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# Bibliometric analysis within studies of brand content strategy in social media

*Análisis bibliométrico de estudios sobre la estrategia de contenidos de marca en los medios sociales*

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106 scientific studies, extracted from Web of Science (WoS), regarding brand content strategy within social media were assessed through a quantitative and descriptive bibliometric analysis.
The aim is to examine the state, evolution and research designs of this area. The results reveal findings based on the signs of methodological diversity and maturity in the subject, expressed through the predominance of empirical works, diversity of actors, methodological designs and analysis units, that will enhance new research in digital communication in digital environments.
KEYWORDS: Bibliographic Analysis, communication strategy, branded content, content marketing, social media.

*Se analizan 106 estudios científicos, extraídos de Web of Science (WoS), sobre la estrategia de contenidos de marca en los medios sociales con el propósito de examinar el estado, la evolución y los diseños metodológicos del ámbito. Para ello se realiza un análisis bibliométrico cuantitativo y descriptivo. Los principales hallazgos son los indicios de madurez científica, como demuestran el predominio de estudios empíricos, la diversidad de actores, unidades de análisis y métodos de investigación, que facilitan nuevas vías de investigación en el área de la comunicación organizacional en entornos digitales.*
*PALABRAS CLAVE: Análisis bibliométrico, estrategia de comunicación, contenido de marca, marketing de contenidos, medios sociales.*

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## Introduction

Over the last decade, the publication of articles, books and professional profiles related to social media has notably increased. The growing popularity of social networks and other Web 2.0 technologies has created a field of emerging research.

However, no previous study offers the focus of the present study, which is potentially the first bibliometric analysis in Spanish conducted into the relationship between social media and brand content strategy.

This study comprises a bibliometric analysis of scientific publications on brand content strategy for social media extracted, from Web of Science (WoS) database, during the period 2004-2018. A descriptive, longitudinal, retrospective and univariate methodological approach is used, based on reference studies in the field of bibliometry, including Castillo and Carretón (2010) and van Osh and Coursaris (2014).

Conducting bibliometric analysis of scientific publications is highly valuable in understanding the evolution, progress and scientific impact of a research area, as the data contained in the publications facilitates the examination of productivity, dispersion and research designs.

The emergence of the Web 2.0 and the development of new information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as social networks, revolutionized the traditional forms of communication between businesses and users.

It has enabled a new way for the two parties to relate and interact, in which brand content are the main means for promoting communication, cooperation and long-term relationships between them (Hollebeek, Glynn & Brodie, 2014).

Given this development, this study performs a bibliometric analysis of studies on companies' strategic planning regarding brand content in social media, that sparks and motivates interactions between users and companies. The Uses and Gratifications Theory of media is applied (Rubin, 1994).

## Theoretical and conceptual framework

To clarify the relevance of this research, a literature review is carried out to collect bibliometric studies previously published in the area of social sciences and communication focusing on social media.

The concept of bibliometry was established by Pritchard (1969), who defined it as: "the application of mathematical and statistical methods to books and other media of communication" (p. 348). With the establishment of bibliometry as a field of research (Garfield, 1972; Merton, 1973; Price, 1963), two basic approaches to bibliometric analysis emerged (Neufeld, Fang & Huff, 2007).

The first approach is descriptive and involves the observation and numerical disclosure of academic activities in the field, with an emphasis on productivity and impact.

The second, referred to as the normative approach, establishes norms, rules and heuristics to ascertain the desirable intellectual advancement of the domain.

According to these classifications, this study is descriptive, with a quantitative methodology (Rogel-Salazar, Santiago-Bautista & Martínez-Domínguez, 2017).

This study analyses how social networks users interact from the perspective of the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Rubin, 1994). According to this theory, individuals play an active role in selecting their preferred communication media channels based on different objectives (Katz, Haas & Gurevitch, 1973; Ruggiero, 2000), with the satisfaction of their needs as the reason for recurrent use (Bryant & Miron, 2004).

The existing scientific literature on the object of study is analysed, forming the conceptual framework of this research. This requires a clarification in the differences between the constructs of social networks and social media that, although used indiscriminately by researchers and communication and marketing professionals, are pre-existing different concepts.

The term "social network" was first introduced by the British anthropologists Radcliffe-Brown and Barnes (1954), who defined it as "a social structure formed by persons or entities connected and united to each other by some type of relationship or common interest" (Ponce, 2012, p. 2). In contrast, boyd and Ellison (2007) define social networks as "web-based services that allow people to develop a public or semi-public profile in a limited system… and navigate the lists of other connections through the platform" (p. 210). These authors defend

the appropriateness of using the term Social Network Sites (SNSs), arguing that expanding one's own network is unnecessary to be an active participant in a SNS.

With the arrival of the Web 2.0, a term coined in 2004 to refer to a new way of using the Internet, users became active players in a process of publishing cooperative content (O'Reilly, 2006). The Web 2.0 revolutionized the Internet and favoured the development of social networks and modified the way companies relate to their audiences. Similarly, researchers developed a growing interest in investigating brand content strategies aimed at promoting user participation and commitment.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) expand on this by identifying the active role of users and define social media as a group of applications that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Additionally, Constantinides (2014) argues that Web 2.0 applications "allow the creation, editing and dissemination of user-generated content" (p. 42).

An analysis of the current academic body of literature also suggests a lack of consensus on the definition of the term "social media". According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), this is a generic concept that groups different categories of media, according to their characteristics and classified into collaborative projects, blogs, content communities, SNSs, virtual game worlds and virtual social worlds. However, the most overarching taxonomy in the scientific literature is that advocated by Constantinides and Fountain (2008), who discern five categories of social media: 1) blogs; 2) social networks; 3) forums and bulletin boards; 4) content communities; and 5) content aggregators.

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media is a tool of great relevance that organizations should use. However, Godin (2007) advises companies to avoid quick solutions to integrate these tools. Porter and Donthu (2008) note that fostering member integration of virtual communities and providing quality content has a positive effect on a company's image. Therefore, it is important to actively participate in social media (Biloš & Kelić, 2012) with a linked marketing and communication strategy.

This literature review indicates the study of brand content strategies, used on social media, and their effects is attracting and increasing scientific interest in the subject. This development is decisively influenced the delimitation of the present bibliometric analysis in the research area.

### *Objectives and research questions*

To analyse the state, evolution and methodological designs applied in the study of brand content strategy within social media, this paper poses the following questions:

Q1: What is the evolution of productivity? Q2: What is the country productivity ranking? Q3: What is the institutional productivity ranking? Q4: What is the authorial productivity ranking? Q5: What is the journal productivity ranking? Q6: What is the relative proportion of conceptual and empirical research? Q7: What is the proportion of cross-sectional and longitudinal studies? Q8: How many studies use quantitative, qualitative or mixed method techniques? Q9: Which data collection methods are most frequently applied? Q10: What is the predominant unit of analysis?

## Methodology

This research is based on a bibliometric analysis of scientific publications extracted from Web of Science (WoS) database that address brand content strategy in social media.

The authors performed a bibliometric analysis to pursue methodological novelties in relation to previous studies, based on several strategic decisions, as outlined below.

Firstly, the term "social media" was delimited, enabling an analysis of the platforms that encompass and facilitate the creation of interactive environments between users and brand content. Secondly, a search based on the Spanish and English languages was conducted, to facilitate internationally representative research. Thirdly, period of longitudinal analysis, based on data collection was extended over 14 years, differentiating this study from other illustrative research, including van

Osch and Coursaris (2014), which covers seven years (2004-2011), and Castillo and Carretón (2010), which analyses only one year.

This study examined the 2004-2018 period to provide up-to-date information, an increase in sample representativeness and research design validity (Cea D'ancona, 1999, p. 114). In addition, the sample in this study represents 73% of all publications related to the research area, unlike the sample used by van Osch and Coursaris (2014), which represented only 58% of the data-set initially obtained.

Finally, the authors extracted and interpreted primary data, to avoid possible errors derived from the analysis of secondary data.

### *Data sources*

The bibliographic source used to perform the search and obtain the results is the WoS database.

This was chosen because this empirical-analytical study aims to identify all scientific works on thematic delimitation with international coverage. The WoS is an appropriate database as it includes a large volume of scientific journals from all disciplines, including communication journals, electronically indexed and available in open access format.

In particular, WoS incorporates the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) corresponding to a global scope and the regional aggregators Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) and Redalyc, for Latin American communication journals.

Another extraordinary system of access to Ibero-American journals is Latindex. However, this source was excluded in the search process as it provides only the title and contact information of the indexed journals, without access to their published scientific papers. In contrast, WoS integrates data from the journal performance analysis tool *InCites Journal Citation Report* (JCR) used in the present analysis.

### *Search strategy*

The search criteria are determined by selecting all scientific journals in WoS. Subsequently, the following terms were entered, in English, and without quotation marks, to identify records representing an exact match and synonyms: *social media*, *marketing*, *communication*, *branding*, *branded content*, *branded posts* and *content marketing strategy*.

From there, the analysis period established from 2004 to 2018 was generated. The year 2004 was selected as the starting date because after carefully reviewing the search terms, no study referencing Internet-based solutions or Web 2.0 was found prior to this date. Although in 2000, we witnessed the burst of the *dot-com bubble*, scientific research on this topic did not begin until 2004. That year, the first research on "social media sites" by Donath and boyd (2004) was published, defining social media as "a visible network of connections", encouraging scientific research of this novel area and its application to professional practice (van Osch & Coursaris, 2014, p. 291).

Previously, Berthon, Pitt and Watson (1996) had analysed the role of the World Wide Web as an advertising medium and its primary role in communication and marketing strategy.

A specific domain was not selected as, despite this object of study being multidisciplinary, a larger volume of records were obtained, ensuring the representativeness of the sample. Subsequently, the type of document was delimited, namely articles, including book chapters, as they are peer reviewed and therefore represent a high level of scientific validity.

Finally, the English and Spanish languages were selected to gain knowledge of the research object on an international level.

All searches were performed on June 18th, 2018 and updated on July 8th, 2018. The following equation was introduced to capture all the search criteria:

> TOPIC: (social media) AND TOPIC: (marketing OR communication OR branding) AND TOPIC: (branded content OR branded posts) AND TOPIC: (content marketing strategy). Refined by: TYPES OF DOCUMENTS: (ARTICLE) AND LANGUAGES: (ENGLISH OR SPANISH). Period: 2004/2018.

### *Selection criteria*

After applying the search criteria, 145 documents were analysed, with he following documents including the following being removed from the research according to the quality criteria of the PRISMA statement (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses) (Urrutia & Bonfill, 2010):

1. Documents not containing the keywords selected in the title, keywords and summary fields.
2. Results that, despite including the keywords, did not match the area of research after additional reading.
3. Reviews, books, conference proceedings and editorial material that were not peer reviewed and, therefore, did not guaranteed a high level of scientific validity.
4. Documents that did not present their content in the selected languages.

The result of this process generated a final sample of 106 records, which text was analysed individually as detailed below.

### *Data collection*

The data gathered from each publication included ten factors for analysis based on factors used by van Osch and Coursaris (2014): title, name and number of authors, year of publication, journal name, empirical or conceptual nature, approach (longitudinal or cross-sectional), methodology, method and unit of analysis. The data were entered into a Microsoft® Excel 2019 spreadsheet for further processing and analysis.

### *Data analysis*

The selection criteria for the scientific indicators applied to the sample in this study are adapted from employed van Osch and Coursaris (2014). These criteria are classified into indicators of scientific productivity, which were subjected to bibliometric techniques and indicators related to methodological design and dominant research techniques, which were examined with meta-analysis.

Consistent with the referenced literature, the amount of research conducted by actors (countries, institutions, authors and journals) is the most frequent factor to calibrate the scientific productivity of a discipline, due to the fundamental importance of this metric in academia (Manning & Barrette, 2005; Serenko & Bontis, 2004).

Additionally, according to van Osch and Coursaris (2014), the methodological design and research techniques used in studies demonstrate the state and future trends of a research area.

## Results

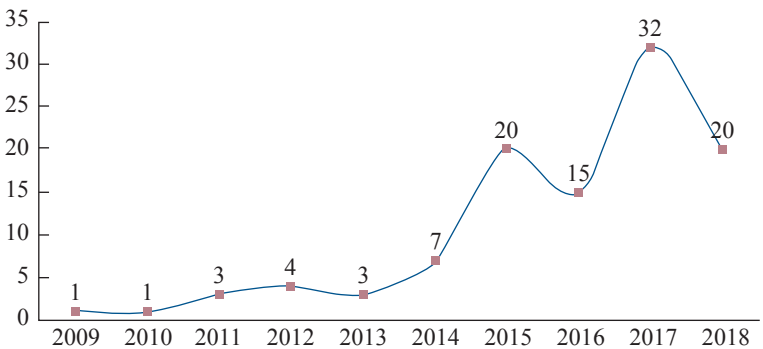
### *Indicators of scientific production*

This study focuses on the measurement of scientific production, analysing the chronological evolution of productivity and calculating the scientific productivity by countries, organizations, authors and journals.

### *Chronological evolution of productivity*

Figure 1 shows a progressive and irregular growth in the number of studies that focused on social media content during the period analysed. In 2015 and 2017, production is nearly almost three and five times higher, respectively, than in 2014, whereas the progression seems to be consolidated in 2016 and 2018.

Figure 1
Number of publications by year (2004-2018)




Source: Authors.

### *Productivity by country*

Table 1 shows the scientific productivity of countries with more than one published study. We employed the criteria applied by van Osch and Coursaris (2004) and used the WoS database tool to extract the

territory with which the institution associated with the first author of the publication belongs.

According to this classification, there is a surprising plurality of countries, 29 in total, in which the United States is the most prolific in the selected area of research, followed by Australia and the United Kingdom, whose productivity is approximately one-third of the United States.

TABLE 1
SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTIVITY BY COUNTRY IN THE PERIOD 2004-2018

| Country | Number of publications | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| USA | 33 | 31.1 |
| Australia | 11 | 10.4 |
| United Kingdom | 9 | 8.5 |
| Spain | 7 | 6.6 |
| China | 7 | 6.6 |
| India | 4 | 3.8 |
| The Netherlands | 4 | 3.8 |
| Germany | 3 | 2.8 |
| South Korea | 3 | 2.8 |
| Brazil | 2 | 1.9 |
| Italy | 2 | 1.9 |
| Turkey | 2 | 1.9 |
| Finland | 2 | 1.9 |
| Norway | 2 | 1.9 |
| Other countries | 15 | 14.2 |
| Mode | 1 | |
| Total | 106 | 100 |

Source: Authors.

Notably, seven studies are based in Ibero-American countries, such as Spain, and Brazil produced two studies.

### *Institutional productivity*

Consistent with the criteria applied for countries, information was extracted regarding the organizations with which the first author of

the document is affiliated. For authors with more than one institutional affiliation, only the primary affiliation was recorded.

Table 2 reveals an institutional diversity because although only 11 institutions published above the central tendency, 78.3% of the studies were conducted by different organizations. In contrast, this heterogeneity does not exist for institutional types, as the most productive organizations are all universities. Therefore, the organizations that contributed the most knowledge on this subject are universities (91.5%), which include institutes and graduate schools affiliated with universities, followed by business schools (6.4%) and private companies (2.1%).

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF PUBLISHED STUDIES BY INSTITUTION (2004-2018)

| Institution | Number of publications | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| University of Western Australia | 3 | 2.8 |
| Manchester Metropolitan University | 2 | 1.9 |
| RMIT University | 2 | 1.9 |
| Harbin Institute of Technology | 2 | 1.9 |
| University of Alicante | 2 | 1.9 |
| London College of Fashion | 2 | 1.9 |
| University of Miami | 2 | 1.9 |
| University of Amsterdam | 2 | 1.9 |
| New York University | 2 | 1.9 |
| George Washington University | 2 | 1.9 |
| University of North Texas | 2 | 1.9 |
| Other institutions | 83 | 78.3 |
| Mode | 1 | |
| Total | 106 | 100 |

Source: Authors.

### *Authorial productivity*

275 authors were identified in the studies analysed, of which only 14 authors contributed to more than one study (5.1%).

The number of authors per publication was analysed to determine the degree of author cooperation in this scientific area and the results

showed the highest percentage (35.8%) of research was conducted by two authors. The second highest group comprises publications with three authors (32.1%). Studies with only one author accounted for 15.1% of the sample, studies with four authors accounted for 12.3%, studies with five authors accounted for 2.8% and, finally, only one study had six and eight listed authors (0.9%). Therefore, the total number of articles with more than two authors accounted for 84.8% of the sample.

### *Journal productivity*

Table 3 lists the journals with more than one publication. Journals from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, the United States and Canada predominated, contributing with 77 papers.

TABLE 3
NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS PER JOURNAL (2004-2018)

| Method | Number of publications | Percentage | Editorial country |
|---|---|---|---|
| Journal of Global Fashion Marketing | 4 | 3.8 | United Kingdom |
| Marketing Intelligence Planning | 4 | 3.8 | United Kingdom |
| Online Information Review | 4 | 3.8 | United Kingdom |
| Business Horizons | 3 | 2.8 | Netherlands |
| Journal of Business Research | 3 | 2.8 | Netherlands |
| Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management | 3 | 2.8 | United Kingdom |
| Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing | 3 | 2.8 | United Kingdom |
| Journal of Services Marketing | 3 | 2.8 | United Kingdom |
| Computer in Human Behaviour | 2 | 1.9 | United Kingdom |

| Method | Number of publications | Percentage | Editorial country |
|---|---|---|---|
| Industrial Marketing Management | 2 | 1.9 | Netherland |
| JMIR Public Health and Surveillance | 2 | 1.9 | Canada |
| Journal of Brand Management | 2 | 1.9 | United Kingdom |
| Journal of Business Industrial Marketing | 2 | 1.9 | United Kingdom |
| Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology | 2 | 1.9 | United Kingdom |
| Journal of Marketing Management | 2 | 1.9 | United Kingdom |
| Journal of Marketing | 2 | 1.9 | United States |
| Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice | 2 | 1.9 | United Kingdom |
| Management Decision | 2 | 1.9 | United Kingdom |
| Other journals | 59 | 55.7 | |
| Mode | 1 | | |
| Total | 106 | 100 | |

Source: Authors.

### *Methodological design and data analysis techniques*

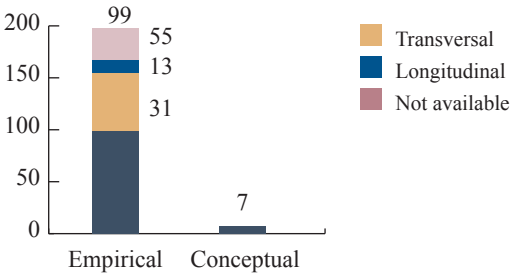
The typology of the studies was determined by distinguishing between conceptual and empirical studies. The following information was discerned: the temporal analysis (transversal or longitudinal); methodology (quantitative, qualitative or mixed); and unit of analysis (individuals, groups or other). Based on this analysis, 99 empirical studies and only seven conceptual studies were extracted.

Among the empirical studies, 31 studies employed a cross-sectional approach, 13 were longitudinal studies, and 55 did not describe their approach (Figure 2).

A balanced proportion of methodological designs was evident: 48 studies (48.5%) were qualitative, 44 (44.4%) were quantitative, and 7 (7.1%) studies used a mixed or triangulated methodology based both

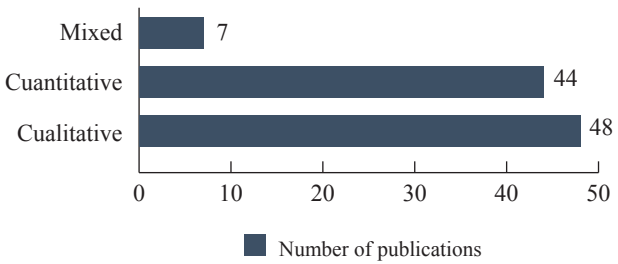
quantitative and qualitative research techniques. Therefore, a discrete majority of qualitative studies was observed (4%) (Figure 3).

FIGURE 2
PROPORTION OF EMPIRICAL/CONCEPTUAL PAPERS AND CROSS-SECTIONAL/ LONGITUDINAL STUDIES (2004-2018)




Source: Authors.

FIGURE 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OF THE ANALYSED STUDIES (2004-2018)




Source: Authors.

The following summarizes the proportion of studies in which a single method or different combinations of methods were used.

Table 4 shows that for qualitative and quantitative studies, the most commonly employed method as a sole research practice was content

analysis, used in 39 studies, of which 15 were qualitative and 24 were quantitative. This method is utilized with other research techniques in 23 publications and 62 empirical studies (N = 99), that is, more than half of the sample (62.6%). Interviews (semi-structured and in-depth) were applied as a sole method in nine studies and were combined with other qualitative techniques in 17 studies. Surveys were utilized as the sole technique in eight studies and were combined with other quantitative methods in eight other studies. Literature reviews were combined with other qualitative and quantitative techniques in 11 studies. Netnography, based on online observation, was used as the only method in four studies and was combined with other qualitative research methods in three studies. Finally, we also identified methods not considered in previous bibliometric analyses of social media (van Osch & Coursaris, 2004) such as experimental techniques. These were sole methods for two studies and were combined with other quantitative and qualitative techniques in four studies.

TABLE 4
RESEARCH METHODS IN THE ANALYSED PUBLICATIONS (2004-2018)

| Method | Number of publications | Technique |
|---|---|---|
| Single method | | |
| Content analysis | 24 | Quantitative |
| Content analysis | 15 | Qualitative |
| Survey | 8 | Quantitative |
| Interviews | 5 | Qualitative |
| Netnography | 4 | Qualitative |
| In-depth interviews | 2 | Qualitative |
| Semi-structured interviews | 2 | Qualitative |
| Controlled experiment | 2 | Quantitative |
| Documentary and archival research | 1 | Quantitative |
| Combination of methods | | |
| Interviews and content analysis | 9 | Qualitative |
| Content analysis and literature review | 3 | Qualitative |
| Experiment and survey | 3 | Quantitative |

| Method | Number of publications | Technique |
|---|---|---|
| Interviews and literature review | 2 | Qualitative |
| Survey and content analysis | 2 | Quantitative |
| Content analysis and literature review | 2 | Quantitative |
| Survey and literature review | 2 | Quantitative |
| Interview, documentary research and netnography | 1 | Qualitative |
| Netnography, interviews and discussion groups | 1 | Qualitative |
| Netnography and interview | 1 | Qualitative |
| Discussion groups and interviews | 1 | Qualitative |
| Participants observation, in-depth interviews and content analysis | 1 | Qualitative |
| In-depth interviews and content analysis | 1 | Qualitative |
| Mixed method | | |
| Quantitative and qualitative content analysis | 4 | Mixed |
| Experiments | 1 | Mixed |
| Quantitative and qualitative content analysis and literature review | 1 | Mixed |
| Literature review and survey | 1 | Mixed |

Source: Authors.

The following methodological combinations were observed: 1) document and archival research as the only method in one study and combined with interview and netnography in another study; and 2) discussion groups combined with interviews and netnography in two studies.

Then, the unit of analysis used in the studies were examined (Table 5).

Notably, more than half of the documents reviewed (55%) used *others* as the unit based on content published on blogs, websites or social media (posts and tweets*)*. The second most used unit of analysis was *groups* (17%), i.e., groups of individuals, representing another 17% of the sample. *Individuals*, representing individual people, accounted

for 7%, followed by a combination of *individuals* with *others* and *groups* with *others*, representing 4% of the total.

TABLE 5
ANALYSIS UNITS IN THE STUDIES (2004-2018)

| Analysis unit | Number of publications | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Others | 54 | 55 |
| Groups | 17 | 17 |
| Not available | 17 | 17 |
| Individuals | 7 | 7 |
| Individuals and others | 2 | 2 |
| Others and groups | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 99 | 100 |

Source: Authors.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study are summarized with respect to the research questions in the following conclusions.

### *Conclusion I: Research on brand content strategy in social media exhibits intellectual and methodological diversity*

The first sign of intellectual diversity observed in this bibliometric analysis, unlike previous studies, including van Osch and Coursaris (2004), is the number of countries (29) in which they originated. Approximately half (14) of the countries produced more than one paper. A second sign is the data obtained from single authors (275 researchers). These authors are associated with 94 institutions, of which only 11 (11.7%) are affiliated with more than one publication. The studies were published in 77 journals, of which only 18 published more than one study (23.4%). Notably, despite the plurality of journals found, most publishers are based in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, the United States and Canada. For this reason, these countries are listed as the most prolific ones (Table 1). However, despite this predominance, and because this study only included research published in Spanish, Spain was identified as a country with above average productivity.

In the case of Latin America, Brazil's contributions were notable; however, these works were published mainly by journals written in English. Large publishers hinder the positioning of regional publishers; therefore, it is necessary to make editorial teams aware of the relevance of indexing their journals in international databases to achieve a more relevant and representative dissemination of research conducted in other countries.

This concentration of the most productive actors together with the lack of studies with a longitudinal approach (26.3%) could slow the scientific progress of this research area, spurring a homogeneity of recurring themes, questions and interpretations and thus limiting unpublished theoretical and scientific contributions.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study indicate three strengths that can prevent this homogeneity: a) the growth of Spanish-language publications that favour new lines of collaboration between Spanish-speaking countries; b) the notable authorial collaboration present in this research area, as 84.8% of the sample are studies involving co-authorship due to the multidisciplinary nature of social media; and c) the evident diversity and novelty of methodological designs and units of analysis that can be applied in this area.

Regarding the methodology, a noticeable variety of combinations of research methods and techniques for data collection and analysis was found. Among these methods are those that facilitate the study of the complex relationships between users and organizations through the analysis of documents (textual or audiovisual) and discourse, including content analysis, interviews, surveys and a broad array of new research methods not used in previous studies (netnography, documentaries and archival research, experiments, participant observation and discussion groups).

In short, this methodological diversity can help broaden knowledge with new theories and future research, providing researchers with a wide variety of research methods for future studies.

*Conclusion II: The study of brand content strategy in social media requires analysing the effects of this strategy on users and companies*

As indicated by the literature review in this study, the emergence

of Web 2.0 and ICTs, such as social networks, have changed how organizations communicate with their audiences. Namely, because of these innovations, organizations can interact directly, bidirectionally and in real time. Thus, social media offer communication channels to facilitate dialogue, cooperation and content creation by both companies (brand content) and users (user generated content).

Given this new paradigm, it is essential to analyse the effects of brand content on both users and organizations, which must adapt their content strategy in social media to trigger desired actions in their audiences. According to the results of this bibliometric analysis, the research methods used in the analysed studies represent multiple combinations of research techniques, with a modest majority of qualitative studies. Among these methods are content analysis and interview methods, accompanied by other qualitative techniques including in-depth interviews combined with participant observation.

Considering the study of brand content in social media is influenced by the complex relationships between society and organizations, ethnomethodological approaches are crucial for: a) analysing the discourse of individuals and audience regarding brand content; b) studying the cognitive, affective and behavioural effects of users that affect their interaction with brands, and finally; c) analysing the characteristics of online messages generated by organizations.

Furthermore, within the quantitative works examined in this study, content analysis predominates as a sole method to analyse formal characteristics of content, such as richness, time of publication, product category or content position within the profile or the brand page on different social media platforms. In other studies, content analysis is accompanied by surveys to capture the textual discourse of individuals.

The highlighted techniques provide invaluable information for potential content classification. This knowledge will be helpful for future researchers and professionals in the field in terms of strategic planning of brand content on social media.

These research methods coincide with the predominance of group analysis units in the studies analysed, based primarily on brand content and posts published on social media and on groups of individuals. Likewise, these units reflect the abundance of co-authorship and the

multidisciplinary nature of the research topic, which according to the academic literature requires collective or "supra-individual" analysis (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Therefore, the results of this analysis contribute to knowledge of brand content on social media and increase the pedagogical and professional relevance of this research area.

### *Conclusion III: Research on brand content strategy in social media is academically mature*

The academic maturity of a scientific domain can be determined by analysing three transformations: a) patterns of co-authorship; b) research methods; and c) the author's role (Inzelt, Schubert & Schubert, 2009; van Osch & Coursaris, 2014). The research area investigated in this study appears to be scientifically mature, based on the following results: an evident progression towards co-authorship (84.8%); the proliferation of empirical studies (93.4%); the variety of methodological designs and units of analysis; and the evolution of the research topic as it changes over time.

In summary, the results indicate the following opportunities: a) the viability of heterogeneity of actors, methodological designs, research techniques and units of analysis to study this domain; b) the critical awareness of editors and organizers of conferences and institutions to increase their levels of cooperation, based on the results concerning co-authorship as for example the increase in Spanish-language studies that facilitate collaboration between Spain and Latin American countries; c) a necessary increase in resources such as grants/research grants provided by national/international agencies to advance knowledge, facilitated into more global and pertinent terms; and d) the necessity of collaboration between academic institutions and private companies in research, to generate accurate knowledge, which in turn helps increase the number of empirical studies, as limited collaboration was found in this study.

These opportunities have new theoretical and practical implications, which, together with the cultural and social changes generated by the consistent progress of ICTs, will facilitate new intellectual discussions and emerging approaches that should be addressed in future research,

ultimately ensuring the sustainability of the scientific research and maturity detected in the present bibliometric analysis on brand content strategy in social media.

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