



# Mapping the Evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility Communication on Social Media: A Systematic Review through Scientific Procedures and Rationales-4-Systematic Literature Reviews and Bibliometric Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

In the evolving landscape of digital communication, social media (SM) has emerged as a significant tool for companies to communicate their corporate social responsibility (CSR). This emergence has generated an expanding, cross-disciplinary research base for CSR communication (CSR-C) on SM, which calls for a comprehensive, in-depth analysis of the field to identify existing gaps, contribute to ongoing discussions and pinpoint future research avenues. For this purpose, this study conducts a systematic review of 405 Scopus-indexed publications from 2010 to 2025 using the SPAR-4-SLR protocol. The review applies two bibliometric analysis techniques: Performance analysis of publication and citation trends among leading authors, journals, and documents; and science mapping through bibliographic coupling, which identified six core clusters. The thematic evolution maps the chronological progression across four periods: 2010-2014; 2015-2018; 2019-2021; and 2022 onwards. Finally, the review proposes seven future research avenues and fourteen research questions that showcase a transition towards AI-enabled CSR-C, influencer-mediated engagement, and data-driven strategies. The implications of this study reinforce the importance of strategic CSR-C by providing actionable theoretical and managerial guidance for researchers and companies navigating the dynamics of corporate reporting to develop stronger theory and practice in CSR-C within SM research.

**Keywords:** Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Social Responsibility Communication, Social Media, Cause-Related Marketing, Systematic Review, Bibliometric Analysis

**JEL Classifications:** M14; M31

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is widely regarded as a multifaceted corporate practice encompassing economic, legal, ethical, environmental, and social duties toward stakeholders and society (Carroll, 1979; Carroll and Shabana, 2010). In theory, strategically aligning CSR with business objectives can create shared value, giving firms a competitive edge while benefiting stakeholders (Porter and Kramer, 2006) and fostering long-term value for the organisation and its stakeholders (Castillo, 2022). Stakeholder expectations continue to rise, and how companies

communicate their CSR has come under scrutiny (Morsing and Schultz, 2006). CSR communication (CSR-C) is recognised as a strategic tool that attempts to establish corporate relationships with stakeholders concerning an organisation's social responsibility (Kim and Rader, 2010). Hence, effective CSR-C strategies can enhance engagement and strengthen positive corporate associations (Du et al., 2010).

While many studies emphasise organisational goals, growing research explores the role of CSR-C in meaning-making and stakeholder relationships (Crane and Glozer, 2016). In particular, the use of CSR-C by companies has transitioned from being

primarily an informational outlet (annual reports, etc.) to a more engagement-oriented, dialogue-based approach (Eberle et al., 2013; Kent and Taylor, 2016); additionally, social media (SM) has become a platform for companies to reach and engage audiences (Yang et al., 2020; Al-Ababneh et al., 2025). There has been an increase in CSR-C as a field of study on SM, which involves analysing the effects of CSR-C on brand reputation (Eberle et al., 2013) and engagement through dialogic, transparent interactions (Abitbol and Lee, 2017). Furthermore, researchers have explored the role of stakeholders' engagement with CSR-C on SM, including its effects on electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Overall, 2017; Fatma et al., 2020; Kapoor et al., 2021;) as well as the influence on purchase intention and brand admiration (Gupta et al., 2021; Park and Kim, 2022; Adewole, 2022; Abbas, 2024). Additionally, researchers have noted that cultural and regional differences impact perceptions of CSR messages (García-de los Salmones et al., 2021). Kapoor et al. (2021) highlighted that the strength of a CSR message (i.e., emotional, rational, or moral) and the source's credibility strongly influence consumers' responses to CSR-C. Given the increasingly technological nature of CSR-C, SM platform features positively influence CSR attitudes (Zhang et al., 2021). Recent studies also investigate the roles of influencers, artificial intelligence (AI), and other digital tools in amplifying CSR messages (Yang et al., 2023; Han et al., 2024; Sung et al., 2025).

Despite the growth, significant gaps remain in understanding the quality and impact of CSR-C on SM. The literature also indicates a lack of consistency in the utilisation of SM's collaborative capabilities, as well as its use as a one-way broadcast channel for CSR-C instead of a two-way engagement channel (Okazaki et al., 2020; Fernandez et al., 2022). For instance, Sarkar and Sarkar (2020) demonstrated that company-initiated brand interactions are influenced by CSR motivations directed toward society, but not by those driven by self-interest. Conversely, Abitbol and Lee (2017) indicated that the success of CSR-C initiatives on SM depends on their alignment with the industry in which the firm operates. Sung et al. (2020) and Martínez et al. (2020) both identified strong and positive relationships between CSR-C and message credibility. However, Dalla-Pria and Rodríguez-de-Dios (2022) were inconclusive regarding whether credibility has a direct relationship with CSR-C and call for further studies to investigate this relationship. Lewin and Warren (2025) further identified the likelihood of stakeholder backlash in response to perceived CSR hypocrisy, whereas Illia et al. (2025) illustrated that repeated exposure to AI-generated CSR messages will increase perceptions of authenticity among consumers; however, this raises questions regarding the limits of transparency and automation in CSR-C on SM.

To address the aforementioned gaps, this study uncovers the evolving landscape of CSR-C on SM by conducting a comprehensive, in-depth analysis of the field to identify existing gaps, contribute to ongoing discussions, and pinpoint future research avenues. Several previous literature reviews have examined various aspects of CSR-C on SM (Table 1). For example, Lombardi and Secundo (2020) reviewed the application of digital and innovative technologies in the corporate reporting process.

Arrigo et al. (2022) evaluated the effects of followership behaviour (i.e., liking, commenting, and sharing) on CSR disclosure as a means of gaining legitimacy with stakeholders. In addition, Schacker (2022) provided a framework for identifying CSR-C on SM and addressed deficiencies in research design for CSR-C on SM. Sun et al. (2022) synthesised CSR-C narrative forms and methods of corporate storytelling on SM. Finally, Inversini and Derchi (2024) conducted a scoping review to outline the key strategic challenges, practices, and factors that shape CSR on SM.

However, given the field's diverse, complex, and cross-disciplinary nature, a systematic review utilising bibliometric analysis techniques has not been conducted previously; this study is the first. Additionally, using quantitative methods minimises the subjective biases associated with qualitative, hand-coded reviews (Donthu et al., 2021; Lim et al., 2022; Lim and Kumar, 2023; Mahajan et al., 2024). Therefore, this study aims to address the following research questions:

- RQ1: What are the publication and citation trends in CSR-C on SM research?
- RO2: Which are the most influential authors, journals, and publications within CSR-C on SM research?
- RO3: What are the unique themes in CSR-C on SM research, and how have they evolved?
- RO4: What are the potential areas for future research in CSR-C on SM research?

This review contributes to the existing research on CSR-C on SM in two novel ways. First, the study provides a comprehensive assessment of the field's performance through a thorough evaluation (RQ1-RQ2), thus enabling an extensive review of the productivity and influence of CSR-C on SM. Second, the study aims to develop a unified knowledge base for the field by applying a knowledge mapping approach, utilising bibliographic coupling and topical evolution of the significant areas of CSR-C in SM research (RQ3), as recommended by Chandra et al. (2022). The combination of a performance evaluation and knowledge mapping in a single review is consistent with the range of previous bibliometric reviews (Sahoo et al., 2022; Mahajan et al., 2024) and is consistent with the recommendations provided by Donthu et al. (2021). In conclusion, this study highlights areas for future investigation to enhance the field of CSR-C on SM (RQ4).

The following sections outline the methodology employed in conducting this review, followed by a discussion of the results, introspection, and way forward, along with the conclusion and limitations.

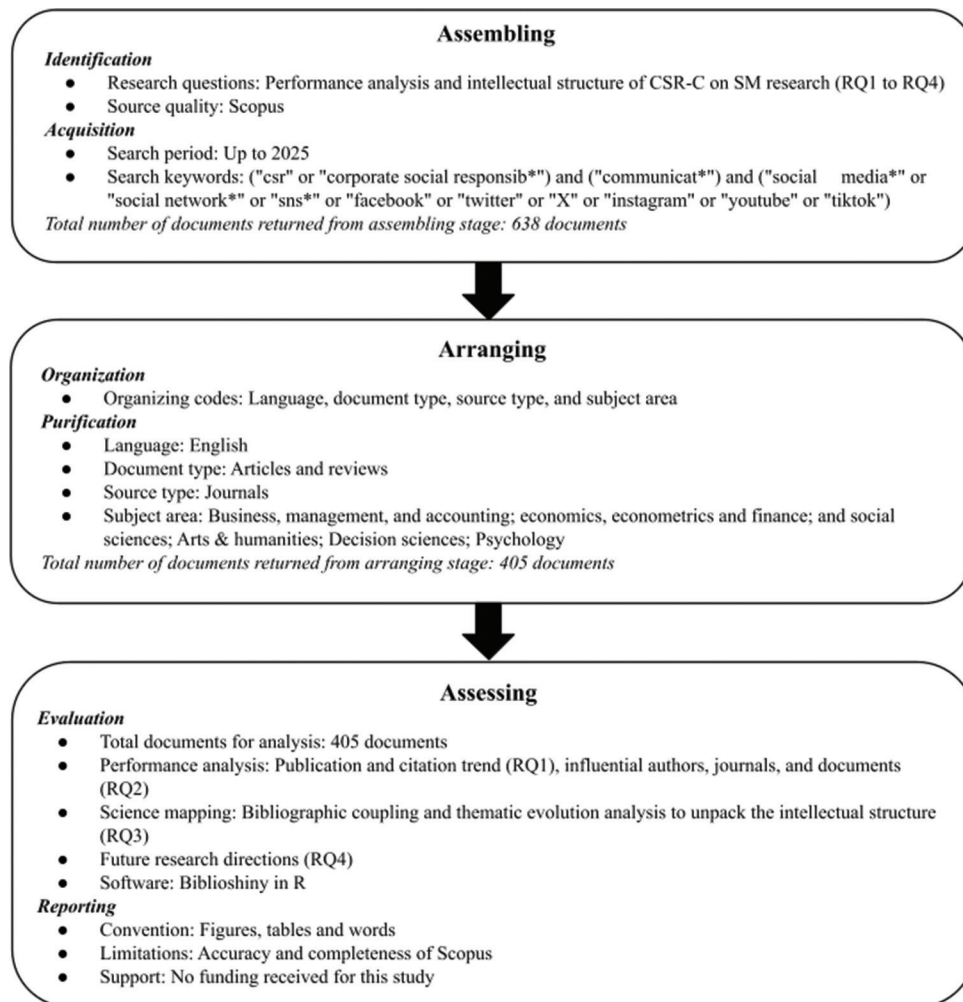
## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs the Scientific Procedures and Rationales for Systematic Literature Reviews (SPAR-4-SLR) by Paul et al. (2021) as a protocol to conduct a systematic review and a bibliometric analysis, aiming to provide a transparent, structured navigation of CSR-C on SM. SPAR-4-SLR is a three-stage methodology of assembling, arranging, and assessing, as shown in Figure 1 and elaborated in sections below.

**Table 1: Representation of past reviews in CSR-C on SM research**

| Author   | Year | Title   | Type               | Review focus  |
|--|------|---|--------------------|---|
| Lombardi R., Secundo G.                        | 2020 | The digital transformation of corporate reporting - a systematic literature review and avenues for future research          | Systematic review  | the role of digital and smart technologies for corporate reporting processes  |
| Arrigo E., Di Vaio A., Hassan R., Palladino R. | 2022 | Followership behavior and corporate social responsibility disclosure: Analysis and implications for sustainability research | Systematic review  | to understand the impact of followership behaviours (e.g., likes, comments, sharing) on CSR disclosure to achieve legitimacy by stakeholders                            |
| Schacker M.                                    | 2022 | Tackling Fuzziness in CSR Communication Research on Social Media: Pathways to More Rigor and Replicability                  | Critical review    | develop guidelines for identifying CSR-C on SM that address shortcomings in existing research designs   |
| Sun Y., Zhai L., Liu W., Yang K.               | 2022 | Corporations' Owned Social Media Narrative  | Integrative review | to synthesise a corporate narrative that has taken on new forms with the emergence of social media and is called the corporations' owned social media narrative (COSMN) |

**Figure 1: Review procedure using the scientific procedures and rationales-4-systematic literature reviews protocol**



### 2.1. Assembling

The assembling stage is the process of identifying and acquiring documents for review and analysis. The primary focus of this study is to assess the performance (RQ1 and RQ2) and knowledge structure (RQ3 and RQ4) of existing CSR-C on SM (domain) research in journals (type of source) indexed in Scopus (quality

of source) databases. Prioritising peer-reviewed Scopus-indexed publications is a robust methodological choice, justified by the stringent quality control mechanisms inherent in that enhance the reliability and credibility of the data (Paul et al., 2021). For document acquisition, this study uses a specific set of keywords, including synonyms for CSR-C, and SM, which are: (“csr” or

“corporate social responsib\*”) AND (“communicat\*”) AND (“social media\*” or “social network\*” or “sns\*” or “facebook” or “twitter” or “X” or “instagram” or “youtube” or “tiktok”) to limit the scope of the study and provide access to bibliometric information and full-texts of journal articles via Scopus (search mechanism and material acquisition) until 2025 (search period). In total, 638 documents were identified in the assembling stage.

## 2.2. Arranging

The organising stage of this study was the second, during which the documents were sorted and refined using Scopus’s “refine results” filters or codes. These codes were based on document attributes, such as language, document type, source type, and subject area—each of these attributes allowed for studies to be included or excluded. For example, only studies written in “English” and published articles and reviews “journal” within the subject areas of “business, management and accounting,” “economics, econometrics and finance,” “social sciences,” “arts and humanities,” “decision sciences,” and “psychology,” which were considered related to CSR-C on SM were included in this study. Other types of documents, such as editorials and notes, as well as non-English documents, were excluded. The arranging stage resulted in 405 documents that met the inclusion criteria.

## 2.3. Assessing

During the third stage of this study, the reviewed documents are evaluated and reported. In the evaluation process, a set of bibliometric analysis techniques was applied to assess the 405 studies related to CSR-C on SM. To answer RQ1–RQ2, a performance analysis was used to investigate the trends in publications and citations (RQ1) and the most productive authors, journals, and documents (RQ2) in CSR-C on SM research. To answer RQ3, knowledge mapping was applied by utilising bibliographic coupling, which groups documents based on shared references (Donthu et al., 2021), and topical evolution over time (Chandra et al., 2022) to identify the dominant themes that represent the intellectual structure of CSR-C in SM research. The analyses and presentation of the results were completed using Biblioshiny in R (Aria and Cuccurullo, 2017). Ultimately, future research directions are proposed (RQ4).

Regarding reporting, the outcomes of the bibliometric analysis were presented using a combination of written descriptions of the results and visual displays, such as figures and tables, primarily utilising the outputs provided by Biblioshiny. Finally, the study offers potential avenues for further research and addresses limitations in CSR-C research on SM.

# 3. FINDINGS

## 3.1. Performance Analysis of CSR-C on SM

### 3.1.1. Trends in publication and citation of CSR-C on SM

Table 2 presents publication and citation trends in CSR-C on SM, which reflect a rapidly expanding field that gained momentum in the last decade. Virtually no significant work was found before the mid-2000s on this specific topic, which is expected, given the timeline of SM proliferation. The data covers 16 years (2010-2025) and includes 405 publications (TP) on this subject, published in

198 sources. Out of these publications, 350 (86.4%) have been cited (TCP), and there is an average annual productivity of 25.3 publications (PAY) (Table 2, Part A).

Regarding citations, Table 2, Part B, shows that CSR-C in SM research published between 2010 and 2025 has garnered 11,682 citations (TC). The average number of citations per publication (TC/TP) is 28.84 on Scopus. The h-index (citation impact) of the field stands at 43, meaning that 43 (h) publications have each garnered at least 43 (h) citations. As shown in Figure 2, publication productivity has increased steadily since 2018, reaching a peak of 64 studies in 2024, which illustrates the field’s growth.

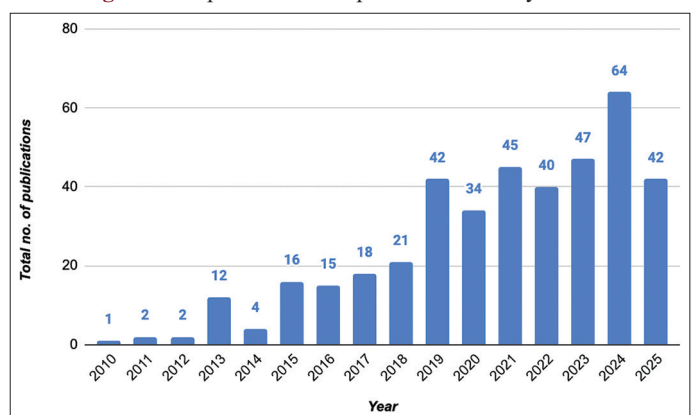
As presented in Table 2, Part C, 1,854 authors (including repetitions) (NCA) have contributed to CSR-C on SM research. There were 398 co-authored (CA) publications and seven single-authored (SA) publications. Co-authorship is an indicator of collaboration in the CSR-C on SM research, and the collaboration index (CI) calculated in this study reflects that each publication involved, on average, 4.57 authors.

**Table 2: Representation of publication and citation metrics in CSR-C on SM research**

| Part A: Publication metrics               | Results |
|---|---------|
| Total publications (TP)                   | 405     |
| Total cited publications (TCP)            | 350     |
| Total sources (TS)                        | 198     |
| Number of active years (NAY)              | 16      |
| Productivity per active year (PAY)        | 25.3    |
| Part B: Citation metrics                  |         |
| Total citations (TC)                      | 11,682  |
| Average citations per publication (TC/TP) | 28.84   |
| h-index                                   | 43      |
| Part C: Authorship metrics                |         |
| Number of contributing authors (NCA)      | 1854    |
| Single-authored publications (SA)         | 7       |
| Co-authored publications (CA)             | 398     |
| Collaboration index (CI)                  | 4.6     |
| Part D. Document metrics                  |         |
| Article                                   | 388     |
| Review                                    | 17      |
| References                                | 2806    |
| Keywords                                  | 1387    |

Time period=2010-2025

**Figure 2: Representation of publication trend year-wise**



**Table 3: Representation of the most prominent authors in CSR-C on SM research**

| Authors                          | Affiliation                                    | TP | TC  | TC/TP | h | PY_start |
|----------------------------------|--|----|-----|-------|---|----------|
| Chen, Y. R. R.                   | Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong        | 6  | 158 | 26.33 | 6 | 2019     |
| Cheng, Y.                        | North Carolina State University, United States | 6  | 181 | 30.17 | 6 | 2019     |
| Herrero, Á.,                     | University of Cantabria, Spain                 | 6  | 150 | 25    | 6 | 2020     |
| Martínez, P.                     | University of Cantabria, Spain                 | 6  | 150 | 25    | 6 | 2020     |
| Chunterawong, P.                 | Syracuse University, United States             | 5  | 123 | 24.6  | 5 | 2021     |
| Dong, C.                         | University of Minnesota, United States         | 5  | 79  | 15.8  | 5 | 2019     |
| García de los Salmones, M. D. M. | University of Cantabria, Spain                 | 5  | 149 | 29.8  | 5 | 2020     |
| Hung-Baesecke, C. J. F.          | Massey University, New Zealand                 | 5  | 158 | 31.6  | 5 | 2019     |
| Yang, J.                         | Syracuse University, United States             | 5  | 123 | 24.6  | 5 | 2021     |
| Ahmad, N.                        | Virtual University of Pakistan, Pakistan       | 4  | 250 | 62.5  | 4 | 2021     |

TP: Total publications, TC: Total citations, PY\_start: Publication start year

**Table 4: Representation of the most prominent sources in CSR-C on SM research**

| Source   | TP | TC   | PY_Start |
|--|----|------|----------|
| Sustainability (Switzerland)                                 | 26 | 622  | 2017     |
| Public relations review                                      | 25 | 962  | 2013     |
| Corporate communications                                     | 21 | 744  | 2013     |
| Journal of business ethics                                   | 17 | 2235 | 2010     |
| Corporate social responsibility and environmental management | 12 | 365  | 2011     |
| Business and professional communication quarterly            | 5  | 170  | 2017     |
| IEEE transactions on professional communication              | 5  | 61   | 2015     |
| International journal of contemporary hospitality management | 5  | 242  | 2019     |
| Journal of communication management                          | 5  | 235  | 2014     |
| Journal of retailing and consumer services                   | 5  | 83   | 2016     |

Finally, Table 2, Part D, illustrates that the overwhelming majority of publications (95.8% or 388) were articles, while only 17 (4.2%) were review articles. These articles contained 2,806 references and 1,387 keywords that will be used to create a knowledge map in this study.

**3.1.2. Most prominent authors of CSR-C on SM research**

Table 3 provides the top ten most prominent authors of CSR-C on SM research based on the number of publications (TP), number of citations (TC), average number of citations per publication (TC/TP), h-index (h), and the year of the first publication (PY\_start). Analysis indicates that Chen, Y. R. R., and Cheng, Y. have the highest number of publications (n = 6) among the authors studied. In addition, both Herrero, Á., and Martínez, P. have six publications each. In terms of the number of citations, Ahmad, N., has the highest (n = 250), followed by Cheng, Y. (TC = 181) and Hung-Baesecke, C. J. F. (TC = 158). Furthermore, the TC/TP ratio varies from 15.8 for Dong, C., to 62.5 for Ahmad, N. More specifically, Ahmad, N., has the highest TC/TP ratio, indicating that the author’s publications have been cited more often than their number would suggest. Finally, the range of h-index values for all authors was from 4 for Ahmad, N., to 6 for Chen, Y. R. R., Cheng, Y., Herrero, Á., and Martínez, P., indicating consistent citation of their contributions. The PY\_start ranged from 2019 for Chen, Y. R. R., Cheng, Y., Dong, C., Hung-Baesecke, C. J. F., and 2020 for Herrero, Á., Martínez, P., and García de los Salmones, M. D. M., to 2021 for Chunterawong, P., Yang, J., and Ahmad, N. The findings suggest that authors from Spain have

made significant contributions to the field, with three appearing on the list, followed by two from the USA and one each from Hong Kong, New Zealand, and Pakistan. This information may help researchers identify influential authors and their affiliations, track research trends, and inform potential research directions.

**3.1.3. Most prominent sources of CSR-C on SM research**

Table 4 outlines the most prominent sources of CSR-C in SM research, based on total publications (TP) and total citations (TC). Sustainability (Switzerland) is the most productive source with 26 publications and 622 citations since 2017, followed by Public Relations Review (25 publications and 962 citations) and Corporate Communications (21 publications and 744 citations). The Journal of Business Ethics, although publishing fewer papers (17), has the highest number of citations (2,235) and therefore reflects its enduring influence in the CSR-C on SM research. Additionally, Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management have made a notable contribution with 12 publications and 365 citations. Overall, the distribution of CSR-C in SM research across the identified journals indicates a trend toward increased publication in interdisciplinary journals spanning communication, ethics, and sustainability. This represents the continued evolution toward a more integrated and practice-oriented research agenda.

**3.1.4. Most prominent publications of CSR-C on SM research**

Table 5 presents the top 10 most prominent publications of CSR-C on SM, as ranked by both the number of citations (TC) and the average number of citations per year (C/Y). The most cited publication was authored by Du and Vieira (2012), with 495 TC and an average citation year of 30.9. Their work examined how CSR contributes to a company’s legitimacy and brand reputation via SM. The second most cited publication was authored by Chae (2015), who analysed Twitter analytics for Supply Chain Research, with 416 TC and an average C/Y of 32.0. Thirdly, Lyon and Montgomery (2013) studied the effects of SM on Greenwashing in Corporate Communications with 311 TC and an average C/Y of 19.4. Other notable publications within the top ten address a range of topics, such as Stakeholder Engagement and Social Legitimacy on Facebook (Bonsón and Ratkai, 2013, 277 TC, C/Y 17.3); the effect of Interactive CSR-C on Corporate Reputation (Eberle et al., 2013, 264 TC, C/Y 16.5); CSR-C Strategies for Organizational Legitimacy (Colleoni, 2013, 229 TC, C/Y 14.3); CSR/CSIR Ratings of Fortune 500 Firms’ Twitter Profiles (Lee et al., 2013, 217 TC, C/Y 13.6); Consumers Engaging in CSR-C (Chu et al., 2020, 208 TC, C/Y 34.7); Public Reactions to Firms CSR

**Table 5: Representation of the most prominent publications in CSR-C on SM research**

| Author   | Title   | PY   | TC  | C/Y  |
|--|---|------|-----|------|
| Du, S., and Vieira Jr, E. T.                                     | Striving for Legitimacy Through Corporate Social Responsibility: Insights from oil companies  | 2012 | 495 | 30.9 |
| Chae, B. K.  | Insights from hashtag #supplychain and Twitter analytics: Considering Twitter and Twitter data for supply chain practice and research     | 2015 | 416 | 32   |
| Lyon T.P., and Montgomery A.W.                                   | Tweetjacked: The Impact of Social Media on Corporate Greenwash  | 2013 | 311 | 19.4 |
| Bonsón E., and Ratkai M.   | A set of metrics to assess stakeholder engagement and social legitimacy on a corporate Facebook page                                      | 2013 | 277 | 17.3 |
| Eberle, D., Berens, G., and Li, T.                               | The impact of interactive corporate social responsibility communication on corporate reputation   | 2013 | 264 | 16.5 |
| Colleoni E.  | CSR communication strategies for organizational legitimacy in social media  | 2013 | 229 | 14.3 |
| Lee K., Oh W.-Y., and Kim N.                                     | Social Media for Socially Responsible Firms: Analysis of Fortune 500's Twitter Profiles and their CSR/CSIR Ratings                        | 2013 | 217 | 13.6 |
| Chu, S. C., Chen, H. T., and Gan, C.                             | Consumers' engagement with corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication in social media: Evidence from China and the United States | 2020 | 208 | 34.7 |
| Saxton, G. D., Gomez, L., Ngoh, Z., Lin, Y. P., and Dietrich, S. | Do CSR Messages Resonate? Examining Public Reactions to Firms' CSR Efforts on Social Media  | 2019 | 198 | 22   |
| Reilly A.H., and Hynan K.A.                                      | Corporate communication, sustainability, and social media: It's not easy (really) being green   | 2014 | 118 | 9.1  |

PY: Publication year, TC: Total citations, C/Y: Average citations per year

**Table 6: Major bibliographic (thematic) clusters of CSR-C on SM research**

| Cluster                 | Theme  | Topics  | TP | TC   |
|-------------------------|--|---|----|------|
| Bibliographic Cluster 1 | CSR-C, signaling, and legitimacy on SM                       | Greenwashing and information disclosure, signalling theory and corporate legitimacy, interactive CSR-C and stakeholder reactions, co-creation and dialogic engagement, CSR credibility and e-WOM, and organisational transparency and media accountability.   | 35 | 2031 |
| Bibliographic Cluster 2 | Cross-cultural CSR-C and influencer engagement               | Comparative CSR message perception (East–West, China–U.S.); role of influencers and virtual endorsers; CSR message framing and emotional appeals; authenticity and trust in brand- or user-generated CSR content; peer communication and opinion leadership; employee voice and internal communication credibility.                         | 49 | 927  |
| Bibliographic Cluster 3 | Dialogic Communication, legitimacy, and consumer engagement  | Dialogic theory in CSR; company–cause fit; two-way communication versus one-way promotion; CSR message strategies on Facebook and Twitter; user-generated content and consumer scepticism; co-creation and participation in CSR campaigns; legitimacy in controversial industries.  | 46 | 1940 |
| Bibliographic Cluster 4 | Measuring engagement and e-reputation through SM             | Stakeholder engagement measurement; dialogic communication and legitimacy metrics; e-reputation and public trust; corporate citizenship on social media; interactivity and communication symmetry; credibility–legitimacy relationship; internal policies and CSR communicative constraints.  | 41 | 1645 |
| Bibliographic Cluster 5 | Empirical modelling, data analytics, and engagement drivers  | Message framing, tone, and interactivity: social media engagement determinants; data-driven CSR evaluation using big data and computer vision; stakeholder legitimacy and sentiment analysis; employee engagement and organisational alignment; process-based frameworks linking CSR credibility, moral emotions, and behavioural outcomes. | 47 | 885  |
| Bibliographic Cluster 6 | Stakeholder perspective and computational expansion of CSR-C | Stakeholder–firm discourse divergence; legitimacy theory and activism (“Wild West” of CSR-C); message source and credibility; e-WOM and purchase intention modelling; big-data and topic-modelling of CSR debates; network communication and sustainable development; mobile CSR (mCSR) engagement during crises.                           | 23 | 727  |

Activities (Saxton et al., 2019, 198 TC, C/Y 22.0); and Corporate Communication, Sustainability and SM (Reilly and Hynan, 2014, 118 TC, C/Y 9.1). These findings demonstrate that these influential publications have significantly advanced the CSR-C concept in the SM research area, providing substantial insights into the influence of CSR-C on brand reputation, stakeholder engagement, and organisational legitimacy.

### 3.2. Intellectual Structure of CSR-C on SM

To investigate the intellectual structure of CSR-C in the SM research area (RQ3), this study performs a bibliometric analysis using two knowledge-mapping techniques: Bibliographic coupling

and thematic evolution. The first one is clustering of publications by reference similarity. In contrast, the second one displays the evolution and chronology of main themes, offering potential paths for future research and deeper comprehension of the body of knowledge (Donthu et al., 2021).

#### 3.2.1. Bibliographic coupling of CSR-C on SM

Bibliographic Coupling is a data clustering technique that groups together similar publications based on their shared characteristics (Kessler, 1963; Zupic and Čater, 2015). Major bibliographic (thematic) clusters are presented in Table 6, and the significant publications of each cluster are listed in Table 7.

**Table 7: Representation of the major publications in the bibliographic (thematic) clusters of CSR-C on SM research**

| Cluster  | Author   | Title  | Year | TC  |
|--|--|--|------|-----|
| Cluster 1: CSR-C, signaling, and legitimacy on SM                      | T.P., Lyon, Thomas P.; A.W., Montgomery, A. Wren   | Tweetjacked: The Impact of Social Media on Corporate Greenwash   | 2013 | 311 |
|  | D., Eberle, David; G.A.J.M., Berens, Guido A.J.M.; T., Li, Ting  | The Impact of Interactive Corporate Social Responsibility Communication on Corporate Reputation  | 2013 | 264 |
|  | G.D., Saxton, Gregory D.; L.M.O., Gómez, Lina María Otálora; Z., Ngho, Zed; Y., Lin, Yipin; S.B., Dietrich, Sarah B. | Do CSR Messages Resonate? Examining Public Reactions to Firms' CSR Efforts on Social Media   | 2019 | 198 |
|  | S., Chu, Shuchuan; H., Chen, Hsuanting   | Impact of consumers' corporate social responsibility-related activities in social media on brand attitude, electronic word-of-mouth intention, and purchase intention: A study of Chinese consumer behaviour | 2019 | 157 |
|  | S., Okazaki, Shintaro; K., Plangger, Kirk; D.C., West, Douglas C.; H.D., Menendez, Hector D.                         | Exploring digital corporate social responsibility communications on Twitter  | 2020 | 133 |
|  | T.B., Araujo, Theo B.; J., Kollat, Jana  | Communicating effectively about CSR on Twitter: The power of engaging strategies and storytelling elements   | 2018 | 104 |
|  | M., Fatma, Mobin; A., Pérez, Andrea; I., Khan, Imran; Z., Rahman, Zillur   | The effect of CSR engagement on eWOM on social media   | 2020 | 95  |
|  | A., ElAlfy, Amr; K.M., Darwish, Kareem M.; O., Weber, Olaf   | Corporations and sustainable development goals communication on social media: Corporate social responsibility or just another buzzword?  | 2020 | 81  |
|  | J., Kollat, Jana; F., Farache, Francisca   | Achieving consumer trust on Twitter via CSR communication  | 2017 | 81  |
|  | G.D., Saxton, Gregory D.; C.R., Ren, Charlotte R.; C., Guo, Chao   | Responding to Diffused Stakeholders on Social Media: Connective Power and Firm Reactions to CSR-Related Twitter Messages   | 2021 | 75  |
| Cluster 2: Cross-cultural CSR-C and influencer engagement              | S., Chu, Shuchuan; H., Chen, Hsuanting; C., Gan, Chen  | Consumers' engagement with corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication in social media: Evidence from China and the United States  | 2020 | 208 |
|  | J., Yang, Jeongwon; P., Chuentawong, Ploypin; K., Pugdeethosapol, Krittaphat   | Speaking Up on Black Lives Matter: A Comparative Study of Consumer Reactions toward Brand and Influencer-Generated Corporate Social Responsibility Messages  | 2021 | 63  |
|  | J., Yang, Jeongwon; P., Chuentawong, Ploypin; H., Lee, Heejae; T.M., Chock, Tamara Makana                            | Anthropomorphism in CSR Endorsement: A Comparative Study on Humanlike versus Cartoonlike Virtual Influencers' Climate Change Messaging   | 2023 | 59  |
|  | K., Dunn, Katherine; D.R., Harness, David R.   | Communicating corporate social responsibility in a social world: The effects of company-generated and user-generated social media content on CSR attributions and scepticism                                 | 2018 | 56  |
|  | P.M., Mercadé-Mele, Pere Mercatore; S., Molinillo, Sebastián; A., Fernández-Morales, Antonio; L., Porcu, Lucia       | CSR activities and consumer loyalty: The effect of the type of publicizing medium  | 2018 | 45  |
|  | Y., Lee, Yeunjae; W., Tao, Weiting   | Employees as information influencers of organization's CSR practices: The impacts of employee words on public perceptions of CSR   | 2020 | 44  |
|  | Y., Cheng, Yang; Y.R.R., Chen, Yi Ru Regina; C.J.F., Hung-Baesecke, Chun Ju Flora                                    | Social Media Influencers in CSR Endorsement: The effect of consumer Mimicry on CSR Behaviors and Consumer Relationships  | 2021 | 40  |
|  | Z., He, Zeya; S.Q., Liu, Stephanie Q.; B.H., Ferns, Bo Hu; C.C., Countryman, Cary C.                                 | Pride or empathy? Exploring effective CSR communication strategies on social media   | 2022 | 34  |
|  | C., Dong, Chuqing; H., Rim, Hyejoon  | Exploring nonprofit-business partnerships on Twitter from a network perspective  | 2019 | 33  |
|  | M., Liao, Mengqi; A.K.Y., Mak, Angela Ka Ying  | "Comments are disabled for this video": A technological affordances approach to understanding source credibility assessment of CSR information on YouTube  | 2019 | 32  |
| Cluster 3: Dialogic Communication, legitimacy, and consumer engagement | S., Du, Shuili; E.T., Vieira, Edward T.  | Striving for legitimacy through corporate social responsibility: Insights from oil companies   | 2012 | 495 |

(Contd...)

**Table 7: (Continued)**

| Cluster  | Author  | Title   | Year | TC  |
|--|---|---|------|-----|
|  | E., Colleoni, Elanor  | CSR communication strategies for organizational legitimacy in social media  | 2013 | 229 |
|  | M.L., Kent, Michael L.; M., Taylor, Maureen   | From Homo Economicus to Homo dialogicus: Rethinking social media use in CSR communication   | 2016 | 151 |
|  | A., Abitbol, Alan; S.Y., Lee, Sun Young   | Messages on CSR-dedicated Facebook pages: What works and what doesn't   | 2017 | 125 |
|  | E., Uzunoğlu, Ebru; S., Turkel, Selin; B., Yaman Akyar, Burcu   | Engaging consumers through corporate social responsibility messages on social media: An experimental study  | 2017 | 64  |
|  | B., Song, Baobao; J., Wen, Jing   | Online corporate social responsibility communication strategies and stakeholder engagements: A comparison of controversial versus noncontroversial industries | 2020 | 53  |
|  | H.K., Overton, Holly K.; J.K., Kim, Joon Kyoung; N., Zhang, Nanlan; S., Huang, Shudan                                     | Examining consumer attitudes toward CSR and CSA messages  | 2021 | 51  |
|  | E., Go, Eun; D.S., Bortree, Denise Sevick   | What and How to Communicate CSR? The Role of CSR fit, Modality Interactivity, and Message Interactivity on Social Networking Sites                            | 2017 | 51  |
|  | S.M.C., Loureiro, Sandra María Correia; J., Lopes, João   | How Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives in Social Media Affect Awareness and Customer Engagement  | 2019 | 50  |
|  | K., Dunn, Katherine; D.R., Harness, David R.  | Whose voice is heard? The influence of user-generated versus company-generated content on consumer scepticism towards CSR                                     | 2019 | 46  |
| Cluster 4: Measuring engagement and e-reputation through SM            | E., Bonsón, Enrique; M., Ratkai, Melinda  | A set of metrics to assess stakeholder engagement and social legitimacy on a corporate Facebook page  | 2013 | 277 |
|  | M., Cho, Moonhee; L.D., Furey, Lauren D.; T.L., Mohr, Tiffany L.  | Communicating corporate social responsibility on social media: Strategies, stakeholders, and public engagement on corporate facebook                          | 2017 | 153 |
|  | G., Whelan, Glen; J., Moon, Jeremy; B., Grant, Bettina  | Corporations and Citizenship Arenas in the Age of Social Media  | 2013 | 118 |
|  | V., Dutot, Vincent; E., Lacalle Galvez, Eva; D.W., Versailles, David W.   | CSR communications strategies through social media and influence on e-reputation: An exploratory study  | 2016 | 116 |
|  | M.A., Etter, Michael Andreas  | Reasons for low levels of interactivity. (Non-) interactive CSR communication in twitter.   | 2013 | 108 |
|  | M.A., Etter, Michael Andreas  | Broadcasting, reacting, engaging – three strategies for CSR communication in twitter  | 2014 | 102 |
|  | C., Stohl, Cynthia; M.A., Etter, Michael Andreas; S.G., Banghart, Scott G.; D.(., Woo, Dajung (“dj”)                      | Social Media Policies: Implications for Contemporary Notions of Corporate Social Responsibility   | 2017 | 83  |
|  | S., Kim, Sora; S., Kim, Soo-yeon; K., Sung, Kang-hoon   | Fortune 100 companies' Facebook strategies: Corporate ability versus social responsibility  | 2014 | 72  |
|  | F.J., Cortado, Francisco Javier; R., Chalmeta, Ricardo  | Use of social networks as a CSR communication tool  | 2016 | 65  |
|  | I., Lock, Irina; C., Schulz-Knappe, Charlotte   | Credible corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication predicts legitimacy: Evidence from an experimental study   | 2019 | 60  |
| Cluster 5: Empirical modelling, data analytics, and engagement drivers | D., Kucukusta, Deniz; M., Perelygina, Mariia; W.S., Lam, Wing Sze   | CSR communication strategies and stakeholder engagement of upscale hotels in social media   | 2019 | 84  |
|  | P., Fernández, Paula; P., Hartmann, Patrick; V., Apaolaza, Vanessa  | What drives CSR communication effectiveness on social media? A process-based theoretical framework and research agenda  | 2022 | 78  |
|  | J., Oh, Jeyoung; E.J., Ki, Eyun Jung  | Factors affecting social presence and word-of-mouth in corporate social responsibility communication: Tone of voice, message framing, and online medium type  | 2019 | 73  |
|  | M.D.M., García-De-Los-Salmones-Sánchez, María Del Mar; A., Herrero-Crespo, Angel; P., Martínez García de Leaniz, Patricia | Determinants of Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Social Networking Sites About Negative News on CSR  | 2021 | 57  |
|  | A.M., Barbeito-Caamaño, Adriana M.; R., Chalmeta, Ricardo   | Using big data to evaluate corporate social responsibility and sustainable development practices  | 2020 | 55  |
|  | I., Lock, Irina; T.B., Araujo, Theo B.  | Visualizing the triple bottom line: A large-scale automated visual content analysis of European corporations' website and social media images                 | 2020 | 42  |

(Contd...)

**Table 7: (Continued)**

| Cluster   | Author  | Title   | Year | TC |
|---|---|---|------|----|
| Cluster 6: Stakeholder perspective and computational expansion of CSR-C | S., Pizzi, Simone; S., Moggi, Sara; F., Caputo, Fabio; P., Rosato, Pierfelice   | Social media as stakeholder engagement tool: CSR communication failure in the oil and gas sector  | 2021 | 41 |
|   | H., Jiang, Hua; Y., Luo, Yi   | Driving Employee Engagement through CSR Communication and Employee Perceived Motives: The Role of CSR-Related Social Media Engagement and Job Engagement  | 2024 | 33 |
|   | L.S., Macca, Luca Simone; J., Ballerini, Jacopo; G., Santoro, Gabriele; M., Dabić, Marina   | Consumer engagement through corporate social responsibility communication on social media: Evidence from Facebook and Instagram Bank Accounts             | 2024 | 31 |
|   | Y.M., Suárez-Rico, Yuli Marcela; M.A., García-Benau, María Antonia; M., Gómez-Villegas, Mauricio  | CSR communication through Facebook in the Latin American integrated market (MILA): Disclosure, interactivity and legitimacy                               | 2019 | 31 |
|   | C., Guping, Cheng; J.P., Cherian, Jacob Poopada; M.S., Sial, Muhammad Safdar; G., Mentel, Grzegorz; P., Wan, Peng; S., Alvarez-Otero, Susana; U., Saleem, Usama | The relationship between csr communication on social media, purchase intention, and e-wom in the banking sector of an emerging economy                    | 2021 | 84 |
|   | P., Gomez-Carrasco, Pablo; E., Guillamon-Saorin, Encarna; B., García Osma, Beatriz  | Stakeholders versus Firm Communication in Social Media: The Case of Twitter and Corporate Social Responsibility Information                               | 2021 | 83 |
|   | M.M., Haigh, Michel M.; P.J., Brubaker, Pamela Jo; E.E., Whiteside, Erin Elizabeth  | Facebook: Examining the information presented and its impact on stakeholders  | 2013 | 78 |
|   | R., Wang, Ruoxu; Y., Huang, Yan   | Communicating corporate social responsibility (CSR) on social media: How do message source and types of CSR messages influence stakeholders' perceptions? | 2018 | 73 |
|   | B., Chae, Bongsug (Kevin); E.(., Park, Eunhye (Olivia)  | Corporate social responsibility (CSR): A survey of topics and trends using Twitter data and topic modeling  | 2018 | 69 |
|   | A.E., Nielsen, Anne Ellerup; C., Thomsen, Christa   | Sustainable development: The role of network communication  | 2011 | 49 |
|   | A., Pons, Adrià; C., Vintró, Carla; J., Rius, Josep; J., Vilaplana, Jordi   | Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility in mining industries  | 2021 | 46 |
|   | D., Louis, Didier; C., Lombart, Cindy   | Retailers' communication on ugly fruits and vegetables: What are consumers' perceptions?  | 2018 | 43 |
|   | Y., Cheng, Yang; Y., Jin, Yan; C.J.F., Hung-Baesecke, Chun Ju Flora; Y.R.R., Chen, Yi Ru Regina   | Mobile Corporate Social Responsibility (mCSR): Examining Publics' Responses to CSR-Based Initiatives in Natural Disasters                                 | 2019 | 42 |
|   | R., Tench, Ralph; B., Jones, Brian  | Social media: The Wild West of CSR communications   | 2015 | 40 |

**3.2.1.1. Cluster 1: CSR-C, signalling, and legitimacy on SM**

Cluster 1 is focused on CSR-C, signalling, and legitimacy on SM, with 35 publications and 2031 citations. Early works dating back to 2013 introduced the shift from traditional CSR reporting to interactive CSR dialogue via SM. Lyon and Montgomery (2013) noted that while SM provides increased transparency, it has also raised the risk of greenwashing because it is used as a brand self-promotion tool. Eberle et al. (2013) demonstrated that interactive CSR-C strengthens credibility and brand reputation, while Saxton et al. (2019) showed that CSR messages that explicitly focus on issues will elicit higher user engagement. Sarkar and Sarkar (2020) indicated that CSR-related SM activities increase brand identification and e-WOM. More recently, Lee and Chung (2023) and Lewin and Warren (2025) have expanded upon this idea by demonstrating that transparent and consistent CSR-C increases legitimacy. Conversely, when CSR-C sends mixed signals, it may generate an adverse reaction from stakeholders and be seen as hypocritical. As a whole, this cluster demonstrates CSR-C's development from symbolic signalling to interactive legitimacy-building, emphasising transparency, engagement, and shared accountability.

**3.2.1.2. Cluster 2: Cross-cultural CSR-C and influencer engagement**

Cluster 2 focuses on cross-cultural CSR-C and influencer engagement, comprising 49 publications and 927 citations. Approximately 70% of the studies were conducted after 2019, indicating an increasing convergence of influencer-mediated and cross-cultural aspects in CSR-C. Chu et al. (2020) demonstrated that the cultural environment impacts consumer engagement with CSR messages, with Chinese consumers being more emotionally and behaviorally responsive than U.S. consumers. Cheng et al. (2021) found that influencers with high opinion and taste leadership minimise CSR scepticism and increase brand loyalty by improving perceived credibility. Yang and Chuentawong (2025) further support the notion that environmental influencers promote public engagement and trust by utilising relatable and humanised messaging. Similarly, He et al. (2022) explained that message framing, authenticity, and emotional tone impact consumer trust. In contrast, Cheng et al. (2021) demonstrated that CSR messages motivated by altruism and employee advocacy are more effective in promoting CSR. Taken together, the studies in this cluster confirm that cultural awareness, the credibility of

influencers, and authentic communication are essential factors that contribute to trust and legitimacy in CSR-C globally across markets.

### 3.2.1.3. Cluster 3: Dialogic communication, legitimacy, and consumer engagement

Cluster 3 examines the dialogic nature, legitimacy, and consumer engagement of CSR-C, encompassing 46 publications that total 1,940 references. The first reference dates back to 2012 and demonstrates the cluster's foundational influence on CSR-C research. Du and Vieira (2012) found that companies in controversy-ridden industries can use CSR-C as an instrument to gain legitimacy through transparent, stakeholder-based approaches. However, Colleoni (2013) also noted that many corporate-stakeholder dialogues via SM are mainly symbolic and lack a truly interactive dimension. Kent and Taylor (2016) advocated for dialogic theories based on ethical, two-way engagement. Abitbol and Lee (2017) demonstrated that interactivity, fit between the company and cause, and multiple forms of multimedia facilitate participation and trust in CSR-C. Song and Wen (2020) indicate that transparency in CSR-C on SM will mitigate scepticism within controversial industries. Sung et al. (2025) demonstrated that when CSR-C is dialogically based on empathy and co-created value, consumers exhibit higher levels of brand advocacy and identify more closely with the company. These findings illustrate that dialogic CSR-C increases legitimacy, decreases scepticism, and facilitates a deeper level of trust between CSR-C on SM and its stakeholders.

### 3.2.1.4. Cluster 4: Measuring engagement and E-reputation through SM

Cluster 4 focuses on measuring the brand's engagement and e-reputation through SM, comprising 41 publications with 1645 references. As of 2013, the theme has been a consistent focus area for scholarly inquiry. Bonsón and Ratkai (2013) developed foundational metrics for assessing the social legitimacy and stakeholder engagement of corporations' SM presence. Dutot et al. (2016) further demonstrated that CSR-C strategies, which are transparent and responsive, increase brand e-reputation. Etter (2013; 2014) demonstrated that Twitter is low in interactivity and primarily used for broadcasting rather than dialogue. Han et al. (2024) further illustrated that engagement metrics were positively correlated with firm outcomes utilising deep learning models and that there is a lagged effect of digital CSR-C on firm performance. Overall, this cluster demonstrates that CSR-C can enhance e-reputation and legitimacy when it is transparent, data-driven, and utilises two-way engagement.

### 3.2.1.5. Cluster 5: Empirical modelling, data analytics, and engagement drivers

Cluster 5 focuses on developing empirical models, utilising data analytics, and understanding engagement drivers, comprising 47 publications with 885 references. Although there has been steady growth since 2019, the number of publications included in this cluster represents a growing trend in data-driven CSR-C research. Fernández et al. (2022) proposed a framework that links the effectiveness of CSR-C to credibility, motivation attribution, and moral emotion. In contrast, Kucukusta et al. (2019) demonstrated

that CSR-related posts on SM produce more engagement than promotional-related posts. Barbeito-Caamaño and Chalmeta (2020) applied big data and sentiment analysis to evaluate sustainable practices. Lock and Araujo (2020) used computer vision to visualise the triple bottom line across various media. Yang et al. (2025) continued this trend by applying machine learning to analyse CSR-C strategies during crises and consumers' sentiment towards those strategies. Together, these studies demonstrate the growing role of computational analytics, AI, and empirical modelling in increasing the precision and scalability of CSR-C research.

### 3.2.1.6. Cluster 6: Stakeholder perspectives and computational expansion of CSR-C

Cluster 6 examines the stakeholder perspective and computational expansion of CSR-C, comprising 23 publications with 727 references (an average of 31.6 citations per reference). Early studies in 2011 provided the basis for both stakeholder-centric and data-driven CSR-C research. Gupta et al. (2021) examined the impact of CSR-C on SM on e-WOM and purchase intentions via attitudes toward brands. Gómez-Carrasco et al. (2021) identified a discourse gap on Twitter between firms and stakeholders: firms provide supplemental narratives, whereas stakeholders prioritise core CSR concerns. Chae and Park (2018) advanced CSR-C research through computational text and topic modelling, providing a conceptual map of CSR-C's development. Nielsen and Thomsen (2011) furthered research by demonstrating that network communication drives sustainable growth. Sun et al. (2025) further showed that CSR-C has dynamic effects on SM, shaping cross-sector CSR networks, with increased visibility leading to collaboration among firms, nonprofits, and governments. These findings demonstrate the emerging importance of computational analytics, cross-platform engagement, and stakeholder legitimacy in advancing CSR-C research on SM.

## 3.3. Thematic Evolution of CSR-C on SM

The thematic evolution map is developed using the Biblioshiny software and represents the progression of research interest in CSR-C on SM, as identified by Chandra et al. (2022). The Alluvial Diagram (Figure 3) illustrates the chronology of CSR-C on SM themes over four periods: 2010-2014, 2015-2018, 2019-2021, and 2022 onwards. Strategic Diagrams (Figures 4-7) break down the themes of CSR-C on SM into four quadrants, representing both Centrality and Density, as defined by Aria and Cuccurullo (2017).

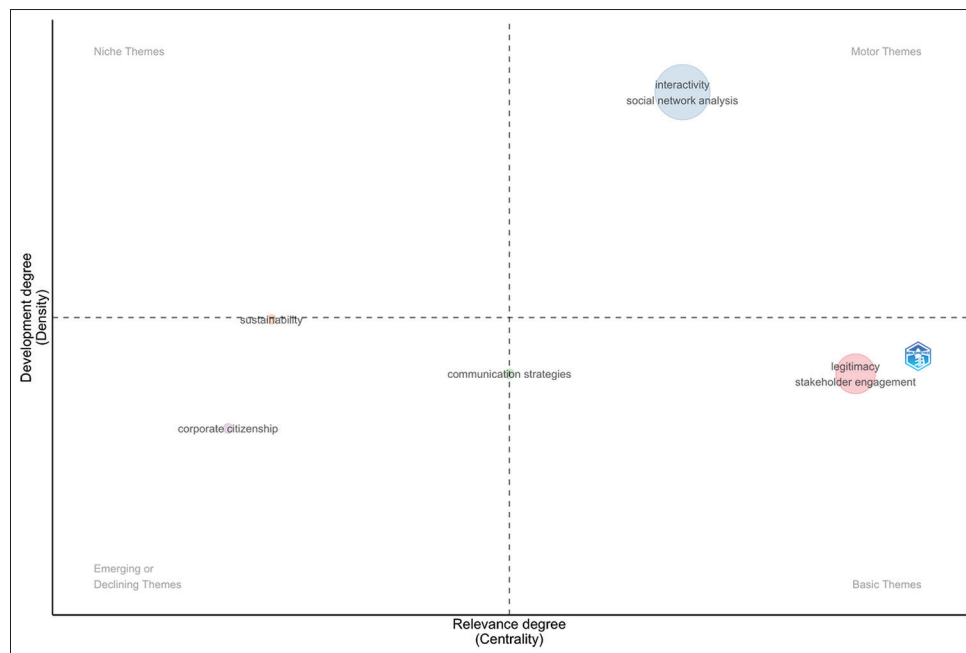
High levels of centrality and impact characterise motor Themes (upper right quadrant) and are therefore critical to the domain. Basic Themes (lower right quadrant) are characterised by a broad relevance to CSR-C on SM, but relatively low development. Emerging/Declining Themes (lower left quadrant) indicate nascent/fading research interests in CSR-C on SM, respectively. Niche Themes (upper left quadrant) indicate specialised but less connected areas of CSR-C on SM.

2010-2014: At this initial stage of CSR-C on SM research, researchers were primarily concerned with communication strategies, interactivity, legitimacy, and sustainability. These served as the foundation for how companies utilised new social media tools for CSR-related communication and to establish legitimacy

**Figure 3:** Representation of an alluvial diagram of the evolution of corporate social responsibility-communication on social media landscape



**Figure 4:** Representation of the time frame 2010-2014



and transparency. The emergence of interactivity as a niche theme highlighted the dialogical nature of CSR-C in SM communication. Legitimacy and sustainability represented the foundational themes (Colleoni, 2013) of the early conceptual framework.

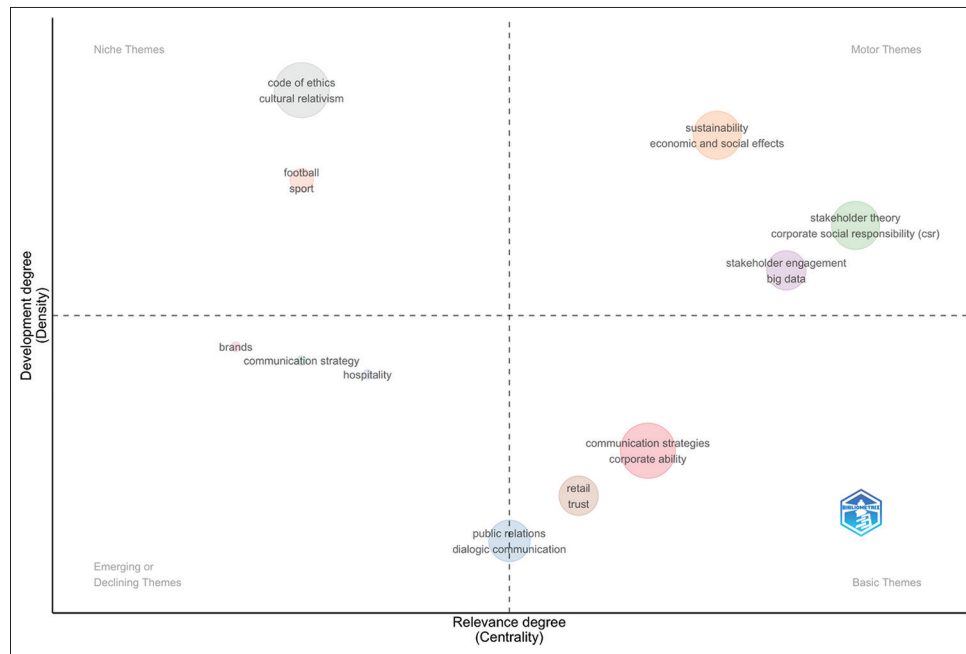
2015-2018: During this period, the CSR-C in the SM field underwent significant diversification. Stakeholder engagement, public relations, and communication strategy were among the primary motor themes. Stakeholder theory has become increasingly prominent as it connects CSR messaging to accountability and relational management (Kent and Taylor, 2016). Retail and corporate communication emerged as niche themes, illustrating the expansion of CSR-C applications into sector-specific contexts. The continued emphasis on sustainability indicates its role as a connecting thread between CSR and related corporate messaging to social and environmental responsibility.

2019-2021: This time frame indicates a period of theoretical and empirical maturation. Stakeholder engagement, corporate social

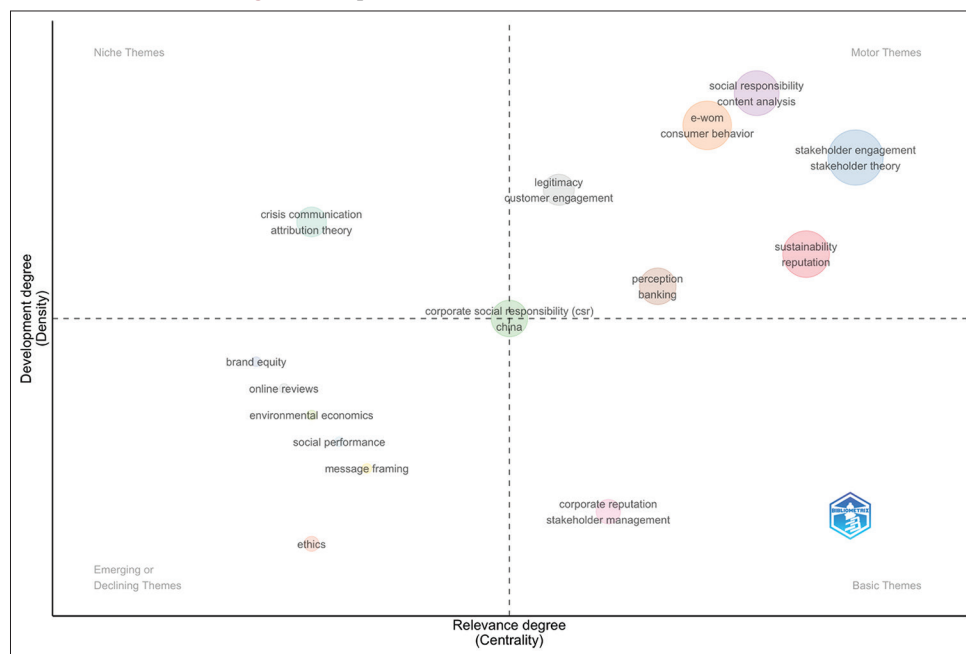
responsibility (CSR), and corporate reputation are prominent motor themes. Emerging themes, such as E-WOM, Message Framing, and Ethics, reflect greater sophistication in understanding how CSR narratives influence perceptions and behaviour. Crisis Communication and Legitimacy highlighted concerns about managing corporate reputation under scrutiny (Saxton et al., 2021). Overall, this time frame indicates a shift toward evaluating engagement outcomes and toward developing frameworks grounded in dialogic communication and stakeholder co-creation.

2022 onwards: The most recent time frame indicates the expansion of CSR-C on SM into data-driven and context-specific domains. Content analysis and corporate social responsibility (CSR) have emerged as dominant motor themes indicating methodological advancements in computational methods. Consumer behaviour, crisis communication, green marketing, and stakeholder engagement represent expanding interdisciplinary connections. Simultaneously, social networks, COVID-19, and word of mouth represent emerging contexts

**Figure 5:** Representation of the time frame 2015-2018



**Figure 6:** Representation of the time frame 2018-2021



that examine digital ethics and post-pandemic transformation (Illia et al., 2025; Sun et al., 2025). Sustainability and legitimacy remain central to the CSR discourse, evolving toward strategic and analytical perspectives.

## 4. INTROSPECTION AND WAYS FORWARD

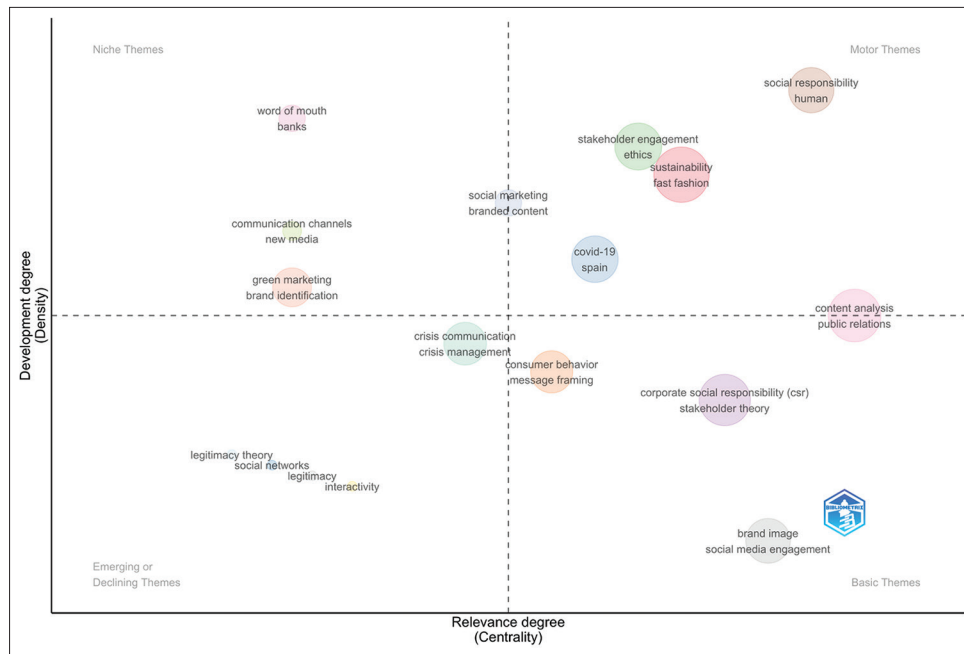
### 4.1. Significant Takeaways

The study indicated that the research domain of CSR-C on SM has been developing at an accelerated pace for approximately 16 years, with the first evidence appearing in 2010. First, this review identified 405 publications on CSR-C on SM published between 2010 and 2025. Approximately 47% of publications

were published after 2022, supporting the notion of accelerating development in this domain. Second, the growing number of co-authored publications indicates increased collaboration among researchers across disciplines. Third, while contributors are represented globally, there is also a significant presence of authors in Europe, Asia, and North America. Specifically, the United States and Spain are leaders in terms of the number of contributing authors. This indicates that research on CSR-C in SM is both global and diverse. Fourth, the Journal of Business Ethics has the most significant influence in this domain.

Additionally, the dominant sources include business, management, social sciences, and psychology domains. These findings support

**Figure 7:** Representation of the time frame 2022 onwards



the multidisciplinary nature of CSR-C on SM research and indicate the potential for further collaboration among these disciplines. *Fifth*, the results of the analysis utilising bibliographic coupling identified six major clusters: (i) CSR-C, signaling, and legitimacy on SM; (ii) Cross-cultural CSR-C and influencer engagement; (iii) Dialogic Communication, legitimacy, and consumer engagement; (iv) Measuring engagement and e-reputation through SM; (v) Empirical modelling, data analytics, and engagement drivers; and (vi) Stakeholder perspective and computational expansion of CSR-C and thematic evolution represents the progression of CSR-C on SM over the course of four periods: 2010-2014; 2015-2018; 2019-2021; and 2022 onwards. The overall thematic structure demonstrates the progress made by researchers in this domain and guides future researchers in focusing their investigations.

#### 4.2. Future Research Directions for CSR-C on SM

Based on the study's findings, there is considerable opportunity for future research on CSR-C in SM research (RQ4), as shown in Table 8.

##### 4.2.1. Influencer- and creator-mediated CSR-C

Influencers on SM are increasingly influential in CSR-C. For example, Yang et al. (2023) demonstrate that human-like influencers may increase trust, authenticity, and brand loyalty but decrease scepticism in CSR-C on SM. Furthermore, Macca et al. (2024) provide evidence from the banking sector that shows CSR-C on SM posts related to internal CSR values, such as employee support and diversity, have a greater effect on user engagement than CSR-C posts related to environmental issues. As such, future studies could examine the influence of CSR domains, influencer types, and SM features on users' levels of trust in CSR-C on SM and, subsequently, their advocacy behaviour. Therefore, the following FRQs are proposed:

FRQ1: In what circumstances do human/virtual influencers perform better than brands for CSR-C (e.g. fit, anthropomorphism, identity signalling), and how will these effects flow through to loyalty, price premium and advocacy?

FRQ2: How can brands optimise their influencer portfolios across different platforms (e.g. Instagram, X, TikTok) and industries (e.g. banking, tourism, fashion) to reduce scepticism and amplify eWOM?

##### 4.2.2. Dialogic communication, transparency and authenticity

Research has demonstrated that transparency in CSR-C has several positive effects on consumers, including increasing the credibility of messages and encouraging positive consumer attitudes (Lee and Chung, 2023), via systematic processing of information based on the elaboration likelihood model. However, research has also found that inconsistencies in CSR messages from internal and external sources can lead to perceptions of hypocrisy, especially when brand reputation is high (Lewin and Warren, 2025). Thus, CSR-C on SM represents a complex balancing act between transparency and consistency. Additionally, dialogical communication theory has found that two-way interaction, empathy, and responsiveness enable companies to co-create meaning and shared value with their stakeholders, leading to higher levels of identification and advocacy (Kent and Taylor, 2016; Sung et al., 2025). As such, future research is needed to develop frameworks for dialogical communication that combine transparency with engagement to enable authenticity in AI-assisted CSR-C. Thus, the following FRQs are proposed:

FRQ3: How do the features of dialogical communication (e.g. reply cadence, Q&A, and co-creation prompts) interact with transparency cues to minimise perceptions of hypocrisy and maximise authenticity over time? FRQ4: What signals of authenticity (e.g. disclosures, third-party verification) can be used to indicate that a firm is being

**Table 8: Representation of the future research directions in CSR-C on SM research**

| Future research direction   | Identification of gap  | Proposed FRQs  |
|---|--|--|
| Influencer- and creator-mediated CSR-C                              | <p>Influencers on SM are increasingly influential in CSR-C. Human-like influencers may increase trust, authenticity and brand loyalty but decrease scepticism (Yang et al., 2023). CSR-C posts that align with internal CSR values generate greater engagement than posts on environmental issues (Macca et al., 2024). There is potential to examine the influence of CSR domains, influencer types and SM features on users’ trust and advocacy behaviour.</p>   | <p>FRQ1: In what circumstances do human/virtual influencers perform better than brands for CSR-C, and how will these effects flow through to loyalty, price premium and advocacy?<br/>FRQ2: How can brands optimise their influencer portfolios across platforms and industries to reduce scepticism and amplify eWOM?</p>   |
| Dialogic communication, transparency and authenticity               | <p>Transparency in CSR-C increases credibility and positive consumer attitudes (Lee and Chung, 2023). Inconsistencies in CSR messages lead to perceptions of hypocrisy, especially among high-reputation organisations (Lewin and Warren, 2025). Dialogical communication enables co-creation, identification and advocacy (Kent and Taylor, 2016; Sung et al., 2025). There is a need to develop frameworks that combine transparency with engagement to enable authenticity in AI-assisted CSR-C.</p>  | <p>FRQ3: How do the features of dialogical communication interact with transparency cues to minimise perceptions of hypocrisy and maximise authenticity over time?<br/>FRQ4: What signals of authenticity can be used to indicate that a firm is being authentic when they use both human and AI-assisted CSR messaging?</p> |
| Large language models (LLMs) and automated CSR-C                    | <p>LLMs and deep learning are transforming CSR-C by enabling monitoring, analysis and automation. CSR-C has a positive long-term impact on organisational performance through engagement and visibility (Han et al., 2024). LLM-generated CSR content improves perceived authenticity until synthetic content is recognised (Illia et al., 2025). Machine learning models can track changes in CSR narratives during crisis events (Yang et al., 2025). There are questions regarding communicative and ethical implications of AI in CSR-C.</p> | <p>FRQ5: How can organisations design human-in-the-loop pipelines to create effective CSR messaging while minimising the risks associated with synthetic content?<br/>FRQ6: What metrics of AI need to be established as standards to assess the quality, credibility and social impact of CSR-C on SM?</p>                  |
| Cross-sector networks, attention dynamics and partnerships          | <p>Cross-sector collaborations are influenced by public attention, issue salience and industry visibility, especially in crisis events (Sun et al., 2025). Companies and stakeholders often “talk past” each other due to differences in the CSR issues they emphasise (Gómez-Carrasco et al., 2021). The CSR-C agenda is fragmented across reports, media and SM, leading to misunderstanding (Mickelsson et al., 2023). There is a need for network and attention-based perspectives.</p>  | <p>FRQ7: How do attention shocks modify CSR network structures and CSR message diffusion across different sectors?<br/>FRQ8: Which cross-sector tie configurations produce the largest decrease in scepticism and the highest levels of successful outcomes?</p>   |
| Sectoral and cultural contexts, emotions, and brand origin          | <p>Local cultural and sectoral contexts influence CSR-C credibility and responses. Locally branded CSR-C is more trustworthy than foreign-branded products, especially during crises (Tosun, 2023). Positive emotional tones increase reputation, while negative tones impact it negatively (Cuervo-Carabel et al., 2025). Emotions influence tourist responses to destination social responsibility CSR-C (Martínez García de Leaniz et al., 2025). There is a need for context-specific frameworks.</p>  | <p>FRQ9: How do CSR-C origins, sector sensitivity and culturally-shaped emotions modify effectiveness across SM platforms?<br/>FRQ10: What combinations of emotional tones and formats maximise the conversion of tourist engagement into advocacy and sustainable behaviours?</p>   |
| Message design: Framing, motives, and proactive versus reactive CSR | <p>The way CSR initiatives are framed influences perceptions of authenticity, reliability and brand loyalty. Anticipation and co-creation result in higher engagement and advocacy than apology or damage control (Dahrouj et al., 2025). Consumer motivations such as self-enhancement, identity signalling and social bonding influence the willingness to share CSR-C (Aguirre et al., 2023). There is a need to study how framing, motives and values interact.</p>  | <p>FRQ11: How do proactive CSR stories compare to reactive/apologetic framing strategies in shaping long-run trust and advocacy?<br/>FRQ12: Which stakeholder motivations most effectively convert specific CSR appeals into sharing and participation?</p>  |
| Measurement, governance and critical success determinants           | <p>CSDs such as source credibility and stakeholder co-creation predict CSR-C reach and effects (Sareen and Mahajan, 2025). Employee support and diversity generate more engagement than environmental topics (Macca et al., 2024), aligning with socially responsible diversity management (Syed and Kramar, 2009). Happiness-oriented and conversational messaging styles generate higher engagement (Galiano-Coronil et al., 2024). There is a need for standardised models and governance mechanisms.</p>                                     | <p>FRQ13: What types of standardised reporting dashboards are predictive of sustained and high-quality engagement across industries?<br/>FRQ14: How should CSR-C be governed to balance KPIs with legitimacy and minimise the risk of negative consequences from contradictory information?</p>                              |

FRQs: Future research questions

authentic when they use both human and AI-assisted CSR messaging?

#### 4.2.3. Large Language Models (LLMs) and automated CSR-C

The rapid evolution of LLMs and deep learning is transforming CSR-C by providing companies with tools to monitor, analyse, and automate their creation. Natural language processing using deep learning has demonstrated that CSR-C has a positive long-term impact on organisational performance, achieved through increased engagement and visibility (Han et al., 2024). Similar benefits have been reported with the use of LLMs that generate CSR testimonials or reports, which can significantly improve the perceived authenticity of CSR messaging until synthetic content is recognised. The effectiveness of CSR messaging is reduced (Illia et al., 2025). Additionally, machine learning models like BERTopic can track changes in CSR narratives during crisis events by monitoring shifts in tone, sentiment, and stakeholder responses (Yang et al., 2025). There are many questions regarding the communicative and ethical implications of using AI to automate CSR-C, as well as how companies can strike a balance between the efficiency of creating CSR-C and its credibility and transparency. Therefore, the following FRQs are proposed:

FRQ5: How can organisations design human-in-the-loop pipelines (e.g. topic modelling, sentiment, causal uplift) to create effective CSR messaging while minimising the risks associated with synthetic content (e.g. illusory truth, over-automation)?

FRQ6: What metrics of AI (e.g. explainability, audit trails, bias/greenwashing flags) need to be established as standards to assess the quality, credibility and social impact of CSR-C on SM?

#### 4.2.4. Cross-Sector networks, attention dynamics and partnerships

The field's growing reliance on cross-sector collaborations between companies, government and non-profit organisations will be significantly influenced by various external factors, including the level of public attention for an issue, how salient the problem is, and how visible an industry is to the general public (especially in crisis events, like pandemic outbreaks - Sun et al., 2025). However, it has been found that the interactions among companies and stakeholders (i.e., "talking past" each other) occur due to differences in what CSR issues are emphasised by companies (typically supplementary CSR-related to advertising/marketing or reputation) versus what CSR issues are emphasised by stakeholders, typically core social and environmental CSR issues (Gómez-Carrasco et al., 2021). Furthermore, the CSR-C agenda is fragmented across CSR reports, CSR media coverage, and SM, and therefore, CSR-C may be misunderstood (Mickelsson et al., 2023). The future research needs to apply a network perspective and an attention-based perspective to understand better how cross-sector communications may contribute to creating a more transparent and more coherent CSR-C agenda, maintaining the legitimacy of CSR-C, and converting public attention into long-lasting collaborative CSR-C outcomes; hence, the following FRQs are applicable:

FRQ7: How do attention shocks (health, climate, social justice) modify CSR network structures and CSR message diffusion

across different sectors (e.g., company-government, company-nonprofit, etc.)?

FRQ8: Which cross-sector tie configurations (e.g., brokerage, multiplexity) produce the largest decrease in scepticism and yield the highest levels of successful outcomes (e.g., policy support, donations, participation)?

#### 4.2.5. Sectoral and cultural contexts, emotions, and brand origin

Local cultural and sectoral contexts significantly influence CSR-C in SM and how stakeholders understand and respond to it. Locally branded CSR-C products are perceived as more credible and trustworthy than foreign-branded products, particularly during times of crisis, as they are viewed as more relevant and community-focused (Tosun, 2023). The tone of CSR-C also plays an important role (Purtell and Kang 2022). For example, using positive emotional tones (e.g., joy/surprise) is likely to increase a company's reputation, whereas using negative emotional tones (e.g., fear/sadness) is expected to impact it negatively (Cuervo-Carabel et al., 2025). Emotions and relationships between tourists and destinations also influence tourist responses to CSR-C regarding destination social responsibility (Martínez García de Leaniz et al., 2025). Therefore, future CSR-C research should develop context-specific frameworks that take into consideration the impact of local cultural values, emotional tones, and sectoral contexts, stakeholder engagement and CSR-C effectiveness; hence, the following FRQs are applicable:

FRQ9: How do CSR-C origins (local/foreign), sector sensitivity, and culturally-shaped emotions (e.g., joy, pride, empathy) modify effectiveness across SM platforms?

FRQ10: What combinations of emotional tones and formats (e.g., short-form video, live Q&A, carousels) maximise the conversion of tourist engagement with CSR-C into advocacy and sustainable behaviours by context?

#### 4.2.6. Message design: Framing, motives, and proactive versus Reactive CSR

Message design is another critical aspect that determines how stakeholders perceive and respond to CSR initiatives. According to the framing theory, the way CSR initiatives are framed — whether they are proactive or reactive — influences perceptions of authenticity, reliability, and brand loyalty. Research indicates that anticipation and co-creation, rather than apology or damage control, result in higher levels of engagement, brand love, and customer advocacy (Dahrouj et al., 2025), particularly when there is consistent SM dialogue. In addition, consumer motivations such as self-enhancement, identity signalling, and social bonding play significant roles in determining the willingness to share CSR-C (Aguirre et al., 2023). Therefore, future research should study how the framing of CSR initiatives, the perceived motivation behind CSR initiatives, and individual values interact to determine the likelihood of CSR-C being shared and long-term engagement; thus, the following FRQs are applicable:

FRQ11: How do proactive CSR stories (e.g., objectives, progress, accountability) compare to reactive/apologetic framing strategies in shaping long-run trust and advocacy during CSR-C scrutiny?

FRQ12: Which stakeholder motivations (e.g., identity, bonding,

moral elevation) most effectively convert specific CSR appeals (e.g., environmental, employee support, diversity) into sharing and participation?

#### 4.2.7. Measurement, governance and critical success determinants

To assess the effectiveness of CSR-C, comprehensive evaluation systems must be in place that incorporate both quantitative and qualitative indicators. Researchers have identified several CSDs, such as the credibility of message sources and the degree of stakeholder co-creation, as significant predictors of CSR-C reach and effects (Sareen and Mahajan, 2025). For instance, employee support and diversity generated more engagement than environmental topics in the banking sector, highlighting the importance of human-Centred messaging (Macca et al., 2024), which aligns with socially responsible diversity management (Syed and Kramar, 2009). Similarly, social marketing perspectives suggest that CSR-C, utilising happiness-oriented and conversational messaging styles, is more likely to resonate emotionally and generate higher levels of engagement (Galiano-Coronil et al., 2024). Therefore, future research should prioritise developing standardised models and governance mechanisms (e.g., audits, transparency indexes) to assess CSR-C quality and create accountability for CSR-C ethics; thus, the following FRQs are applicable:

FRQ13: What types of standardised reporting dashboards (e.g., source credibility, co-creation depth, stakeholder mix, equity of voice) are predictive of sustained and high-quality engagement across industries?

FRQ14: How should CSR-C be governed (e.g., through policies, transparency reports, independent audits) by companies to balance KPIs with CSR-C legitimacy and minimise the risk of negative consequences resulting from contradictory information?

## 5. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

Over the past decade, companies have rapidly been using SM for CSR-C, which has generated an expanding, cross-disciplinary research base. The purpose of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the field to identify existing gaps, contribute to ongoing discussions and provide future research avenues. Hence, the study conducted a systematic review using bibliometric analysis techniques, namely performance analysis and science mapping, which provided an in-depth understanding of the field's productivity and structural intellectual aspects, demonstrating consistent growth patterns. With a sudden increase in publications since 2022, focusing on AI-enabled communication, influencer engagement and computational modeling (Han et al., 2024; Illia et al., 2025), CSR-C on SM is expected to be shaped by the ongoing technological changes and the increasingly algorithmically mediated SM environment such as AI and LLM models (Sung et al., 2025; Lee and Chung, 2023). As a result, researchers in CSR-C on SM will need to adjust their research objectives and methodologies in response to these developments. There are increasing calls for the development of CSR-specific theoretical frameworks that can integrate SM interactivity with behavioural outcomes (O'Connor, 2022) and must address the

complexities of digital legitimacy, stakeholder trust, and cultural variability (Cheng et al., 2024; Yang and Chuentarawong, 2025). The findings of this review identify multiple knowledge gaps, including authenticity and AI ethics, cross-sector partnerships, and message framing, which are outlined in our future research agenda (see section 4.2). This reinforces the importance of strategic CSR-C and provides a roadmap for researchers and practitioners to develop stronger theory and practice in CSR-C on SM research.

However, this review is not without its limitations. First, the use of bibliometric analysis, which often favours breadth over depth, suggests that future research may employ methods such as meta-analyses. Additionally, while this review includes Scopus-indexed publications, future reviews may consider publications from other databases relevant to CSR-C on SM. Nonetheless, this study provides a comprehensive overview of the evolving research of CSR-C on SM. It consolidates the scholarly contributions over 16 years, serving as a basis for developing research that spans both academia and practitioners working towards effective communication strategies.

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