

The sound of responsibility: evolution of the use of radio advertising as a corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication channel before and after Covid-19. A significant increase

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Abstract

Radio is an audio communication medium that has always stood out for its credibility and close relationship to its audience, which makes it an appealing option for organizations that want to make their responsible behavior known. The Covid-19 pandemic has created a new landscape in which the strategic role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the company has been strengthened and in which advertising messages are proving to be an interesting way of disseminating organizations' responsible actions. Based on the quantitative content analysis of 562 radio advertisements taken from the three principal mainstream Spanish radio broadcasters and collected 2 years apart (2019 and 2021), this study seeks to find out whether the Covid-19 health crisis has led to changes in the use of radio advertising as a vehicle for communicating organizations' CSR. To this end, the variables analyzed were the presence of CSR elements, advertiser, economic sector, CSR dimensions, beneficiary stakeholders, and communication area. The results show, among other data, that the communication of CSR through radio advertising has experienced significant growth after overcoming the worst moments of the pandemic. This growth indicates that companies are increasingly sensitive to issues related to CSR and that radio advertising has provided them with a way to publicize their socially responsible actions. It seems that corporations understand that credibility, trust, and a not inconsiderable penetration rate encourage the circulation of their CSR campaigns through the medium of radio.

Keywords

Audio communication; Advertising; Radio; Advertisers; CSR; Social responsibility; Corporate communication; Companies; Enterprises; Corporations; Evolution; Stakeholders; CSR dimensions; Covid-19; Pandemics: Organizations; Content analysis.

1. Introduction

On March 14, 2020, the Spanish government declared a state of alarm with the objective of minimizing the impact Covid-19 was going to have, most likely, on all parts of our society. From that moment, the business community undertook a series of actions to respond to the health emergency and provide solutions to cope with an unprecedented global, social, and financial crisis.

This situation has put social structures to the test (Xifra, 2020), representing a significant change in the business environment and marking a new era in the development of CSR (He; Harris, 2020). The relationship between the private and public sectors, the impact on work routines, and the social response to the resulting needs are areas of action that have been addressed by companies' corporate social responsibility (CSR) departments, which has made it necessary to strengthen the relationships between companies and their audiences.

Corporations have sought to strengthen ties with consumers and users, but also with a society that needs media content to find answers to a situation hitherto unknown. Companies and institutions, after the initial confusion, strengthened their points of contact with their audiences through the media. Radio was no exception. Its credibility, loyal audience, high penetration rate, and adaptability make it a useful tool for crisis situations:

“Radio can be a lifesaver in times of crisis and emergency (...) Radio can be useful in emergency response operations and help reconstruction” (Ki-Moon, 2016).

After the advent of the biggest pandemic to take place in the 21st century, a scenario emerged in which organizations' commitment to society gives CSR strategic value and in which advertising messages enhance the reach and awareness of responsible corporate actions. In this context, this research aims to find out whether radio has become a possible point of contact between organizations and citizens to broadcast organizations' responsible actions, especially after a period marked by the pandemic's impact. In short, this raises a question: how has the communication of corporations' CSR through radio advertising evolved in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis?

2. Corporate social responsibility

CSR is one of the intangible values of organizations that is undergoing increased development, especially in the business sphere. It has become a key factor in the agendas of companies of all types, and its importance in academia has increased (Sancllemente-Téllez, 2017), as has been covered by various national and international researchers, giving rise to differing definitions that lack consensus (Villagra, 2015; Sancllemente-Téllez, 2017). However, Barrio-Fraile and Enrique-Jiménez observed a series of items that are repeated when delimiting the concept of CSR and advocated for a definition that reflects the criteria that recur most frequently. Thus, they define CSR as

“the consequence of a voluntary commitment to all groups with a stake in economic, social, and environmental matters, with the aim of taking responsibility for the consequences and impacts of their actions and maximizing the creation of shared value for all stakeholders” [*“la consecuencia de un compromiso voluntario adoptado con todos sus grupos de interés en materia económica, social y medioambiental, con el objetivo de responsabilizarse de las consecuencias e impactos que derivan de sus acciones y maximizar la creación de valor compartido para todo el conjunto de stakeholders”*] (Barrio-Fraile; Enrique-Jiménez, 2015, p. 29).

Through CSR, organizations strive to respond to the overall interests of all their stakeholders, which is why its management requires the presence of a cross-sectional department in a company with a holistic understanding of the corporate vision and mission (Monfort; Villagra, 2016).

Radio’s credibility supports the organizations’ responsible messaging

When approaching CSR as a corporate strategy, it is necessary to focus its application on the three dimensions that Elkington (1998) defined as the “triple bottom line,” that is, the act of seeking the economic sustainability of the company while taking into account its social and environmental development. A description of each of the three dimensions is presented below, according to the work of De-la-Cuesta and Valor (2003) and Barrio-Fraile (2019).

The economic dimension of CSR refers to the search for efficiency and productivity, considering CSR actions that create value for all stakeholders. This dimension includes CSR actions aimed at creating benefits for employees by providing them, in many cases, with financial benefits, such as training programs and opportunities for professional development and promotion within the organization. For consumers, actions aimed at offering products and services at competitive prices, thereby facilitating access to the product, stand out. This dimension also includes those actions that promote a better quality of life for suppliers, helping them become more competitive in the market. As for the local community, this dimension includes all CSR actions that promote economic activity, such as advisory workshops and collaborative work with the local business network. Finally, initiatives that ensure the appropriate use of investors’ capital are also included in this dimension.

The social dimension consists of all those actions that aim to improve the well-being of the organization’s stakeholders. In relation to employees, this means those initiatives that promote work–life balance, such as teleworking or a flexible schedule; initiatives to improve occupational health and safety; and nondiscrimination and equal opportunities regardless of ideology, religion, gender, country of origin, or social status. For consumers, this covers actions aimed at improving the quality and accessibility of products or services. By way of illustration, here one can find actions such as offering healthy products or adapting a website for people with visual impairment. Also, those actions that seek to improve societal well-being, such as implementing awareness campaigns about the importance of a balanced diet or holding workshops for adolescents on the importance of self-esteem and self-acceptance, fall under this dimension.

Finally, the environmental dimension includes all those initiatives that contribute to the reduction of the environmental impact of the company’s economic activity. In this dimension are actions such as the use of sustainably sourced raw materials, the reduction of energy consumption, the reduction of water consumption throughout the value chain, the use of renewable energy sources, and even awareness campaigns for environmental sustainability. In relation to this last dimension, it is interesting to note how, during Covid-19, the prominence enjoyed by the environmental dimension, bolstered by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, shifted to the social dimension, a dimension that organizations backed more firmly during the worst moments of the health crisis (Barrio-Fraile; Enrique-Jiménez, 2021).

Another concept closely linked to the term CSR is “stakeholder.” Stakeholder theory has become the dominant paradigm in the study of CSR (Estanyol, 2020). Freeman (1984, p. 25) defined a stakeholder as

“any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives.”

Since then, corporate vision has changed from a model focused exclusively on maximizing shareholder benefits to one that views organizations as social entities comprising a wide variety of stakeholders whose interests must be taken into

Table 1. Criteria for the classification of stakeholders

Author	Stakeholder classification criteria
Svendsen (1998)	Differentiates between primary (directly related to the organization’s future) and secondary (can affect or be indirectly affected) stakeholders.
Dowling (2001)	Bases classification on criteria categorized as normative, functional, diffused, or a final group made up of customers.
Ibiate (2007)	Categorizes them as structural, management, or complementary.
Navarro (2008)	Classifies them as internal or external.
Freeman, Harrison, and Wicks (2008)	Redefine the classification of primary and secondary stakeholders.
Azuero (2009)	Differentiate between stakeholders who would lose something if the organization shut down, stakeholders who can influence the brand, and stakeholders who represent interests that can be affected by a company’s day-to-day operation.
Raghubir, Roberts, Lemon, and Winer (2010)	Distinguish between classic strategic marketing groups, internal groups, and external groups.
Bajo (2015)	Differentiate between primary stakeholders, without whom the business could not succeed, and secondary stakeholders, who are important but not crucial for the business.
Barrio-Fraile and Enrique-Jiménez (2018)	Propose distinguishing between beneficiaries and partners.

Source: based on Svendsen (1998); Dowling (2001); Ibiarte (2007); Navarro (2008); Freeman, Harrison, and Wicks (2008); Azuero (2009); Raghubir et al. (2010); Bajo (2015); and Barrio-Fraile and Enrique-Jiménez (2018).

consideration in business management (**Estanyol**, 2020; **Barrio-Fraile**, 2019; **Báez et al.**, 2018). To address all of these diverse interests, companies must identify their stakeholders and determine each one's needs. This aspect has been addressed by different authors, resulting in differing criteria for the identification and classification of stakeholders in an organization (**Orozco-Toro**; **Alzate**, 2018).

The importance of the last classification provided by **Barrio-Fraile** and **Enrique-Jiménez** (2018) lies in its differentiation between beneficiaries and partners. Beneficiary stakeholders are those stakeholders toward whom the organization directs its CSR actions, such as consumers, employees, suppliers, the local community, and society. Stakeholder partners are those stakeholders who work together with the company to implement various CSR actions, most notably nonprofit organizations, collaborating companies, public administration, distributors, and the media.

3. CSR communication

Villagra (2007) points out the misgivings that some companies express about CSR communication on account of its potentially instrumentalist objective, its sole purpose being to achieve a positive corporate image. These organizations are concerned that their audiences perceive CSR communication as purely superficial action. To this point, **Orozco-Toro** and **Ferré** (2013) explain that corporate greenwashing fails in the long term and that, to avoid the pitfall of CSR communication being seen as instrumentalist, it should be perceived as accountability, with transparency as a foundation. To this end, with the aim of having an impact on the various stakeholders, these authors are committed to the use of various media or channels for the dissemination of their CSR, such as reporting, patronage, mass media advertising, free press, accountability reports, sponsorships, blogs, direct client relationship campaigns, conferences, and management and "below the line" reports, among others.

Companies perceived as socially responsible have greater public support, which usually translates into positive behavior toward them (**Carreras**; **Alloza**; **Carreras**, 2013). In fact, organizations' responsible behavior has an impact on their reputation, which is why its management is crucial from a communicative standpoint (**Estanyol**, 2020). To carry out said communication, two factors are key: an organization's transparency (**Epstein**; **Birchard**, 2001; **Monfort**; **Villagra**; **López-Vázquez**, 2019) and the credibility of the actions being communicated (**Villagra**; **Cárdaba**; **Ruiz-San-Román**, 2016).

With respect to whether advertising represents an effective technique for communicating CSR, a change in trend has been noted. Whereas twenty years ago advertising was thought of as a controversial mode of publicizing CSR (**Dawkins**, 2004), in the last decade, organizations' responsible behavior has enriched traditional advertising campaigns with additional content (**Azuero**, 2009). For some companies that implement CSR plans, advertising has become a means of disseminating their corporate image and reputation (**Orozco-Toro**; **Roca**, 2011).

As reflected in the report published by *Dircom* in 2020, entitled *Communicating in times of pandemic [Comunicar en tiempos de pandemia]*, the Covid-19 health crisis has led companies to promote their more caring side by organizing initiatives that have helped counteract the pandemic's most serious effects. Companies have made public all their solidarity efforts. The *Dircom Association* stresses that this was not an attempt at self-promotion but rather at informing and communicating to society that the companies were there, providing support with their resources and paying special attention to what was happening. This report also indicates that companies have opted to create new narratives from a collaborative and constructivist approach, which makes even more sense when that communication's content is related to sustainability or CSR:

"Sustainability narratives are an excellent tool that allows us to consider people as resourceful citizens, who assist in building sustainability, and who transform attitudes of complaint or indignation into processes of collective construction. Through these new narratives, it is possible to move from fear to trust" [*Las narrativas en materia de sostenibilidad son una excelente herramienta que permiten considerar a las personas como ciudadanos con recursos, que ayudan en la construcción de la sostenibilidad, y que transforman actitudes de queja o indignación en procesos de construcción colectiva. A través de estas nuevas narrativas, se puede pasar del miedo a la confianza*] (*Dircom*, 2020, p. 61).

The study conducted by the *Association of Advertising Agencies of Spain [Asociación de Agencias de Publicidad de España]* (2021) confirms that the major brands have adapted their advertising to the crisis situation, opting for a more empathetic, engaged, and emotional message, and there has been an increase in advertising linked to CSR or companies' objectives. Whereas, in 2019, only 9% of the advertising campaigns analyzed were categorized as CSR, this figure increased to 33% by 2020.

In addition, a report by *Llorente y Cuenca* (2021) points out that consumers reward brands that understand that now is the moment for simple, meaningful ideas that have a positive impact on society. Therefore, consumers are becoming increasingly discerning, demanding the highest quality products as well as social commitment from brands. Environmental and social impact is becoming increasingly relevant at the time of purchase. In this "era of purpose," consumers are putting more pressure on brands by demanding greater coherence and representativeness, making brands take a stand on values and social phenomena with high environmental impact or footprint.

In short, we are witnessing a new way to advertise whose audience demands that companies be more connected to the *raison d'être* of the company than to appearances; this is why we consider it important and necessary to analyze and study how this new approach is being expressed through the medium of radio, which we believe, due to its intrinsic characteristics, is an appropriate means of communicating organizations' CSR.

CSR communication through radio advertising has experienced significant growth after overcoming the worst moments of the pandemic

4. Radio advertising

Perelló-Oliver and **Muela-Molina** (2013) define advertising as a persuasive activity whose main objective is to convince the target audience that, to satisfy a need, they must select a certain brand or product and, therefore, their creative components include rational arguments and emotional arguments that ultimately influence the purchase decision. In this sense, organizations implement ongoing communication strategies to connect with their audiences, with radio advertising being part of a long-established strategy that organizations use to communicate with their audiences through sound and the sense of hearing (**Barbeito-Veloso**; **Perona-Páez**, 2019).

Radio, the audio communication medium par excellence, is synonymous with companionship, proximity, warmth, immediacy, credibility, and imagination (**Balsebre et al.**, 2006). These distinctive characteristics of radio make it an ideal medium for credibly and reliably transmitting organizations' CSR through radio advertising. However, radio is undervalued by the advertising sector (**Barbeito-Veloso**; **Vázquez-Gestal**, 2000; **Barbeito-Veloso**; **Fajula-Payet**, 2005; **Perelló-Oliver**; **Muela-Molina**, 2013), which has been experiencing creative stagnation for decades, as reflected in the formats, in the message construction, in the use of sound language, and its informational and expressive potential (**Espinosa**; **Vico**, 2016; **Barbeito-Veloso**; **Perona-Páez**, 2019; **Fajula-Payet**; **Barbeito-Veloso**; **Perona-Páez**, 2021). This lack of interest is also evident in the importance given to radio studies in Spanish academia (**Piñeiro-Otero**, 2017).

On the other hand, as highlighted above, radio has credibility among listeners and remains, to this day, the medium that engenders the greatest trust in its audience (**Montaña-Blasco**; **Ollé-Castellà**; **Lavilla-Raso**, 2020). In addition, this sense of closeness favors an intimate and personal experience when listening to messages, which increases the audience's feelings of warmth and transparency. In this line, **Perona-Páez** (2007) also highlights the commitment of radio advertising to information as a guarantee of credibility, selling the product from reality, without enhancing fantasy, which makes it an appropriate setting to communicate companies' responsible behavior.

In regard to the effects that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on radio consumption, it should be noted that, in times of crisis, there is a general increase in audience in traditional media (*Havas Media Group*, 2020). This is due to citizens' need to be more informed, causing a rise in news consumption and, consequently, an increase in audience. Studies carried out in several countries have recorded an overall increase in radio consumption, both in the number of listening hours and in the number of listeners (**Rodero**; **Blanco**, 2020). There are two advantages to this medium that become relevant in difficult moments such as the one we have lived through: the psychological influence it exerts on listeners (**Rodero**, 2020) and the credibility of the medium (**Montaña-Blasco**; **Ollé-Castellà**; **Lavilla-Raso**, 2020). Regarding the latter aspect, these authors state that, although the consumption of radio to keep informed is not remarkable,

“this medium is considered to be the most credible, along with television” [“*este medio es considerado como el más creíble, conjuntamente con la televisión*”] (**Montaña-Blasco**; **Ollé-Castellà**; **Lavilla-Raso**, p. 155).

If concrete data are studied, according to the *General Framework for Media in Spain* [*Marco general de los medios en España*] report prepared by the *AIMC* (2022), radio has an audience of around 23 million listeners (22,775,000) and a penetration rate of 55.4%, which places it in fourth place, after the Internet, television, and the external environment. Further, if we analyze the level of trust that citizens have with respect to the media in general, for Spaniards, radio is the most trustworthy means of communication; 45% of Spaniards and 53% of Europeans believe so (*Eurobarometer*, winter 2020/2021). This fact is closely related to radio being a medium that, to date, has weathered crises with relative ease. **Madinaveitia** (2021) explains that, despite the fact that radio has always grown more moderately during periods of strong investment growth, when a crisis occurred and investment fell sharply, radio always fell less. This means that its performance has always been flatter than those of the market as a whole.

In short, based on the remarkable credibility of the radio medium compared with other media (**Perona-Páez**, 2007), as well as its audience's behavior and perception toward this audio medium during the pandemic, the foundations seem to be laid for an area conducive to communicating organizations' CSR through advertising. In this way, radio advertising and CSR can become productive partners, together positively impacting the messages conveyed to the organizations' stakeholders.

5. Research method

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on many areas of our lives. Companies and institutions have not been spared from this exogenous factor's impact on both their daily work and their communication. Taking this as a starting point, this research is based on one main objective: to analyze whether Covid-19 has brought about changes in the use of radio advertising as a vehicle to communicate organizations' CSR.

To achieve this main objective, the following research questions were posed:

- Q1: What percentage of advertising spots in the selected sample communicated or disclosed CSR actions?
 Q2: Which sectors and advertisers are most invested in communicating CSR through radio advertising?
 Q3: What dimensions of CSR are communicated most through radio advertisements?
 Q4: Who are the main beneficiary stakeholders of the CSR that is disseminated through radio advertising spots?
 Q5: To which area or field of communication are advertising spots concerning CSR confined?

To respond to these questions, a methodological design was proposed based on the quantitative content analysis of two representative samples of radio advertising spots, one corresponding to the year before the pandemic broke out, that is, 2019, and another collected after the worst waves of Covid-19 had been overcome, that is, 2021. **Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (1998)** point out that it is not possible to conduct a study on media without analyzing its content. In addition, as argued by **Perelló-Oliver and Muela-Molina**, two authors with extensive research experience in the Spanish radio advertising field, quantitative content analysis

“allows us to dissect the communicative product, examine it in detail to understand the internal structure of messages, its constituent elements and its operation to infer and interpret social phenomena” [*“permite diseccionar el producto comunicativo, examinarlo al detalle con el objeto de conocer la estructura interna de los mensajes, sus elementos constituyentes y su funcionamiento para inferir e interpretar los fenómenos sociales”*] (**Perelló-Oliver; Muela-Molina**, 2013, p. 35).

The two samples were obtained by recording contemporaneous advertising spots broadcast by the three principal mainstream Spanish broadcasters (*Cadena SER*, *COPE*, and *Onda Cero*). The broadcasters were chosen based on data provided by the *General Media Framework (Marco General de Medios)* of the *Association for Media Research (Asociación para la Investigación de los Medios de Comunicación)* (**AIMC**, 2021). With the purpose of making a comparison that would allow us to identify the changes that took place between the pre- and post-pandemic periods, the first sample was collected on February 4, 2019, while the second was recorded on November 8, 2021. These dates were chosen at random, avoiding periods in which advertising campaigns were significantly altered, such as the back-to-school season, Christmas, Easter, etc. In both cases, it was decided that advertisements that appeared during the 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. slot, which includes part of the primetime slot for radio in Spain, would be selected and analyzed (**AIMC**, 2019; 2021). A total of 562 spots were gathered, 239 in the first recording and 323 in the second, which were analyzed using an ad hoc template that allowed us to classify and categorize the different study variables. The table contains the following classification elements: year, broadcaster, time slot, presence of CSR content, advertiser, economic sector, CSR dimensions, beneficiary stakeholders, and communication area (Table 2).

Regarding the information presented on the analysis variables, it should be noted that the CSR dimensions variable has been studied following the works of **De-la-Cuesta and Valor (2003)** and **Barrio-Fraile (2019)**. The types of communication were established based on the proposal made by **Costa (2011)**, who presents a comprehensive communication model comprising three spheres (corporate communication, commercial communication, and internal communication). Internal communication has not been included in the typology because, upon analysis, we observed that this variable did not appear in the sample.

For the classification of economic sectors, the sectoral classification offered by *InfoAdex* was taken as a reference (Table 3).

Table 2. Variables for analysis

Years	2019 2021
Broadcasters	<i>SER</i> <i>COPE</i> <i>Onda Cero</i>
Time slots	9:00–10:00 a.m. 10:00–11:00 a.m. 11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
Presence of CSR content	Yes/No
Advertisers	
Economic sectors	<i>InfoAdex</i> sectors (Table 3)
CSR dimensions	Economic Environmental Social Combination (specify)
Beneficiary stakeholders	Consumers Employees Providers Local community Society Others
Types of communication	Corporate Commercial

Table 3. Classification of economic sectors

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Automotive 2. Distribution and foodservice 3. Finance 4. Telecommunications and internet 5. Food 6. Public and private services 7. Beauty and hygiene 8. Culture, education, and media 9. Beverages 10. Gambling and betting 11. Health 12. Transport, travel, and tourism 13. Home 14. Sports and leisure 15. Energy 16. Miscellaneous 17. Cleaning 18. Construction 19. Textiles and clothing 20. Industrial, equipment, agricultural 21. Office and retail supplies 22. Personal items 23. Tobacco 24. Unknown

Source: *InfoAdex* (2021).

The data obtained from this analysis allow us to understand the magnitude of advertising spots from the selected sample that publicize CSR actions, as well as which dimensions are communicated the most and the primary beneficiaries of these types of actions. In addition, considering that we are working with two samples obtained at two distinct times (pre-Covid and post-Covid), we are able to observe whether the pandemic has produced any kind of change in radio advertising campaigns that would qualify as CSR. A comparative study would allow us to compare whether there are a similar number of actions in both groups or whether there has been an increase or decrease in CSR-specific radio advertising spots.

6. Results

The communication of CSR through radio advertising experienced significant growth after overcoming the worst moments of the pandemic, according to the results of this study. In 2019, 6 spots were found in the total sample ($n = 239$), which means that only 2.5% of the ads incorporated CSR content, whereas in 2021, 35 out of a total of 323 analysis units, or 10.8% of the ads, were identified as such. This increase of just over 8 points indicates that organizations are opting, albeit tentatively, to promote their CSR messages on radio. In fact, although only 6 advertisers were broadcasting this type of content in 2019, this figure was three times higher in 2021, totaling 18 (Table 4). Regarding the number of campaigns issued in both years, in 2019, the 6 spots gathered correspond to 6 different advertising campaigns, whereas in 2021, the 35 advertising spots with CSR content represent 20 different advertising campaigns.

The analysis shows that *Sanitas* and the *Atresmedia* group are the two advertisers most committed to CSR communication, leading the 2021 ranking with a total of seven and five spots, respectively. Following *Sanitas* and *Atresmedia*, by a considerable margin, are *El Corte Inglés*, *J. García Carrión*, and *ONCE*, which broadcast CSR content in 2019 and 2021, albeit with only one radio advertising spot each. If we focus on the number of campaigns (Table 4), the *Atresmedia* group stands out by carrying out three different advertising campaigns in 2021, whereas the rest of the advertisers only carried out one, both before and after Covid-19.

Table 4. Advertisers who publicize CSR initiatives

Data by number of spots				Data by number of campaigns			
Year 2019 (6 spots)		Year 2021 (35 spots)		Year 2019 (6 campaigns)		Year 2021 (20 campaigns)	
Economic sectors	No. of spots	Economic sectors	No. of campaigns	Economic sectors	No. of campaigns	Economic sectors	No. of campaigns
<i>Atresmedia</i>	1	<i>Sanitas</i>	7	<i>Atresmedia</i>	1	<i>Atresmedia</i>	3
<i>El Corte Inglés</i>	1	<i>Atresmedia</i>	5	<i>El Corte Inglés</i>	1	<i>Balay</i>	1
<i>Repsol Foundation</i>	1	<i>Banco Sabadell</i>	3	<i>Repsol Foundation</i>	1	<i>Banco Sabadell</i>	1
<i>J. García Carrión</i>	1	<i>Bankinter</i>	3	<i>J. García Carrión</i>	1	<i>Bankinter</i>	1
<i>Corsa Group</i>	1	<i>Balay</i>	2	<i>Corsa Group</i>	1	<i>Bosch</i>	1
<i>ONCE</i>	1	<i>CaixaBank</i>	2	<i>ONCE</i>	1	<i>CaixaBank</i>	1
		<i>Ibercaja</i>	2			<i>El Corte Inglés</i>	1
		<i>Bosch</i>	1			<i>Factorenergía</i>	1
		<i>El Corte Inglés</i>	1			<i>Fenie Energía</i>	1
		<i>Factorenergía</i>	1			<i>Novo Nordisk Group</i>	1
		<i>Fenie Energía</i>	1			<i>Ibercaja</i>	1
		<i>Novo Nordisk Group</i>	1			<i>J. García Carrión</i>	1
		<i>J. García Carrión</i>	1			<i>Mercado Organic</i>	1
		<i>Mercado Organic</i>	1			<i>Mutua Madrileña</i>	1
		<i>Mutua Madrileña</i>	1			<i>ONCE</i>	1
		<i>ONCE</i>	1			<i>Panasonic</i>	1
		<i>Panasonic</i>	1			<i>Repsol</i>	1
		<i>Repsol</i>	1			<i>Sanitas</i>	1

The increase in radio advertising with CSR content, of course, implies an increase in the economic sectors concerned, from six in 2019 to nine in 2021. Although, in absolute numbers, this change is not significant, the percentage increase in terms of sectors is 50%. The sectors present in the two time periods studied are Culture, education, and media; Gambling and betting; and Energy. In 2021, Finance, a sector that accounts for 10 of the 35 spots observed, and Health, with 8 spots, had a very strong showing. Table 5 also shows that the Culture, education, and media sector went from one spot in 2019 to five in 2021, while Energy also experienced notable growth, increasing from one to four. The other emerging sectors in 2021 were, in this order, Home (with three advertisements), Food (two), Public and private services (one),

and Transport, travel, and tourism (one). If we analyze the behavior of the different sectors in relation to the number of campaigns, the sectors with the highest number of campaigns are Finance (with four different campaigns), Energy (four), and Culture, education, and media (three).

Table 5. Economic sectors that disseminate CSR initiatives

Data by number of spots				Data by number of campaigns			
Year 2019 (6 spots)		Year 2021 (35 spots)		Year 2019 (6 campaigns)		Year 2021 (20 campaigns)	
Advertisers	No. of spots	Advertisers	No. of campaigns	Advertisers	No. of campaigns	Advertisers	No. of campaigns
Distribution and foodservice	1	Finance	10	Distribution and foodservice	1	Finance	4
Culture, education, and media	1	Health	8	Culture, education, and media	1	Energy	4
Beverages	1	Culture, education, and media	5	Beverages	1	Culture, education, and media	3
Gambling and betting	1	Energy	4	Gambling and betting	1	Food	2
Energy	1	Home	3	Energy	1	Health	2
Miscellaneous	1	Food	2	Miscellaneous	1	Home	2
		Public and private services	1			Public and private services	1
		Gambling and betting	1			Gambling and betting	1
		Transport, travel, and tourism	1			Transport, travel, and tourism	1

In the midst of the pandemic, the economy, employment, and health were what most worried Spaniards (*Wunderman Thompson, 2020*). What is most striking about this study is that, after the worst stretch of the pandemic, the economy (finance sector), health, and culture/education, those sectors encompassing three of the aspects traditionally most valued by society as a whole, take very prominent positions in terms of the number of radio advertising spots.

This is consistent with the increase in the social dimension of advertisements that publicize CSR actions (Figure 1). Whereas in 2019 this dimension was present in 50% of campaigns that opted to publicize CSR initiatives, it is present in 70% of campaigns of this type in 2021. On the other hand, the environmental dimension decreased by 15%, from 50% of advertisements that publicized some type of CSR to only 35%. The economic dimension, which, according to data provided by the *Wunderman Thompson (2020)* study, is an element that worries Spaniards, remained stable in this study, at around 35%, in the two periods analyzed.

It is also interesting to note how some advertisers opted to communicate

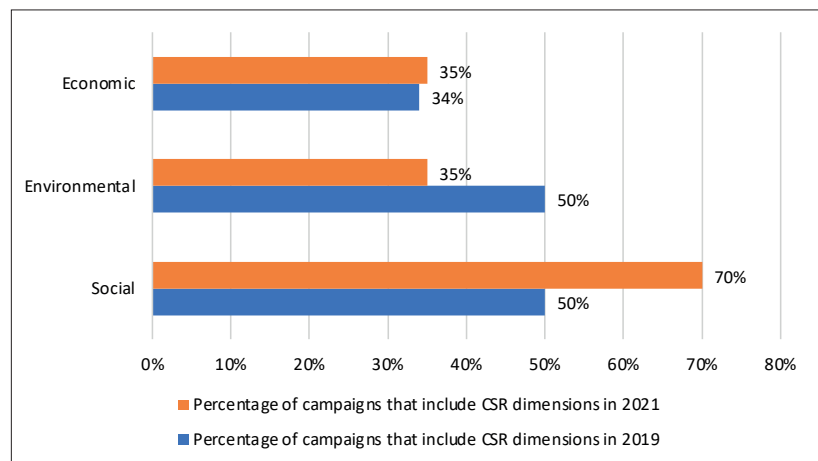


Figure 1. The presence of all three dimensions in campaigns with CSR content

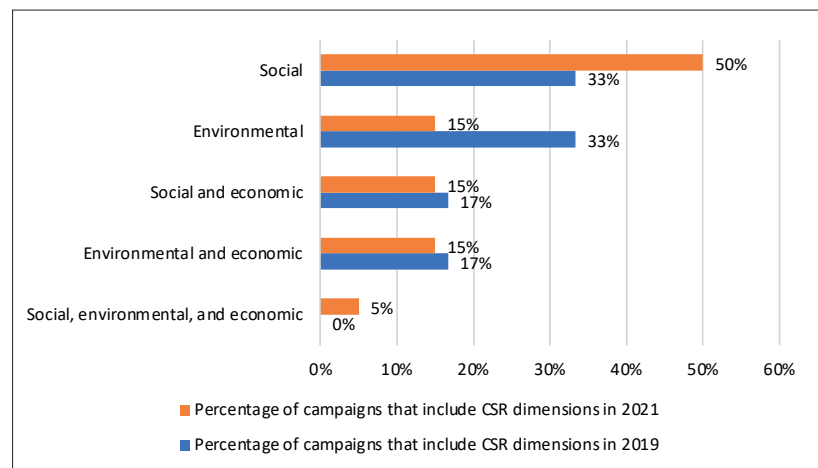


Figure 2. CSR dimensions present in CSR campaigns

more than one dimension of CSR. Figure 2 shows that, in 2019 and 2021, around 65–66% of advertisers that publicized their CSR through radio advertising opted to communicate a single dimension of CSR, be it social or environmental. On the other hand, 30–34% communicated two dimensions of CSR –social and economic or environmental and economic– so the economic dimension is never communicated in isolation, only in conjunction with the social or environmental dimension. In 2021, an advertisement that encompassed the three dimensions of CSR was found, as well.

As for the stakeholders targeted by CSR actions communicated through radio advertising (Figure 3), in both years, consumers and society were the focus, whereas other important CSR audiences, such as employees, did not appear in the advertisements analyzed. The most significant data related to stakeholders was the increase in CSR advertisements that communicated actions that benefit consumers, from 33% to 45%.

Another very remarkable aspect of this research is that the transmission of CSR content no longer seems to be an action unique to corporate communication; rather, the data reflect an upward trend in the use of commercial communication to publicize CSR actions. Before Covid-19, the predominant type of advertising used to communicate CSR was related to corporate communication (67% of cases), compared with 33% of advertising linked to commercial communication. In contrast, after Covid-19, commercial advertising accounted for 70% of campaigns with CSR content.

7. Discussion and conclusions

The pandemic has had an impact on media consumption habits. Television, official statements, and the online press, in this order, have been the channels used most to stay informed about the spread of the virus. Although radio is not one of the top dogs as far as most consumed media, it did overtake television as the medium that engenders the most trust (Rodero, 2020; Montaña-Blasco; Ollé-Castellà; Lavilla-Raso, 2020). Therefore, as Balsebre *et al.* (2006) and Perona-Páez (2007) pointed out, at present, audio content continues to maintain its long-established credibility in the face of the message saturation and multiple offerings that provide greater access to the population.

Aware of this, organizations approach radio as a communication tool. Its credibility is precisely what justifies broadcasting advertising messages via this medium that, despite not reaching the massive audience levels of others, maintains a penetration rate of around 50% and loyal listeners.

Corporations seem to understand that credibility, trust, and a not inconsiderable penetration rate encourage the dissemination of their CSR campaigns through the medium of radio. At a time when society is looking for solutions and needs answers, companies and institutions are relying on radio to show their commitment to their external stakeholders.

In relation to the first research question (Q1), the increase in spots with CSR content is notable if we take 2019, before the pandemic, and 2021, after a year of living with the virus, as reference points. The increase in the number of such spots from 2.5% to 10.8% shows a remarkable growth trend. These data coincide with those provided by the study prepared by the *Spanish Associa-*

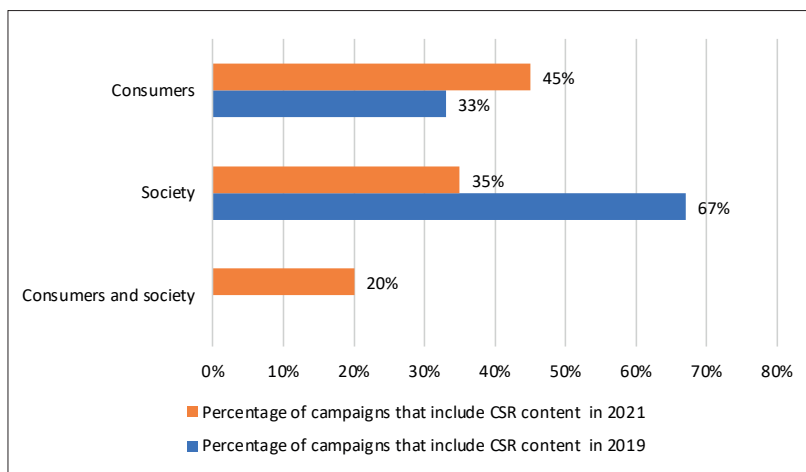


Figure 3. Stakeholders benefiting from CSR actions publicized through radio advertising

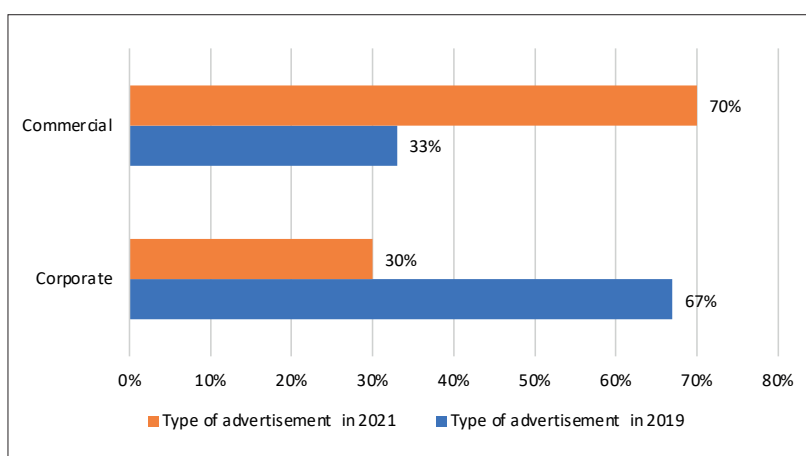


Figure 4. Communication area for advertisements with CSR content

At a time when society is looking for solutions and needs answers, companies and institutions are relying on radio to show their commitment to their external stakeholders

tion of Advertising Agencies (*Asociación de Agencias de Publicidad de España*; 2021), which reflect the increase in CSR advertising campaigns in the media. Therefore, it can be said that radio follows media's general trend toward an increase in advertising with CSR content.

“ The stakeholders targeted by CSR actions communicated through radio advertising are consumers and society ”

The increase in the number of spots has been accompanied by a threefold increase in the number of advertisers, from 6 to 18. These are advertisers who, answering the second question (Q2), are mainly spread across the Healthcare, Finance, and Media sectors, with *Atresmedia* as the leading advertiser, leveraging its radio platform, *Onda Cero*, as a loudspeaker for its awareness campaigns.

In response to Q3, the research shows, as **Barrio-Fraile** and **Enrique-Jiménez** (2021) pointed out, that the social dimension is growing compared with 2019 and has taken the lead, overtaking the environmental and economic dimensions. The pandemic's impact may explain this trend. It seems that Covid-19 has led organizations to focus on enhancing those intangible aspects most related to people's quality of life through their radio advertising. It will be interesting to see whether this trend takes hold or whether, once the pandemic is over, the economic and environmental dimensions will regain ground and recover their leading roles in CSR radio campaigns.

Regarding the stakeholders targeted by CSR actions communicated through radio advertising (Q4), it is interesting to note the absence of such relevant stakeholders as employees, suppliers, or local communities in CSR material. In both years, these types of communications focused their messages on actions that primarily benefited the consumer, without neglecting actions aimed at society in general. This could be explained by the fact that companies use other, more internal means to communicate CSR actions targeted at employees or suppliers, but it could also be a reflection of the data provided by *Llorente y Cuenca* (2021), which indicate that we are dealing with an increasingly discerning consumer who demands quality products and social commitment from companies, that is, CSR for consumers and society. Since radio is a complementary medium at the advertising level, the shift in the type of audience targeted by the campaigns analyzed should be understood in general terms; in other words, consumers, rather than society, are addressed first and foremost owing to strategic criteria at the organizations' communicative level.

Regarding the final research question (Q5), it is interesting to observe how the borders between the commercial and corporate communication areas converge. Thus, if traditionally the CSR dimensions were linked to a more corporate type of communication, the pandemic has accelerated the process by which CSR has leaked into messages usually described as more commercial. These results coincide with the trend indicated by the study of *Llorente y Cuenca* (2021), which highlighted the existence of an increasingly discerning public that rewards brands' social commitment, so it would be logical that consumers' demand for this company profile leads to increased commercial advertising about CSR to provide another argument or benefit for their purchasing decisions.

This research is not without limitations. The first comes from the geographical scope of the study itself, which was conducted in Spain; therefore, it would be interesting to replicate this research in other countries. The second and primary limitation of the research is the final number of advertising spots analyzed. Although it is true that a total of 562 spots were collected (239 in 2019 and 323 in 2021), only 41 of them (6 in 2019 and 35 in 2021) had CSR content. This figure is very small for a detailed statistical analysis, but it is enough to show a trend toward organizations' increased use of radio advertising to communicate CSR. Therefore, the objective of the investigation has been fulfilled. In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, radio advertisements with CSR content have increased. Some companies have decided to communicate their more social side, and what is most significant is that they do so through their commercial communications.

Despite the limitations mentioned above, the results obtained represent an advance in the study of the use of radio advertising as a vehicle to communicate organizations' more social and sustainable sides, which lays the groundwork for the development of future research. The research presented paves the way for further work on the usefulness of radio as a medium for corporations' CSR messages. Continuing this line of work will make it possible to determine whether the data provided are due to a one-off situation stemming from the pandemic's effects or whether this marks a turning point, indicating that organizations understand that radio can offer special features that help their messages reach a certain audience profile.

“ Covid-19 has caused organizations to focus on strengthening CSR's social dimension at the expense of the environmental dimension ”

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