

## **Determining Factors of Success in Internal Communication Management in Spanish Companies. The Influence of Social Media**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to explore the factors that influence the success of internal communication in Spanish companies, specifically the importance of the channels used, activities conducted through ISM and the role played by the communication professional.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The model employed argues that to obtain success in internal communication, three factors are considered necessary: first, communication professionals must participate in strategic decisions; second, they have to use together social media channel and classical channel to communicate with employees; and finally they must choose which activities they carry out during the use of social media. These elements are developed in the literature review. To research practices of internal digital communications and level of success of internal communication across types of organizations, a quantitative survey between professionals from Spanish companies was conducted.

**Findings** – The results revealed that the hierarchical level, participation in the strategic decision process and dedication of the communication practitioner, alongside with the use of face-to-face and online communication channels, and the perceived importance of communication activities conducted through social media platforms are the key factors that influence the quality of internal communication. However, no significant relationship between the level of success and the use of social media channels was found.

**Research limitations/implications** – The current study has several limitations that should be noted and addressed in future research. The main limitation lies in the fact that the dependent variable – success in communication – is entirely based on communication professionals' perceptions. Replication studies can be conducted to cross-validate the results obtained from this study using business outcome metrics to measure the communication effectiveness. A further limitation is related to the sampling procedure. Obtaining a

representative sample of communications professionals in Spanish companies poses a number of limitations due to the impossibility of having accurate data on the total population.

**Practical implications** – The findings of the current study provide important implications for public relations professionals on what (i.e. the content) and how to (i.e. the channels) communicate within an organization. In general, internal communicators should move from historical roles as information producers and distributors to advisory roles in strategic decision making. Additionally, the implementation and use of ISM should be carefully reevaluated. Communication practitioners should examine and address the difficulties involved in choosing the correct channels, devoting the necessary time to their adequate management, analyzing employees' feedback and improving the engagement.

**Originality/value** – The study shows that internal communication practices in Spanish companies are changing. The model used in this research can be applied in an individual organization to evaluate what factors improve the communication of its employees and carry out additional research in other countries or types of organizations to identify new challenges.

**Keywords** Employee relations, Internal communications, Social media, Companies' success

## Introduction

The advent of the Web 2.0 era has changed the style of interaction inside organizations by creating an open corporate space where collective intelligence accrues added value on top of the mere sum of individual expertise possessed by the organization's employees (Men, 2015). In the past decade, social media channels have revolutionized internal communication by their ability to create and strengthen ties among employees, collect and exchange information, foster teamwork, generate trust and loyalty, build lasting relationships and facilitate the role of workers as ambassadors of their own company (Cao et al., 2012; Mazzei, 2014a, b; Morgan et al., 2004; Skeels and Grudin, 2009; Wattal et al., 2010; Zoonen et al., 2014). Companies that invest in improving the effectiveness of their communication practices deliver better market share, more shareholder value, increased engagement and lower employee turnover (Yates, 2006).

Numerous research studies have linked internal communication with job satisfaction, performance and company's efficiency (Laidlaw and Gray 2002; Korzynski, 2014; Rosenfeld et al., 2004; Towers Watson, 2013), but there is still a considerable lack of knowledge concerning which factors are responsible for success in this area (Duhé, 2014; Jarrahi, 2011). According to Welch and Jackson (2007), "research into employee preferences for channel and content of internal corporate communication is required to ensure it meets employees' needs" (p. 187). Other authors (e.g. Dreher, 2014; Madsen, 2017; Robson and James, 2013) also highlight the strategic role played by the internal communication manager for achieving success.

For the purpose of this research, internal communication success or quality is understood as an outcome of corporate internal communication (e.g. Mueller and Lee, 2002; White et al., 2010). Downs and Down (1989) defined perceived communication quality as "whether an interaction was perceived to be of high or low quality, poor or excellent, correct or incorrect, worthless or worthwhile, as well as satisfactory or unsatisfactory" (p. 60). From a management point of view, we ask public relations practitioners to evaluate to what extent internal communication in their organizations is perceived to be successful.

According to data from Observatorio de Comunicación Interna e Identidad Corporativa (2013), 40 percent of Spanish business organizations are not yet adapted to the digital era and have no strategic plans for their internal communications. In fact, only 25 percent of them implement specific actions through social media, while no more than half (51 percent) consider the latter important and 22 percent operate their own internal social network. Nevertheless, in its 2011 report, Catenon Worldwide Executive Search disclosed that 59 percent of Spanish professionals interact with their colleagues at work or with their seniors through social networking sites, whether it be on a regular basis (30 percent) or occasionally (29 percent).

Currently, Spain has about 1,000 communication and public relations agencies (Puesto Base, 2016) and a business volume of 286 million euros (\$337.42 million<sup>1</sup>). Even though significant progress has been made in recent years, the profession in Spain still has a long road ahead to overcome the obstacles imposed by excessive levels of government intervention, highly regulated markets and an important number of businesses led by people who do not understand the role of public relations (García, 2013). Research in internal communication has underlined important cultural differences that need to be addressed. In this sense, more knowledge is required about the professional use of ISM in public relations in diverse regions of

the world through empirical studies. Spain, as a Southern European country with strong historical connections with Latin America, offers an interesting case study.

Thus, this study aims to fill the research gap by investigating the factors that influence the level of perceived success of internal communication in Spanish companies from a public relations practitioner's perspective. In particular, the study attempts to advance the understanding of the influence of the channels used to communicate with employees, the role played by the chief communication officer (CCO) and the communication activities conducted through social media platforms.

### **The strategic role of the communications director**

Internal communication is crucial in order to ensure that employees carry out their activities and that the company increases its competitive advantage. Its integration within the managerial structure is one of the keys in achieving a higher organizational effectiveness (Chen, 2008). In this sense, the principles underlying the widely accepted theory of excellence in public relations (Broom and Dozier, 1986; Dozier and Broom, 1995; Grunig, 1992) claim that those responsible for managing communications in business organizations: must be involved in the company's strategic management; must be part of the dominant coalition; must have a managerial point of view, expertise and professional experience; and must resort to bidirectional communication. The authors of the theory of excellence likewise claim that the organization's structure and culture have an influence on the effectiveness of work done by public relations professionals and advocate a "communication-driven culture" where participation, symmetry and equal opportunities are encouraged. In Spain, research work published to date provides a limited diagnostic picture concerning aspects such as the position of the CCO within the company's managerial structure, their participation in decision-making levels, their accountability to the chief executive officer (CEO), the responsibilities assumed, their influencing capability and their leadership style (Costa, 2009, 2011; Gutiérrez-García, 2010; Matilla and Marca, 2011; Morales and Enrique, 2007; Moreno, 2004; Moreno et al., 2011, 2012). An European study conducted by the Escuela de Organización Industrial (2010) confirmed that the majority of CCOs in Spain (53.4 percent) are hierarchically dependent upon the company's top management level and that their presence in executive committees is becoming an ever more common occurrence. Their position is defined as clearly strategic in

the organization's performance, even though their role continues to be too closely focused on external communications and media relations.

With regard to introducing ISM, the communication professional plays a central role as community facilitator, sense giving and change-management agent. A strong commitment from an organization's leaders is an essential requirement in handling employees' social media use, as the process of embracing social media at the workplace has to start at the core of an organization's culture (Dreher, 2014). Without the formal power, communication on ISM is likely to fail (Madsen, 2017).

Based on literature review, the following hypotheses are posited:

H1. The highest hierarchical level occupied by the communication professional in an organization is positively associated with the effectiveness of internal communication.

H2. The CCOs participation in strategic decisions within the organization has a positive influence on the success of internal communication.

Previous research found that the practitioners who use social networking sites and social media tools were more likely to report feeling empowered to their current position, and feel greater prestige within their organizations (Diga and Kelleher, 2009; Porter and Sallot, 2005). In this vein, Jarvenpaa and Tanriverdi (2003) claim that the amount of time that leaders spend on internal platforms is a proxy for higher communication effectiveness. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H3. The time devoted by those responsible of the communication department to manage social media channels has a positive impact on the success of internal communication.

Using communication channels strategically continues to be one of the main challenges for the profession (Paine, 2011). Practitioners that are unprepared are likely to face a number of barriers and the potential lack of communication knowledge and skills is an issue for the profession (Macnamara, 2010; Macnamara and Zerfass, 2012). In fact, previous research shows that senior professionals report greater success in the use of communication channels (Moreno, Navarro, Tench and Zerfass, 2015; Navarro et al., 2017; Navarro et al. (2018); Treem et al., 2015). Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H4. The wider the experience of communications professionals, the higher the level of success of internal communication.

## **Importance of social media channels in communicating with employees**

Today, organizations have an array of communication channels accessible to disseminate messages to employees, including company website, intranet, blogs e-newsletters, meetings and print materials. Each media conveys information and engage receivers in different ways. According to Daft and Lengel (1984), media capability is differentiated by the availability and speed of feedback of the channel, the use of multiple cues and natural language to facilitate understanding and the personal focus of the message.

The recent incorporation of social media platforms has changed the landscape of communication within organizations. Drawing upon the previous definitions of social media, Madsen (2017) defines internal social media as “an user-friendly and visible web-based communication arena inside an organization in which coworkers and managers can communicate, interact, connect, and make sense of their work and organizational life” (p. 3). ISM channels with two-way, interactive, communal, personal and relational features allow managers to listen closely to employees and respond in a timely manner (Mazzei, 2010; Mishra et al., 2014; Men, 2015), and increase their involvement (Ruck and Trainor, 2012).

Even if face-to-face communication is often perceived as an optimal channel for communicating complex information (Men, 2014; White et al., 2010), the transforming power of the new technologies have likewise been proven, as well as their effectiveness in moving toward more horizontal structures and conveying values, norms, strategies and corporate culture (Battilana and Casciaro, 2013).

The integration of social tools into traditional knowledge management systems makes it possible to use the expertise of all members of an organization and facilitates open innovation. The adoption of internal social media also contributes to increase multi-directional communication, workplace productivity, organizational collaboration, information sharing, employee engagement and decentralized organizational power structure (Jiang and Neill, 2017). In this sense, Stieglitz et al. (2014) argue that social networks facilitate the inclusion of new members in an organization, while at the same time encouraging a redistribution of influence beyond formal hierarchies. However, and despite the potential benefits, many organizations are still struggling to make communication on ISM an integrated part of internal communication (Madsen, 2017). Coworkers' perceptions of organizational climate, supervisor and leader behavior, and employee roles both promote and inhibit employee voices in organizations (Morrison, 2014).

The introduction of social networks has been hampered by the popularly accepted stigma, and corroborated by some research work, that their preeminently social approach lowers the employees' productivity (Cummings, 2013). Moreover, as employees begin to use communication technologies for work-related tasks more frequently during their free time, this may contribute to an increase in work-life conflict as well as related outcomes, such as job satisfaction, stress and burnout (Wright et al., 2014).

Selecting the most appropriate media is an important issue for professional communicators once they have determined objectives and strategies, assessed relevant audiences and constructed messages. Previous research has proven a positive relationship between excellent communication departments and the intensive use of all kind of communication channels, including social media platforms (Moreno, Navarro, Zerfass, and Wiesenbergs, 2015; Moreno, Navarro, Tench and Zerfass, 2015; Zerfass et al., 2014).

Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5. The use of online channels is positively associated with the level of perceived success of internal communication.

H6. The use of social media channels is positively associated with the level of perceived success of internal communication.

H7. The use of face-to-face channels is positively associated with the level of perceived success of internal communication.

#### **Communication activities conducted through the internal social media**

The daily functioning of companies nowadays requires access to knowledge and experience that are often diverse, disperse and instantly needed (Riemer and Scifleet, 2012). The complexity of their activities and the globalization of firms generate a growing number of situations that demand the collaboration of employees from several departments, working in different geographic locations and sometimes having different working hours. Aware of this need, social media platforms have in the last few years veered toward business practice, while there has been a steady rise in the demand for business-oriented social software in order to enhance organizational efficacy (Bughin and Manyika, 2007; McAfee, 2009).

Social media, as two-way communication channels, are characterized by openness, feedback, listening, opportunities for participation in the decision-making process and accessibility. Through symmetrical

communication effort, organizations increase the likelihood of scouting behavior (voluntary seeking, forwarding and sharing of information related to organizational problems or interests) among employees (Kim and Rhee, 2011). Studies have shown that organizations use these platforms to provide ongoing feedback to employees about individual and organizational issues, ensure an adequate flow of information and meet employees' individual communication needs (Walden et al., 2017).

Wikis, for example, are considered to be ideal for tasks involving updating work schedules, implementing projects, editing documents and performing other internal tasks. Social bookmarking encourages innovation insofar as it facilitates access to relevant information inside organizations (Gray et al., 2011), while blogs enable the exchange of information among peers concerning tasks involved in problem resolution (Walden, 2013). Microblogging channels, on the other hand, are basically used to call meetings, as a warning system in the face of possible crises, and to hold conversations, identify experts and support the creation and dissemination of knowledge within an organization (Wu et al., 2010; Zhao and Rosson, 2009). Some companies have developed specific tools, for example, Yammer, Jive, Chatter, and Communote based on the microblogging format in order to cater for internal communication needs of companies.

A positive relationship between excellent communication departments and the perceived importance of social media activities has been found in previous research (Moreno, Navarro, Tench and Zerfass, 2015; Zerfass et al., 2014). This study predicts that communication practitioner's evaluation of social media activities will directly influence the perception of internal communication quality. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H8. The capacity of social media to find information on the organization and the employees' specific jobs is associated with a higher level of perceived success of the company's internal communication.

H9. The capacity of social media to increase innovation and creativity has a positive influence on the perceived success of internal communication.

### **Methodology**

In order to test this model, an online questionnaire was designed to be responded by communications professionals working for Spanish firms. As a prior step, we built a database including a total of 4,300 professionals from Spanish business organizations of several sizes in several sectors and operational scope.

Selecting a representative sample of communications professionals involves a number of limitations because of the unavailability of accurate data about the complete population. However, the number of respondents does provide a starting point to analyze the practices of internal digital communications in Spanish companies.

In early January 2015, we conducted the first online pretest and, after introducing the necessary modifications, the questionnaire's final version was launched on January 14, and remained open until March 18, 2015. After discarding non-fully responded surveys, we were eventually left with a sample of 99 questionnaires.

The structure of our research is shown in Figure 1. The suggested model aims at identifying which variables influence the success of internal communication in Spanish organizations and in which direction by applying a multivariate-ordered probit regression analysis.

### **Figure 1 around here**

#### *Questionnaire*

The questionnaire was divided into three blocks. The first one aimed at learning about the characteristics and uses of social media channels in internal communication; the second one gathered information about the organization's features, such as number of employees, sector they belong to and whether or not they have headquarters in other countries; and the third block included socio-demographic data on communications managers like age, gender, years of professional experience or educational level.

#### *Data analysis*

For the purpose of data analysis, we used the SPSS software package. In the first place, we conducted an analysis with contingency tables and ANOVA – depending of the type of variable – in order to study which variables showed a higher relation with the level of success. The latter were then included in the regression model with a view to analyzing how independent variables influence the above-mentioned level of success. The dependent variable – the level of success of internal communication in Spanish companies – takes ordered discreet values, so that the most suitable regression model to be applied in this case is the ordered probit model.

#### *Sample characteristics*

The demographic data indicate that 70.71 percent of respondents are female vs 27.29 percent males. The majority of respondents (52.53 percent) have a university degree and their average age was 38.23. In total, 41.42 percent of professionals are members of the managerial team or serve as consultants for the latter; 23.23 percent state that they are directors of the communication department in their company; 15.15 percent are team or work unit leaders; and 20.20 percent do not identify themselves as belonging to any of the above categories.

On the other hand, in order to classify the companies in our sample according to size, we used the staff headcount criterion proposed by the European Commission<sup>2</sup>. The majority of the surveyed companies (59.60 percent) are large enterprises with over 250 employees, 15.15 percent are small enterprises with 11-50 employees, 16.16 percent are medium-sized enterprises and 9.09 percent are micro enterprises with a maximum of ten persons employed.

In order to classify companies by the geographic scope of their operations, we relied on the criterion set up by Iborra et al. (2014) whereby a distinction is made between national and multinational enterprises – the latter being those that have headquarters, plants or employees in other countries. In our sample, 61.26 percent were multinational firms, while the remainder qualified as national.

Lastly, and even though the item concerning the sector<sup>3</sup>, the company belongs to was only answered by 63 respondents, it can be observed that 20.64 percent of the companies in the sample belong to the manufacturing and production sector, 17.46 percent to financial activities, 15.87 percent to information and communication activities, 9.52 percent to commerce and distribution, 1.59 percent to education, 3.17 percent to the health services sector and 31.75 percent to other services (Table 1).

### **Table 1 around here**

#### *Research procedure and measures*

The empirical input to the model consists of a behavioral questionnaire based on the opinion of the communication professionals. The dependent variable used in the econometric model was “success in internal communication.” Communication experts were asked to evaluate the success of internal communication within their companies and using a 1-5 Likert scale. In order to include this as a dependent

variable in the model, the number of categories was reduced from 5 to 3, answers were codified as 0 (unsuccessful) for scores 1 or 2; as 1 (successful) for score 3; and as 2 (highly successful) for scores 4 or 5. Independent variables, on the other hand, are as follows.

*Hierarchical positioning.* Following previous work by Moreno et al. (2011), the respondents were asked about the hierarchical level occupied by the CCO or person responsible for communications in their company's organizational structure. Three possible answers were offered: s/he is a member of the executive committee, s/he reports directly to the company's CEO or to the person having the greatest decision-making power in the executive committee, s/he does not report directly either to the company's CEO or to the person having the greatest decision-making power in the executive committee. A dummy variable was incorporated into the model which takes value 1 when the CCO is a member of the executive committee, and value 0 otherwise.

*CCO's participation in strategic decisions.* The respondents were asked to rate the CCO's participation in the organization's strategic planning process on a 1-5 scale.

*Percentage of time devoted to social media management.* The respondents were asked to specify the percentage of time from their workday devoted to managing social media: a percentage that may vary from 0 to 100 percent.

*Years of professional experience.* The respondents were asked about the number of years they had been working as communications professionals.

*Use of online, face-to-face and social media channels.* Regarding these three variables, the respondents were requested to rate on a 1-5 scale the use of each one of these three channels in communications with employees in their organizations. Rating traditional and digital channels in this way somehow reflects, in general terms, the coexistence of both and their respective contribution to the success of internal communication.

*Finding information and increasing innovation and creativity.* Once again, the respondents were asked to rate on a 1-5 scale the capacity of social media as a channel used by employees to find information about their business organization and their specific jobs. They were furthermore requested to rate on the same scale the capacity of such channels to increase innovation and creativity (1 meaning a very low capacity and 5 meaning a very high capacity) (Tables 2 and 3).

**Table 2 around here****Table 3 around here****Findings**

The results show that 41.40 percent of the Spanish communication practitioners evaluate internal communication as highly successful in their companies, 32.48 percent as successful, and the remaining 26.11 percent as unsuccessful. The model contrasted to explain which factors influence the level of success of internal communication is that of the ordered probit regression, using the usual likelihood ratio ( $\chi^2$ ) statistic. The regression model is significant since the  $\chi^2$  statistic is 68.26520 and the significance level is 0.0000. Additionally, the obtained goodness-of-fit observed by using the Nagelkerke's coefficient (0.56) is adequate and the results can therefore be considered valid (see Table 4).

**Table 4 around here**

Next, we analyze the significance of the variables employed in the model, their marginal effects and whether or not the proposed hypotheses are tested true. In order to do this, we use the results of estimates collected in Table 5, and level of significance of 5 percent.

It can be observed that all variables used are significant, except for years of experience and social media use, whose p-values are 0.0966 and 0.1227, respectively. The coefficient for the variable hierarchical positioning takes a positive value and shows growing marginal effects, so that companies where the person responsible for communications belongs to the executive committee have higher odds of having success than those where this is not the case. In other words, the higher the hierarchical level of the person responsible for communications, the higher the level of success of the company's internal communication will be; which proves H1.

Increasing the participation of the CCO in the organization's strategic decisions boosts the level of success of internal communication, since the coefficient explained in the marginal effects column is positive for highly successful (see Table 5). The analysis concludes, therefore, that H2 – which posits that the participation of the chief communications officer in strategic decisions within the organization has a positive influence on the success of internal communication – is supported.

### **Table 5 around here**

The results also confirm the positive relationship between the time devoted to social media management and the perceived level of success of internal communication, which corroborates H3. On the contrary, the number of years of work experience is not related to the level of perceived success of internal communication. Hence, H4 cannot be confirmed.

On the other hand, On the other hand, the use of online and face-to-face communications are likewise significant variables in this model and exert a positive effect. This means that those organizations that attach a greater use to these channels in order to facilitate communications with employees achieve higher levels of success. The results support H5 and H7. Unexpectedly, the use of social media platforms is not linked to the success of internal communication. H6 remains unconfirmed.

Lastly, the type of activity conducted through social media channels is a determinant of success when communicating with employees. Our findings suggest that as the perceived capacity of the social media to provide employees with information about their company and their own jobs increases, so does the level of success of internal communication, which supports H8. On the contrary, the negative sign in the model and the drop in marginal effects suggest that increasing the perceived capacity of social media to promote innovation and creativity entails a reduction in the level of success of internal communication. This result contradicts H9 (see Table 6).

### **Table 6 around here**

#### **Conclusion and discussion**

The purpose of this study has been to analyze to what extent the role of the communication professional, the channels used to communicate with employees and the activities conducted through social media platforms influence the quality of internal communication within the organization. Ongoing changes at the workplace with respect to the evolving expectations of the employees make internal communication more important (Argenti,1998). The findings of the current study provide important implications for public relations scholars and professionals.

First, the results confirm that the role played by the communication professionals is a predictive factor for the success of internal communication. Their participation in the C-suite, which has been highly touted by

scholars as the ideal, is proved to boost the level of quality of internal communication. This finding is in line with the previous research (Bowen, 2009; Grunig, 1992; Dozier and Broom, 1995; Yates, 2006), which has consistently emphasized that communication professionals must gain membership in the dominant coalition. Such strategic participation makes it possible to share information transversally, so that all members of an organization have access to the information they need in order to carry out their daily tasks (Van Riel, 1997). Having a strategic and global vision enables internal and external communication to be consistent and, consequently, helps the company to project a positive image, both outwardly and inwardly (Mazzei, 2010; Xifra, 2014). This study also shows that the quality of internal communication will improve in those organizations whose CCO devotes more time to social media management. These results are consistent with those of other investigations that have shown that company leaders should spend more time on handling social media in order to build strong relationships with their subordinates (Jarvenpaa and Tanriverdi, 2003). Second, the use of face-to-face and online communication is positively related to the level of success of internal communication. Our finding supports the previous research regarding the richness of interpersonal communication, which allows for nonverbal communication, as well as for immediate feedback (Cisco, 2012; Cheney, 1999; Daft and Lengel, 1986; Mishra et al., 2014; White et al., 2010). Similarly, the positive impact of online communication in internal communication success found in this research has been previously proven (Crescenzo, 2011; Men, 2014).

However, and despite social media platforms have become an indispensable component of the communication landscape of organizations (Kelleher, 2009; Men and Tsai, 2013), the study results show no significant relationship between internal communication success and the use of social media channels. These findings can be explained by the fact that social media is often linked to the perceptions of time as scarce and of information overload, and that knowledge-sharing or helping each other is not considered as work (Madsen, 2017). Moreover, voicing opinions on organizational issues using uncontrolled media could be perceived as a risk by both communication managers and employees. As suggested by previous researchers, employee voice can be an untapped resource for enhancing the organization's public image or a bomb waiting to explode with devastating impact on the firm's reputation (Miles and Mangold, 2014). This is also consistent with the European Communication Monitor studies (Zerfass et al., 2010) and with Friedl and

Verčič's (2011) work, who found that employees have a high preference for traditional and online media, such as e-mail, reports, brochures, newsletters, intranet news, social events and team meetings when internal communication is concerned.

Finally, the type of activities conducted through the social media influences the level of success of internal communication. Thus, while a greater perceived capacity of social media for information-seeking purposes will help to improve the level of success of internal communication, an increase perceived capacity of such channels in order to promote innovation and creativity will entail a decrease in such a level of success. This may explain the fact that, as pointed out by other studies, the majority of employees turn to social networks in search of information that may help them know what is being done in other departments (Towers Watson, 2011). Instead for innovation efforts to bear fruit, it is necessary to create an innovative culture (Ishak, 2017).

### **Practical implications**

Pragmatically, the findings of the current study provide important implications for public relations professionals on what (i.e. the content) and how to (i.e. the channels) communicate within an organization. In general, internal communicators should move from historical roles as information producers and distributors to advisory roles in strategic decision making. Additionally, the implementation and use of ISM should be carefully reevaluated. Communication practitioners should examine and address the difficulties involved in choosing the correct channels, devoting the necessary time to their adequate management, analyzing employees' feedback and improving the engagement. Creating the opportunity for social interaction using the latest technology, organizations will foster the sense of community and will improve the financial performance. Organizational leaders need to analyze costs and benefits and must provide the company with mechanisms that encourage the adoption of new technologies that ignite the passion for knowledge and reduce barriers to creativity.

### **Limitations**

The current study has several limitations that should be noted and addressed in future research. The main limitation lies in the fact that the dependent variable – success in communication – is entirely based on communication professionals' perceptions. Replication studies can be conducted to cross-validate the results

obtained from this study using business outcome metrics to measure the communication effectiveness. A further limitation is related to the sampling procedure. Obtaining a representative sample of communications professionals in Spanish companies poses a number of limitations due to the impossibility of having accurate data on the total population. It would be highly interesting to replicate this research with a bigger sample and to include the employee's perception. In addition, future research should analyze the particularities and influence of each social media platform: social networks, blogs, microblogs, wikis, etc. It is therefore necessary to continue analyzing the current use of social media tools at the workplace in order to contribute toward the success of communication with employees. Finally, future researchers could focus on developing a comprehensive theoretical framework in predicting factors that might contribute to the success of internal communication.

### **Notes**

1. Euro to USD exchange rate on October 25, 2017.
2. As of January 1, 2005, the European Commission established staff headcount as one of the three criteria for the classification of companies according to their size. Following this criterion, micro enterprises are those having a maximum of ten employees; small enterprises have 10-50 employees; medium-sized enterprises have 51-250 employees; and large enterprises have over 250 employees. Information available at: [www.ipyme.org](http://www.ipyme.org)
3. The classification by sectors follows Spain's National Classification of Economic Activities, Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2018), and the work by Bussy et al. (2003).

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## Tables

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents and entity type of companies in the sample

Sample description	Percentage
<b>Respondent Profile</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	29.29%
Female	70.71%
<b>Educational level</b>	
No university degree	4.04%
Bachelor's degree	52.53%
Master's degree	40.40%
PhD	3.03%
<b>Position of the communications professional</b>	
Director of the communications department	23.23%
Team or work unit leader	15.15%
Team member	41.42%
Others	20.20%
<b>Type of enterprise</b>	
<b>Size</b>	
<= 10 employees	9.09%
11-50 employees	15.15%
51-250 employees	16.16%
Over 250 employees	59.60%
<b>Scope of operations</b>	
Multinational	61.62%
National	38.38%
<b>Sector</b>	
Commerce and distribution	9.52%
Information and communication activities	15.87%
Financial activities	17.46%
Manufacturing and Production	20.64%
Health services	3.17%
Education	1.59%
Other services	31.75%

Table 2. Summary of variables included in the model

Definition	Variable in the econometric model
<b>Dependent variable:</b>	
Success of internal communication	Success
<b>Independent variables:</b>	
<b>Variables relative to the role of the communications professional</b>	
Hierarchical positioning	Member of the Executive Committee
CCO's participation in strategic decisions	Strategic participation
Percentage of time devoted to social media management	Time devoted on social media
Years of professional experience	Years of experience
<b>Variables relative to channels of internal communication</b>	
Use of online channels	Online channel
Use of social media channels	Social media channel
Use of face-to-face communication	Face-to-face channel
<b>Variables relative to the activities of internal communication carried out through social media channels</b>	
Capacity to find information on the organization and one's own job through the social media	Finding information
Capacity to increase innovation and creativity through the social media	Increasing innovation

Table 3. Descriptive statistics

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Success			0	2
Member of the Executive Committee	0.32	0.47	0	1
Strategic participation	3.40	1.18	1	5
Time devoted to social media	22.45	24.27	0	100
Years of experience	9.66	8.07	1	37
Online channel	4.28	0.99	1	5
Social media channel	3.19	1.26	1	5
Face-to-face channel	4.31	0.76	1	5
Finding information	3.61	1.14	1	5
Increasing innovation	4.01	0.98	1	5

Table 4. Ordered probit model statistics

Ordered Probit Model	
Maximum Likelihood Estimates	
Dependent variable	Success
Weighting variable	Constant
Number of observations	99
Iterations completed	17
Log likelihood function	-72.6380
Restricted log likelihood	-106.7706
$\chi^2$	68.2652
Degree of freedom	9
Significance level	0.0000
Nagelkerke	0.5637

Table 5. Ordered probit output

Variable	Estimates			Marginal effects		
	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-value	Unsuccessful	Successful	Highly successful
Constant	-5.0556	1.3721	0.0002	-	-	-
Member of the Executive Committee	0.6644	0.3057	0.0297	-0.1782	-0.0760	0.2543
Strategic participation	0.5124	0.1301	0.0001	-0.1521	-0.0410	0.1931
Time devoted to social media	0.0185	0.0066	0.0050	-0.0055	-0.0015	0.0070
Years of experience	-0.0279	0.0168	0.0966	0.0083	0.0022	-0.0105
Online channel	0.6380	0.1608	0.0001	-0.1894	-0.0510	0.2404
Social media channel	-0.1823	0.1181	0.1227	0.0541	0.0146	-0.0687
Face-to-face channel	0.4297	0.2069	0.0379	-0.1275	-0.0344	0.1619
Finding information	0.2770	0.1226	0.0238	-0.0822	-0.0222	0.1044
Increasing innovation	-0.3201	0.1530	0.0364	0.0950	0.0256	-0.1206

Table 6. Summary of results following hypothesis testing

Independent variable	Hypothesis	Verification
Member of the executive committee	H1. The hierarchical level occupied by the CCO is positively associated with the effectiveness of internal communication	Yes
Strategic participation	H2. The CCO's participation in strategic decisions within the organization has a positive influence on the success of internal communication	Yes
Time devoted to social media	H3. The time devoted by those responsible for communications to manage social media channels has a positive impact on the success of internal communication	Yes
Years of experience	H4. The wider the experience of communications professionals, the higher the level of success of internal communication.	No
Online channels	H5. The use of online channels is positively associated with the level of success of internal communication	Yes
Social media channels	H6. The use of social media channels is positively associated with the level of success of internal communication	No
Face-to-face channels	H7. The use of face-to-face channels is positively associated with the level of success of internal communication.	Yes
Finding information	H8. The capacity of social media to find information on the organization and the employees' specific jobs is associated with a higher level of success of the company's internal communication	Yes
Increasing innovation	H9. The capacity of social media to increase innovation and creativity has a positive influence on the success of internal communication	No

## Figures

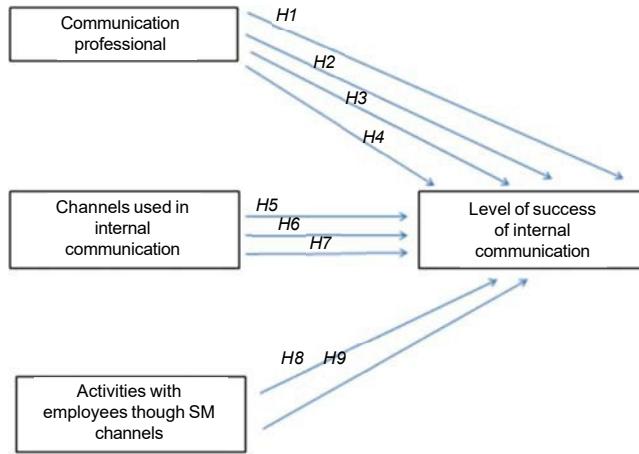


Figure 1. Model for determining factors in the level of success of internal communication.