Corporate Social Responsibility on Social Media:
A Scoping Review of the Literature

I. INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a strategic priority for virtually all businesses (WEF, 2020); it is therefore essential for companies to ensure CSR information is effectively communicated to their specific audiences (Kim, 2019; Tata & Prasad, 2015). The popularity of the term CSR – with respect to some other terms such as 'sustainability' – in the academic literature has been documented by prior studies (Christensen et al., 2021; Huang & Watson, 2015) and it denotes corporate activities and policies that encompass a firm's responsibility for its impacts on society and the environment (Christensen et al., 2021).

From an economic perspective, CSR may offer many benefits to companies investing in CSR activities to improve shareholder wealth and the value of the firm. Hence, firms incorporate social and environmental aspects into their strategies for the potential impact associated with their CSR performance (Awaysheh et al., 2020; Bénabou & Tirole, 2010; Eccles et al., 2014). Examples of CSR-associated benefits include improved trust and social capital (Lins et al., 2017), better company reputation and increased customer awareness and loyalty; these improvements enhance competitiveness and attract new customers (especially socially conscious customers and/or "green" customers) leading to enhanced profitability (Flammer, 2015). From an institutional perspective, firms make investments (Liang & Renneboog, 2017; McWilliams & Siegel, 2001) that benefit society by complying with regulations and protecting their reputation (Marcus & Fremeth, 2009). Such investments represent attempts to conform to societal boundaries and behave legitimately by trying to meet

the needs of a wider set of stakeholders, even if potentially detrimental to the economic interests of shareholders (Bénabou & Tirole, 2010; Moser & Martin, 2012).

Nevertheless, engaging in CSR and 'doing the right thing' do not ensure that a company receives credit for it: communicating the right topic to the right audience over the right channel is, therefore, essential to generate value for both businesses and stakeholders (Seele & Lock, 2015). Although the recent literature reports evidence of the growing importance of alternative means to communicate CSR activities (i.e. social media – e.g. Chu et al., 2020; Fernandez et al., 2022), so far, the most popular medium used by companies to communicate their CSR efforts has been the CSR or sustainability report, being therefore the most researched form of CSR communication (Fifka, 2013; Fatima and Elbanna, 2022). In most cases, these reports are designed as print or online magazines, often with opening letters from the CEO and featuring financial and non-financial information about the CSR activities of the company (Tengblad & Ohlsson, 2010).

CSR reports (Christensen et al., 2021) are generally released to reduce the information asymmetry between the firm and the public regarding social and environmental aspects of the business (Christensen, 2015; Dhaliwal et al., 2011; Matsumura et al., 2013). They contain a segmentation of the firm's CSR activities and performance, risks, and actions to help boards of directors and shareholders in monitoring executive managers and correct certain undesired behaviour, such as misconduct, poor investments, and misleading disclosures (Christensen, 2015). According to KPMG, in 2022, 96 percent of the 250 largest global corporations and 79 percent of the 100 largest companies across 58 different countries and regions issue some form of ESG or sustainability reporting [1]. However, only corporate activists and a few other

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[1] KPMG Survey of sustainability reporting 2022; retrieved from https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/se/pdf/komm/2022/Global-Survey-of-Sustainability-Reporting-2022.pdf; consulted on June 06, 2024.

stakeholders (i.e. regulators, NGOs, and investors), who are considered vigilant about any negative corporate impact or CSR-related business opportunities, are likely to appreciate and scrutinise the information contained in CSR reports (Kramer, 2018).

The rise of social media tapped into the need to effectively (Kim, 2019) engage with different stakeholders (e.g. Saxton et al., 2020) on different topics (Kramer, 2018) possibly conveying the right message to the right audience. In fact, social media (e.g. Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) gave important life-blood to communication, reshaping the paradigms of dialogue between businesses and consumers, empowering internet users, and creating the basis for dialogic communication between firms and their customers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Thanks to its interactive (i.e. two-way) nature (Fatma et al., 2020), social media has become a very interesting tool for engaging directly with a variety of different stakeholders (Saxton et al., 2020), including those audiences not familiar with CSR reports that are publicly disclosed on companies' websites (Christensen, 2015; Derchi et al., 2020). Information is spread on networks and the dialogic nature of the media (Zizka, 2017), along with its accessibility (Marcela Suarez-Rico et al., 2018), brings a new dimension to traditional CSR communication (Kim et al., 2014). Following Seele and Lock (2015), it is possible to say that social media are recognized as deliberative published tools for CSR communication as they foster open discourse, participation, and transparency. Thus, social media can be seen as a complementary communication effort with respect to the more traditional CSR reports in use (Fifka, 2013) that apply a one-way, non-dialogic communication model. However, extant research on virtual CSR dialogue has proven to be challenging because it lies at the intersection of two largely separate literature streams: CSR and its reporting practices (Christensen, 2015) and social media communication (Korschun & Du, 2013).

Over the last fifteen years, academics and practitioners alike have increasingly engaged in fundamental and applied research accumulating knowledge about the nature, the effects, and the drivers of CSR communication on social media (e.g. Fatma et al., 2020). This body of research aimed to generate a better understanding of these communication practices shedding lights on key characteristics and the reasons of their efficacy/failure (e.g. Eren-Erdoımuš et al., 2013). This phase of knowledge development shares some characteristics with the concept of "normal science" mentioned by Sims (1996 – p.112): "textbooks are written and frameworks developed; researchers pose and solve puzzles; and there is a general sense of powerful theories and methods being extended to cover unexplored areas of application". However, this vast and growing academic literature has produced sparse and unstructured evidence, making it difficult to synthesize the key concepts. Consequently, the nature of CSR communication on social media (e.g. Kent & Taylor, 2016), along with its scope (e.g. Saxton et al., 2020) and actual strategies (e.g. Etter, 2014; Kim et al., 2014), remains blurred and not entirely codified. Following Loureiro & Lopes (2019), if a concept remains ambiguous, ill-defined, and lacks clear boundaries, knowledge cannot evolve properly, creating a fragmented proliferation of viewpoints and a gradual disappearance (Goldman & Grinstein, 2010). This lack of clarity may affect the quality of future academic research that will leverage prior knowledge, as well as influence firms' sub-optimal use of CSR communication on social media with neutral or even negative effects on performance (e.g. Kiessling et al., 2016). On this matter, academic literature and anecdotal evidence show a proliferation of misinterpretations of social media usage in CSR (e.g. broadcasting vs interactive communication - Etter, 2014), along with debatable practices (e.g. greenwashing - Lyon & Montgomery, 2013) used by businesses to engage (or often not to engage – e.g. Colleoni, 2013) with target audiences. This represents a common issue affecting both large firms (e.g. Kim et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2013) and small businesses in different sectors (e.g. Zizka, 2017). Hence, more research is needed to generate a better

understanding of the nature of CSR communication on social media to guide how to implement and assess CSR communication effectively through social media.

This study contributes to filling this research gap by presenting a scoping review (Munn et al., 2018) of the published academic literature related to CSR and social media. A thorough analysis of the literature indicates that extant research has provided many relevant insights into the various aspects of social media communication used by organizations to manage CSR issues. The research elaborates on the increasing enthusiasm and consensus regarding the role of social media in implementing CSR strategies (e.g. Kent & Taylor, 2016), providing researchers and practitioners with opportunities to explore innovative theories and models that may help better explain applications of CSR communication on social media. This work also has practical implications as it is informative for business leaders and regulators about how companies should utilise social media for effective CSR communication. Furthermore, it provides insights of high relevance for organizations given the central and ever-increasing role of social media communication in strategy implementation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), especially in engaging targeted audiences such as customers and employees (Chu et al., 2020).

The following section introduces the methodology used to select relevant studies whilst the result section is organized to reflect the research objectives.

II. RESEARCH DESIGN

To tackle the aim of this research, a scoping review (Munn et al., 2018) of existing academic literature was performed, to identify key theoretical concepts and applications associated with CSR on social media. The general purpose of conducting a scoping review was to identify and map the evidence available in a field of interest in terms of volume, nature, and key characteristics (Munn et al., 2018; Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). In general, scoping

literature reviews are suitable 'to map the key concepts underpinning a research area and the main sources and types of evidence available, and can be undertaken as stand-alone projects in their own right, especially where an area is complex or has not been reviewed comprehensively before' (Mays et al., 2001 p. 194). In recent years, running a systematic review has become an increasingly popular approach for synthesizing research evidence (Daudt et al., 2013; Linnenluecke et al., 2020).

In this study, the scope of the review was determined based on academic research on CSR and social media published between 2005 (roughly when the first articles about social media appeared) and June 2020 (when the review was performed). Existing literature was reviewed qualitatively to identify the main research streams that developed over time and share a distinct definition, theory, or understanding of CSR communication on social media (Linnenluecke 2017). Accordingly, the analysis was structured around the following three main streams:

(i)   the nature of CSR communication on social media;

(ii)   the key strategies and tactics of CSR communication on social media; and

(iii)   the impact of CSR communication on social media

In order to run an exhaustive search and find relevant studies at the intersection of CSR and social media, three major databases hosting peer-reviewed publications were queried using Boolean searchers: Scopus, Ebsco Business Source Complete and Web of Science. Within these databases, I queries were conducted for publications with the terms 'CSR and Social Media' and 'Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Media' in the title, abstracts, or keywords (Linnenluecke 2017). Following Statista (Most Used Social Media, 2020), popular social media names were added as keyword input: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, WeChat, and Sina Weibo (pewresearch.org, 2018). The generic term 'social media' was maintained in the query to ensure more inclusive results (as there could be other social media

than the ones inserted in the specific query). To clarify our search strategy, we provide an example of keywords built to query the targeted databases below:

TITLE-ABS ("CSR" OR "corporate social responsibility") AND

TITLE-ABS ("social media" OR "Facebook" OR "Instagram" OR

"Twitter" OR "YouTube" OR "WeChat" OR "Sina Weibo")

Identification, Screening and Selection of the Studies

Searches on the three databases resulted in a sample of 853 studies: 282 from Scopus, 228 from Ebsco Business Source Complete and 343 from Web of Science. Then, a detailed screening process to reach the final set of articles for inclusion in our systematic review was applied (Figure 1 summarises the sample selection process based on – Page et al., 2020). In the identification stage, moving from 853 records, 480 duplicates were removed. In the screening stage, the remaining 373 studies were screened and only those using the terms 'CSR' or 'Corporate Social Responsibility', along with mention of social media and/or any social media in the original query in the title, abstracts, or keywords were considered. The remaining 373 studies were manually screened by two authors, who selected only peer-reviewed publications, checked the title, abstract, and keywords of each study, and looked at the full text to determine its suitability for inclusion in the review (Linnenluecke 2017). This cleaning procedure was employed to identify only the set of rigorous academic studies focusing on the topic under scrutiny, discarding the ones that only had scant focus on the matter. As a result, 140 studies were selected. Finally, papers not in English (i.e. Reason 1 in Figure 1 – n= 27) and papers not accessible (i.e. Reason 2 in Figure 1 – n= 35) were discarded resulting in a final sample of 78 papers to include in the review.

--Insert FIGURE 1 about here--

Despite practical limits on the number of studies included, authors believe that performing a scoping review allowed the selection of a sample that contains a broad diversity of CSR and social media research published in English, covering the relevant literature, and eventually informing research agendas (Linnenluecke et al. 2020).

III.   SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Based on prior research on systematic literature reviews (Linnenluecke 2017; Linnenluecke et al. 2020), this section analyses the main publication trends and provides a qualitative map of existing academic knowledge on the interplay between CSR and social media in business and management research.

Among the selected academic publications (n=78), the most represented academic outlet is Public Relations Review (n=9), followed by the Journal of Business Ethics (n=8), Journal of Business Research (n=5), and Corporate Social Responsibility & Environmental Management (n=4). Table 1 displays the summary of publications appearing more than once (i.e. n>=2) in the sample. Taking them together, these outlets (n=38) account for 49% of the overall sample, indicating that, so far, academic knowledge on the interplay between CSR and social media is relatively sparse across several journals with only a few outlets showing a stronger concentration and, therefore, interest for the topic. It is interesting to note that, despite the popularity of the topic, only one journal in table 1 belongs to the top tier of journals (i.e. Journal of Business Ethics - 50 Journals Used in FT Research Rank, 2012). Nonetheless, all the journals selected are published by reputable publishers such as Emerald (n=3), Science Direct (n=2), Taylor and Francis (n=2), Wiley and Springer (n=1 respectively), except for one outlet which is an open access journal with an established peer review system.

--Insert TABLE 1 about here--

Articles in the sample span from 2012 with only 1 (n=1) paper found on the subject, through to 2020 (n=12) with a pick of publications in 2019 (n=19). The increasing trend of publications confirms the newness of this field of research as well as the stronger attention given by academic scholars to CSR-oriented communication through social media, especially in the last five years. This trend is in line with the rising diffusion of social media across firms in the period analysed, as documented by 40% of European companies using social media in 2016 and over 60% in 2021[2].

As displayed in Figure 2, we also found that almost all papers discussed CSR topics and practices on Facebook.com and Twitter.com (n=77) with other social media lagging behind. This evidence can be due to Facebook.com and Twitter being amongst the oldest platforms to provide publicly accessible text-based information, and therefore easier to access and examine by academic scholars.

--Insert FIGURE 2 about here--

For what concerns the theoretical underpinning of the examined researches, most papers contribute to the broad communication landscape (n=48) and add to the marketing and management literature (n=22). In addition, the great majority of these studies mix different theories and sector-specific arguments (e.g. hospitality and tourism) with the lens of sustainability (e.g. stakeholders theory n=72).

Additionally, the papers analysed use a very diverse range of methodological approaches to investigate the issue under their scrutiny. As displayed in Figure 3, the most popular methodologies include content analyses (n=29), survey designs (n=13), mixed-method

approaches (n=11), and narrative reviews (9), with the remaining studies being roughly equally

distributed among case studies, social network analyses and experimental design

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Developments in CSR Communication and Social Media Research

This section summarizes the main research streams identified through the qualitative

review of the selected publications. For each research stream, the study examines emerging

research trends and defines gaps to integrate existing knowledge.

The Nature of CSR Communication on Social Media

The analysed papers generally praised the advent of social media as a tool that completely

reshaped communication between stakeholders and organizations (Tuan & Moretti, 2017).

Related to this evidence, Kim et al. (2014) illustrated that, also from a digital point of view,

both strategies and outcomes of CSR communication on website and on social media are

radically different. In fact, traditional CSR communication on corporate websites (i.e. based

on CSR reporting) does not produce direct involvement and awareness as an outcome (Loureiro

& Lopes, 2019) because CSR reports are built for a specific set of stakeholders who will use

them essentially to inform their independent decisions regarding the company. On the contrary,

social media communication is seen as creating easy access (Suarez-Rico et al., 2018) two-way

(Fatma et al., 2020; Zizka, 2017) symmetric communication (Kollat & Farache, 2017) able to

produce a networking effect (Yang et al., 2020) and possibly diminish obstructive word-of-

mouth in cases of negative occurrences like product failure (Vo et al., 2019).

Moreover, there is no real consensus on the quantity of CSR-related posts on social media

for the business under investigation. Kucukusta et al., (2019) estimated that only 5% of the

entire communication over social media is related to CSR while Okazaki et al. (2019) assed

this to be around 3.1%; Shu-Chuan Chu & Chen (2019) reported that fewer than 20% of

messages analysed portrayed CSR-related activities. This evidence confirms the adoption by organisations of various definitions of CSR, as well as multiple and diverging understandings of CSR issues (Berg et al. 2022).

Overall, social media communication is perceived to be more trustworthy due to its perceived transparency (Dunn & Harness, 2018). In line with this argument, some studies show that organizations are investing in CSR communication on social media (Oh & Ki, 2019) with brands creating cutting-edge CSR content (Okazaki et al., 2019) to serve a variety of different stakeholders and somehow democratize access to sustainability information (Nwagbara, 2013). Accordingly, social media communication can be used to encourage inclusive stakeholders' engagement (Bhattacharya et al., 2008) to collaboratively build CSR frameworks and a shared understanding (Capriotti, 2011). In fact, through social media, businesses are broadening the public they interact with (Saxton et al., 2019) and they are, to some extent, obliged to pay more attention and include in their decisions (at least in part) the voices of individual citizens who have been empowered by social media usage and therefore can demonstrate a greater sense of power and urgency (Kim & Youm, 2017). These 'diffused stakeholders' (Saxton et al., 2020) represent new sets of audiences for firms engaging in CSR and possibly need different communication strategies. These audiences can even be involved in the implementation of CSR activities, such as spreading the word and sharing on social media (Korschun & Du, 2013) and co-creating the actual meaning and image associated with the CSR initiatives (Burton et al., 2017).

A series of studies examined the communication strategies of organizations that are engaging in social media with CSR content (e.g. Chu et al., 2020; Etter, 2014; Farivar & Scott-Ladd, 2016). These works particularly highlighted the debate between the broadcasting and engagement nature of communication (Okazaki et al., 2019). Colleoni (2013) posited that

interaction and engagement do not result in higher commonality towards CSR content, claiming that, even in a dialogic context, companies still see CSR communication on social media as a marketing activity. Etter (2014) proposed a strategic CSR communication framework based on three specific corporate behaviours: (i) the broadcasting strategy, a one-way communication strategy where there is no real relationship commitment among the parties; (ii) the reactive strategy, a two-way communication based on answers to specific questions, where the company often risks being perceived as a passive actor poorly committing to a transparent relationship with stakeholders; (iii) the engagement strategy where companies are proactive in seeking interactivity with stakeholders, supporting communication and relationship commitment. A recent study by Chu et al., (2020) asserted that stakeholders' attitudes towards CSR had no direct impact on consumers' engagement with CSR communication in social media. However, they performed a network analysis and found that both strong and weak ties had a positive influence on eWOM behaviours (Fatma et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Kim et al. (2014) found that in a sample of Fortune 100 firms, 44% of the analysed CSR-related Facebook.com posts presented a call to action (i.e. an explicit attempt to foster engagement with the audience). Moreover, general results show that the majority of companies publishing CSR content in social media tend to broadcast information rather than engaging with stakeholders online (Manetti & Bellucci, 2016; Okazaki et al., 2019; Kollat & Farache, 2017). These results challenge the assumption that CSR communication on social media is symmetric (Etter, 2013) and brings co-creation (Burton et al., 2017). In addition, some studies documented empirically that the platform where content is published plays a significant role and shapes the level of consumers' engagement on social media. In particular, while Facebook.com and Twitter.com seem to drive engagement (Manetti & Bellucci, 2016), YouTube.com is used more as a uni-directional broadcasting channel (Chu et al., 2020).

Therefore, these findings show that although social media communication should be designed for interaction and engagement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), most of organisations do not seem to be ready to respond to regular users about CSR-related content (Kollat & Farache, 2017). On this matter, Bellucci and Manetti (2017) examined the level and type of corporate interaction on social media and found a low level of interaction across firms with only 25% of social media analysed having more than 2 comments per post on average. As a result, businesses seem to be aware of the power of social media in generating engagement but empirical evidence demonstrates poor interaction related to CSR content on social media (Zizka, 2017).

Arguably, this (mis)behaviour could be reconnected to a series of reasons. First, organizations might be reluctant to engage deeply in social media because of possible criticism and attacks from different audiences which can affect negatively their online reputation (Etter, 2013; Kollat & Farache, 2017; Dutot et al., 2016). Second, there could be a set of issues related to trust in corporate behaviour and an organization's credibility. For example, CSR contents evoking mostly positive evaluation of the company's behaviours are often proven not to increase the organization's credibility (Eberle et al., 2013), thereby resulting in perceived self-sponsorship and self-promotion (Kollat & Farache, 2017). Third, companies not perceived as being (prior to social media exposure) socially responsible could attract accusations of window-dressing whereas their use of social media is seen as a tool to reduce window-dressing possibilities (Dutot et al., 2016; Reilly & Larya, 2018). The latter argument is of particular interest given that previous studies showed that new media innovation seems to favour disproportionally firms with high CSR credibility wanting to maintain a genuine commitment with stakeholders as compared to firms with low CSR credibility (Lee et al., 2013).

In addition, the analysed papers show that both stakeholders and firms display very different types and levels of interaction in CSR communication with the relative power of the

interacting party representing the factor influencing mostly these relationships (Saxton et al., 2020). In particular, stakeholders with higher centrality in the network are likely to receive more attention from the firm, while organizations showing more responsible behaviour receive more attention from social media users (Saxton et al., 2019). In summary, stakeholder voice is driven more by the firm's CSR level than by the content of its CSR communication (Lee et al., 2013).

Key Strategies and Tactics of CSR Communication on Social Media

Examined literature showed that, when exposed to messages with CSR content, consumers often try to understand when a given company publishes a self-service campaign serving inner motives, like boosting sales and adopting a window-dressing strategy, or if the message is genuine and serves societal motives (Reilly & Larya, 2018; Srivastava et al. 2019). In such contexts, the more the message is perceived as genuine and credible the more stakeholders are likely to interact with the company as they see the increased possibility of identifying with the campaign and the product or service (Eberle et al., 2013). For example, focusing on CSR messages on YouTube.com, Song and Wen, (2020) found that content (i) emphasizing the companies' commitment to CSR programs, (ii) demonstrating impact with anecdotal evidence, and (iii) balancing social benefits and business interests received less negative and sceptical comments from stakeholders.

Moreover, Lee et al. (2013) argued that one key advantage of socially responsible firms is their ability to foster user-driven communication without investing more resources in firm-driven communication. Related to this matter, Galati et al., (2019) even documented that crafting an effective CSR communication campaign (Okazaki et al., 2019) is likely to boost engagement further also across companies already having a good record of engagement with

their stakeholders. However, the literature reports a tension in the effectiveness of CSR strategies between controversial and non-controversial industries.

From a strategic communication point of view, two design choices emerged as highly debated and crucial for the success of a CSR social media campaign: the message source and the choice of topics. The issue of how managers have to choose the right source(s) for CSR messages received much attention in the literature. Several authors (e.g. Dunn & Harness, 2018; Loureiro & Lopes, 2019; Stohl et al., 2017) discussed the importance of using genuine communication which should not always be sent out by the company's CEO but also through staff and employees. For example, Dunn & Harness (2018) and Loureiro & Lopes (2019) showed that companies giving the possibility to staff and employees to engage directly in CSR discourses report greater social capital when measured in terms of trust toward the message. In particular, employees' words are seen as a powerful communication tool and their favourable CSR-related messages can influence positively the public's attitude towards the company as well as encourage customers' purchase intentions (Loureiro & Lopes, 2019). Additionally, other scholars highlighted the importance of using a tone of voice that should be perceived as natural and specifically designed for the given social media (Oh & Ki, 2019). Following these arguments, it seems that empowering employees requires giving them the freedom to support firms' CSR involvement in a very transparent manner and letting them use whichever language style suits their role and the characteristics of their social media network (Stohl et al., 2017).

The choice of topic represents another focal decision. Saxton et al. (2019) and Gómez and Borges-Tavárez (2017) showed that some topics are more popular and resonate more than others in terms of effectiveness in reaching the targeted audiences and engagement with different stakeholders (i.e. society, community development, labour practices, and the environment). The success of using a certain CSR-related topic also depends on its linkage

with other messages that are part of an existing conversation among socially active actors in the network (Saxton et al., 2019). In this vein, the use of trendy hashtags that refer to social movements and existing campaigns (e.g. #blacklivesmatter) as well as the involvement of key individuals and organizations are often more successful and effective (Saxton et al., 2019). Additionally, Manetti & Bellucci (2016) even pointed out that some posts on social media attracted much attention but mainly drew negative comments. In particular, these posts referred to socially controversial and ethically sensitive topics, leading to tense debates among the advocates of divergent socio-political views (Brown & Dillard, 2013).

One other vivid debate in the literature is the one about how CSR messages should be crafted on social media. One paramount issue is the fact that messages should be adapted to the platform on which the campaign is deployed. For example, Kim et al. (2014) examined Facebook.com's CSR strategies and observed that generic terms like 'try' or 'learn' were relevant to triggering users' behaviour. There is a consensus among academics regarding two specific features of effective CSR messages: (i) customization, and (ii) consistency with the corporate strategy across the different media employed (Wang & Huang, 2018).

Furthermore, there are two more features emerging as relevant in crafting an effective CSR message in line with communication theory (Oh & Ki, 2019): first, CSR communication seems to profit from using a human-like tone of voice that can generate greater positive influence on word-of-mouth intention than by using an organizational voice. Second, CSR communication should use gain-framed messages rather than loss-framed messages to stimulate credibility and users' behaviour.

Lastly, different information cues on social media pages should be exploited (when present) and designed to affect the public's perception of the company and its CSR campaign (Lee et al., 2018). In fact, when configured correctly, virtual CSR dialogues have the potential to create value both for the company and society (Bhattacharya et al., 2008), thus contributing to the so-

called 'syncretic' organization that takes into consideration and balances the needs of multiple stakeholders. Some authors also agreed on the importance of new content proposed on social media being crafted in harmony with the firm's offering and its actual involvement in CSR activities (Srivastava et al., 2019); however, they also highlighted the crucial role of the firm's interactivity and responsiveness towards stakeholders.

Impact of CSR Communication on Social Media

CSR communication on social media can impact an organization's performance by meeting the needs of both internal and external stakeholders.

Taking an outward perspective (Oh & Ki, 2019; Dutot et al., 2016), companies invest in CSR communication through social media to influence consumers' and other stakeholders' general perception at three different levels: (i) the company, (ii) the brand, and (iii) the product. Concerning the impact at the company level, Etter (2013) found that CSR communication on social media has a positive impact on corporate reputation and legitimacy. Concerning the impacts at the brand and the product levels, some studies showed that consumers tend to identify more with a brand because of the company's CSR-related activities, possibly leading to changes in behavioural intentions (e.g. eWoM - Chu & Chen, 2019) and product/service purchase intention (Loureiro & Lopes, 2019). In line with this argument, Uzunoglu et al. (2017) documented that CSR communication is often used to add social value to a real product or service and foster customers' purchase intention.

Taking an inward perspective, companies deploy CSR communication on social media to empower employees and boost their productivity. Indeed, the CEO and employees are often seen as relevant advocates for CSR communication on social media (e.g. Stohl et al., 2017). Consequently, besides appearing more natural and trustable (Dunn & Harness, 2018), CSR communication using social media also serves the goal of empowering employees at different

organizational levels in the CSR discourse and influencing their propensity to identify more with the workspace as well as their willingness to engage and exert effort to complete the assigned tasks (Gonzalez-Lafaysse & Lapassouse-Madrid, 2016).

In particular, prior studies also pointed out the need for firms engaging in CSR communication to balance their inward-looking goals and their societal-serving motives to be able to generate a positive impact at the company, brand, and product levels (Srivastava et al., 2019).

In contrast to these results, other studies found that many companies are reluctant to engage in CSR campaigns because of the sensitivity of the content disclosed and the relatively high level of consumers' scepticism about CSR messages which could result in backslashes and attacks by social media users (Cho et al., 2017). Additionally, there is growing concern by companies of being accused of greenwashing or, more generally, window-dressing behaviours, especially across those firms without a long-standing tradition of CSR communication (Reilly & Larya, 2018). Internet users who are empowered by social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) often display bad reactions to firms' fraudulent and non-genuine content, thereby affecting negatively the firm's overall reputation (Aula, 2010). As such, stakeholders' scepticism can be mitigated only when the business is perceived to truly care about CSR and an authentic contribution to society is shown (Dunn & Harness, 2018).

IV. DISCUSSION

The previous section has provided a systematic analysis of the scope and key elements of CSR communication practices on social media as documented in prior publications in business and management. Extant literature at the intersection between CSR communication and social media has accumulated a substantial amount of knowledge that were grouped around three main topics. These three topics, referred to different research streams and represent a conceptual and empirical attempt to make sense of firms behaviours towards the production of

insights into how organizations manage CSR communications using social media (Linnenluecke 2017).

This section summarizes the key findings and discusses various opportunities to expand on existing knowledge investigating unexplored aspects of CSR communications on social media. In particular, these avenues for future research are set out to form a research agenda for improving the understanding of why and how organisations should employ social media for their CSR communications (Linnenluecke 2017; Post et al. 2020).

First, it was reported that the nature of social media communication about CSR struggles to be truly interactive and engaging (Chu et al., 2020). In particular, social media have the potential to broaden the public, therefore addressing a higher number and more diverse set of stakeholders in a dialogic and interactive way. Related to this matter, future research could explore which social media (i.e. Facebook, Twitte/X, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn) are more appropriate to communicate around specific topics—environmental, social, and governance issues—and engage with specific stakeholders groups—B2B or B2C customers, policy makers, suppliers, industry associations, investors and other creditors, NGOs, community.

Second, when looking at key strategies and tactics for engaging in social media with CSR content, it was emphasized the need for organisations to commit both at a strategic level with real CSR-oriented efforts (i.e. to avoid greenwashing or, more generally, window-dressing behaviours - Loureiro & Lopes, 2019) and at a tactical level by recognising the specific characteristics of different social media (Okazaki et al., 2019). Future studies can focus on identifying the general traits of authentic CSR messages on social media capable of benefitting both the company and its stakeholders, as well as the specific characteristics of communications about highly controversial issues and across controversial industries.

Third, the impact CSR communication on social media on the company as a whole, on the brand, and on the products (Srivastava et al., 2019) was discussed. Future work can expand on

existing knowledge and look at the impact on financial performance and the return on investing in specific CSR communications through social media.

Nonetheless, defining the scope of CSR communication on social media is subject to an ongoing debate both in academia and across industries. From a theoretical viewpoint, CSR communication on social media should be framed in the wider literature related to CSR reporting (Fifka, 2013; Christensen et al. 2021; Fatima and Elbanna, 2022) and traditional communication (Tengblad & Ohlsson, 2010). However, the rise of social media offers businesses new and different ways to communicate CSR initiatives (Kim, 2019), addressing a wider and more diffused set of stakeholders with specific interests in the firm and, therefore, generating additional relational and economic benefits (Saxton et al., 2020). Moreover, while it is true that social media offers a dialogic platform to reach and engage directly with different stakeholders (Tuan & Moretti, 2017), it is worth to note that the multitude of social media cannot be simply considered as one 'other' channel to distribute CSR information crafted or re-purposed from traditional and less interactive media (e.g. Loureiro & Lopes, 2019). Social media have their characteristics that must be mastered to mitigate any countereffect, reduce inefficiencies associated with overlapping, and harvest the full potential (Tuan & Moretti, 2017).

Finally, although few studies have partly examined the interrelations across the different research streams, the limitations of the current literature and the opportunities for cross-fertilization remain largely unexplored (Linnenluecke 2017); for example, none of the study under scrutiny analysed to what extent the interaction between releasing a CSR report and using social media to communicate CSR message has an impact on company performance and stakeholders' reactions.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper is intended to substantiate the need for more theoretical and empirical research on unexplored aspects of firms' use of social media to promote their CSR activities. This systematic review and the suggested future research directions have the objective of inspiring and supporting the development of new conceptual and empirical knowledge on CSR communication through social media (Post et. Al, 2020). Many organisations struggle to use social media for CSR communication effectively and seem unprepared to combine multiple channels to disclose and manage CSR messages. So, organisations need to build new capabilities and adopt comprehensive and transparent CSR strategies to achieve effective communication.

In this context, academic scholars can play a crucial role and provide substantive theoretical and practical contributions by investigating complex and innovative aspects of CSR communication practices on social media that today remain partially unexplored. This paper substantiates the need for more theoretical and empirical research on novel and unexplored aspects of firms' use of social media to promote their CSR activities. More research is required to accumulate a stock of knowledge to explain the design and role of effective social media communication adopted by organizations to implement CSR goals.

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TABLE 1

Academic outlets in the sample (n>=2)

| Journal Title	Frequency
Public Relations Review	9
Journal of Business Ethics	8
Journal of Business Research	5
Corporate Social Responsibility & Environmental Management	4
Accounting Auditing & Accountability Journal	2
International Journal of Organizational Analysis	2
Journal of Communication Management	2
Journal of Interactive Advertising	2
Journal of Marketing Management	2
Sustainability	2

FIGURE 1

Prisma of selected studies
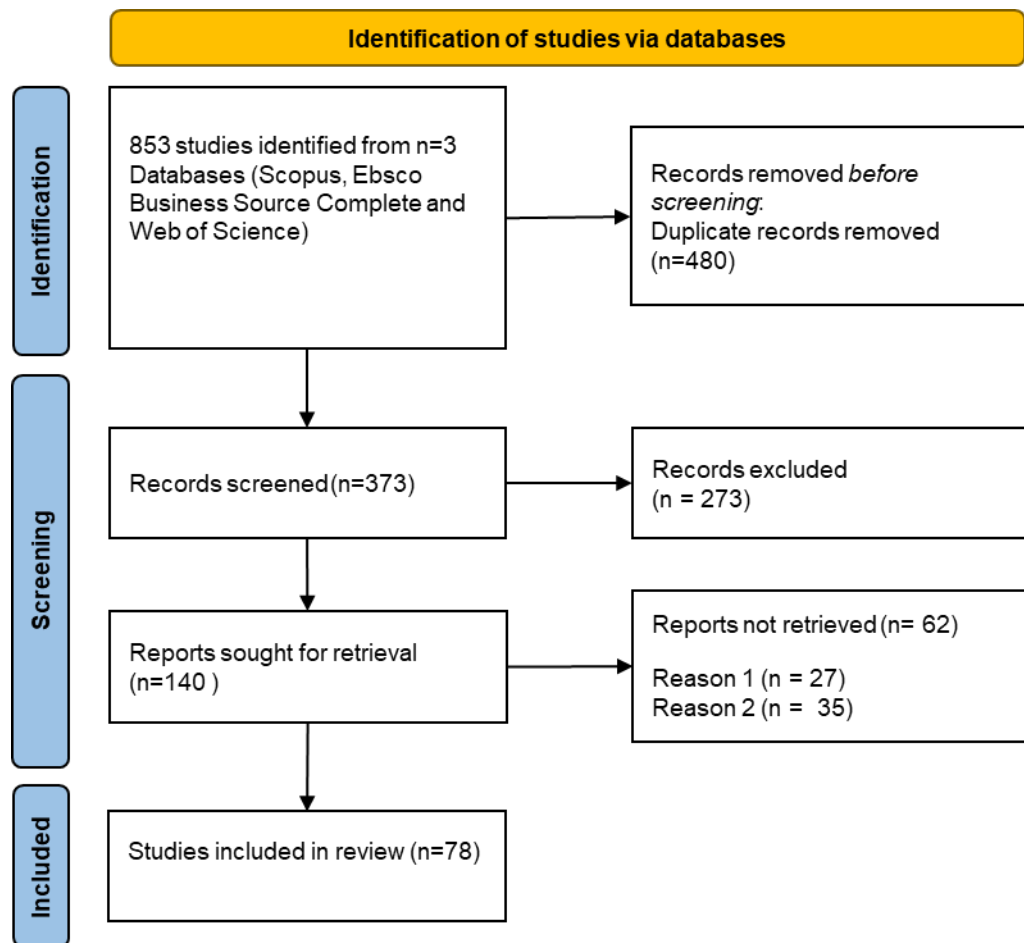
FIGURE 2

Popular social media in the sample
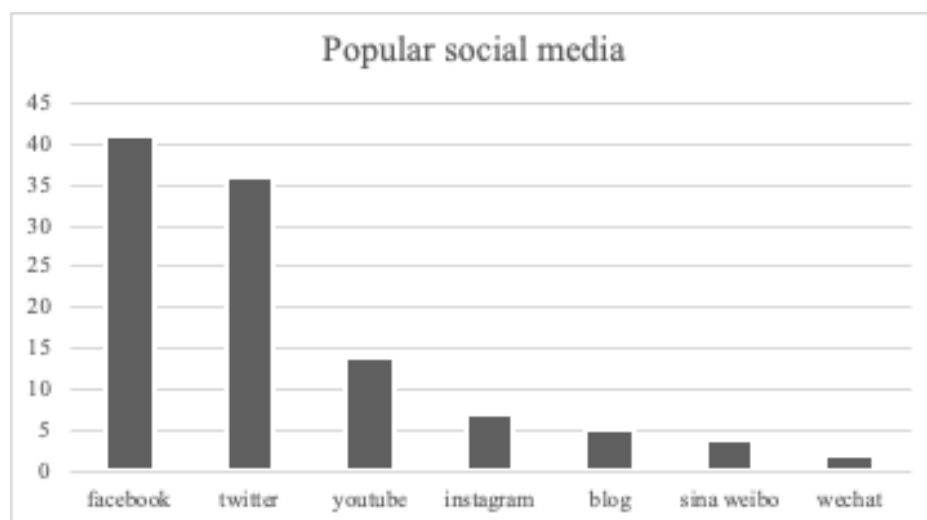
FIGURE 3

Popular methodological approaches in the sample