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# Family businesses, corporate social responsibility, and websites

## The strategies of Italian wine firms in talking to stakeholders

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to identify the distinctive elements of CSR communications that characterize the communications models of family businesses in the Italian wine industry, and to compare them with nonfamily businesses.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Using a case study approach, a sample of large and medium companies practicing corporate social responsibility was identified. The content of their websites was examined using content analysis and text mining (correspondence analysis techniques and word association analysis using the T-Lab software).

**Findings** – The analysis indicates that the ownership structure nature makes a difference in the online CSR communications process. The cultural identity in both family and nonfamily businesses is founded on intangible factors such as tradition; however, being a family business is a fundamental driver in the online CSR communications process, no longer forming a bond among players in the wine industry, but rather linking with other wine family businesses.

**Research limitations/implications** – One limitation of this work is the small size of the investigated sample. An added value it contributes is its focus on the Italian wine industry. The paper provides the essential elements that family and nonfamily wine businesses should consider in customizing their CSR communications with the brand's specific details.

**Originality/value** – The authors highlighted the similarities and differences of family and nonfamily wine businesses in terms of their online CSR communications. The authors also observed how the family wine business identity, in its multidimensional construct, has common factors with what we call “familiness.” This research could establish a starting point for further work within this important sector.

**Keywords** Family business, Content analysis, Corporate social responsibility, Wine industry, Company website, Nonfamily business

**Paper type** Research paper

### Introduction

In the last decade, the role of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become so relevant (Lehtonen, 2004; Davis, 1973, 1960) that CSR is now considered the next generation of competitiveness (Birim, 2016). In line with stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), which argues that a company has to establish and maintain a relationship with all groups of interest, as well as provide all the information they need, CSR aims to create and improve an open dialogue with all stakeholders so as to promote ethical and socially responsible actions on different topics (Lim and Greenwood, 2017; Kirat, 2015; Golob and Bartlett, 2007). In this sense, the implementation and communication of CSR could be seen as a natural consequence of corporate communications, which can bring added value to companies. CSR communications, together with public relations, allow companies to address social value to



their market and show their uniqueness (Holme, 2010); build a strong competitive advantage (Porter and Kramer, 2006); and make stakeholders aware of the company's CSR activities, as they influence business returns (Du *et al.*, 2010).

The highest level of CSR communication is reached (Gomez and Chalmeta, 2011) when companies communicate their CSR efforts in developing an online communications process. In enterprises that develop CSR strategies, a proactive communications process aimed at engaging their stakeholders and capable of creating an effective and long-term relationship with them is expected to arise. In this sense, the use of a website could help (Del Bosco, 2017; Gomez and Borges-Tavarez, 2017) the company to improve its response to stakeholders' information needs and to customize messages to its users and the stakeholders in selecting the necessary information. In particular, websites represent a specific communication medium that can affect consumer perception (Saat and Selamat, 2014) when the corporate website is used as a tool to communicate CSR activities for companies. A part of the literature has investigated how specific firm characteristics affect firm CSR reporting behavior and have observed, in particular, internal determinants (Adams, 2002; Prado-Lorenzo *et al.*, 2009), but few studies have investigated particular type of internal factor as the family influence on business organizations (De Massis *et al.*, 2012). Family businesses constitute a huge fraction of companies throughout the world (Neubauer and Lank, 2016; Chua *et al.*, 2003; Gersick *et al.*, 1997), and their importance is also related to their capability to shift family values in the environmental and societal economy in which they are embedded (Bergamaschi and Randerson, 2016). In particular family firms enhance their sustainability by preserving their socio-emotional wealth (Berrone *et al.* 2012). The values generally associated with family businesses – such as long-term orientation, employee relationship, social and business community connections, integrity and continuity in the business policies, and attention to reputation (Le Breton-Miller, 2005; Donnelley, 1988) – may better facilitate the adoption of socially responsible behavior than in nonfamily businesses (Nekhili *et al.*, 2017; Campopiano and De Massis, 2015; Berrone *et al.*, 2010; Lindgreen and Swaen, 2010; Dyer and Whetten, 2006). A specific characteristic of family businesses is the familiness, a construct which in the social capital theory is described as the set of real and potential resources – norms, values, cooperation, vision, trust – embedded and made available within single or multiple relationships (Habbershon and Williams, 1999; Habbershon *et al.*, 2003). These resources intrinsic and implicit in a family business are difficult to imitate (Dess and Shaw, 2001) and able to shape the family brand identity as well as its competitive advantage. These essential characteristics of family businesses can improve CSR and therefore represent a critical issue that needs to be studied (Bergamaschi and Randerson, 2016). This suggests that there may also be important differences in the disclosure of social and environmental actions that distinguish family and nonfamily firms.

Our paper thus aims to advance our understanding of how family influence on a business organization may affect the type of online CSR communication and content disclosed of themselves. So, we identify the distinctive elements of CSR communications that characterize the communications models of family and nonfamily businesses. Specifically, we choose to observe the potential differences in the online CSR communication in the Italian wine industry, where the “family” element has always been a peculiar and recognizable trait of companies (Casprini *et al.*, 2016; Vrontis *et al.*, 2016).

In fact, from the point of view of wine companies, talking about social commitment means discussing a complex concept (Pellicelli *et al.*, 2016; Ohmart, 2009) that affects all the management activities of the company and affects competitors as well as local communities. Furthermore, if we consider that the wine industry has deep roots in the land in which it operates, reflecting in a broad sense the *terroir* notion (Iaia *et al.*, 2017; Arfini *et al.*, 2010), the CSR approach is significant in the wine sector because of the crucial role represented by the

territorial dimension and the critical and responsible behavior of the consumer in this field (Nazzaro *et al.*, 2016). The same strict bond with territory is associated with family businesses, which play an important role in the wine industry (Iaia *et al.*, 2017; Vrontis *et al.*, 2016). In fact, family businesses represent a set of values, symbols and traditions rooted in the area from which the family originates (Georgiou and Vrontis, 2013), where their reputation is well known by the market (Gallucci and Nave, 2012), and whose brand visibility is gained through online communication (Scorrano *et al.*, 2018; Iaia *et al.*, 2017, 2016; Capitello *et al.*, 2014).

Within this context, to the best of our knowledge, very little research has examined the relationship between CSR and family businesses in the wine industry (Iannone, 2018) and in particular few studies have analyzed the disclosure by website. Then, in this paper, we attempt to fill this gap in the literature, advancing our understanding of how online CSR communication differs between wine family and nonfamily firm.

Specifically, we aim to address the following research questions:

- RQ1. What are the main aspects of CSR communicated in the family vs nonfamily wine businesses, in the website communication?
- RQ2. Does there exist a qualitative and quantitative composition of the words that move around the word “wine,” that can represent different CSR communications models of family and nonfamily wine businesses?

The sample consists of companies dedicated to CSR – large and medium companies (Campopiano and De Massis, 2015; Young and Marais, 2011) that possess a significant number of stakeholders who need information and which have greater impact on society. Another contribution of this investigation is the methodology used: although Italian companies have already been investigated using the case study approach, in our case the content analysis did not employ just the CSR webpages and reports, but rather extracted the material for CSR analysis directly from the “Who we are” and “History,” sections, as in the wine sector, the business’s corporate reputation (the “output” of the CSR strategy implementation) is directly connected with the business’s history (Iannone, 2018). The content analysis was carried on using correspondence analysis techniques and word association analysis, using the T-Lab software.

The structure of the paper is as follows: the next section provides the theoretical background to the research. The third section illustrates the method employed in the empirical analysis, the fourth section reports on and discusses the main findings of the empirical study, and the last section concludes and outlines avenues for future research.

## Theoretical background

### *Corporate social responsibility and its communication*

In The Citizens’ Network-Commission Green Paper published in 2001, CSR was defined as “the voluntary integration by enterprises of social and environmental issues in their commercial transactions and their relationships with their interlocutors” (Jáuregui 2012, p. 30). The same construct was developed by Aguinis (2011, p. 855), who described CSR as a “specific context of organizational actions and policies that takes into account the expectations of suppliers and the social, economic and environmental actions.” In fact, both of these are based on the triple bottom line concept (Elkington, 1997, 1994), which is a way to operationalize CSR (Iannone, 2018). The relevance and complexity of this concept requires researchers to explain CSR through its three dimensions (Gémar and Espinar, 2015; Aguinis, 2011): the economic, social and environmental dimensions. The economic dimension covers all topics about ethical behavior and the honest practices underlying the general activities of the business management and its

governance (Lee and Saen, 2012), as well as the quality of products (Lee and Saen, 2012; Erol *et al.*, 2011) and innovation in product processes (García de los Salmones and Rodríguez del Bosque, 2011). This dimension thus describes the development of enterprises by means of ethical management. The social dimension concerns the social impact of companies on the sustainable development of society and the support of social issues (Ruizalba Robledo *et al.*, 2014) in terms of human activities or settlement (Chang and Cheng, 2019). It deals with the creation of employment opportunities (Govindan *et al.*, 2013), employees' health and work safety, their living standards, their decision-making power and improving their competences (Ruizalba Robledo *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, it concerns (Lee and Saen, 2012; Erol *et al.*, 2011; Hong and Andersen, 2011) a green image intended, related to the green suppliers involved, green supply chain management as implemented by managers, and the associated environmental performance. The environmental dimension refers to the impact of the company's activities on the environment in terms of nature, ecosystems and the Earth (García *et al.*, 2014; Tseng, 2013). In this sense, companies need to measure and decrease the damage caused to the environment (Chang and Cheng, 2019).

Since the CSR activities implemented by enterprises highlight the assumption of economic, social and environmental responsibility by the firm (Perrini, 2005), CSR can also generate moral capital (Gamerschlag *et al.*, 2011) when companies communicate the effects of organizations' actions to particular "groups of interest," better known as stakeholders, who may be "any group or individual that can affect and can be affected by the achievement of the aims of the organization" (Freeman, 1984). It is fundamental (Gamerschlag *et al.*, 2011; Campbell, 2004; Gray *et al.*, 2001, 1987) that stakeholders are informed about the "good" practices carried out by firms (Merkl-Davies and Brennan, 2007; Yuthas *et al.*, 2004; Godfrey *et al.*, 2003; Clatworthy and Jones, 2001) because they have a positive attitude toward the concept of CSR (Di Bella and Al-Fayoumi, 2016). In fact, on one hand, companies can improve their brand image and corporate reputation (Chatzoglou *et al.*, 2017; Kang and Hustvedt, 2014; Colle *et al.*, 2014; Almela Burgos, 2009) and at the same time gain a competitive advantage (Du *et al.*, 2010; Hooghiemstra, 2000), with significant and positive associated firm financial performance (Salehi *et al.*, 2018). On the other hand, CSR communication can create a dialogue with stakeholders, allowing the firm (Agudo-Valiente *et al.*, 2015) to gather information on their different expectations and to obtain feedback on the perception of CSR initiatives.

This shows that company should intend CSR communication as a technique for gaining social recognition (Wigley, 2008), although if the communication is to be effective, it requires the use of more advanced approaches to CSR communication (Morsing and Schultz, 2006; Morsing, 2006). The effectiveness of the communications process, in fact, is the first step for the involvement of stakeholders, as its importance is growing as an important tool that companies can use to build and sustain relationships with stakeholders, as it can support company recognition, trust and credibility (Du *et al.*, 2010).

#### *CSR communication strategies: focusing on website and content analysis*

At present, to get in touch with their consumers and keep them up to date, companies need to employ multiple communication channels, including the digital environment because of its significance in disseminating CSR information (Holcomb *et al.*, 2007; Haigh and Jones, 2006). The internet makes it possible to establish both one-way and two-way communication and therefore to receive feedback from interested parties and create a direct dialogue on CSR issues (Isenmann and Kim, 2006; Isenmann, 2006; Unerman and Bennett, 2004; Esrock and Leichty, 2000). The essential role of the internet in CSR communication (Gomez and Chalmeta, 2011; Basil and Erlandson, 2008) is confirmed by the CSR strategies elaborated by

Morsing and Schultz (2006). In fact, using stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), Morsing and Schultz (2006) included stakeholders in corporate strategy development, creating a framework of CSR communication strategies (Ettinger *et al.*, 2018) including stakeholder information strategy, stakeholder response strategy and stakeholder involvement strategy. Stakeholder information strategy is a one-way strategy, as the company transmits information to stakeholders with the purpose of gaining their positive support by informing them of its philanthropic actions (Morsing and Schultz, 2006). Stakeholder response strategy is a two-way communications model in which the company tells stakeholders about its good intentions and pays attention to their answers. The purpose of this exchange of information is to persuade stakeholders of the company's attractiveness (Ettinger *et al.*, 2018). Even if a response strategy is implemented with the aim of persuading the stakeholders, it is really a one-sided scheme that mirrors the firm's voice (Morsing and Schultz, 2006). Stakeholder involvement strategy means the implementation of an actual two-sided communication with stakeholders (Ettinger *et al.*, 2018), as the company activates and invites them to engage in dialogue, often using discussion forums and social media. The goal of this strategy is to engage stakeholders, in order to guarantee that their opinions are listened and their needs are met (Golob and Podnar, 2014).

An application of the Morsing and Schultz's (2006) stakeholder information strategy is the company website and all the information conveyed through it. In fact, websites make it much easier to exchange information between different stakeholders (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001) and to personalize messages for different stakeholders or groups of stakeholders (Wanderley *et al.*, 2008; Hartman *et al.*, 2007; Adams and Frost, 2006; Isenmann, 2006; Wheeler and Elkington, 2001).

In this sense, some authors have already studied the information shared on the internet by analyzing published CSR reports and focusing on the content, extent, and determinants of the information presented on company websites (Gomez and Borges-Tavarez, 2017; Del Bosco, 2017; Frostenson *et al.*, 2011; Morhardt, 2010; Tagesson *et al.*, 2009; Wanderley *et al.*, 2008; Maignan and Ralston, 2002; Rikhardsson *et al.*, 2002). These studies have identified various factors that can affect the disclosure of CSR on websites, such as size, profitability, business sector, country of origin, ownership and position in the company structure, listing status, and media exposure. Other studies have compared CSR disclosures through the web with other traditional offline forms of reporting CSR (Branco and Rodrigues, 2008; Williams and Ho Wern Pei, 1999), finding a tendency to provide more narrative information on websites than in annual reports and to focus on different CSR issues when using different media. CSR can add many benefits, as it improves positive attitudes toward the firm (Arvidsson, 2010; Wanderley *et al.*, 2008) and creates real dialogue (Esrock and Leichty, 2000).

Websites are often one of the first steps (Rios and Pablo, 2014) and the hub of the business's online communication (Toma and Marinescu, 2012; Kung and Zhang, 2011) as they simultaneously constitute the company's main promotional "window" and the essence of the online presence of firms. Studying the potential of organizational websites from the customer's perspective, with the aim of understanding the link between company and public relations (Park and Reber, 2008), it has been demonstrated that corporate websites directly affect customer perception of CSR responsibility and customers' trust of the company; consumer use of a corporate website has an indirect effect on positive word-of-mouth communication. So, moving from the possibilities of corporate websites and their important role for company communication of CSR also (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001), the literature review has highlighted that internet-based analyses of CSR were generally conducted using the CSR webpage or CSR reports; few studies have focused on analyzing the content of the overall corporate website in terms of CSR strategies.

*Corporate social responsibility and its relationship with family and nonfamily business*

A family business can be defined as a firm owned by one or more family members, in which at least two members of the founding family are involved as major owners, where family members hold a substantial proportion of the equity, and where fractional equity ownership by the founding family exists (Heck and Trent, 1999; Gómez-Mejía *et al.*, 2007). Family businesses represent a huge proportion of companies worldwide (Neubauer and Lank, 2016; Vrontis, 2008; Chua *et al.*, 2003; Gersick *et al.*, 1997), but their importance is also related to their ability to shift family values in the environmental and societal economy in which they are embedded (Bergamaschi and Randerson, 2016) and to use the family variable to achieve good economic and financial performance (Bresciani *et al.*, 2016). An interesting construct in the family business study is “familiness,” introduced by Habbershon *et al.* (2003) that have defined it as the resources and capabilities related to family involvement and interactions. These resources include norms, values, cooperation, vision, trust; which are intrinsic and implicit in a family business, therefore, difficult to imitate (Dess and Shaw, 2001). Following this idea, Irava and Moores (2010) describe the familiness as the set of human elements (reputation and experience), organizational elements (decision making and learning) and relational elements (relationships and networks). Pearson *et al.* (2008) suggest a multidimensional construct, characterized by a structural dimension (social interactions and networks), a cognitive dimension (shared vision and purpose, as well as unique language, stories and culture) and a relational dimension (trust, norms, obligations and identity). The familiness is related to a greater business market orientation (Tokarczyk *et al.*, 2007; Craig *et al.*, 2008), and to create family brand identity (Zellweger *et al.*, 2010).

The values of family businesses – long-term orientation, relationship with employees, social and business community connections, integrity and continuity in the business policies, and attention to reputation (Le Breton-Miller, 2005; Donnelley, 1988) – may facilitate the greater adoption of socially responsible behavior than in nonfamily business (Nekhili *et al.*, 2017; Berrone *et al.*, 2010; Lindgreen and Swaen, 2010; Dyer and Whetten, 2006).

Scholars have only recently begun to study the issue of CSR in the family business context (De Massis *et al.*, 2012; Campopiano and De Massis, 2015; Yu *et al.*, 2015; Campopiano *et al.*, 2014; Amann *et al.*, 2012) and in comparisons with nonfamily businesses (Nekhili *et al.*, 2017; Martín Castejón and Aroca López, 2016; Bergamaschi and Randerson, 2016; Cennamo *et al.*, 2012; Granata and Chirico, 2010; Anderson and Reeb, 2003).

A first category of empirical studies has emphasized the values of the owner family (Niehm *et al.*, 2008; Perrini and Minoja, 2008; Déniz and Suárez, 2005; Gallo, 2004), highlighting a link with the surrounding community, the dialogue’s tendency and how the family nature of the firm affects the relationships between employees, customers and suppliers, and examining family-run large firms. In fact, family businesses respect the family values and traditions of their employees and the community when compared with nonfamily firms (Donnelly, 1964; Ward, 1987; Leach, 1993; Poza, 1995; Neubauer and Lank, 1998; Miller and Le Breton-Miller, 2003). Niehm *et al.* (2008) demonstrated the positive relation between the CSR orientation and performance of the company, through the family’s values on the CSR behavior; in particular, their focus was the connection and interaction with the community and the society. Déniz and Suárez (2005) identified the two dimensions of CSR from two proposed scales measuring the narrow vision/costs and the broad vision/benefits of CSR, constructed by cost-benefit analysis and broadness of firm vision, proving the bond between the CSR orientations and the related investments. They demonstrated that family firms are a heterogeneous group in terms of their orientation toward CSR, and in order to understand the determinants of distinctive corporate social orientations and behaviors, they suggest to analyze the family features as values and

culture, which constitute their competitive advantage (i.e. familiness, product quality, respect for employees, involvement with the community, management policies, etc.; Miller and Le Breton-Miller, 2003; Neubauer and Lank, 1998; Poza, 1995; Ward, 1987; Donnelly, 1964).

A second category of studies has performed comparative analysis of the social responsibility of family and nonfamily businesses. These studies have shown that there are differences in the ethical behavior of family and nonfamily businesses (Adams *et al.*, 1998), as well as differences in CSR activities and perceptions among different types of family businesses (Bergamaschi and Randerson, 2016; Martín Castejón and Aroca López, 2016). From the stakeholder perspective, some studies have shown that family businesses are often linked with positive features in their relations with the stakeholders (Déniz and Suárez, 2005), as on one hand the stakeholders' evaluation of CSR information is affected by the ownership identity (Granata and Chirico, 2010; Anderson and Reeb, 2003), and on the other hand the "familiness" permeates all business areas, influencing employee, client and supplier relationships (Uhlaner *et al.*, 2004), as well as providing a positive image and reputation of caring about stakeholders (Dyer and Whetten, 2006). Besides, referring to external stakeholders, family business is supposed to be aligned to their expectations and to preserve the business partner's trust (Cennamo *et al.*, 2012), which demonstrates that a firm's characteristics can influence the effectiveness of CSR communication and decrease stakeholder skepticism (Nekhili *et al.*, 2017; Du *et al.*, 2010). On the base of the analyzed literature, it is possible to relieve the absence of homogeneity in the CSR orientation (Uhlaner *et al.*, 2004; Déniz and Suárez, 2005; Marques *et al.*, 2014); so, further research on the CSR dimensions related to family firms are relevant to better focus the existing differences. Besides, this is motivated by the presence of very few researches about the influencing elements of the CSR dimensions (Lamb *et al.*, 2017).

### Methodology

If we consider notion of *terroir* (in the broad sense) to be important (Iaia *et al.*, 2017; Contò *et al.*, 2014), then the CSR approach is even more significant in the wine sector because of the crucial role represented by the territorial dimension and the critical and responsible behavior of the consumer (Nazzaro *et al.*, 2016). The same strict bond with territory is associated with family businesses, which play an important role in the wine industry (Iaia *et al.*, 2017; Vrontis *et al.*, 2016). In fact, family businesses represent values, symbols and traditions rooted in the area where the family originates (Georgiou and Vrontis, 2013), their reputation is well known by the market (Gallucci and Nave, 2012), and brand visibility is gained through online communication (Iaia *et al.*, 2017, 2016; Capitello *et al.*, 2014). In this sense, for the nature of the sector, an interesting connection between the CSR concept and family businesses can be found in the wine industry. Indeed, Iannone (2018) in her study interviewed a family business in the Italian wine sector, discovering that CSR manifests itself as the involvement, valorization and education of employees; social and environmental merit products; activities with the local community (such as sponsorship, promotion, and production of social, cultural and environmental projects); stable and durable collaboration with customers, suppliers and financial partners; global environment care and procedures and programs of environmental protection and quality of life (recycling waste, reducing emissions, saving energy, etc.). Furthermore, our literature review highlighted that internet-based analyses of CSR have been conducted using the CSR webpage or the CSR reports, and few studies have performed content analysis of the overall corporate website in terms of CSR strategies. For this reason, the aim of our study is to identify the distinctive elements of the online CSR communications that characterize the communications models of family businesses in the Italian wine industry, and to compare them with nonfamily businesses.



### *Research questions*

In line with stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) and selecting stakeholder information strategy from the CSR communication strategies (Morsing and Schultz, 2006), we examined website content in which both family-owned and other wine companies speak about themselves, as we assumed that the overall communication strategy of these companies is permeated with the CSR perspective. The paper aims to identify the distinctive elements of CSR communications that characterize the communications models of family businesses in the Italian wine industry, and to compare them with nonfamily businesses. In other words, we would understand how family influence on a wine business organization may affect the type of online CSR communication and if it exists a different content disclosed compared to nonfamily businesses.

In particular, the purpose is to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1.* What are the main aspects of CSR communicated in the family vs nonfamily wine businesses, in the website communication?
- RQ2.* Does there exist a qualitative and quantitative composition of the words that move around the word “wine,” that can represent different CSR communications models of family and nonfamily wine businesses?

### *Sampling criterion and context*

The subject of this study was selected using the case study approach (Yin, 2012; Gummesson, 2000; Malhotra, 1993). Although this method does not allow generalization of the results, it is argued to be suitable for generating a qualitative information flow (albeit one linked to the context of reference), which can facilitate learning (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Two important considerations (Campopiano and De Massis, 2015; Young and Marais, 2011) bring us to focus on large and medium companies: the number of stakeholders asking for information and the greater impact on society.

The sample selection was obtained on May 16, 2017 by inputting the following criteria into Aida, the Bureau van Dijk database:

- ATECO code (2007) 11.02, companies that produce wine from grapes, which includes winemaking companies, quality wines produced in specified regions (QWPSR – code 11.02.10) and sparkling wine and other special wines (code 11.02.20);
- company located in Italy; and
- company has sales revenue available for 2012–2016.

For each examined year (2012–2016 inclusive), we selected the first 30 companies from the Aida data set, ordered by sales revenue in euro and integrated, where data were missing, with data from a wine industry survey report (Mediobanca, 2017). The sample was refined to further select firms:

- who were ranked in the 31st places in each year of the previous lists;
- who had a corporate website; and
- who agreed with the CSR approach, as seen by their corporate website containing a Sustainability or Social Report or other similar document (e.g. Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct, etc.).

At least 22 large and medium companies (12 nonfamily businesses and ten family businesses) were found using these criteria.

Family businesses were identified through Aida’s indication of the company’s ownership (based on capital).

*Content analysis*

The website’s content was analyzed through the logic of quantitative content analysis (Weber, 1990; Krippendorff, 1980; Berelson, 1952) supported by text mining techniques (Feldman and Sanger, 2007; Bolasco, 1997) conducted through the T-Lab software. Content analysis is a method that allows researchers to summarize a large amount of textual data in a small number of content categories (Stemler, 2001; Bryman and Bell, 2003; Weber, 1990). Text mining aims to process unstructured (textual) information, extract meaningful numeric indices from the text, and thus make the information contained in the text accessible to the various data mining (statistical and machine learning) algorithms. It can thus be used to analyze words, clusters of words and whole documents, identifying similarities between them and showing how they are related to other variables of interest in the research project.

The content of the CSR analysis was extracted directly from the corporate website, from sections entitled “Who we are” and “History,” as in the wine sector the business’s corporate reputation (the output of the CSR strategy implementation) is directly associated with the history of its business (Iannone, 2018).

In the processing phase, two sub-collections of data were created by the T-Lab software, to consider the phenomenon (family business or nonfamily business; see Table I).

A co-occurring data matrix was computed for each level of content using correspondence analysis of the T-Lab software. The co-occurrences found were clusterized in order to detecting groups of words that were representative of CSR communication in both family and nonfamily businesses. The keywords returned by the co-word analysis were subjected to hierarchical clusterization, yielding mini-clusters. These are graphically represented by a similarity matrix based on multidimensional scaling (MDS; see Figures 1 and 2), which makes it possible to represent relations between data in a small space like a “map.” The MDSs are significant when the stress value is equal to 0.14 (coefficient < 0.1). The diameter of a term reflects the probability that it will appear in the analyzed text; the colors represent the division of the most frequently discussed topics by theme; the positioning in a quadrant indicates the strongest associative link in each area (the color). Looking at the homogeneity of the words present in each quadrant of the MDS (words synthesized through mini-clusters; see Figures 1 and 2), it is possible to identify four main thematic areas (*RQ1*).

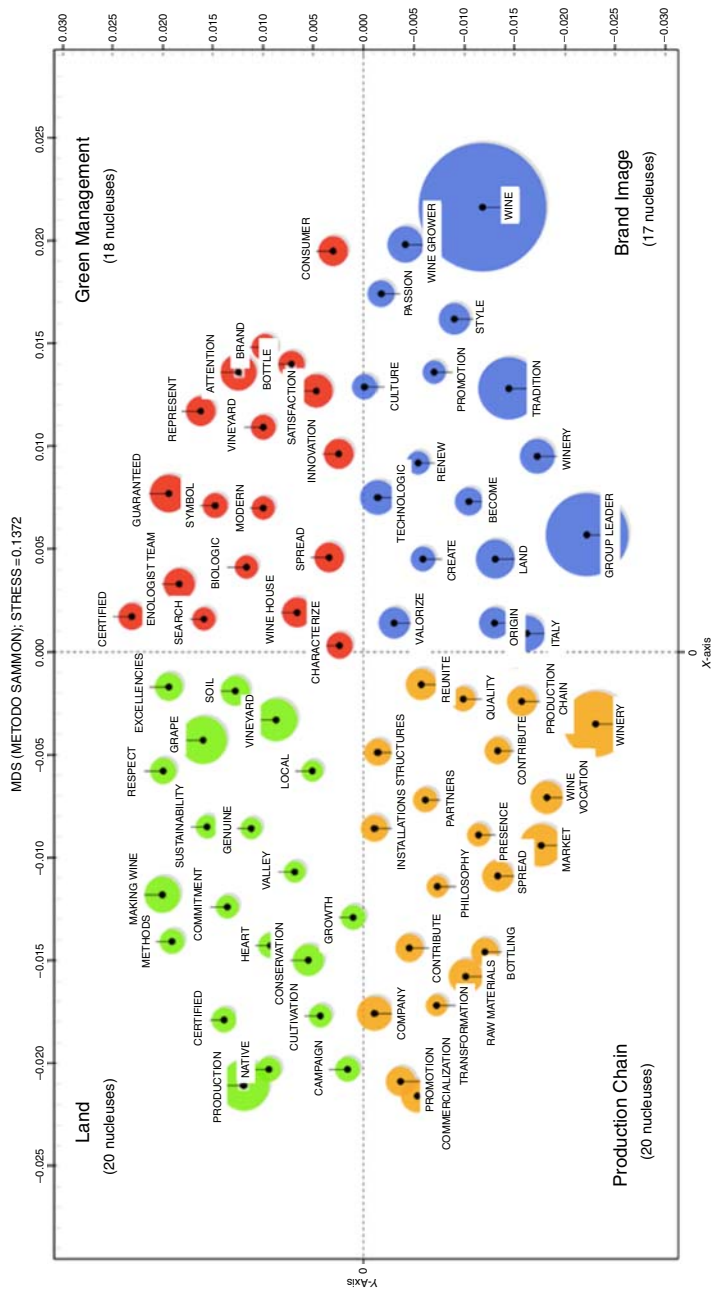
In order to identify whether a set of values, symbols and traditions that characterizes the two different communications models exists (*RQ2*), we have selected the term “wine” from the keywords (511 keywords for the nonfamily business and 575 keywords for the family business contents). Then, using co-occurrence analysis, we extracted the first 20 words (B) with higher association with “wine” (A), in both family and nonfamily business; Table II highlights the frequency of co-occurrences (E.C. (AB)).

**Findings**

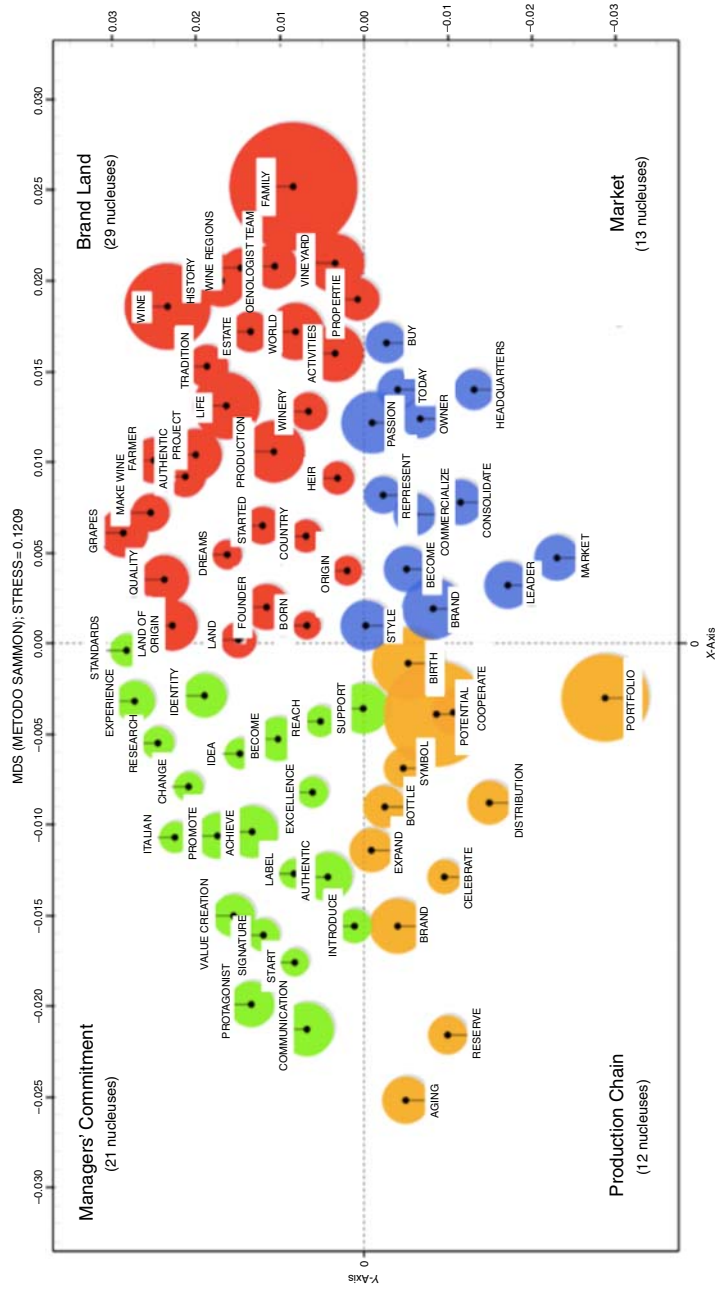
*RQ1.* What are the main aspects of CSR communicated in the family vs nonfamily wine businesses, in the website communication?

	No. of family business	Family business
Texts	1	1
Elementary contexts	526	580
Forms	4,684	5,478
Lemmas	3,712	4,403
Occurrences	19,529	22,635

**Table I.** Results of data processing as returned by the T-Lab software



**Figure 1.** Multidimensional scaling (MDS) map nonfamily business group



**Figure 2.**  
Multidimensional  
scaling (MDS) map  
family business group

Word (B)	No. of family businesses			Family businesses				
	Coeff.	E.C. (B)	E.C. (AB)	Word (B)	Coeff.	E.C. (B)	E.C. (AB)	$\chi^2$
1. Quality	0.33	69	42	1. Producer	0.306	17	14	39.187
2. Winery	0.328	120	55	2. Grape	0.275	21	14	26.948
3. To produce	0.304	70	39	3. Production	0.269	45	20	15.765
4. Italian	0.262	42	26	4. Estate	0.245	39	17	12.536
5. Grape	0.255	55	29	5. Generation	0.242	20	12	18.656
6. Passion	0.228	21	16	6. Company	0.231	44	17	8.656
7. Product	0.226	70	29	7. Quality	0.231	39	16	9.828
8. Innovative	0.219	20	15	8. Family	0.213	79	21	1.582
9. Area	0.218	23	16	9. Italians	0.213	18	10	13.117
10. Tradition	0.217	52	24	10. History	0.209	54	17	3.762
11. History	0.214	37	20	11. Land	0.202	24	11	9.087
12. Style	0.206	17	13	12. Territory	0.202	20	10	10.277
13. Variety	0.197	28	16	13. Grape harvest	0.191	8	6	14.048
14. Taste	0.188	12	10	14. Vineyards	0.174	27	10	4.247
15. Place of origin	0.186	10	9	15. Property	0.17	18	8	6.003
16. Generation	0.181	13	10	16. Region	0.169	14	7	7.118
17. Territory	0.177	44	18	17. Passion	0.167	29	10	3.22
18. Market	0.172	37	16	18. Famous	0.161	5	4	10.433
19. Land	0.172	37	16	19. Selection	0.161	5	4	10.433
20. DOC	0.169	18	11	20. Life	0.159	32	10	2.044

**Table II.**  
Words related to  
the term "wine"

MDS is a means of visualizing the level of similarity of individual cases of a data set. By examining the words in the maps, we have identified four thematic areas that characterize CSR website communication, which can be ascribable to the economic, social and environmental perspective of the commitment undertaken by the companies in both family and nonfamily businesses.

Analysis of the map quadrants extracted for nonfamily businesses (see Figure 1) highlights:

- An environmental responsibility toward the land that has supported the genesis of the product (land). The land synthesizes the *terroir* and its peculiar features. It is sought to highlight the “native” character of the “production,” using the “certified” place of origin and its procedural guidelines as a guarantee, providing the instructions for the “campaign,” “cultivation” and the “methods” of “making wine.” For nonfamily businesses, the “sustainability” aspect of the territory is leveraged, as the “grape,” the “vineyard” and the “soil” can generate “excellencies,” making an effort (“commitment”) to preserve and improve (“conservation,” “growth”) the naturalness of the production areas (“genuine,” “heart,” “valley,” “local”).
- A social approach based on the commitment of managers oriented toward green supply chain management and the impact on local communities (Green management). This quadrant is characterized by features of production, such as raw materials (“vineyard”), “certified,” “biologic,” “modern,” “guaranteed,” “enologist team,” in which the “search” for “innovation” plays a crucial role. These aspects show the “attention” paid to the “brand” by the “consumer” to increase his or her “satisfaction,” and the company’s desire to “spread” this attention for the product and for the environmental care. The consumer is also invited to visit the company’s “wine house” in order to learn more about the brand and the production techniques.
- The production chain and the brand image could be associated to an economic perspective of the CSR. The production chain is intended as an operating philosophy represented by a cooperative approach to the main goal: to “reunite” the “partners” in one “winery,” with the necessary “installations” and “structures” to receive their contributions (“contribute”), thus increasing the “quality.” The “raw materials” are therefore physically transformed (“transformation”), creating value through activities such as, for example, “bottling,” “promotion” and “commercialization” (cooperating entirely with the “production chain”). The “philosophy” and the land’s “wine vocation,” where both the winery and the “company” partners entered in the “market,” spreading (“spread”) its “presence.” The brand image is characterized by terms that especially refer to the intangible attributes of the “wine.” The product is thus obtained thanks to: the “passion” of the “wine grower” and the product’s value creation (“create,” “valorize”) which goes through the “promotion” of the “style,” “culture” and “tradition” (communicating “history” and the “origin” of the product and its “land” of “origin,” “Italy”); innovations in the wine sector (“renew,” “technologic”). In this quadrant, it is also possible to determine the company’s goal: to “become” an industry “group leader.”

The quadrants of the map elaborated for the family business (see Figure 2), on the other hand, highlight a different approach:

- The managers’ commitment view intended as involving the adoption of practices aimed at creating the relationship between the land and the company is very close to the social perspective of the CSR. Through continuous “research” activity and respect for the productive “standards,” the “experience” gained and the “communication” of the “label,” the company provides its contribution to the promotion (“promote”) of the territory. From the latter, conversely, it receives a “support” for the construction of the brand “identity” and the “value creation,” using the ideas of “excellence,” “authentic” and “Italian.”

- The quadrant called brand-land has particular appeal, because it is characterized by words that highlight the relationship between the brand image and the environment perspective (land). The theme that revolves around the brand image communication is the “family” and the “wine,” which represent not only “history” and “tradition,” but also an “authentic” “life” “project,” “born” (“started”) from the “dreams” of the “founder” (“heir”), and from the skills of the “farmer” that helped him or her make wine (“grapes,” “make wine”), from a “land of origin,” bringing “quality” to the “world.” Today, that role is played by an “oenologist team,” which pursues the “production” “activities” in the family “properties,” also dislocated in other “wine regions”; for this reason, product is promoted is made by providing information on the “vineyard” “origin” and its “country,” where the “winery” and the “estate” are located.
- The production chain and the market could be based on the economic dimension of the CSR. In fact, the thematic nuclei suggest that the family businesses “cooperate” or are considering “potential” cooperation, with the intent to “expand” the company’s “portfolio” and/or the “brand” awareness, intended as a “symbol,” emphasizing (“celebrate”) particular aspects (probably also through the organization of ad hoc events), such as the “bottle,” the “reserve” and “aging.” The market quadrant is based on a smaller number of nuclei, but with very strong meaning, as they embody the company’s business mission: to “represent” the “style” and the “passion” of its own “brand” (and of the “owner”) to the “market,” with the purpose of becoming (“become”) “leader” and to “consolidate” the position reached:

*RQ2.* Does there exist a qualitative and quantitative composition of the words that move around the word “wine,” that can represent different CSR communications models of family and nonfamily wine businesses?

In order to answer the second research question, we analyzed the qualitative and quantitative composition of the words that move around the word “wine,” because this represents the focus of the CSR communications model, as seen in *RQ1*. Table II shows the co-occurrences (AB) of the word “wine” (A) with other words (B) within same the elementary context.

From the analysis of the values, it is clear that nonfamily businesses link the term “wine” with words, such as “winery” (co-occurring No. 55), “quality” (No. 42), “production” (No. 39) and “grapes” (No. 29), that are features of wine production features; in addition, there are other values, like being “Italian” (no. 26). Following, the term is interpreted as a “product” (No. 29), “innovative” and certified (“DOC”), including in its meaning “passion,” “history,” “tradition,” “style” and “taste,” all handed down from “generation to generation” in its “land.”

On the contrary, the family businesses are firstly related to the “producer,” to emphasize to the “family” (“estate,” “generation,” “history,” “property” and “life”). The other keywords are related to the “production,” and the co-occurring terms are “grape,” “company,” “quality,” “winery,” “grape harvest,” “renewed” and “selection.” The importance given to the family element, related to the product “wine,” is also highlighted by the arrangement of keywords in descending order of number of co-occurring lexical units: “family” (No. 21), “production” (No. 20), “estate” (No. 17), “company” (No. 17), “history” (No. 17), “quality” (No. 16). In contrast to the findings for the nonfamily business group, among the identified keywords in the latter classification, only two (“production” and “company”) also fall into the first six positions of the ranking, based on the association index (see Table II).

Table II also shows that we can compare the words (B) dealing with family or nonfamily business, and consider the terms associated with the word “wine” that are used in both contexts, and those that characterize the communication of only family or nonfamily business.

In particular, the words associated with “wine” that are common to the CSR communication of both types of business – even though their association indices and degree of co-occurrence are not always similar – are linked to tangible elements, such as “grape,”

“winery,” “company” and “production,” along with intangible elements such as “quality,” being “Italian,” “passion,” “history” and “land.”

The “family” theme (“generations,” “life,” “estate,” “property,” “region,” etc.) is the cornerstone for the family businesses, and it is interesting to note that the nonfamily businesses rely on the “product” narrative, and particularly stress their features of “tradition,” “place of origin” (related to the “DOC” certification), “taste,” “style” and “innovation.”

This information was considered useful in answering the second research question, as they highlight the qualitative and quantitative composition of the words that characterize the different ways of transmitting CSR communication in the family vs nonfamily businesses.

### Discussion

In line with stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), CSR aims to create and improve an open dialogue with all stakeholders to promote ethical and socially responsible actions on different topics. Modern online communication is a proactive communications process that aims to engage stakeholders and is able to create an effective and long-term relationship with them.

Recent studies suggest stakeholders’ evaluation of the CSR information is significantly affected by the ownership of the firm (Granata and Chirico, 2010; Anderson and Reeb, 2003) and that family businesses, in particular, have the capacity to shift family values in the environmental and societal economy in which they are embedded (Bergamaschi and Randerson, 2016); these peculiarities may facilitate the greater adoption of socially responsible behaviors than in nonfamily business (Nekhili *et al.*, 2017; Lindgreen and Swaen, 2010; Berrone *et al.*, 2010; Dyer and Whetten, 2006). If Aguinis (2011) described CSR as an organizational policy that takes into account the social, economic and environmental actions, as it is based on the triple bottom line concept (Elkington, 1997, 1994), it could be interpreted as a way to operationalize CSR (Iannone, 2018). The empirical results show that in the wine industries these perspectives characterize online disclosure of the CSR, and in the same time highlight the main aspects of CSR communicated in the family vs nonfamily wine businesses (QR1) and permit to observe the topic that distinguishes online CSR communications strategies (RQ2).

With reference to the main aspect of CSR communicated in the family and nonfamily wine business through the website (RQ1), we identified the three CSR’s perspectives (Aguinis, 2011), with different peculiarities. The social perspective (see Figure 1) in the family business is expressed by the managers’ commitment, intended as the adoption of practices aimed at creating a relationship between the land and the company. On the other hand, in the nonfamily businesses, the social perspective is indicated by the commitment of management toward green supply chain management and the impact on local communities (called Green Management) (Lee and Saen, 2012; Erol *et al.*, 2011; Hong and Andersen, 2011). The economic perspective is focused on two dimensions (Lee and Saen, 2012; Erol *et al.*, 2011; Garcia de los Salmones and Rodríguez del Bosque, 2011): the production chain and the brand image for nonfamily business and the production chain and market in the case of the family business. The “Production Chain” is similar in both family and nonfamily businesses because it is intended as an operating philosophy represented by the cooperative approach to the main goal, aimed at expanding brand awareness. “Market” for family businesses indicates the company’s business mission, whereas in nonfamily business the “brand image” refers especially to the intangible attributes of “wine.” The environmental perspective is recognizable in the quadrant called Land (García *et al.*, 2014; Tseng, 2013), where the nonfamily businesses explicitly describe an environmental responsibility toward territory. On the other hand, in family businesses, this perspective is represented in the quadrant called brand–land. This has a particular appeal, because it is characterized by the words that highlight the relationship between the brand image and the environmental perspective (land).



The qualitative and quantitative composition of the words (*RQ2*) that move around the word “wine” allows us to observe that there are factors common to both family and nonfamily businesses. In particular, the words associated with “wine” are linked to tangible elements, such as “grape,” “winery,” “company” and “production,” as well as intangible elements like “quality,” being “Italian,” “passion,” “history” and “land.” In particular, deepen analyze the family businesses’ contents, it has been recognized that the “familiness” represents a fundamental driver. In fact, the words of the cluster “Family” – “history,” “tradition,” “authentic,” “life,” “project,” “land” – show the will of family wineries to create and reinforce the value system, generating credibility and authenticity. This happens because familiness, as the outcome of interactions between family values and business activity (Habbershon *et al.*, 2003), assumes a symbolic value allows the company to represent itself as going beyond family business interactions to consolidate itself within a wider and more complex relationship among wine, family and land.

### Conclusion

To make contact with their consumers and keep them up to date, companies presently need to employ multiple communication channels and to include the digital environment, on account of its significance in disseminating the CSR information (Holcomb *et al.*, 2007; Haigh and Jones, 2006).

Although there are numerous tools available to create a business’s online communication, a website is often one of the first steps (Rios and Pablo, 2014), as it simultaneously constitutes the company’s main promotional “window” and the essence of the online presence of firms (Toma and Marinescu, 2012; Kung and Zhang, 2011).

Moreover, from the customer’s perspective, a company website has high potential for CSR communications, as it makes much easier to exchange information between different stakeholders (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001).

Nevertheless, our literature review highlighted that internet-based analyses of CSR have been conducted using the CSR webpage or the CSR reports, and few studies have performed content analysis of the overall corporate website in terms of CSR strategies. This paper thus contributes to managerial studies, as it goes beyond the communication of the CSR through traditional reporting, showing that the overall online communication presents specific features, and that there are differences in the disclosure approach between family and nonfamily wine businesses.

Few studies have focused on the connection between the wine industry and family businesses, in which the family brand becomes the main driver for communicating the CSR project, as we have demonstrated, along with the manager’s commitment, the production chain and the market elements, the brand image, the land to which the family business belongs to, and the strict bond between brand and land (Niehm *et al.*, 2008; Perrini and Minoja, 2008; Déniz and Suárez, 2005; Gallo, 2004).

In this perspective, our study enriches the academic literature of the CSR online communication, highlighting the similarities and differences between family and nonfamily wine business communications. The communication of the value elements of the CSR began, in both types of business, by following a path that links the tangible elements of the wine product (“grape,” “winery,” “company,” “production”) with intangible elements such as “quality,” being “Italian,” “passion,” “history” and “land.” Then, for the family businesses this path is characterized by the presence of a specific element: the “familiness” that permeates all business areas (Uhlaner *et al.*, 2004). In fact, the wine identity’s multidimensional construct presents common factors to the those of familiness, as in both of them cultural identity is founded on intangible factors such as tradition, the assets, the culture, the ethnic diversity, the local identity, the trust, the sense of belonging, etc. Thus, the familiness represents a fundamental driver in the CSR online communications process, because through it family businesses represent themselves as going beyond the

family business interactions to consolidate themselves within a wider and more complex relationship among wine, family and land. As we have seen, these essential characteristics of family business help improve the CSR and therefore represent a critical issue that needs to be studied (Bergamaschi and Randerson, 2016).

One limitation of this work is the small sample we investigated, although its focus on the Italian wine industry represents an added value. In fact, for historical and traditional reasons, the “family” element has always been a peculiar and recognizable trait of companies in the Italian economy (Casprini *et al.*, 2016; Vrontis *et al.*, 2016). An interesting future development of this work would be to attempt to understand whether familiness affects the CSR online communications of wine companies located in different countries, or if this is a purely Italian phenomenon. It might also be interesting to evaluate how the familiness construct is perceived by wine consumers.

If CSR is intended as a next-generation competitiveness factor (Birim, 2016) then, among the practical implications and recommendations for management, it is worth highlighting that our analysis allows us to consider the essential elements that family and nonfamily wine businesses should take into account and customize in order to produce a CSR communication with their brand’s specific details. In particular, the endowment of familiness on a family wine business can be assumed to be a construct that increases competitiveness along with the CSR communication. In fact, through familiness the family business can activate emotional resources, which may represent an element of differentiation and recognition of the family brand.

For the above-mentioned reasons, it is essential that the overall communication strategy of the wine family businesses’ website is permeated with the CSR perspective, instead of dedicated sections of it, as it can have two effects (Park and Reber, 2008): it directly affects the customer’s perception of CSR responsibility and his or her trust in the company; also, the consumer’s use of the corporate website has an indirect effect on positive word-of-mouth communications.

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