followers:

- 1) Promote the brand story and ensure that it is consistent with the company, its CSR and is present in communication actions.
- 2) The story should be organic and capable of being developed by the company as milestones or achievements are reached in the social project. The company should also bring it to reality (storydoing).
- 3) The workers and vulnerable groups that form part of the social project must be represented in the communication and enjoy a certain prominence, not merely as an indirect object on which a project is based. The project is thus humanized and the brand narrative is built and projected from the inside out.
- 4) It is important to have a differentiating brand tone that is consistent with the brand values and recognizable by the community. The tone must be maintained throughout the various actions.
- 5) The creation of relevant and interesting content related to the social project and the workers should be encouraged.
- 6) The communication of the social project must be based on the transmission of the values of diversity, inclusion, sustainability and solidarity.
- 7) Communication through social media must be constant and fluid in order to help maintain a dialogue with the community so that it can see the evolution of the social project in a continuous and progressive way.
- 8) The relationship of the company and its CSR with current trends and issues that are alien to it must be treated with the utmost sensitivity. The social project must not remain detached from other social causes, but neither must it treat these issues superficially or without the necessary sensitivity and decorum. Similarly, communication should not be aligned with ideologies or movements that could distort the project or distance it from its values.

9) CSR communication must consider and integrate experiential and immersive actions in which the target audience feels an active part of the social project, allowing it to understand how it works from the inside, as well as its history and protagonists.

10) Dialogue with the community should be fostered and interaction elements enhanced to encourage the creation of content generated by followers.

In any case, this decalogue is just a series of principles that work or have worked and that each company could adapt to its possibilities and reality and context.

Regarding the limitations of the study, they revolve mainly around the difficulties of being able to distinguish between the various elements or variables involved in achieving earned media. It is considered that all the variables included in this study act holistically and should therefore be considered part of the brand's purpose strategy and not as one-off independent actions.

In this regard, new lines of research or fields of study could be opened, such as the perception and opinion of workers and/or the community in relation to this type of communication and their role in it, the link with corporate volunteering (Mañas-Viniegra, 2018) and comparing it with the social commitment to vulnerable groups of large companies in Spain (Llorente-Barroso et al., 2022; Viñarás-Abad et al., 2021; Sánchez-Valle et al., 2022).

## Authors' contribution

**Jesús López-González:** Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Resources; Software; Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Writing-original draft; Writing-review and editing. **Alfonso Freire-Sánchez:** Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Resources; Software; Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Writing-original draft; Writing-review and editing. **Montserrat Vidal-Mestre:** Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Resources; Software; Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Writing-original draft; Writing-review and editing. All authors have read and agree with the published version of the manuscript. Conflicts of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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