

CSR communication & stigmatized industries: is inclusion and diversity becoming a means for stigma-washing? Six decades of literature review

Comunicación RSC e industrias estigmatizadas: ¿La Inclusión y la diversidad se convierten en un medio para mitigar el estigma? Seis décadas de revisión de la literatura

Comunicação de RSC e Indústrias estigmatizadas: a inclusão e diversidade se tornarão um meio de eliminar o estigma? Seis décadas de revisão da literatura

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ABSTRACT | This work aims to present an in depth literature review under the lens of three disciplines: Corporate Social Responsibility (from now on CSR) communications, stigmatized industries, and diversity and inclusion (D&I). Such review is supported by a bibliometric mapping software, SciMAT, developed by Cobo and colleagues (2011), at Universidad de Granada, Spain. A total of 8,942 papers on the three topics from 1963 to 2022 published in 98 leading journals indexed in the *Journal Citation Reports* of the Web of Science have been examined. The aforementioned software has been used to identify the relevant studies to focus on a second in-depth qualitative individual scrutiny. Findings suggest that the use of D&I to mitigate organizational stigma has yet to be analyzed. One still needs to confirm or reject the proposition that stigmatized firms use CSR communication and D&I to mitigate their stigma. Furthermore, they indicate that if future studies may find that stigmatized companies utilize D&I to manage their stigma via CSR communication, the D&I discipline would suffer from this practice, since one would prove that D&I is instrumentally used in a different way than it is supposed to.

KEYWORDS: stigmatized companies; sin industries; CSR communication; diversity; inclusion; Web of Science; SCIMAT; bibliometric map; Type – Literature review.

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RESUMEN | Este trabajo busca presentar una revisión en profundidad de la literatura bajo el prisma de tres disciplinas: comunicación de responsabilidad social corporativa (en adelante, RSC), empresas estigmatizadas y diversidad e inclusión (D&I). Dicha revisión está respaldada por un software de mapeo bibliométrico, SciMAT, desarrollado por Cobo y sus colegas (2011), miembros de la Universidad de Granada, España. Se ha examinado un total de 8942 artículos sobre los tres temas entre 1963 y 2022, publicados en 98 revistas líderes indexadas en el Journal Citation Reports de Web of Science. Se ha utilizado el software antes mencionado para identificar los estudios relevantes y centrarse en un segundo escrutinio individual cualitativo en profundidad. Los hallazgos sugieren que aún no se ha analizado el uso de D&I para mitigar el estigma organizacional, y que todavía es necesario evaluar la hipótesis de que las empresas estigmatizadas pueden usar la comunicación de RSC y D&I para mitigar su estigma. Asimismo, se indica cómo futuros estudios pueden encontrar que las empresas estigmatizadas utilizan D&I para gestionar su estigma a través de la comunicación de RSC, y que la disciplina D&I se vería afectada por esta práctica pues significaría que la D&I se utiliza instrumentalmente de una manera diferente a la que se supone.

PALABRAS CLAVE: empresas estigmatizadas; industrias estigmatizadas; comunicación RSC; diversidad; inclusión; Web of Science; SCIMAT; mapa bibliométrico; Tipo – Revisión de la literatura.

RESUMO | Este trabalho tem como objetivo apresentar uma revisão aprofundada da literatura sob as lentes de duas disciplinas: comunicação de Responsabilidade Social Corporativa (doravante, RSC), indústrias estigmatizadas e Diversidade e Inclusão (D&I). Tal revisão é apoiada por um software de mapeamento bibliométrico, SciMAT, desenvolvido por Cobo e seus colegas (2011), membros da Universidade de Granada, Espanha. Foram examinados um total de 8.942 artigos sobre os três tópicos de 1963 a 2022, publicados em 98 periódicos importantes indexados no Journal Citation Reports da Web of Science. Foi utilizado o software acima mencionado para identificar os estudos relevantes para centrar-se num segundo escrutínio individual qualitativo aprofundado. Os resultados sugerem que o uso de D&I para compensar o estigma organizacional ainda não foi analisado. Ainda é necessário avaliar a proposição de que as empresas estigmatizadas utilizam a comunicação de RSC e D&I para compensar o seu estigma. Além disso, indicam que se estudos futuros descobrirem que empresas estigmatizadas utilizam D&I para gerir o seu estigma através da comunicação de RSC, a disciplina de D&I sofreria com esta prática, uma vez que se provaria que D&I é utilizado instrumentalmente de uma forma diferente da que deveria ser.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: empresas estigmatizadas; indústrias estigmatizadas; comunicação de RSC; Diversidade, Inclusão; Web of Science; SCIMAT; mapa bibliométrico; Tipo– Revisão de literatura.

INTRODUCTION

In a world of information overload where companies need more awareness and increase their efforts to build a good image, it is not surprising that some companies struggle to maintain a good reputation. This difficulty leads companies to use CSR communication (Timothy Coombs & Holladay, 2013) to influence their public image (Kent & Taylor, 2016; Rim & Kim, 2016). Scholars have outlined how CSR and related communication "have given rise to a burgeoning, multi-disciplinary literature that has sought to reveal the role of communications of various kinds between firms and their stakeholders in shaping CSR meanings, expectations and practices" (Crane & Glozer, 2016, p. 1224).

This is all the more true for stigmatized companies (alcohol, firearms, gaming, nuclear power, tobacco (Oh et al., 2017)). These companies have a financial impact in the corporate world (i.e., the top five tobacco companies by global revenue alone accounted for more than 4,000 billion dollars in 2021), and have been the subject of recent academic research (Devers et al., 2009). While most academic studies have focused on the impact of stigma on individuals (Walker, 2008) these companies can be examined from a wide array of angles, including the impact on individuals, media, public institutions, current employees, potential employees, and consumers, as well as analyzing stigma has been attributed to organizations (Hudson, 2008).

The question of whether the stigma attributed to these companies can be mitigated through CSR is debated (Lee & Boynton, 2017). Some studies consider that stigmatized companies tend to remain silent and do not communicate their CSR intensively (Viererbl & Koch, 2022). Other studies instead consider that stigmatized companies may use CSR communication in a manipulative way (Cai et al., 2012) to gain the tolerance of society and public opinion. Wolfe and Blithe (2015) are considered proponents of CSR communication to reduce the negative perception created by stigmatization of the industry.

If we look at the key aspects of CSR communication in detail, organizations have invested heavily in effective management of diversity and inclusion. Over the past three decades, a wealth of research on diversity has examined the positive effects of diversity on performance, creativity, innovation, problem-solving, and decision-making (Elsass & Graves, 1997), as well as the negative effects on group cohesion, conflict, and turnover (Roberson, 2019).

Having highlighted the increasing impact of both stigmatized companies and the impact of CSR communication, the first research question on this analysis is: What is the state of the art when it comes to how stigmatized companies use CSR communication?

Building on this, an additional high potential can be identified in the analysis of a second research question: What is the state of the art on how stigmatized companies set their D&I policies?

Both questions are of interest because, in recent decades, corporations of all sizes, sectors and regions –including stigmatized companies– have significantly increased their investments in CSR communication, and specially in D&I, partly due to the pressure that arise at the societal level to ensure equal access, promotion, and retention opportunities for all employees (Gomez & Bernet, 2019).

To answer the above, a systematic literature review of the existing research on the three phenomena was conducted. The first step involves a literature review supported by the SCIMAT bibliometric-mapping tool, a software that aims to map the most relevant studies in all these areas through the use of a co-wording analysis to identify the most frequent topics through a temporal segmentation. In a second step, based on the results of the SCIMAT tool, a more in-depth investigation was conducted to select a sample of papers to be studied separately in a qualitative manner to identify commonalities between all three areas –CSR communication, stigmatized industries, and D&I–. The criteria for selecting the most representative articles on each topic included: a) high level of agreement with the topic covered, b) a high number of citations, and c) a high level of recognition and references in journals.

METHODOLOGY FOR THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Regarding the first phase, Cobo and colleagues (2011) developed a bibliometric asset that enables the processing, mapping and analysis of science maps, called SciMAT. Originally based on the concept of the H-index (Hirsch, 2005) and the analysis of co-words (Callon et al., 1983), the performance analysis was implemented to identify and represent a wide range of domains that map a particular research field and its evolution across a specific time frame, as shown in figure 1.

To conduct the literature review, all Web of Science articles on the three areas were downloaded: CSR communication, stigmatized industries and D&I. First, 1198 references (CSR communication), 105 references (stigmatized industries) and 8,766 references (D&I) found in Web of Science were identified and screened. Then, only research areas related to the topics were retained (business, management, environmental studies, communication, ethics, economics). Finally, a SCIMAT analysis was conducted. To conclude, a qualitative review has taken place on the evolution of the topic by selecting and analyzing a compound of resources based on a number of citations and findings as well as added value to the topic.

Identification of themes and thematic areas to be dissected	Visual representation of the evolution of themes
(1) Collection of raw data	(1) Most frequent and relevant topics and its changes over time
(2) Selection of the type of item to analyse	(2) Portrayed in a systematic diagram
(3) Extraction of relevant information from the raw data	(3) Composed by overlaps and absences in the clusters
(4) Calculation of similarities between items	(4) Based on extraction of relevant information from the raw data
(5) Use of a clustering algorithm to detect the themes	(5) To calculate similarities between items
	(6) And the use of a clustering algorithm to detect the themes

Figure 1. Theme keyword evolution analysis model by SCIMAT

Source: Own elaboration based on SCIMAT (<https://sci2s.ugr.es/scimat/>)

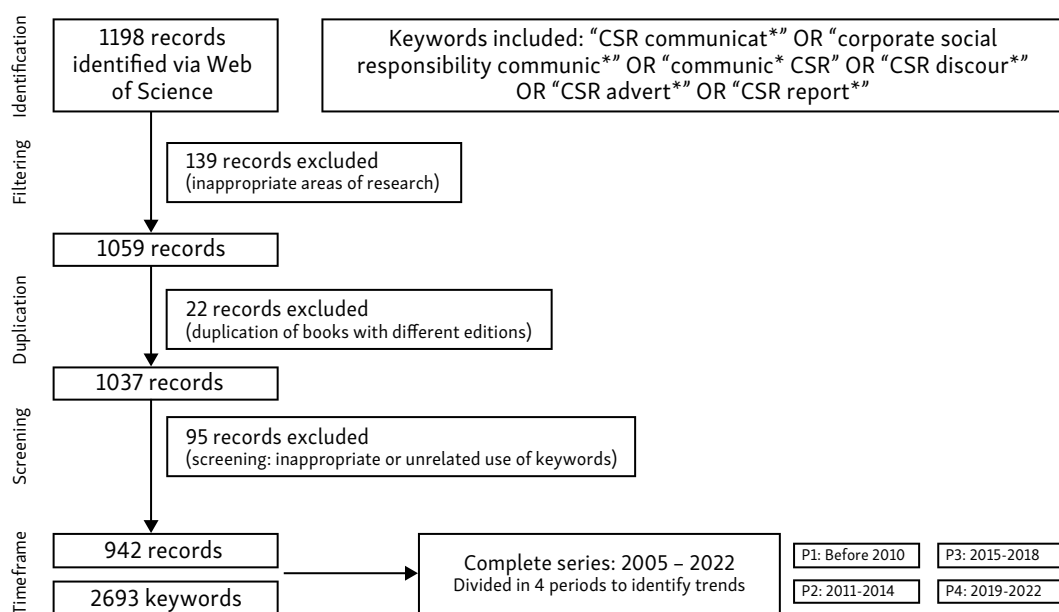


Figure 2. Record refinement process for literature review about CSR communication

Source: Own elaboration, 2023

For CSR communications, as figure 2 shows, a selection of articles was made based on keywords used in previous literature (Ji, 2020). On this basis, 1,198 documents identified in WoS were identified and screened. Thereafter, only research areas related to the topic were maintained (business, management, environmental studies, communication, ethics, economics). Furthermore, all entries related to either duplication of books (more than one entry with different

editions) or journals related to off-topic subjects were progressively eliminated, and a deduplication process was performed to refine data and remove duplicate references to authors, journals, citations, and keywords. Finally, the dataset was divided into four time periods: pre-2010 (first document starting in 2005), 2011-2014, 2015-2018, and 2019-2022. These time periods were selected according to the coherence of the CSR communication topic by the most prominent authors; i.e., repetition and strength of the link between each keyword were the main criteria for the division into four phases.

Results of keywords clustering for SCIMAT on CSR communication

This visual representation below –figure 3– consists of solid lines representing thematic connections, dotted lines participating in topics that share a set of key themes with their names, the size of the spherical image, and the number of reports subscribed to each theme. In the case of CSR communication, six thematic keyword clusters ("CSR Communications," "Performance," "Perception-Reputation," "Disclosure," "Content", and "Companies") facilitated the investigation in the subsequent qualitative phase of this literature review. Six colored paths were then added to the diagram to track the development of the individual clusters.

Figure 3 - Next page ▶

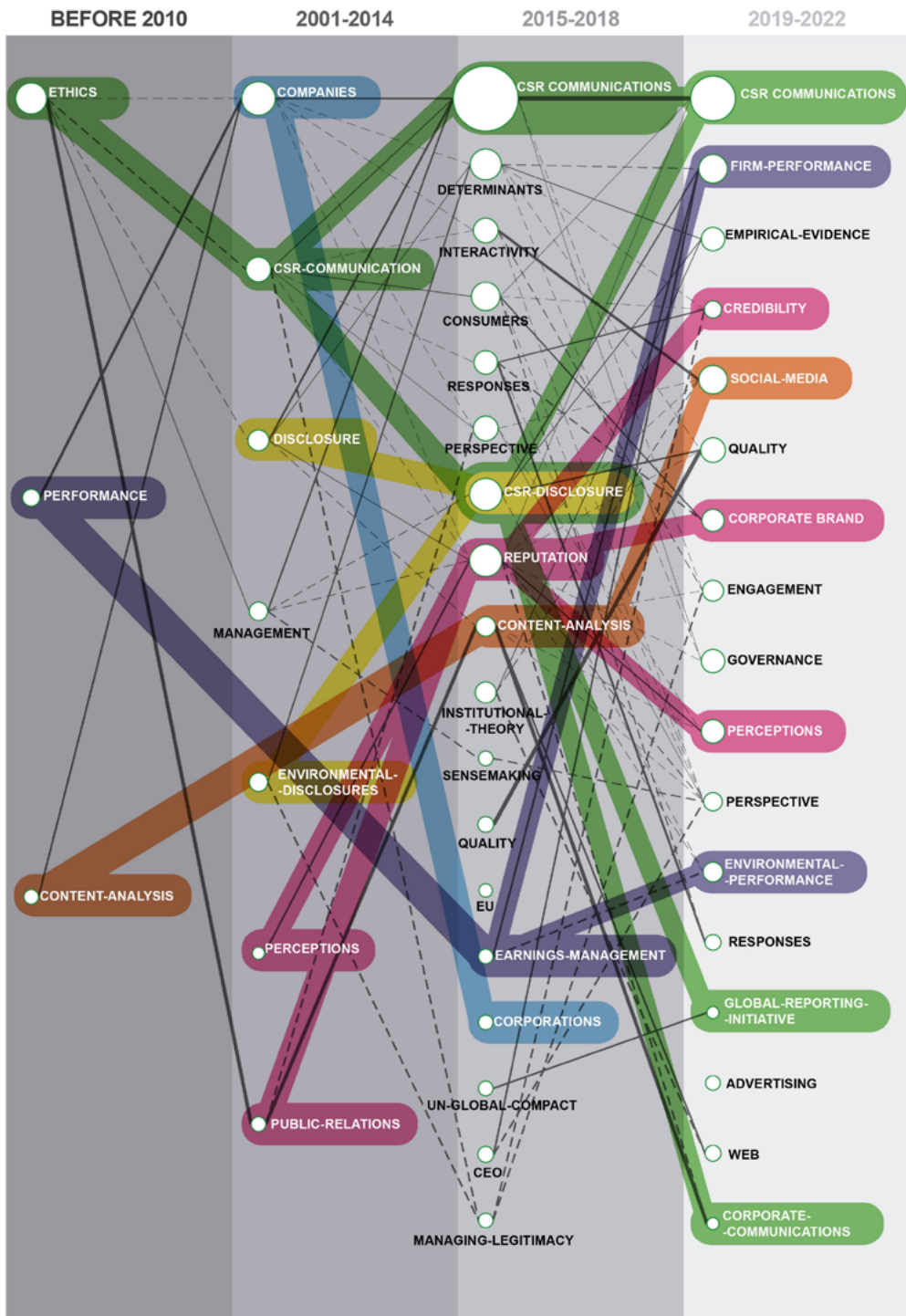


Figure 3. Keywords clustering

Source: Own elaboration based on SCIMAT (<https://sci2s.ugr.es/scimat/>)

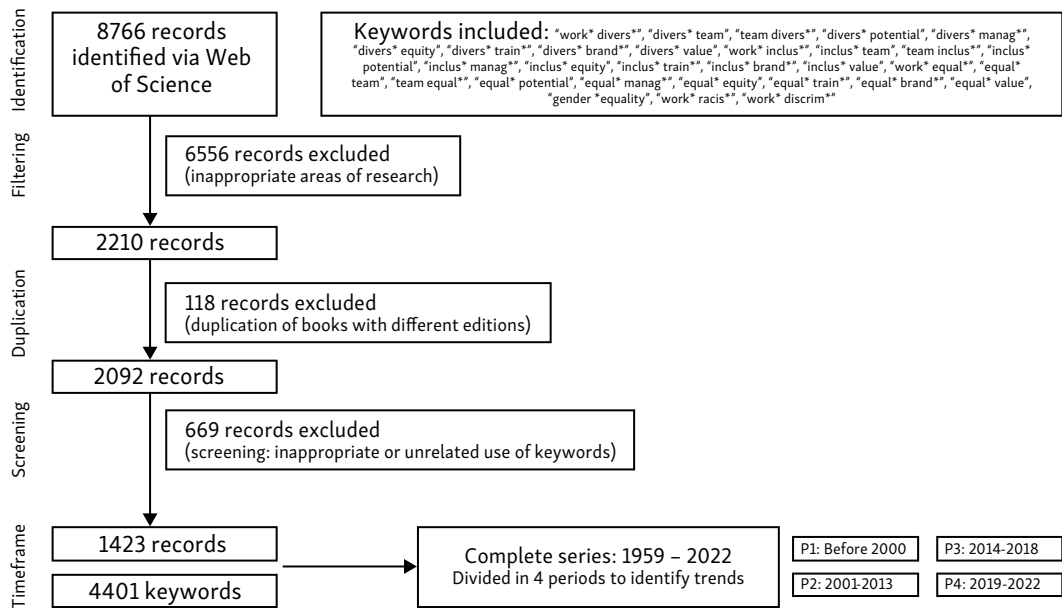


Figure 4. Record refinement process for literature review for D&I

Source: Own elaboration, 2023

The list of keywords for D&I is shown above in figure 4. As in the previous case, these keywords were selected on the basis of the most frequently recurring words in the most prominent studies with an analysis of more than 60 years (first document published in 1959). This resulted in an initial first filter list composed of 2210 records. The rest of the procedure follows the same structure as in the CSR communication aforementioned.

Results of keywords clustering for SCIMAT on D&I

The DEI topic is a consolidated field of study for the academic community, with has gained increasing interest over the last decade, allowing for further research. The development of the topic shows a wide variety of courses of studies, based on the focus of society and companies focal points over the the decades. Six thematic keywords clusters – "Diversity," "Performance," "Conflict," "Job Satisfaction," "Gender," and "Equality-Discrimination"- helped to build the subsequent qualitative phase of this literature review.

The basis of the keywords for the selection of articles for stigmatized industries organizations is shown in figure 6. The small number of sources published on this topic, below the minimum number of 200 items required by the SCIMAT technology, classed the results of the potential analysis as non-significant.

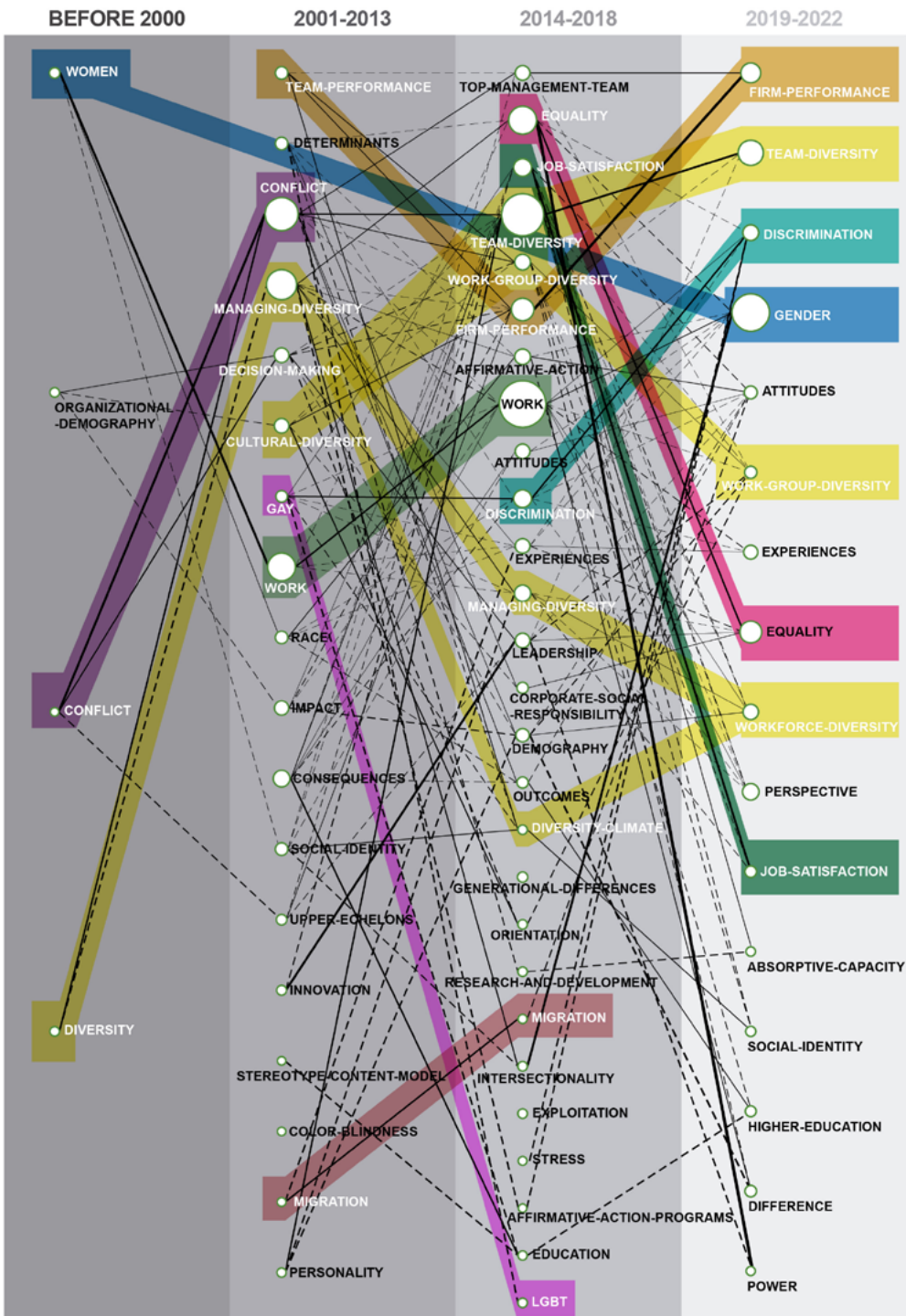


Figure 5. Keywords clustering

Source: Own elaboration based on SCIMAT (<https://sci2s.ugr.es/scimat/>)

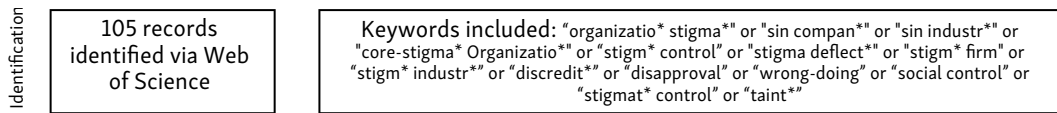


Figure 6. Record refinement process for literature review about Stigmatized industries

Source: Own elaboration, 2023

RESULTS OF LITERATURE REVIEW

Core stigmatized industries and organizational stigma

The scientific community has not agreed on a uniform definition of stigmatized industries or organizational stigmatization. However, several concepts can be derived from the literature to date, including product and service portfolios that may harm human health (e.g., tobacco, alcohol), operations and activities that are potentially harmful to the planet (e.g., fracking), or events worth of criticism (e.g., scandals), all of them frontally contrasting with endorsed standards of corporate behavior (Grougiou et al., 2016; Vergne, 2012). Four main streams of research on corporate stigma can be identified in the existing literature.

First, origin studies focus their analysis on individual stigma. Goffman (1990), one of the first recognized scholars in the field, addresses the concept of stigma in the context of physical attributes and their repercussions (gender, physical deformities, race, gender, and mental needs), and despised social activities (drug use) on community acceptance (Devers et al., 2009; Link, 2001). In Goffman's studies (1990), individual stigma is defined as an attribute that is deeply discrediting, which reduces the bearer from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one.

Second, studies have evolved to focus on a comprehensive definition of organizational stigma. While personal stigma has attracted considerable interest from academics over the past decade (Gan et al., 2022; Thornicroft et al., 2022), organizational stigma and the ways in which organizations use some of their resources to reduce disapproval and influence public opinion (Jensen & Sandström, 2015; Hudson & Okhyusen, 2009) have consolidated as a topic with its own importance. Following the definition by Wilson and West (1981), sin industries, as an alternative term for stigmatized industries, can be depicted as "those whose products, services or concepts, cause reactions of distaste, disgust, offence or outrage when mentioned" (p. 92).

But how can we define what is and what is not a stigmatized industry for this analysis? The work of Grougiou and colleagues (2016) and Statman and colleagues (2009) identified stigmatized businesses as those that produce alcohol, firearms, gaming, nuclear power, tobacco, and military operations. Humphrey and collaborators (2014) use the four-digit (SIC) Standardized Industry Classification

codes from the WorldScope Database to search for firms in the alcohol, firearms, gaming, tobacco, and defense/weapons/firearms industries.

Following this milestone, despite many articles and books that address the concept of stigma, there are only a very small of studies that examine what constitutes organizational stigma and how it manifests in a particular setting (Mishina & Devers, 2012; Jensen & Sandström, 2015).

Third, the studies develop a detailed analysis of the effects of stigmatization. In practice, stigmatized companies have suffered intense pressure and scrutiny from public institutions, governments, and public awareness, all of them stakeholders who raise their concerns in a globalized, interconnected world to influence public awareness of changes in their activities and operations. New legislation, social media bashing, and constant demands for self-explanation are recurring commonplaces of significant hostility that these organizations face on a daily basis (Banerjee & Bonnefous, 2011; Bansal & Clelland, 2004). As an illustrative example, building on this topic, the World Health Organization stated that “there are irreconcilable differences between the goals of governments to protect and promote people’s health and well-being and the economic operators pursuing maximum profit through increased alcohol consumption” (World Health Organization, 2023, p. 18)

Fourth, studies define how companies can deal with stigmatization in their organization. This last branch of research seems to be the most extensive. The situations of stigmatized companies mentioned above all have one point in common: “a fundamental, deep-seated flaw that deindividuates and discredits the organization” (Devers et al., 2009, p. 155), which places corrosive obstacles in the way of the organization fulfilling its purpose, including potential disadvantages from litigation, regulatory decisions, and consumer rejection (Grougiou et al., 2016). Academic analysis over the last decade has shown a steady increase in examples of stigmatized companies producing CSR reports that are longer and cover more areas than companies from other sectors with a dual objective: to demonstrate alignment with society’s values and concerns (Grougiou et al., 2016) and a steady-growth investment in CSR activities and its communication (Oh et al., 2017).

In summary, most authors agree that an organization becomes stigmatized when relevant communities and audiences publicly disparage its behavior, activities, operations, products, and service offerings as remarkably inappropriate and communicate their direct disapproval of all or part of them (Hudson, 2008). Devers and colleagues (2009) provide another concept to support the idea: a stigmatized institution is perceived as inherently flawed as an extension of the negatively connoted category to which it belongs.

A clarifying example: the tobacco companies have been forced to admit that they know their products harm people and the environment, even though they have denied this for years. As for gambling, governments and the public have made a concentrated effort to highlight the harm that gambling can do to people, which has led to a decline in their popularity (Ezzine, 2018). Firearms manufacturers are increasingly blamed for disasters and environmental damage caused by artillery tests, and the use of chemical and biological weapons (Vergne, 2012). The nuclear industry is also associated with enormous ecological and social damage due to nuclear tests carried out for military purposes (Clemens & Papadakis, 2008). Alcohol corporations have long been sued for the addictive nature of their portfolio and the dramatic impact on individuals and their families (Hudson, 2008).

CSR communication: transparency and the restoring of reputation, image and legitimacy after a crisis?

Since the 1980s as part of the corporate management function, CSR has raised interest from both academics (Sohn et al., 2012) and top managers in companies due to its potential to improve corporate communications and meet stakeholder expectations (Ferguson, 2018; Osiichuk, 2022). As a result, corporate CSR communication has blossomed due to increased focus and investment (Crane & Glozer, 2016). However, although CSR has an undeniable importance to the field of communication (Lee & Boynton, 2017), analysis shows that the span of attention academics devote to CSR transparency has not yet reached the same level of investigation, as it is an area that still has much room for further research. In particular, two dominant viewpoints have been used by researchers to approach CSR: (1) evaluating the strategic benefits of CSR (Rim & Kim, 2016) and (2) highlighting the moral foundation of public relations as socially responsible action (Bartlett et al., 2007).

In summary, the range of disciplines researching CSR communication has increased. Over the last three decades, the accounting literature has developed more sophisticated studies on the relationship between firms, legitimacy and CSR reporting (Campbell et al., 2003; Hooghiemstra, 2000; Tilling & Tilt, 2010).

Another exciting approach follows the idea that impression management can help restore reputation, image, and legitimacy in times of crisis or change, such as poor financial performance (Curtis, 2004), corporate scandals (Linsley & Kajuter, 2008), environmental disasters (Hooghiemstra, 2000) and significant restructuring, has emerged from this literature (Ogden & Clarke, 2005).

Although the issue of corporate legitimacy crises and CSR reporting has been discussed in the accounting literature (O'Donovan, 2002; Roberts, 2003), relatively little research has been conducted on the specific strategic responses of stigmatized

companies to stakeholder activism following crises in order to manage stigma (Bebbington et al., 2008).

The reason for our study is the growing disconnect between what is stated in CSR information (the talk) and what is done (the walk). CSR communication has become a new tool of corporate representation and public relations (Hopwood, 2009) without achieving significant results.

Diversity and inclusion: a true CSR intention or a purely functional meaning for corporations?

Researchers explain the concept of diversity management (DM, henceforth) as the “specific programmes, policies and practices that organizations have developed and implemented to manage a diverse workforce effectively and to promote organizational equality” (Dennissen et al., 2020, p. 220). In addition to this, Matuska (2014) identifies the need for change, trends that are causing the change in workforce structure and globalization. As companies have to accommodate these changes in their internal and external environment, the importance of organizational diversity has increased dramatically. Businesses are now trying to better explore the links between diversity and organizational culture, its impact on openness to diversity, and between diversity and performance at individual and organizational levels (Patrick & Kumar, 2012). However, it is demonstrated that stigmatized companies use D&I to lean their stigma through CSR communication, a significant negative outcome in perception outcome could impact the D&I discipline in our society, highlighting the urgency of the analysis. This possibility has already been described by academics with the notion of the back-fire effect, which states that “CSR may have counterproductive effects by increasing misbehavior though moral-licensing” (List & Momeni, 2021, p. 21)

The reason for heterogeneity in the workforce is the recruitment of ethnic minorities, women, and underrepresented groups, as well as the migration of people in search of employment opportunities (Tsui et al., 1992). Each individual has unique knowledge that must be recognized by organizations for their holistic development. To understand and manage the dynamics of diversity in the workforce, researchers have explored the outcomes of diversity at the individual level (Chatman & Flynn, 2001), at the group level (Leslie, 2019), and at the organizational level (Armstrong et al., 2010).

Diversity management as part of CSR communication positively influences organizational effectiveness and business performance (Watson et al., 1993). In contrast, some studies have reported that diversity has negative effects such as social exclusion, miscommunication, conflict, and turnover (Richard et al., 2004).

While diversity focuses primarily on the demographic composition of groups and organizations, inclusion focuses on promoting participation and moving from simply valuing to leveraging and integrating diversity into everyday work (Roberson, 2006). The literature on inclusion has yet to be developed, and there appears to be limited agreement on the conceptual underpinnings of the construct.

DISCUSSION: A RESEARCH AGENDA ON CSR COMMUNICATION, STIGMATIZED INDUSTRIES, AND D&I

Having explained the three phenomena separately, the next section will consider how these three intersect.

CSR initiatives: stigmatized vs. non-stigmatized corporations

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) disclosures have shown to be an effective tool for managers to gain broader stakeholder support (Hillenbrand et al., 2013), as well as the attention of institutional investors and analysts (Perks et al., 2013; Dhaliwal et al., 2011). However, these results are not transferable, as the CSR disclosure practices of controversial companies have hardly been studied (Mishina & Devers, 2012). None of these companies have been studied in terms of diversity and inclusion as a discipline to divert society's attention from the negative impact of their activities, although academics have called for further research (Hudson, 2008; Philippe & Durand, 2011; Vergne, 2012) on CSR reporting of stigmatized firms.

Companies associated with sin industries appear to engage in CSR practices (Rundle-Thiele et al., 2008) and are even more likely to initiate CSR reports than their counterparts in non-controversial firms and to state their reasons for doing so.

The relevance of such an investigation focusing on the combination of three issues (CSR communication, stigmatized companies, and D&I) is of general interest for two main reasons. First, any organization can be more or less challenged due to a stigma is beyond its control (Hudson, 2008; Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009), making all public and private institutions a potential target in this matter, even if the core business is beyond the rejection of public opinion. Secondly, the activities of certain industries have triggered intense public debates (Viererbl & Koch, 2022). This is due to the existing discrepancy between what the corporations claim they do (the talk) in their CSR published documentation versus the actual activities (the walk), investments, and intentions of the aforementioned firms, and considering that not all firms suffering from these situations have been previously stigmatized (Heal, 2008), other group members live with an increased likelihood of encountering the repercussions of social stigma.

According to research, CSR initiatives in stigmatized companies differ from non-stigmatized industries in terms of the direction of impact (Oh et al., 2017).

Most CSR activities in stigmatized industries, according to Hill (2001), would further “alienate the company from the rest of society, resulting in reduced reputation, increased costs, and decreasing shareholder value through erosion of its licence to operate” (p. 32). Confirming this theory, a group of scholars determined that CSR communication might be employed to mitigate stigma; Palazzo and Richter (2005) argued that traditional CSR approaches exacerbate rather than legitimize the difficulties of stigmatized companies. Another school of thought countereargues that position by noting that the financial underperformance of stigmatized enterprises increases as they expand their CSR reporting (Oh et al., 2017).

There is evidence that the participation of non-stigmatized industries in CSR initiatives and the associated advertising increases the costs of raising capital, while these costs decrease in the case of non-stigmatized industries (El Ghouli et al., 2011). Steltenpool and Verhoeven (2012) found that more explicit CSR information in the alcohol industry had a negative impact on consumers' attitudes towards the company, their purchase intentions, their perception of the company, and their level of skepticism. Thus, some studies suggest that CSR activities in stigmatized industries are less effective or may have a negative impact than in non-stigmatized companies (Jo & Na, 2012; Cai et al., 2012).

A growing number of scholars point out that firms that perform and operate activities in a sin sector actively defend and restore their reputation and identity by lobbying, promoting charities, and sponsoring events to demonstrate their morality, ethics, and responsibility, among other things (Hilson, 2012).

Institutions that fall within in the sin sector invest relentlessly in reducing the core stigmatization's effects (Elsbach & Sutton, 1992). They are of particular interest in this literature review because their defensive methods serve as excellent examples for several companies facing significant reputational issues (Brown, 2014). As a result, these industries are gaining relevant experience in discourses like CSR and sustainability, as shown by the increase in social, environmental, and sustainability reports (Hudson & Okhuysen, 2009).

Another perspective on this matter is presented by specific documentation suggesting that stigmatized businesses intend to restore their damaged reputation or silence stakeholder complaints through the use of impression-based communication strategies (Bansal & Clelland, 2004; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). As such actions are currently viewed as corporate social responsibility (Philippe & Durand, 2011), which communicates compliance to social audiences, these firms frequently turn to CSR to start a “dialogue between the company and its stakeholders” (Gray et al., 1995, p. 53). Particularly, CSR reporting sends significant institutional congruence signals that are highly effective at concealing

or, at the least, diverting attention from the most reviled behaviors (Elsbach & Sutton, 1992). Therefore, sin corporations use the disclosure of CSR information as a proactive and/or reactive defense mechanism to mitigate the impact of critical assessments of their operations and to keep social disapproval low (Vergne, 2012). It can be concluded that managers of sin enterprises may have a much stronger incentive to publish CSR reports to spread signals of social and environmental compliance than managers of non-sin firms due to the extreme adversity faced by sin companies (Philippe & Durand, 2011).

Has CSR communication the potential to become the next stigmatized industry pacifier?

Having established a connection between stigmatized industries and CSR reports, the next step in this analysis is to find evidence of whether CSR reports can actually become a cover-up tool for institutions, individuals, and public media.

From this literature review it can be concluded that accounting and CSR reporting communication, in particular, can play a significant role in improving a bad corporate image and strengthening relationships with stakeholders, in light of Goffman's work on mitigating the influence of stigma (Lee & Cho, 2022). A stigmatized business may be eager to employ various image restoration techniques to overcome difficulties with exposure versus concealment (Walker, 2008). As Grougiou and colleagues (2016) suggest, CSR reports send necessary signals of institutional congruence, that are highly likely to obscure or at least distract attention from stigmatized activities (Kim & Choi, 2022). Therefore, CSR disclosures may be proactive and/or reactive defense mechanisms employed by stigmatized firms to mitigate the impact of negative evaluations of their operations and reduce or manage societal disapproval (Vergne, 2012).

According to the pioneers of the topic, Dhandhanian and O'Higgins (2021), sin industries such as gambling, alcohol, and cigarettes have allegedly exploited CSR reports to increase their social legitimacy while disguising their damaging practices. By highlighting their positive contributions to the environment and society in their CSR reports while concealing the effects of their actual behavior, an ethical conflict is created that is exacerbated in the CSR reports from sin industries: although their goods and services harm people, the stigmatized firms portray themselves as doing good deeds in order to be socially tolerated. Key and Popkin (1998) noted that regulation for sin companies stems from stakeholders' concerns about social and ethical issues, so promoting CSR initiatives through communication should be advantageous to the company. Therefore, companies advertise their CSR efforts, which could serve as a cover for unethical behavior (Banerjee, 2008).

According to Dhandhanian and O'Higgins, a conflict was identified in the CSR reports of the United Kingdom sin industries, particularly gambling and tobacco (2021). Companies belonging to both sectors still make money from the harm they cause to people and the environment, but most of them still present themselves as ethical by supporting green programs and sponsoring charities. The first conclusion is that while sin companies can influence their key stakeholders through CSR reporting, the general public, NGOs, and the media are now much better informed and less easily persuaded by CSR communication.

In a further step of this research, the increasing number of CSR reports published by stigmatized firms reveals an increased tendency to promote their CSR credentials to strengthen their validity. In line with Brown and Dacin's (1997) assertion that a company's CSR serves primarily to clarify its position and operations in relation to its perceived social and stakeholder responsibilities, Carroll (1999) stated that CSR addresses and captures the key public issues surrounding the interactions between business and society. In general, research has consistently shown a positive relationship between a company's reputation and value and its sustainability policies, regardless of the industry in which it operates (Cai et al., 2012). Many businesses use voluntary sustainability reporting as a front of false behavior to appease various stakeholders (Cho et al., 2015). In essence, there is a gap between self-reports (the talk) and the actual impact through real activities (the walk) (Campbell et al., 2003).

As a concluding statement of this section, the response to the first research question shows that the stigmatized industries are not the focus of the literature review on CSR communication. There is evidence that CSR reporting is an organized, continuous, and ongoing strategy to combat the core stigma of sin companies, including the fact that rejected tobacco and gambling firms have been scrutinized based on individual case studies. However, these analyzes have not explored how legitimacy theory interacts with CSR reporting and actual practice in these businesses.

In response to the second research question, no specific study has been conducted to question or analyze the impact of the D&I discipline on stigmatized companies, whether as a support to mitigate stigma, improve the corporation's reputation, or to shed a light on the positive influence it has on non-stigmatized industries.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of our literature review can be summarized in a list of conclusions.

First, stigmatized organizations have been subjected repeatedly scrutinized and criticized. Nonetheless, the corporate strategies and techniques they use to

win the society's approval, more specifically via their CSR communication, need to be examined more closely.

Second, despite the above, there is clear evidence that CSR communication was critical when both sin and non-sin institutions suffered from either core or event stigma intended to compensate either permanent activities and portfolio services or isolated harmful situations with strategic and tactical approaches to achieve community redemption.

Third, from a stakeholder perspective, academics have scrutinized all five areas of sin at one time or another, but very few studies have provided an approach from a CSR communications perspective.

Fourth, the D&I discipline as a means to improve the reputation of stigmatized companies has not yet been analyzed, so the fact that these firms purposefully use CSR communication, D&I applications, and activities to manipulate the collective minds mentioned above can neither be confirmed nor rejected, opening up an intensive potential for future empirical studies on the matter.

Limitations

Since this paper is a bibliometric review of the scientific literature, i.e., not a study based on empirical data, there are some unavoidable limitations. First, only peer-reviewed documents and full-article conference papers have been considered in this research. Other findings written by the academic community could provide additional insights to this initial approach. Second, the articles are limited to the Web of Science Core Collection results. Third, it is possible that an important article was overlooked despite specific criteria mentioned above for selecting the most reputable sources for qualitative analysis. Fourth, due to the number of sources on stigmatized industries it was not possible to assess a SCIMAT analysis, which opens the opportunity for future research once the minimum threshold is reached.

Despite these limitations, the conclusions point to an important research direction. Future works should compare these results with samples from other databases, such as Scopus, which cover a wider geographical and idiomatic range, and thus allow for meaningful transnational comparisons.

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