COMMUNICATION & SOCIETY

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Comparing Facebook as an interactive communication tool for companies in LatAm and worldwide

Abstract

Social networks have changed the communication rules between companies and their stakeholders. Facebook became an important tool of communication strategies to promote interaction and dialogue. The objective of this study is to analyze how companies in LatAm and worldwide are managing the interaction with their stakeholders on Facebook. For this paper, 159 corporate profiles and 32,760 posts were analyzed through the methodology of content analysis. The categories selected were communication approach, communication resources, interaction level, and interaction rate. Results illustrate that the communication of companies in LatAm and worldwide mainly involves an informative approach on Facebook. The content disseminated by companies is not promoting interaction with the stakeholders. In contrast, companies are managed in a unidirectional way, meaning that it is not managed to establish and strengthen relationships, but rather to get visibility.

Keywords
Communication management, corporate communication, strategic communication, social media, Facebook, interaction.

1. Introduction

Social networks are considered key instruments for communication management between companies and their stakeholders. Different studies show that the active involvement of companies on social networks is directly proportional to corporate reputation (Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom, 2015). Accordingly, organizations progressively recognize the potential of social networks, affirming that organizations are changing the way they relate to the stakeholders. Several international studies such as the European Communication Monitor 2017 (Zerfass, Moreno, Tench, Verčič & Verhoeven, 2017), or the Latin American communication monitor 2018–2019 (Moreno *et al.*, 2019) indicate that the trend of the online communication continues to lead the main strategic communication channels.

Social networks become a good instrument to promote interaction and dialogue with companies' stakeholders. The ability of direct interaction and collaboration with the stakeholders has encouraged organizations to use social networks as a communication tool. Communication specialists strongly agree more than ever that social media are changing the way organizations communicate with their stakeholders both internally and externally (Wright & Drifka Hinson, 2017), and the Latin American professionals prefer the online

channels to communicate with their stakeholders (Moreno, Molleda, Athaydes & Suárez, 2015). The rising recognition of social networking has made it even more incorporated into communication strategies.

Among the various social networks accessible, Facebook is considered the most significant, popular, and far-reaching. This social network facilitates sharing content and enables dialogue and interaction between organizations and their stakeholders. Compared to other social networks, the user base of Facebook has been growing significantly over recent years. A study on the state of social networks in Latin America (from now on "LatAm") confirms that there was an exponential growth of social networks in the region with Facebook being the social network that boasts the most social engagement (Castro & Vega, 2018).

Thus, communication through Facebook in the current LatAm context becomes a means of communication for organizations, not only to improve their visibility but also to promote interaction with their stakeholders.

The objective of this research is to analyze Facebook as an interactive communication tool for companies in LatAm, assessing if companies are employing their communication management to promote interaction and dialogue with their stakeholders.

2. Literature review

2.1. *Communication on social media*

Internet as a means of communication has swiftly become indispensable in an organizational context throughout the world (Shih, 2009). The social dispersion instigated by the internet has greatly influenced the relationship between organizations and their stakeholders and triggered a change in the model of traditional communication branded as "one-way" communication. Web 2.0 facilitated the participation of active users, allowing for the dissemination of content and interaction in the cyber domain (Kang & Sundar, 2016). Thus, Web 2.0 became an open platform for active users, promoting dialogue between organizations and their stakeholders. Although Web 2.0 is the technology that gave rise to the social networks, it was social media that generated an optimal communicative ecosystem.

Social networks have changed how communication is practiced (Wright & Hinson, 2017), while also becoming a key instrument to communication as well as a requisite to organizational communication strategies (Damásio, Dias & Andrade, 2012; DiStaso & McCorkindale, 2013; Iniesta, 2012; Lee, 2016). Irrespective of the ample social networking skills acquired by professionals, the use of social networks as a strategic communication tool remains a key challenge. Even though there is still no preponderant way to manage communication in social networks as claimed by Chung, Andreev, Benyoucef, Duane, and O'Reilly (2017), they are key strategic tools in organizations, corresponding to their strong potential to revolutionize the way said organizations relate to their audiences.

Among the numerous social networks available, Facebook remains the social network of choice for users. The study *Digital in 2019* indicates that Facebook is the social network with the largest number of active users globally (Kemp, 2019), where more than half of said users use the network almost 1 hour per day (Hutchinson, 2019). Furthermore, Facebook is becoming ever more incorporated into communication programs allowing for the establishment and strengthening of the bonds between organizations and their stakeholders (Neill & Moody, 2015).

Studies indicate that the majority of organizations are present on Facebook (Aced-Toledano & Lalueza, 2018; Estudio de Comunicación, 2019; Ki & Nekmat, 2014; Sixto García, Aguado Domínguez & Riveiro Castro, 2017), however, their activity on the social network is poor (Capriotti & Losada-Díaz, 2018; Devaney, 2015; Quintly, 2016; Zeler, Oliveira & Malaver, 2019). Even though experts recommend posting between 1 and 2 posts per day (Hartshorne, 2020; Jordan, 2017; Patel, 2016), studies indicate that the frequency of publications of the

organizations is well below the recommended average (Devaney, 2015; Estudio de Comunicación, 2019; S. Kim, Kim & Hoon Sung, 2014; Quintly, 2016; Statista, 2017).

2.2. *Dialogic communication: from dissemination to dialogue*

The consolidation of Web 2.0 has involved significant changes in the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders, facilitating a more symmetrical interaction and negotiation in terms of power and mutual influence, beginning the move towards a full dialogic or interactive form of communication (Guillory & Sundar, 2014; Kent & Taylor, 1998). Dialogic communication can be defined as "an ongoing interaction between organizations and their stakeholders using Internet tools, which enables the exchange of information, comments, opinions, assessment, and experiences on a continuous basis" (Capriotti & Pardo Kuklinski, 2012, p. 620). In other words, it is the framework on which relationships between an organization and its stakeholders through the Internet are built (Kent & Taylor, 1998, 2002). Thus, interactivity is the cornerstone on which dialogic communication stands (Guillory & Sundar, 2014), as it is employed by said organizations to establish an appropriate engagement with their stakeholders (Taylor & Kent, 2014).

Dialogical theory entails that to guarantee effective relationships, organizations should not only disseminate information but should also be willing to interact and converse with their stakeholders (Kent, Taylor & White, 2003; Taylor & Kent, 2014). In this manner, as Kent and Taylor (1998, p. 323) pointed out, "a dialogic loop allows publics to query organizations and, more importantly, it offers organizations the opportunity to respond to questions, concerns, and problems." According to numerous studies, based on the various tools or mains of interaction, two main approaches to interactivity were identified (Capriotti, Carretón & Castillo, 2016). In the first approach, where the tools used are unidirectional and the level of interactivity is low, the main objective is to disseminate information in an attempt to influence the image of the company that their stakeholders might have. In the second approach, where the tools used are bidirectional and the degree of interactivity is high, the main objective is to establish and build relationships by allowing dialogue and interaction between the organization and its stakeholders.

Several authors (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Diga & Kelleher, 2009; Eyrich, Padman & Sweetser, 2008; Wang, 2015) emphasize that social media promote dialogical communication, which in turn expands the potential of communication professionals. Various studies illustrate that there is an increase in the use of the Internet as a communication tool, focusing mainly on the dissemination of information and the interaction between organizations and their stakeholders, whether through websites (Kent & Taylor, 1998; Moreno & Capriotti, 2006), blogs (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007) and social networks (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Ji, Li, North & Liu, 2016; Pace, Buzzanca & Fratocchi, 2014; Waters, Burnett, Lamm & Lucas, 2009). Needless to say, bidirectional communication is possible as long as there are conversations and dialogue between the parts. For this to happen, it is necessary to share content that could be approached interactively, since the messages that promote interaction and dialogue inspire better engagement with the stakeholders (Abitbol & Lee, 2017). Thus, the first objective of this study stands for analyzing the general communicative approach of companies on Facebook, to evaluate if companies are mainly focused on disseminating information or promoting interaction with their audiences.

2.3. *Communication resources on Facebook*

In an attempt to effectively communicate with stakeholders on social networks, organizations use various available information resources. According to Safko and Brake (2009), social networks allow for the creation and dissemination of content, which in turn combines with each different resources such as images, texts, links, hashtags, emoticons, labels, video, audio, GIFs, etc. Comprehensive research (Invodo, 2016; Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013;

Quintly, 2016) indicates that the use of graphic, audiovisual and interactive resources contributes to a broader and more interactive dissemination of content. Capriotti *et al.* (2016) categorized resources on Facebook into three groups: graphic (photo/image, text, and emoticon), interactive (tag to users and link and hashtag) and audiovisual (audio, video, and animated image).

Although research indicates that the use of audiovisual resources on Facebook has grown exponentially, some studies show that image is the most used resource in organizations' publications (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018; Cohen, 2016; Luarn, Lin & Chiu, 2015), and its manifestation in posts is as twice as that of videos and links (Capriotti *et al.*, 2016; McCorkindale, 2010). Some studies consider videos as a valuable element for social media strategies, for they require a higher level of engagement, as they have a greater ability to appeal to emotions and require more user attention time with the story, which in turn has a positive impact on communication on Facebook (Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013). Videos are already considered part of the digital ecosystem (Fosk, 2017), and some studies on Facebook show that videos display the highest level engagement compared to other information resources such as imagery and link posts (Rayson, 2017).

Recent studies show that the number of users who watch videos through the Internet and social networks has significantly increased. According to *Global Web Data Index 2017*, more than 90% of Internet users watch online videos every month (Smith, 2017), and more than 50% of said users watch videos through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Snapchat. A noticeable increase of almost 20% compared to the data of 2015 (Valentine, 2017). The *Digital Future 2018* study from ComScore claims that video consumption worldwide has increased in the last years (Fosk, 2018), ensured by Valentine's assertions that 7 out of 10 internet users in the region of LatAm watch videos on the main social networks. According to Valentine (2017), these figures are a direct consequence of the new functions provided by the social networks that promote the audiovisual impulse, for the purpose to enable users to get on the digital social trend. An example of said functions is the live and direct video format offered by social networks, which is considered a key tool to start conversations with users (Castro & Vega, 2018).

Needless to say that only creating visually attractive content is not enough to successfully promote social engagement, or attempt to increase the interaction of users with the content of the organizations. Therefore, it is necessary to combine different information resources such as images and videos accompanied by text that enables interaction with the users (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018). According to Theunissen & Wan Noordin (2012), successful dialogic environments can be encouraged by organizations that embrace its underlying philosophy and provide the corresponding resources to creating such an environment. Hence, the second objective of this study proposes getting to know and analyze the types of communication resources used by companies to share content on Facebook.

2.4. *Interaction management on Facebook*

The role of communication in the digital context should be oriented to promote relations with their stakeholders through dialogue and interaction. Thus, social networks provide an appropriate channel to foster interactivity (Yang, Kang & Cha, 2015), simultaneously while becoming an important social capital that allows organizations to increase business value and competitiveness (McCorkindale, 2010).

Social networks are optimal spaces for relations between companies and their stakeholders. Through digital platforms, not only can users be dealt with directly and personally (Iniesta, 2012), but they are also encouraged to communicate with greater proximity, ease, and fluency (Oliveira & Capriotti, 2014).

Some authors (Kim *et al.*, 2014; Losada–Díaz & Capriotti, 2015; Wang & Yang, 2020; Waters *et al.*, 2009; Wissen, 2017) relate the basis of communication management on social networks

to the principles of dialogic communication. Through dialogue, companies can better understand their audiences, know their opinions and feelings, promote their activities and increase their reputation (Fuertes-Callén, Cuellar-Fernández & Pelayo-Velázquez, 2014; Gonçalvez Pereira, Salgueiro & Mateus, 2014).

In this sense, social networks are presented as a new possibility of connection and dialogue to achieve a relationship of mutual benefit between organizations and their stakeholders: "when engaging in true dialogic communication, two or more parts negotiate ideas and opinions by listening to and engaging with each other, incorporating the goal of building common ground" (Wissen, 2017, p. 57).

Jo and Kim (2003) argue that interaction in social networks has significant effects on building relationships between organizations and their audiences, but this does not guarantee a beneficial relationship. For that to happen it is necessary to establish long-term relationships built on trust through dialogue. However, some studies show that organizations are not taking advantage of this opportunity offered by the social networks, yet they continue to maintain a mainly unidirectional communication (Hassink, Bollen & Steggink, 2007; McCorkindale, 2010; Taylor, Kent & White, 2001; Wang & Yang, 2020; Wissen, 2017).

Facebook, in particular, became a key instrument of communication for organizations (Kim *et al.*, 2014) to promote dialogue with their stakeholders. The maturity of Facebook, the arrival of other social networks (Instagram, Pinterest, Google+, Snapchat, etc.), and the consolidation of the public digital consumption habits lean towards a higher level of dialogue on this social network. Facebook's ability to generate interaction between organizations and their stakeholders lets a dialogical communication with the stakeholders.

Facebook provides users with three ways of interaction regarding content: likes, shares, and comments. Likes, shares, and comments require varying degrees of interaction, with likes requiring the least effort while shares and comments entail more (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018). Likes are a passive way of voicing appreciation of content without needing verbal expression, the shares allow users to be voluntary spokespersons for the messages of the organizations to their social groups, while comments allow users to establish direct conversations with organizations and/or other users (Abitbol & Lee, 2017; Cho, Schweickart & Haase, 2014).

Organizations' posts need to be visually appealing enough to generate likes and shares from users or invite them to comment to start conversations (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018). Even though the stakeholders are more willing to interact with content that foster dialogue and conversation (Cho *et al.*, 2014), studies show that organizations are not using Facebook as a communication platform (Capriotti & Losada-Díaz, 2018; Gálvez-Rodríguez, Sáez-Martín, García-Tabuyo & Caba-Pérez, 2018), but mainly to disseminate information (Huang, Lin & Saxton, 2016; Shin, Pang & Kim, 2015; Sundstrom & Levenshus, 2017; Wissen, 2017).

In this sense, organizations are missing out on what it means to truly be engaged (Distaso & McCorkindale, 2012), squandering the opportunities offered by social networks to interact and have a dialogue with users (Gálvez-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2018).

Therefore, it is necessary to review the strategy regarding social networks to achieve engagement. Accordingly, a third specific objective of this research suggests analyzing the interactivity generated by the content published by companies, focusing particularly on both the level and rate of interaction.

3. Purpose of the study

This study aims to analyze how companies in LatAm and worldwide are managing the interaction and dialogue with their stakeholders on Facebook. To answer this objective, four research questions (RQ) were defined:

> RQ1: What type of communication approach do companies in LatAm and worldwide use on Facebook?

RQ2: Which kind of communication resources do companies in LatAm and worldwide use on Facebook?

RQ3: What is the interaction level reached on Facebook posts by companies in LatAm and worldwide?

RQ4: What is the interaction rate obtained on Facebook posts by companies in LatAm and worldwide?

4. Methodology

For this research, the most reputable companies in LatAm and worldwide were selected because they are considered key players in communication management and they invest a lot of resources to improve innovation in digital communication. The reason why companies in LatAm and worldwide were compared in this research was the need for studying if companies are using the communication strategies on Facebook in the same way.

Countries were selected considering those countries with the highest GDP in the Statistical Yearbook of Latin America and Caribbean of ECLAC (Economic Commission of Latin America and Caribbean), and in which the most important corporate reputation annual study in LatAm (MERCO) has been carried out over 2 years. Six countries were selected: Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, and Peru. In said countries, the first 35 companies in the MERCO rankings were analyzed however only companies with an official national corporate Facebook page in 2015 and 2016 were chosen. Companies selected and analyzed are national companies (of each LatAm country) and international companies operating in LatAm.

To compare companies in LatAm to companies in worldwide, the corporate reputation worldwide annual study (*Global RepTrak®100* by Reputation Institute) has been considered for over 2 years. The first 35 companies of these study were analyzed and companies with an official international corporate Facebook fan page in 2015 and 2016 were chosen. Thus, the sample included 189 companies: 157 from LatAm (27 from Brazil, 23 from Mexico, 26 from Argentina, 30 from Colombia, 23 from Chile, and 28 from Peru) and 32 from worldwide.

Among the 189 companies selected, only those with Facebook profiles that were previously verified were chosen. Thus, the final sample included 159 corporate profiles: 135 from LatAm (25 from Brazil, 19 from Mexico, 23 from Argentina, 27 from Colombia, 19 from Chile and 22 from Peru), and 24 from worldwide (see Annex 1).

Posts were selected for 2 weeks per month along 12 months: from January until June in 2015 and from July until December in 2016. The posts were compiled for the odd weeks in 2015 and the even weeks in 2016. Finally, a total of 32,760 posts were obtained.

To answer the research questions, 4 categories were defined based on the general communication approach (RQ1), the communication resources (RQ2), the interaction level (RQ3) and the interaction rate (RQ4). These categories were developed and tested in previous research (Capriotti *et al*., 2016; Capriotti & Losada-Díaz, 2018).

The *General Communication Approach* (RQ1) analyzes the focus of the posts disseminated concerning two aspects: (a) informative approach: when the content has a unidirectional communication approach (disseminating information to public knowledge), (b) interactive approach: when the content has a bidirectional communication approach (promoting participation, sharing, giving opinions, answering questions, etc.).

The *Communication Resources* category was established for RQ2 to determine the resources used for present content to the stakeholders. Thus, the use of graphic, audiovisual, and interactive resources for spreading the message was defined. Seven tools were identified for this dimension: text, image (pictures, photos), animated image, audio-video, link, hashtag, tag users and emoticons. Texts, images, and emoticons are considered graphic resources. Animated images and audio-video are recognized as audiovisual resources. Tag users, hashtags and links are interactive resources. More than one possible resource can be included in the analysis of the format.

The *Interaction Level* (RQ3) allows for evaluating the volume of reactions reached on the posts disseminated by companies. To analyze the interaction level 3 dimensions were defined: (1) Support Level (SL): The average number (AV) and percentage (%) of likes obtained per company and post; (2) Viralization Level (VL): The AV and % of shares obtained per company and post; (3) Conversation Level (CV): (a) The AV and % of comments per company and post.

The *Interaction Rate* (RQ4) allows for assessing the volume of reactions per post concerning the number of followers. For this category 3 dimensions were defined: (1) Support Rate (SR) obtained dividing the total number of likes per post related to the number of followers of companies, and multiplying it by 100; (2) Viralization Rate (VR) obtained dividing the total number of shares per post, related to the total number of followers of companies, and multiplying it by 100; (3) Conversation Rate (CR) obtained dividing the total number of comments per post, relevant to the total number of followers of companies, and multiplying it by 100. Combining these 3 dimensions, an integrated numeric value was obtained: General Interaction Rate (GIR) given by the result of the sum of AR + VR + CR (Kaushik, 2011; Narayanan *et al.*, 2012).

For this study, a content analysis was employed. A monitoring tool available on the Internet called Fanpage Karma was used to collect the posts. A template was designed to contain all the data collected from the sample. This tool provides valuable insights on posting strategies and performance of social media profiles of Facebook and other social networks like Twitter and YouTube (Fanpage Karma, n.d.). The historical links of companies' posts on Facebook were taken from this tool. Likewise, a template was designed to contain all the data collected from the sample. The information obtained during the research was coded in Excel templates specifically designed for this research.

5. Findings

The total quantity of posts analyzed was 32,760 (29,078 from LatAm and 3682 from worldwide. The results presented below were organized according to the established research questions (RQ).

Results show that the majority of companies are present on Facebook. The presence of companies in LatAm is higher (86.5%) than companies in worldwide (75%). Nevertheless, the level of activity indicates significant differences between companies in LatAm and worldwide, where companies in LatAm are more active (AV 1.2 posts per day) than companies in worldwide (AV 0.9 posts per day).

5.1. *General Communication Approach*

About the *General Communication Approach* (RQ1) the results suggest a preponderant informative approach to companies´ posts. Around 75% of LatAm´s posts are focused on the dissemination of information. Consequently, the interactive approach stands off less than 30% of posts (Table 1).

Table 1: Global communication approach of companies on Facebook.

		Informative Approach	Interactive Approach
LatAm	*(N)*	21,513	7,565
	(%)	74,0	26,0
Worldwide	*(N)*	3,108	574
	(%)	84,4	15,6

Source: Own elaboration.

Companies in worldwide have obtained a high percentage of posts with an informative approach than companies in LatAm. Posts oriented towards the dissemination of information reach almost 85% of the sample, while posts oriented towards the interaction only 15%. In other words, the informative approach of companies in worldwide is more than 10% of companies in LatAm.

5.2. *Communication Resources*

Regarding the *Communication Resources* (RQ2) on Facebook, the analysis shows that graphics resources are used as a basic tool for disseminating content on companies in LatAm. Text and image are the resources most used by companies. The text is present in almost all the posts (97.8%) and the images in the majority of the posts (77.3%). In contrast with text and images, the use of emoticons is unusual. The emoticons were found around 10% of posts (Table 2).

Interactive resources such as links and hashtags were fairly used by companies in LatAm too. But the presence of these resources is less than that of image and text. The links are present in around 50% of posts and the hashtags in around 40% of posts. The interactive resource "user tag" occasionally used. This resource is only employed in 15% of posts.

Audiovisual resources are the most under-used resources by companies in LatAm. The animated image (or GIF), one of the last resources included by Facebook, achieves a frequency of almost 10%. The videos, one of the important resources to promote engagement with Facebook users, are present in 12.7% of posts.

Table 2: Communication resources used by companies on Facebook.

		Total	Graphics			Interactive			Audiovisual	
			Text	Image	Emoji	User Tag	Hashtag	Link	GIFs	Audio/video
LatAm	*N*		28,432	22,490	3515	4601	11,807	14,143	1078	3697
	(%)		97.8	77.3	12.1	15.8	40.6	48.6	8.6	12.7
Worldwide	*N*		3580	2568	148	891	1703	1979	0	959
	(%)		97.2	69.7	4.0	24.2	46.3	53.7	0.0	26.0

Source: Own elaboration.

No significant differences were noted in the use of resources between companies in LatAm and worldwide. Likewise, it is important to note that the use of audiovisual resources is more frequent in worldwide companies than in LatAm companies. About 26% of the posts of companies in worldwide include videos. It is twice the percentage noted in the posts of companies in LatAm. Moreover, graphic resources like emoticons have a testimonial presence in worldwide companies. The analysis of companies in worldwide shows that about 4% of posts include emoticons. These results represent three times less than companies in LatAm (about 12%).

5.3. *Interaction Level*

About the *Interaction Level* (RQ3), the results show that likes are the main interaction tool used by users on the posts of companies in LatAm (AV=1265.9 likes). On the other hand, the shares and the comments represent a much lower average (AV=106.6 shares and AV=56.8 comments). Comparing the AV of likes, shares, and comments the analysis indicate that for every 12 likes, a post is shared once, and for every 25 likes, a post receives at least one comment. The SL is the dimension denoting the major volume of reactions. The volume reached is 88.5% of the total sample of reaction, while the volume reached of VL and CL is 7.5% and 4% (Table 3).

Table 3: Interaction level of companies on Facebook.

	Total	SL (likes)	VL (shares)	CL (comments)
LatAm	(AV) = company/post	1265.9	106.6	56.8
	(%)	88.5	7.5	4.0
Worldwide	(AV) = company/post	3106.7	510.9	162.5
	(%)	82.2	13.5	4.3

Source: Own elaboration.

A significant difference between companies in LatAm and worldwide was found. Although in both cases, the likes are the interaction tool most used by users (more than 80% of the total sample of reaction), it is necessary to emphasize that companies in worldwide receive almost 3 times more likes than companies in LatAm (AV= 3106.7 likes per company and post).

Likewise, the results of VL show differences. The average of shares obtained on worldwide companies' posts is 5 times more than the average shares obtained on the posts of companies in LatAm (Table 3). In percentage data, the difference between companies in LatAm and worldwide is almost double (6%).

The results of CL are similar in both cases. Comments are the least used interaction tool (around 4% of the total reactions). However, the volume of comments obtained on worldwide companies' posts is higher than the posts on LatAm companies' posts (AV= 162.5 comments per company and post).

5.4. *Interaction Rate*

Although the results of the interaction level suggest the volume of interaction on the companies' posts is high, it is necessary to consider that companies in LatAm and worldwide have a high average of followers (Table 4). In this sense, the result of the *Interaction Rate* (RQ4), obtained from the number of followers, is very low. The highest percentage attained by companies in LatAm comes from the SR (5.7%). The 'like' is the tool most used by users to interact with the posts published by companies in LatAm. The data of the SR greatly exceeds the data of both VR and CR (both percentages below 1% per year) (Table 6).

Table 4: Interaction rate of companies on Facebook.

	Followers	SR	VR	CR	GIR
	(AV)		(%) annual		
LatAm	2,398,322	5.7	0.5	0.3	6.5
Worldwide	9,049,802	2.7	0.4	0.1	3.3

Source: Own elaboration.

Some significant differences were found in the dimension between companies in LatAm and worldwide. The results of the SR, VR, and CR obtained regarding companies in worldwide are lower than of companies in LatAm. In both cases, the SR is the dimension with the highest percentage of all the samples, but the SR reached 2.7% of companies in worldwide (3% less than companies in LatAm). The percentages of VR and CR are below 1%.

Adding the results of the SR, VR, and CR the General Interaction Rate was attained. Thus, the GIR obtained was 6.5% per company in LatAm. These results are twice as much as the results brought by companies in worldwide (3.3% per company) as it indicates that the GIR reached by companies in LatAm is higher than companies in worldwide.

6. Discussion and conclusions

Social networks are recognized as a strategic tool of communication and research indicates they are massively incorporated into communication strategies of organizations (Navarro, Moreno & Zerfass, 2018). This research revealed that companies (LatAm and Worldwide) mainly have a unidirectional and informative approach on Facebook. Companies are not taking advantage of all the tools offered by Facebook to achieve dialogue and interaction with their stakeholders. However, some significant differences between companies demonstrated that companies in LatAm are more active and participatory than companies in worldwide.

Regarding the RQ1 (*General Communication Approach*), the results suggest that companies mainly have an informative communication approach. Companies generally disseminate information to disclose their activities, yet present interactive content on a few occasions. Since interactivity is a central element of social networks (Jo & Kim, 2003) and the interactive content helps achieve greater engagement (Abitbol & Lee, 2017), this study shows that companies are mainly promoting low interactive content.

According to *Communication Resources* (RQ2), the analysis shows a prominent use of unidirectional resources on content by companies. Facebook facilitates the use of instruments to promote the interactive approach of content by users, nevertheless, the graphic resources are the most used by companies. In this way, texts and images became basic instruments of content for companies on Facebook.

Likewise, companies are quite often including interactive resources as links and hashtags on their content. The interactive resources help promote the interaction with users on the social network, but the audiovisual resources are the most important instruments to increase the engagement even more (Pletikosa Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; Quintly, 2016). Although the video is a valuable instrument of interaction and dialogue as stated in the literature review, this resource is the least used by companies. Additionally, as found in other studies (Brubaker & Wilson, 2018; Cohen, 2016; Luarn *et al.*, 2015), companies prefer to add text and images on their content instead of including more videos and GIFs. The research evinces how companies are missing the potential of audiovisual resources for the sake of promoting conversations with their stakeholders on the social network.

Regarding the interaction, two categories were defined. The *Interaction Level* (RQ3) and the *Interaction Rate* (RQ4). Even though the volume of interaction detected in the research is high (interaction level), the volume of interaction per fan found is low (interaction rate). The level of interaction is determined by the high volume of likes obtained on companies' posts. The support level (likes) greatly exceeds the viralization level (shares) and the conversation level (comments). It is necessary to point out that almost the totality of comments found is from users, where 88% is by the users and only 12% are by companies in LatAm. The participation of companies in worldwide in the conversations is even lower than that of companies in LatAm, where 99% are by users and only 1% is by companies in worldwide. These results indicate the users´ strong interest in participating in said conversations. As affirmed in the study of Sprout Social (2017), consumers want companies to participate in conversations they're mentioned in, and they want companies to respond to them, but companies in LatAm and worldwide rarely take part in conversations and respond to users. Regarding the interaction rate, a low percentage of users who interact with companies' posts was found. The volume of likes is high, but the level of reactions generated by likes is less than shares and comments. The GIR reached by companies in LatAm is higher than companies in worldwide. Thus, the results suggest that companies in worldwide are disseminating uninteresting information to users much more than companies in LatAm. Companies are also very unenthusiastic to promote and maintain a dialogue with their stakeholders on Facebook.

Conclusively, the communication of companies in LatAm and worldwide is managed in a unidirectional way. The use of Facebook by companies is more focused on information

dissemination than on interaction with their stakeholders. Companies are losing sight of the purpose of communication on Facebook which is to strengthen their relationship with their stakeholders through interaction. The lack of interaction by companies on the social network could be linked to two reasons: the limited resources or budgetary constraints they might have (Wissen, 2017) as well as the fear of losing control over conversations (van den Berg & Verhoeven, 2017). The first reason would be unlikely in this research because companies studied are rather large corporations. The second reason would be rather a very unlikely strategy, simply because active participation in conversations by companies on social networks allows for increasing trust, encouraging engagement with the stakeholders, and strengthening corporate reputation.

Since companies include Facebook in their communication strategies, they use key tools of online communication. Therefore, achieving a high level of interaction and maintaining fluid dialogue, have become important aspects of realizing successful management of communication. However, companies are using Facebook as a dissemination channel more than a communication channel, in other words, communication is not managed to establish and strengthen relationships, but rather to get visibility.

Companies in LatAm and worldwide have an active presence on Facebook, but companies in LatAm are making more active use of the social network than companies in worldwide. Companies create and disseminate content quite frequently, however, said content does not mainly promote stakeholders' participation by companies studied in the same way. The stakeholder's participation is more promoted by companies in LatAm than companies in worldwide. When content disseminated by companies promote participation and dialogue, companies are inviting stakeholders to involve in their corporate activities and share their opinions. Effective communication management is possible if companies interact and dialogue with the users too. Creating and maintaining solid relationships between companies and their stakeholders increase the level of trust and consequently their corporate reputation (Bruning, Dials & Shirka, 2008; Kaptein & Tulder, 2003; J. Kim & Hammick, 2017). Therefore, generating dialogue with stakeholders through the communication process is necessary for achieving sustainable economic, social and environmental value for all stakeholders (Murphy *et al.*, 2005). Despite the advantages generated by interactive management of communication on Facebook, companies in LatAm and worldwide mainly invest efforts to be more visible on the social network.

7. Limitations and future directions

This research presents a methodology that enables communication management analysis on Facebook in an integrated way. It was applied to a large number of companies and the results demonstrate companies' current situation. From an academic point of view, this study can help analyze the communication of other organizations in specific countries or regions and make a comparative analysis. From a professional point of view, the results can contribute to detecting the strengths and weaknesses of communication management in social networks, improving these practices in organizations. However, the methodology was applied to a specific study object (the main companies in LatAm and worldwide) in a specific period; therefore, the results cannot be extrapolated to other companies or another specified period. Thus, future research could apply the methodology to other social networks (Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.) and also to other non-profit and for-profit organizations to determine whether the results found are replicated in another type of social media and for other organizations.

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Appendix 1: Companies in LatAm and worldwide.

LATAM (MERCO)						WORLDWIDE
BRAZIL	**ARGENTINA**	**COLOMBIA**	**MEXICO**	**PERU**	**CHILE**	(*RepTrak®100*)
Natura	Arcor	Ecopetrol	Grupo Bimbo	Banco de Crédito Perú	Banco de Chile	Google
Itaú Unibanco	Cervecería y Maltería Quilmes	Grupo Bancolombia	Cemex	Interbank	LAN	BMW Group
Nestlé	Mercedes Benz	Grupo Nutresa	FEMSA	Unión de Cervecerías Peruanas Bachus y Johnston	BCI	Rolex
Vale	Molinos Río de la Plata	Alpina	Nestlé	Ferreyros	Falabella	LEGO
Petrobras	Volkswagen	Grupo EPM	Cervecería Cuauhtemoc Moctezuma	Graña y Montero	Codelco	Microsoft
Bradesco	Toyota	Avianca	Volkswagen	Gloria	Nestlé	Volkswagen
Gerdau	Nestlé	Bavaria	Walmart	BBVA Continental	Viña Concha y Toro	Intel
Votorantim	Banco Galicia	Cementos Argos	LaLa	Minera Antamina	CCU	Adidas
Banco do Brasil	Kimberly Clark	Grupo Éxito	Telmex	Scotiabank	Entel	Michelin
Microsoft	American Express	Grupo Sura	Grupo Alfa	San Fernando	Sodimac	Johnson & Johnson
Embraer	Mastellone Hnos. (La Serenísima)	Nestlé	Hewlet Packard	IBM	Santander	Nestlé
Volkswagen	Tarjeta Naranja	Organización Corona	Nissan	Odebrecht	3M	Philips Electronics
Hospital Albert Einstein	Bayer	Colombina	La Costeña	Rimac Seguros	Gerdau AZA	Nike
Fiat	PSA Citröen	Banco de Bogotá	Colgate Palmolive	Belcorp	Tresmontes Lucchetti	Amazon.com
Honda	PSA Peugeot	Pacific Rubiales Energy	General Motors	AFP Integra	Empresas Carozzi	Goodyear
Odebrecht SA	Sony	ISAGEN	BBVA Bancomer	América Móvil-Claro	Collahuasi	L´Oréal
IBM	Samsung	ISA	Jumex	Toyota	Hewlet Packard	Colgate Palmolive
Toyota	General Motors	Arturo Calle	Grupo Modelo	LAN	Grupo Security	Giorgio Armani
Samsung	SanCor	Compensar	Danone	Telefónica	ACHS	3M
Facebook	Santander Río	Terpel	Alsea	Movistar	Empresas Copec	IBM
Magazine Luiza	Ford	UNE	Apple	Cosapi	Apple	Nintendo
Hering	Renault	Telefónica-Movistar	Grupo Carso	JW Marriott Hotel Lima	BHP Billiton	Toyota
Abril	BBVA Frances	Davivienda	Yakult	Pacífico Seguros	Grupo Enersis	Danone
Ambev	Grupo Techint	PepsiCo		Alicorp		The Walt Disney Company
Apple	Bagó	Cemex		Corporación Lindley		Sony
Grupo Boticario	Apple	CAFAM		Grupo Romero		Canon
Grupo Paõ de Azucar		Grupo Carvajal		Compañía de Minas Buenaventura		Apple
		Coca-Cola FEMSA		Repsol		Daimler
		Metro de Medellín				Samsung Electronics
		Colsubsidio				Ferrero
						Bridgestone
						Kellogg´s