



**WHAT IS THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SEVERAL OVERTONES OF CSR COMMUNICATION? THE CASE OF THE WINE INDUSTRY IN THE SOUTHERN ITALIAN REGIONS**

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# WHAT IS THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SEVERAL OVERTONES OF CSR COMMUNICATION? THE CASE OF THE WINE INDUSTRY IN THE SOUTHERN ITALIAN REGIONS

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The aim of this study is to understand whether the companies most involved in communicating their responsible behaviour externally are those most active on the social media platform, with a philanthropic purpose rather than strictly aimed at economic aspects.

**Methodology** – We firstly assess firms' efforts on the SM platform using the model proposed by Chung *et al.* (2014), and, secondly, we analyse the content of messages in order to verify what dimensions of the CSR they contain. A multivariate modelling has been performed In order to verify whether the wineries that take most care to communicate their responsible behaviour are those that are more involved in the management of Social Network (SN).

**Findings** – Our findings show that wineries most involved in corporate social responsibility initiatives and in the active communication of these initiatives on social media platforms, are those most active on social media and in particular those that interact most with their Web users, triggering in them some reactions that lead to the sharing of content and therefore having a significant impact on the dissemination of information through social media.

**Research limitations** – The main limitations of this study are related to the limited sample size, the time period considered.

**Practical implications** – This study provides insight and hints to wine entrepreneurs interested in improving the effectiveness of their CSR communication via SM showing the importance of the interactive dimension of SM, in order to reduce scepticism and gain greater credibility on the market.

**Originality/value** – This study uses four dimensions of the companies' SM efforts' built on the basis of a number of variables that are more explicative of the social media engagement.

**Keywords:** Corporate reputation; CSR communication; Facebook; Green corporate image; Social Media effort.

**Paper type** Research paper.

## 1. Introduction

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3 The integration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives in business is one of the  
4 great challenges facing firms today (Yuan et al., 2011) as well as responding to the growing  
5 concerns of customers regarding social and environmental aspects related to the products and  
6 production processes. In this scenario, an effective communication strategy has become a vital issue  
7 in building and sustaining the legitimacy and reputation of a company in the eyes of stakeholders  
8 (Korschun and Du, 2013; Türkel and Akan, 2015; Dutot *et al.*, 2016). CSR communication offers  
9 several advantages to the companies operating in different sectors of activity (Mangold and Faulds,  
10 2009; Riad Shams, 2015). Particularly is able to convey a better corporate image to the customers  
11 (Fraj-Andrés *et al.*, 2012), establish stronger links with stakeholders (Tench *et al.*, 2014), enhance  
12 stakeholders' advocacy behaviour (Du *et al.*, 2010), and contribute towards gaining a competitive  
13 advantage, offering new opportunities for the firm in the market (Holme, 2010; Porter and Kramer,  
14 2006). The way in which companies communicate their CSR efforts has changed over time in line  
15 with the development of new information technologies and in particular with the advent of social  
16 media (SM), which has transformed the way firms interact with their internal and external  
17 stakeholders. Compared to traditional communication channels (i.e. mass media, reports,  
18 advertising), SM offers the opportunity to enable stakeholders to respond to the CSR message with  
19 user-generated content in a two-way communication between companies and stakeholders, assuring  
20 a mutual understanding and shared value (Dunn and Harness, 2018; Tench et al., 2014). These  
21 significant advantages entail the firms' willingness to invest part of their budget to reach potential  
22 customers through advertising on these communication channels (Falls, 2009).

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CSR communication, as previously highlighted, is one of the most important corporate strategies  
in several industries and especially in the agribusiness sector, not only for its importance in  
economic terms, but particularly because it produces goods to satisfy human needs (Luhmann and  
Theuvsen, 2016; Vanhonacker and Verbeke, 2014). People today, as a consequence of the frequent  
food crises and environmental issues, are generally concerned about the quality of products that  
they consume and the impact of the production process in both social and ecological terms. These  
are just a few reasons justifying the commitment of agri-food companies to the field of social  
responsibility and the dissemination of increasingly innovative communication strategies, such as  
those based on the use of social media platforms. The wide dissemination of SM into the marketing  
and communication strategies of firms is proved by data released by Eurostat (2018), according to  
which in the European Union (EU-28), 41% of firms with at least 10 employees, operating in the  
industries of food, beverages, tobacco, textile, leather, wood, pulp and paper, used at least one SM  
in conducting their business activities in the year 2017.

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3 The growing diffusion of CSR initiatives among companies and of social media as tools to  
4 effectively communicate the companies' CSR efforts, in order to build a relationship of trust with  
5 both internal and external stakeholders, has attracted the interest of academics and practitioners in  
6 analysing the effectiveness of CSR communication via social media. Most studies in the economic  
7 literature have been primarily focused on the analysis of the influence of CSR communication on  
8 consumer behaviour and stakeholders' evaluation, emphasizing how effective communication  
9 strategies contribute to creating value for the company (Ali et al., 2010; Vlachvei and Notta, 2015).  
10 Conversely, there are few studies in the management literature that analyse the way in which  
11 companies use social media to communicate their responsible behaviour and whether the  
12 engagement on social media channels is driven by a global vision of sustainability or if the goal of  
13 creating value is the determining one. In respect of the latter, Reilly and Hynan (2014), analysing 16  
14 global corporations of four different production sectors, among which was included the  
15 multinational Coca-Cola, showed that the firms with a greater environmental performance are more  
16 active in SM than other firms and are more likely to maintain a strong corporate presence in the SM  
17 platforms.

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29 Given this background, and taking into consideration the scarcity of studies in the management  
30 literature in the agribusiness field, this study is intended to understand whether the companies most  
31 involved in communicating their responsible behaviour externally are those most active on the  
32 social media platform, also in terms of interaction with their web-user. In particular, starting from  
33 the CSR dimensions identified by Jones and co-authors (2007), this analysis aims to verify if  
34 companies' social media engagement is addressed exclusively on increasing sales and improving  
35 the overall image of the company, using this tool in the same way as traditional communication  
36 channels, or on the contrary, with a philanthropic purpose. To achieve these aims we firstly assess  
37 firms' efforts on the SM platform, and in particular on Facebook, and, secondly, we analyse the  
38 content of messages in order to verify what dimensions of the CSR they contain (only economic or  
39 philanthropic). The wine industry has been chosen since SM technologies have, over time, gained  
40 increasing importance in the wine industry, showing expectations of strong implementation in the  
41 near future (Szolnoki *et al.*, 2014). In addition, as emphasized by Marshall et al. (2005) the wine  
42 industry has traditionally been considered fairly green, thanks to several initiatives aimed at  
43 increasing the sustainability of its practices (Giacomarra et al., 2016). More specifically, this study  
44 is focused on a sample of 102 wineries operating in the Southern Italian regions. In fact, this area –  
45 particularly suited to the cultivation of vines – has the second largest wine production at a national  
46 level, with 22.7 million hectolitres of wine in 2016 of a total national production of about 54.1  
47 million hectolitres (ISMEA, 2018). In these regions the wine industry has shown a growing  
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3 investment in new technologies and a growing diffusion of networking into the communication and  
4 media plan (Stasi *et al.*, 2016), the latter especially among small wineries, led by managers with a  
5 higher educational level (Galati *et al.*, 2017a). Furthermore, over the last few years the wine  
6 industry, in several regions, has shown a strong propensity towards the green economy (Bresciani *et*  
7 *al.*, 2016), and particularly for strategies and practices addressed to solving environmental and  
8 social issues (Fiore *et al.*, 2016a, b; Giacomarra *et al.*, 2016; Marshall *et al.*, 2010; Marshall *et al.*,  
9 2005; Pomarici *et al.*, 2014). This has also pushed an increasing number of wineries towards a  
10 greater CSR in order to respond to the pressure of increasingly critical and responsible consumers  
11 (Nazzaro *et al.*, 2016) and the high competitiveness of the wine market (Galati *et al.*, 2017b; Maizza  
12 *et al.*, 2017; Vrontis *et al.*, 2016; Contò *et al.*, 2015).

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15 This paper offers a preliminary examination of the extent to which Italian wineries use social  
16 media to communicate their engagement in CSR initiatives, contributing to adding value to specific  
17 CSR aspects in the general CSR framework. In particular, compared to previous studies that analyse  
18 the commitment to social media companies by only taking into consideration likes or followers, this  
19 study uses four dimensions of the companies' SM efforts' built on the basis of a number of  
20 variables that are more explicative of the social media engagement.

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22 In light of the above, the paper is structured as follows. After a brief introduction, a literature  
23 review is presented in Section 2. Section 3 explains the adopted methodological approach. Then,  
24 results are presented in the Section 4 and they are discussed in Section 5. Finally, research  
25 implications, limitations and future research close the work.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. CSR communication through SM

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27 In recent years, the way of doing business has profoundly changed as a result of an increasingly  
28 critical society that demands that companies from all industries take responsibility for their business  
29 environment to solve social issues and meet societal expectations (Salehi *et al.*, 2018; Luhmann and  
30 Theuvsen, 2016; Caulfield, 2013). The companies' commitment to respond to growing social and  
31 environmental concerns can be summarized in the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility  
32 (CSR), which is today an important element at the centre of the different forms of governance.  
33 There is no unique definition of CSR, in part due, as shown by Tench *et al.* (2001), to the fact that  
34 different stakeholders seek to claim the concept as their own and to define it in their own interests.  
35 A widely shared definition is the one proposed by the European Commission in the Green paper  
36 (EC, 2001) where CSR is defined as "*the companies' voluntary integration of social and*

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3 *environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders*  
4 *on a voluntary basis”.*  
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6 Business CSR activities can vary from those of fundamental responsibility, related to the respect  
7 of the minimum standards set by the economic, legal and ethical responsibilities, to those of  
8 discretionary responsibility in which businesses participate actively in the betterment of society  
9 (David and colleagues, 2005). Carroll (1999) identifies four dimensions of CSR, described as  
10 responsibilities of the organization, such as economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic  
11 responsibilities, in relation to the various stakeholders involved, directly or indirectly, in the  
12 company activity. A more comprehensive classification of the CSR dimensions has been proposed  
13 by Jones et al (2007), in which the distinction has been drawn between CSR seen as a core business  
14 activity, according to which the company operates in a socially responsible manner with the aim of  
15 creating value for the company, as opposed to CSR as asylum, where there is an active participation  
16 of the company in solving environmental and social problems. These dimensions of CSR, linked to  
17 the objectives that the company sets out, make it clear that the commitment in the field of social  
18 responsibility must correspond to a positive outcome or a high evaluation of the company by the  
19 stakeholders involved in various capacities in the company. To do this, the company must build a  
20 relationship with key stakeholders (internal or external) by communicating the activities related to  
21 CSR in a different way, helping to strengthen the companies' legitimacy and reputation. Whereas in  
22 the past CSR communication took place mainly through newspapers, corporate websites, CSR  
23 reports, etc., which may be defined as traditional communication channels, today, with the advent  
24 of modern information and communication technologies, companies communicate with their  
25 stakeholders primarily through social media. SM has reshaped and transformed the nature of  
26 communications by playing a great role in fostering dialogue between firms and stakeholders  
27 (Tench and Jones, 2015). The main characteristic that differentiates SM from traditional  
28 communication channels is that it enables stakeholders to respond to the CSR message with user-  
29 generated content in a two-way communication between companies and stakeholders, with a focus  
30 on mutual understanding and shared value (Dunn and Harness, 2018; Tench et al., 2014; Ho, 2014).  
31 As emphasized by Cho et al. (2017) the adoption of SM as a CSR communication tool is  
32 recommended, as it creates a communication environment where interactive and dialogic aspects  
33 inherently reside. Through the communication of CSR initiatives on SM platforms, firms are able to  
34 interact with a large number of stakeholders (including customers, investors, activists, employees  
35 and members of the local community) through the exchange of online visible messages initiated,  
36 created, circulated and consumed by users, can better understand consumers' expectations, respond  
37 to criticism, and reduce scepticism contributing to creating corporate and social values (Perks et al.,  
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3 2018; Dunn and Harness, 2018; Vrontis et al., 2018; Korschun and Du, 2013). This occurs because  
4 users of online communities try to affiliate themselves with virtual groups that express their values  
5 (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006), and when firms take responsibility for environmental, ethical,  
6 cultural or community-related issues, the users identify themselves with these issues and become  
7 themselves spokespersons for business activities, strengthening the corporate reputational capital  
8 (Isaksson *et al.*, 2014). The firm, in this way, as a primary enactor in the management of CSR,  
9 becomes a sort of facilitator, while the stakeholder assumes the role of CSR enactor (Bhattacharya  
10 *et al.*, 2008). More specifically, when the company uses message interactivity features to convey  
11 their CSR activities to their stakeholders it shows its desire to keep in touch with, and listen to, its  
12 public (Go and Bortree, 2017; Ali et al., 2015).

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15 In the context of increasingly critical consumers, as suggested by Luhmann and Theuvsen  
16 (2016), the information availability through CSR communication becomes ever more relevant for  
17 agribusiness. In this field, the management literature has focused mainly on the analysis of the  
18 ability of CSR communication to influence the evaluation of stakeholders (internal and external)  
19 and therefore consumer choices (Lee and Shin, 2010). As emphasized by several authors, CSR  
20 communication positively affects the purchase intention of consumers and generates a positive  
21 evaluation among stakeholders, thus improving the company image (Ali et al., 2015; Du et al.,  
22 2010). In particular, as emphasized by Russo and Simeone (2017), social media, compared to mass  
23 media in general, facilitates the acquisition of knowledge on ethical problems and allows the  
24 creation of a system of individual values regarding the environmental and social impact of food  
25 production. In addition, the way in which information is transferred to users is of considerable  
26 importance. Robinson and Eilert (2018), for example, found that consumers perceive a firm much  
27 more reliable when providing detailed information about their commitment to social responsibility,  
28 preferring more specific information when the organization engages in a single issue, although more  
29 general information achieves the same result in the case of a diversified portfolio.

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32 Contrarily, very few studies in the economic literature are focused on the usefulness of CSR  
33 communication via SM in agribusiness. Araujo and Kollat (2018) investigate the main factors  
34 driving the effectiveness of CSR communication on Twitter, focusing on companies operating in  
35 the food sector. Results found that CSR tweets were associated with higher levels of content  
36 endorsement and diffusion (**retweets per followers**), highlighting that companies operating in the  
37 food sector that tweet frequently regarding CSR activity are more likely to have higher levels of  
38 endorsement and diffusion of their tweets. For this reason and as emphasized by Du et al. (2010),  
39 the effectiveness of a CSR communication strategy is greater when it is addressed to people more  
40 sensitive to the issues of social responsibility. However, the latter result is in contrast with Lee et al.

(2013) who, with regard to companies operating in three different subsectors of the food industry (fast-food, beverages and food & confectionary companies), found that the effectiveness of the CSR communication outreach is no different for CSR activists and disbelievers. In particular, as Reilly and Hynan (2014) find, comparing the corporate communication in four companies' product industries among which were food, beverages and tobacco, green companies are more likely to discuss the concept of sustainability in their corporate communication and were more active on two of the main social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. In line with this result, Lee and Holladay (2012) highlight that social media represent a useful communication tool to create a greater awareness of philanthropic initiatives adopted by companies and that the companies that most use these channels for this purpose are those operating in the food sector, as shown the greatest number of posting on philanthropic efforts. These results are inconsistent with what emerges from the study of Meixner and co-authors (2015) according to which companies operating in the agro-food industry use social media platform in order to increase sales and improve the company image, and not with a philanthropic purpose, emphasizing the need of a greater effort in particular for the interaction phase with external stakeholders in order to assure a greater effectiveness of the CSR communication. However, the use of social media as innovative communication tools and the commitment to their use are linked to the company dimension, assuming that small companies operating in the agro-food sector are less interested because they have a lower awareness of the usefulness of these tools (Meixner et al., 2013). In light of this, and with the aim of identifying distinct communication strategies via SM adopted by responsible companies, the next section gives a brief literature review on the main dimension of the SM effort of companies.

## **2.2. Dimension of firms' SM effort and CSR communication**

One of the features of CSR communication through social media is linked to the opportunity of exchanging messages with users. As emphasized by several authors (Kelleher, 2009; Go and Bortree, 2017), people who have some levels of contingency interactivity with an organization show higher levels of trust toward that organization. This brief analysis emphasizes the role of the SM as a strategic marketing tool used by firms to communicate their social responsibility behaviour. In the economic literature there are few empirical works that measure the SM effort made by firms. Some studies evaluated the effort in SM through the number of likes or fans (Paniagua and Sapena, 2014; Reilly and Hynan, 2014), or taking into account the number of comments and posts, the quality and richness of the contents, and the intensity of updates (Chung *et al.*, 2014; Öztamur and Karakadilar, 2014; Karjaluoto *et al.*, 2016). In this regard, Chung *et al.*

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3 (2014) identify three dimensions of a firm's efforts on a social media platform, named: Intensity  
4 (i.e. the volume of messages posted by a firm); 2) Richness (i.e. the information richness of  
5 messages posted by a firm); and 3) Responsiveness (i.e. the extent to which a firm responds to  
6 consumers' messages). This approach has been used by the authors in order to explain how firms'  
7 social media efforts influence consumer behaviour (engagement and attention) and firm  
8 performance. The above-mentioned dimensions of business engagement on social media are closely  
9 related to CSR communication. With regard to intensity, Isaksson *et al.* (2014) assert that CSR  
10 benefits from intensive communication. However, the intensity of interaction can increase the  
11 expectations of the stakeholders towards the firm, which has more opportunities to respond to the  
12 solicitations learned (Berthon and John, 2006, p. 204). Regarding richness, Korschun and Du  
13 (2013) state that the interactions on SM rich in multimedia content (such as text, video, audio,  
14 animations) allows an effective communication of information that is able to engage the users in a  
15 cognitive and emotional way and to convey complex information rich in meaning and value. To this  
16 Vickery *et al.* (2004) add that the richness of the media positively influences customer satisfaction  
17 and loyalty, and the relationships with other stakeholders. Finally, the level of interaction and  
18 response of the customers (responsiveness), or potential customers, to the communication activities  
19 of CSR initiatives on SM, in terms of number of likes, followers, comments and shares, is able to  
20 identify how popular a firm is and then to evaluate the degree of the organizations' approval among  
21 network users (Lee *et al.*, 2018; Westerman *et al.*, 2012). In this respect, it is important that the  
22 company, through its own messages, triggers a reaction in the Internet users that leads to sharing  
23 and therefore to an ever greater interactivity of the two-way communication process.

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39 The model proposed by Chung *et al.* (2014) was subsequently adopted by Vlachvei and Notta  
40 (2015) and Galati *et al.* (2017a). In particular, Vlachvei and Notta (2015) investigated the main  
41 firms' efforts in using SM that influence consumer behaviour in the Greek food manufacturing  
42 industry, and found that Greek food manufacturing firms put efforts into providing rich information  
43 through Facebook and actively responding to consumers' messages. Using the same model, Galati  
44 *et al.* (2017a) they use the three dimensions identified by Chung *et al.* (2014) to verify the  
45 relationship that exists with some managerial characteristics. The results in particular show that if  
46 on the one hand there is a lack of intensity, on the other hand companies pay much attention to  
47 aspects related to the wealth of information and in particular interaction with Web users, recognizing  
48 the importance of responsiveness, which creates a wonderful loyalty and brand awareness.

### 58 **2.3. Hypotheses**

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3 In the light of the above, this section explores the research hypotheses' with reference to the  
4 Southern Italian wineries:

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6 H1. The wineries who take most care to communicate their responsible behaviour are those that are  
7 more active on SM platforms, according to main dimensions of the firms SM effort.  
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10 H2. The wineries who take most care wineries to communicate their responsible behaviour to the  
11 outside world are those most engaged in a continuous dialogue and interaction with external  
12 stakeholders.  
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### 17 **3. Materials and method**

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19 In order to test the hypotheses offered in this study, we first analysed the social media effort of  
20 firms operating in the wine industry and subsequently verified that among the messages exchanged  
21 on the Facebook platform there were contents attributable to the responsible behaviour of the  
22 company. To achieve the first aim, the model proposed by Chung *et al.* (2014), which considers  
23 three different dimensions of firms' engagement in SM named Intensity, Richness, and  
24 Responsiveness, has been adopted. In more detail, the first dimension, Intensity, quantitatively  
25 measures the Facebook activity, and it is obtained by the ratio between the number of comments  
26 and posts on the wineries' Facebook page and the network size expressed in terms of number of  
27 fans of the page. The second dimension, Richness, is the expression of the quality of the wineries'  
28 posts, and is a proxy of the quality of their SM activities. It is determined by dividing the number of  
29 posts containing videos, photos, and links with the total number of posts. The third dimension,  
30 Responsiveness, measures qualitatively the interaction level between wineries and fans and it  
31 corresponds to the result of the division of the number of wineries' comments and the total number  
32 of comments (wineries' post and fans' posts). In addition, in order to verify the effectiveness of the  
33 use of social media by wineries in triggering a reaction in Web users, we included among the  
34 variables a measure of the public reaction to the messages posted, using as reaction indicator the  
35 number of shared messages per day (Saxton *et al.*, 2017). This measure is the expression of the  
36 number of shares per day of a winery's posts by users.  
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50 For the purpose of acquiring the data necessary for determining the dimensions previously  
51 discussed, the Facebook pages of wineries were analysed using Next Analytics software available  
52 on line ([www.nextanalytics.com](http://www.nextanalytics.com)), which allows several pieces of information to be obtained  
53 (number of fans, likes, posts, shares, reactions, links, photos, videos, and comments both of owners  
54 or users for a preset time period). Starting from a list of 281 wineries operating in the southern  
55 Italian regions, Next Analytics reported the data of 102 wineries. Indeed, 60 wineries do not have a  
56 Facebook page, while the data for 119 wineries could not be processed.  
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A different approach has been adopted in order to evaluate the CSR engagement of wineries. Given Facebook as a strategic tool useful for sharing and transferring information about firms' CSR initiatives with several external stakeholders, an explorative analysis has been conducted of each Facebook page. On each of these pages the presence of several key words has been identified, both in the information section, and in the content of posts related to CSR activities put in place by wineries. This work allowed us to identify and separate wineries not engaged in CSR initiatives from wineries committed to conveying their responsible behaviour to external stakeholders.

### 3.1 The Probit and Logit models' specification

In order to verify whether the wineries that take most care to communicate their responsible behaviour are those that are more involved in the management of Social Network (SN) a multivariate modelling has been performed. In more detail, the most appropriate models when the dependent variable has a binary nature (they equal to 1 if the winery communicates to external stakeholders their engagement in CSR initiatives and 0 on the otherwise) are the Probit and Logit models. In light of this, the dichotomous dependent variable, called  $CSR^*$ , was processed in both Logit and Probit regressions according to the following model:

$$CSR_i^* = \beta_0 + \sum_{k=1}^K \beta_k X_{ki} + \varepsilon_i$$

where  $CSR^*$  denotes the latent level engagement of wineries  $i$ ,  $X_{ki}$  represents the vector of explanatory variables,  $\beta_k$  is the vector of the coefficient to estimate, and  $\varepsilon_i$  is the stochastic error term for respondent  $i$ . The variable  $CSR^*$  generates the variable  $CSR_i$  as:

$$CSR_i = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } CSR_i^* > 0 \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

More specifically, the value is 1 if winery  $i$  informs the external stakeholders of social responsibility initiatives put in place in various environmental and social fields, and 0 if the same winery is not engaged in a process of communication of CSR initiatives.

The complete empirical specification of the Probit and Logit regression models for CSR engagement is:

$$CSR_i^* = \beta_0 + \beta_1 INT_i + \beta_2 RICH_i + \beta_3 RESP_i + \beta_4 POSH_i + \varepsilon_i$$

where  $INT_i$  represents the intensity dimension,  $RICH_i$  refers to the Richness of the Facebook page in qualitative terms,  $RESP_i$  express the responsiveness dimensions – a measure of the degree of interaction – and  $PO\_SH_i$  refers to the messages sharing which measures the reactivity of people.

In light of the fact that is not possible to interpret the  $\beta$  parameter as the contribution of each variable in the definition of the observed phenomenon, the marginal effects were calculated and reported in the empirical results section.

Taking into consideration that the Probit and Logit regressions produce similar results (Davidson and MacKinnon, 1984), Log likelihood, AIC (Akaike's Information Criterion) and BIC (Bayesian Information Criterion) criteria were calculated for the choice of the most suitable model. The model who's the likelihood value is maximum AIC and BIC criteria are minimum were chosen. In addition, to test the significance of the Probit and Logit models, several fit statistics were verified, such as LR chi2, Prob > chi2, Log likelihood, R, R-squared, and Pseudo R2. Finally, in order to assess the goodness of fit for the regression models estimated the D statistic and the Hosmer–Lemeshow test have been performed.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Wineries' Facebook activity

**Table 1** briefly describes the main data about the wineries' Facebook activity during the period between June 2017 and June 2018. In detail, the number of posts per day reaches a maximum value of 3.518 with an average value equal to 0.322. These posts receive on average 29.076 likes (with a minimum value close to one and a maximum value of approximately of about 220.0) and 1.552 comments (the number of comments per post varies between zero and seven), while they are shared, on average, less than more four times. Finally, the wineries are followed, on average, by 4,311 Facebook users. More specifically, the least followed winery has just 62 fans, while the most watched winery shows over 71,828 likes.

[Insert Table 1]

**Table 2** shows the nature of the posts published on Facebook by the observed wineries. As we can see, the wineries included in the sample are more oriented to conveying information to their fans through the use of photos, in light of the fact that, on average, for each post 0.684 photos are shared (with a minimum of no photos per post and a maximum of one photo per post). Links and videos are rarely present in the wineries' posts. The ratio of number of links and number of posts is only 0.137, while the use of video is even lower (a video in the post, on average, is present only in 5.4% of cases).

[Insert Table 2]

As shown in **Table 3**, the values for Intensity and Responsiveness are, on average, very low: 0.123 and 0.337, respectively. This means, not only that the observed wineries are little engaged in the SN activity, but also that they are less inclined to establish and maintain relations through SN.

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3 On the contrary, the Richness dimension assumes, on average, a higher average value, which is  
4 0.874. This result is due to the fact that a great part of the posts contains additional information and  
5 in particular photos.  
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8 **[Insert Table 3]**  
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#### 10 11 12 13 **4.2. CSR messages in SM platform**

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15 The tables 4 present the results of the Probit and Logit models. Comparing the latter models, no  
16 significant differences emerge with regard to significance and the sign of the estimated coefficients,  
17 which give information on the direction of the effect of the variable. Although the revealed low  
18 value of R squared could, on the one hand, be read as a low ability of the variables to explain the  
19 studied relationship, on the other – as also stressed by Allison (2014) – it is no cause for alarm,  
20 because models with very low R-squares can fit the data very well according to goodness-of-fit  
21 tests. According to the minimum values of AIC and BIC criteria and the value of the likelihood  
22 ratio, the Logit model was chosen as the best suited model to explain the relationship between  
23 winery engagement in CSR communication to external stakeholders and the efforts made in using  
24 the SM platform. The Hosmer–Lemeshow (H–L) test has been used in order to verify how well the  
25 proposed model fits the data. The large p-value closer to 1 (p-value > 0.9776) indicates the null  
26 hypothesis of “good fit” is not rejected. Therefore, the marginal effects for the Logit model have  
27 been analysed and interpreted. The analysis of the marginal effects of the Logit model shown in  
28 Table 5 reveals that only two coefficients are statistically significant and in particular  
29 Responsiveness ( $RESP_i$ ), as a dimension of SM effort, and sharing messages ( $POSH_i$ ), as a reaction  
30 indicator. More specifically, findings reveal that wineries most engaged in transferring information  
31 about their responsible behaviour to external stakeholders are those that interact most with their  
32 Web users. Indeed, the positive relationship suggests that the southern Italian wineries with a  
33 greater level of interaction with their fans, through the exchange of messages, are those most  
34 involved in the communication of their social responsibility initiatives on SM. In addition, the  
35 models show that the coefficient related to the number of posts shared by Web users per day is  
36 statistically significant and positively correlated to the dependent variable. This result indicates that  
37 the wineries that communicate the adoption of CSR initiatives on Facebook are those that have the  
38 ability to provoke a reaction in Web users through the messages posted on the platform and  
39 messages that are shared, thus having a greater impact. These results confirm our second hypothesis  
40 according to which the wineries who take most care to communicate the adoption of responsible  
41 initiatives to the outside world are those most engaged in a continuous dialogue and interaction with  
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external stakeholders. In contrast, the first hypothesis is only partially accepted considering that only one of the dimensions of the companies' SM effort, and especially responsiveness, was significant.

[Insert Table 4]

## 5. Discussion

This is one of the few studies in the management literature which analyses the relationship between the use of social media and the communication activity of the company aimed at conveying to the external stakeholders their commitment in the field of social responsibility. In this context, the work aims to verify whether the CSR communication of a company is closely linked to time investments in social media or whether the latter are used exclusively for economic purposes. In particular, what does the present study reveal about the above-mentioned relationship? In line with previous empirical evidences, our results confirm partially the hypothesis H1 and completely the hypothesis H2, showing that the wineries most involved in corporate social responsibility initiatives and in the active communication of these initiatives on social media platforms, are those most active on social media and in particular those that interact most with their Web users, triggering in them some reactions that lead to the sharing of content and therefore having a significant impact on the dissemination of information through social media.

Looking to the relationship between CSR communication and the three dimensions of social media effort, our result show that only the dimension linked to interactivity has a positive and statistically significant relationship with the communication to external stakeholders of responsible social behavior, confirming the hypothesis H2. In other words, wineries that use social media as a channel to communicate their responsible behaviour are those most involved in a continuous and interactive dialogue with the Internet users underlining, as Go and Bortree (2017) and Ali et al. (2015) find, the desire to stay in touch with their audience. This results is consistent with what was found by Reilly and Hynan (2014), according to whom green companies, that is companies engaged in the field of environmental sustainability, are measurably more active on the social media platform and are more likely to discuss their corporate responsible initiatives in order to maintain a strong corporate presence in the key platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. In other words, companies recognizing the validity of these tools to actively communicate social responsibility initiatives, dedicate more resources in terms of economic and human capital for the management of social media. Therefore, SM becomes an "integral part of the communication process with an appropriate and strategic manner" (Kollat and Farache, 2017) and a strategic tools to create a greater awareness among external stakeholders of philanthropic initiatives promoted by several

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3 companies operating also in the food sector (Lee and Holladay, 2012). It is evident that Sicilian  
4 wineries recognize social media as effective communication channels, as has also been emphasized  
5 by several authors (Galati et al., 2016; Galati et al., 2017a), and above all, recognize their usefulness  
6 in interacting with Web users. This enables the wineries, as several authors highlight, to understand  
7 the stakeholders' expectations, respond to criticism and reduce scepticism by contributing to the  
8 creation of value (Dunn and Herness, 2018; Perks et al., 2018). The Hypothesis 2 is also confirmed  
9 by the statistical significance of the variable related to the sharing of posts by users positively  
10 correlated to the communication of CSR initiatives. This result highlights that the messages with  
11 content referable to social responsibility initiatives, implemented by wineries, are those most  
12 commonly shared by users on SM platforms. This is in line with what was found by Yuki (2015)  
13 and Araujo and co-authors (2015), according to whom messages perceived as useful and  
14 informative increase the likelihood that social media content will be shared or further transmitted.  
15 Sharing of the content posted by the companies on the social platforms, linked to the assumption by  
16 the same of a responsible behaviour about environmental-, ethical-, cultural- or community-related  
17 issues, can lead the Web user to identify with these problems, themselves becoming a spokesman  
18 for the company's activities, strengthening the capital of corporate reputation (Isaksson et al.,  
19 2014). In a recent study conducted by Araujo and Kollat (2018) on companies and brands in the  
20 food industry that use Twitter, it emerges that CSR tweets are associated with a higher level of  
21 content endorsements and in particular diffusion (retweets per followers) compared to non-CSR  
22 tweets. By triggering this sharing process, the company has a return of a non-negligible image that  
23 is then reflected in consumer behaviour. In fact, as highlighted by Russo and Simeone (2017),  
24 consumers who are more informed about social media exhibit conscious consumption, especially if  
25 they are more sensitive about environmental issues. Taking into consideration the positive effect of  
26 the content sharing, and as has been emphasized by Lee et al. (2013), focusing on companies  
27 operating in the food and beverage industry, the likelihood of a positive reaction can increase if the  
28 company carefully consider the fit between initiatives and their core business.

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48 In contrast, the results of this study show that there is not a significant relationship between the  
49 volume of messages posted on the Facebook page of the wineries (Intensity) and the wealth of  
50 content posted (Richness) with the communication of corporate social responsibility initiatives,  
51 acting a partial acceptance of the hypothesis H1. Although on the one hand, on the basis of the  
52 analysis of the three dimensions of the SM effort of the wineries, there emerges a strong  
53 commitment by the southern Italian wineries to take care of the quality and richness of the  
54 information communicated on the SM platforms, on the other hand this commitment is not practised  
55 by wineries that have a more philanthropic purpose. This is the case of the wineries that use SM as a  
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3 tool to maintain a high level of reputational credibility of the product, allowing, as emphasized by  
4 Capitello et al. (2014) the potential consumer to gather information on wine and creating a  
5 consumer experience through the collection of information. However, business research  
6 recommends managers to better assess the approach to CSR communication by moving away from  
7 idea of using SM just for advancing the firm's market interests (Boyd *et al.*, 2016). **In line with this,**  
8 **as suggested by Meixner et al. (2015), with specific reference to agri-food companies, it is essential**  
9 **to make a greater effort to understand the potential of these tools, even if this depends on the lack of**  
10 **know-how and awareness about the benefits of these alternative innovative communication tools.**

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16 Our result therefore contrasts with what was affirmed by Korschun and Du (2013), according to  
17 whom the SM effort in terms of the content richness is able to make the communication of  
18 information more in-depth and effective and is able to transmit complex information rich in  
19 meaning and value. It is necessary to emphasize that the language used to communicate the CSR  
20 and the intensity of the communication itself play an important role, and in some cases it can have a  
21 boomerang effect. In line with this, Drew *et al.* (2017) highlight how the language of CSR in the  
22 quinoa food sector of Peru and Bolivia obscures the social, economic and ecological complexities  
23 that surround the quinoa industries in these countries, making sure that CSR communication is  
24 abused just for a less sustainable and corporate profit. On the other hand, firms that engage in non-  
25 economic activities aimed at developing environmental and social initiatives, using corporate image  
26 advertising, reduce the scepticism of consumers towards the organization and increase the corporate  
27 reputation (Pomering and Johnson, 2009), and thus the promotion of CSR initiatives through SM  
28 can increase the credibility of firms (Go and Bortree, 2017). However, this result is in contrast with  
29 what was asserted by Isaksson *et al.* (2014), according to whom CSR benefits from an intensive  
30 communication, since the intensity of communication affects the success or the failure of the firm  
31 by the market in relation to corporate behaviour.

## 47 48 **6. Conclusions, research implications, limitations and future research**

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50 Our paper is one of the few studies in the management literature that focuses on the relationship  
51 between the use of SM platforms and CSR communication via SM in order to understand the main  
52 purpose of companies using these tools – that is, whether they are purely economic or more  
53 philanthropic. Results show that the most committed wineries in CSR communication are the most  
54 interactive ones, compared to the wineries that are most dedicated to enriching the content of their  
55 social media pages and that have an economic purpose, using these tools mainly to increase the  
56 reputation of the company in the marketplace.

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3 Our study provides some both theoretical and managerial implications. From a theoretical point  
4 of view, our study contributes to the enrichment of the current literature on communication methods  
5 adopted by wineries through a SM platform, such as Facebook, in the field of corporate social  
6 responsibility, providing empirical evidence about the usefulness of the model proposed by Chung  
7 et al. (2014) and of the dimensions of the SM effort in the understanding of the behaviour of  
8 companies, but emphasizes that further dimensions should be considered as in the case of the  
9 message sharing, taking into consideration his power to explain certain marketing strategies.

15 Switching to a managerial perspective, the study provides insight and hints to wine entrepreneurs  
16 interested in improving the effectiveness of their CSR communication via SM. For some years now,  
17 the wine industry has shifted to adopting responsible behaviours, responding to consumer  
18 expectations. Our results, which are in line with what also emerges from other empirical evidence,  
19 show that the messages posted by companies with content referable to CSR are shared more. This  
20 gives us an idea of how the interactive dimension of social media is fundamental when the company  
21 wants to communicate its responsible behaviour to the external stakeholders, in order to reduce  
22 scepticism and gain greater credibility on the market. In line with this, managers and marketers  
23 could use our findings to make some considerations regarding the type of initiative to be taken in  
24 order to obtain a better result in terms of image and reputation at firm level. From this perspective,  
25 it becomes necessary to invest more in terms of developing specific internal skills capable of  
26 managing this two-way communication. Today, indeed, more so than in the past, the management  
27 of social media increasingly requires professional figures for the management of social networks.

37 The current study has a number of limitations related both to the limited number of wineries  
38 involved in the analysis, which does not allow us to generalize our results, and to the period of  
39 analysis, which affects the results of the research. A greater number of observations would improve  
40 the percentage of the response variable variation that is explained by the proposed analysis.  
41 Furthermore, the research considers the effort in SM taking into account only the commitment of  
42 wineries on the Facebook platform, without considering the activities carried out on other SM and  
43 SN sites, equally important from the point of view of firms' strategies for CSR communication.

49 In light of these considerations, future research could expand the analysed sample and take into  
50 consideration other SM communication channels and different time periods in order to compare the  
51 results. In particular, it is desirable to identify new dimensions able to cover the company's  
52 commitment to social media and therefore to the strategies implemented by them. Finally, it might  
53 be interesting to investigate the reasons that push users to show greater responsiveness to some  
54 types of CSR initiatives rather than others, and in the research of the relationship between SM effort  
55 and commitment in CSR communication in other types of industry.

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## Tables

**Table 1 - Descriptive data of Facebook effort**

	Average	Min	Max	Standard deviation
Posts/day	.322	.003	3.518	.467
Likes/post	29.076	.968	219.658	34.710
Comments/post	1.552	0.000	7.000	1.283
Shares/post	4.311	0.227	19.227	3.870
Number of fans	4,241.922	62.000	71,828.000	8,930.789

Source: our elaboration on collected data

**Table 2 - Nature of post**

	Average	Min	Max	Standard deviation
Photos/post	.684	.000	1.000	.193
Videos/post	.054	.000	.455	.071
Links/post	.137	.000	.487	.131

Source: our elaboration on collected data

**Table 3 - Measure of Facebook effort**

	Average	Min	Max	Standard deviation
Intensity	.123	.002	.877	.129
Richness	.874	.205	1.000	.159
Responsiveness	.337	.000	.941	.312

Source: our elaboration on collected data

**Table 4 - Results of the Probit and Logit regressions and marginal effects (No. of obs = 102)**

	Probit model		Logit model	
	Coefficient	Marginal effects (dy/dx)	Coefficient	Marginal effects (dy/dx)
<i>Intensity</i>	1.045993 (1.063045)	0.3990648 (0.40589)	1.841044 (1.753464)	0.43349 (0.41328)
<i>Richness</i>	0.2642736 (0.8489584)	0.1008251 (0.32396)	0.4714297 (1.401791)	0.1110023 (0.3303)
<i>Responsiveness</i>	1.407061*** (0.4476913)	0.536819*** (0.17099)	2.31159*** (0.746885)	0.5442843*** (0.17555)
<i>Posts_shared</i>	0.0618681* (0.0345873)	0.0236038* (0.01321)	0.104424* (0.0583291)	0.0245876* (0.01375)
<i>_cons</i>	-1.399403* (0.8123435)		-2.359702* (1.363189)	
Prob > chi2	0.0022		0.0021	
Log likelihood	-59.953813		-59.889038	
H-L stat	3.34 [0.9111]		2.11 [0.9776]	
D(97)	119.908		119.778	
R	0.4047		0.4065	
R-squared	0.1638		0.1652	
Pseudo R2	0.1223		0.1233	
AIC	129.9076		129.7781	
BIC	143.0325		142.9029	

(\*\*\*) Significance at 1%, (\*\*) significance at 5%, and (\*) significance at 10%.

In square brackets there is the *p*-value.