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To cite this article: María Dolores Olvera-Lobo & Celia Castillo-Rodríguez (2018): Dissemination of Spanish SME information through web 2.0 tools, Journal of Transnational Management

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15475778.2018.1509422>



Published online: 20 Nov 2018.



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Dissemination of Spanish SME information through web 2.0 tools

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ABSTRACT

Due to the vertiginous development of the so-called information society, one essential phase of any internationalization process is the establishment of a professional online presence. Such a presence can help small and medium enterprises (SMEs) start implementing their business abroad at a low cost, but possible interactions with users from diverse sociocultural and linguistic contexts must be considered. In this scenario, two resources of great value are social media platforms and web translation and localization processes. This article examines Spanish SME processes of information dissemination and interaction with users on social media and using web translation and localization. The sample includes 70 Spanish SMEs drawn from a selection of 1000 European companies compiled by the London Stock Exchange. Results suggest that Spanish SME online presence tends to lack professionalism, strategy, and willingness to interact with users.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 29 June 2018
Accepted 5 August 2018

KEYWORDS

Small and medium enterprises; social networks; translation; Web 2.0; web localization

Introduction

In recent decades, Internet has become an unprecedented communicative phenomenon, essential in information dissemination and marketing processes in most economic sectors. This circumstance is unquestionably transforming the way in which companies and markets come into contact. Additionally, the emergence of the so-called Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005) has seen users go from being passive recipients of information to being able to adopt an active attitude and become content creators and opinion makers themselves. In this context, social media, one of the maximum Web 2.0 exponents, not only enables information dissemination but also promotes dialog with users. Moreover, digital platforms are even capable of generating emotional commitment between companies and audiences (Navarro, 2011), providing consumers with a virtual space that helps complement

and expand relationships established in the real world (Arroyo, Martín & Farfán, 2018).

In the Spanish economic environment, small- and medium-sized enterprises (hereafter SMEs) play a crucial role. According to the Commission Recommendation 2003/361/CE (European Commission, 2003), an SME is a company that employs less than 250 people and whose annual turnover does not exceed €50 million, or whose annual balance sheet does not exceed €43 million. According to data published by the General Secretariat of Industry and Small and Medium Enterprises (2018), 2,842,783 companies are registered in Spain, of which 2,838,269 are SMEs. This last figure represents 99.8% of the Spanish business sector, a percentage identical to that of Europe as a whole (Muller, 2017). Very often, SMEs are characterized by having limited resources, not only capital but also human and technological (Davis & Vladica, 2006). Therefore, they face greater barriers when it comes to incorporating the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). However, SMEs should prioritize using these technologies considering that they offer a number of benefits at a reduced cost. Furthermore, diverse factors such as continuous changes in the economic environment together with the acceleration of globalization processes are systematically pushing SMEs toward the challenge of accessing external markets. For those companies that decide to pursue internationalization, establishing a solid, professional online presence is an unavoidable step, not only because it contributes to the dissemination of corporate information and interaction with potential customers, but also because it improves the corporate image and can help a company differentiate themselves from the rest.

Two frequently used strategies when establishing an online corporate presence are the creation of a corporate website in several languages, and the setting up of professional profiles on various social media sites. Some advantages offered by the creation and proper maintenance of a corporate website are: increased business visibility and competitiveness, improved corporate image, removal of intermediaries and geographical restrictions, and diverse benefits linked to ecommerce such as real-time transactions and access to contact information and customer preferences (Marín Dueñas & Lasso de la Vega, 2017; Mbatha 2013). These benefits are multiplied, if the website undergoes a translation or localization process. According to its most popular definition, localization in the field of translation refers to the activity that involves taking a product (in this case, a website) and making it linguistically and culturally appropriate for a locale, that is, the target country and the language in which said product will be used and sold (Lommel & Ray, 2007). In fact, users spend up to twice as long on websites that have been localized into their first language, their

attitude toward them is more positive and they are almost three times more likely to end up purchasing some product (Baack & Singh, 2007; Singh & Pereira, 2005).

However, a considerable proportion of Spanish SMEs do not have a corporate website, and those that do either rarely have their contents localized or the localization is of poor quality. According to Uruña et al. (2017), although 77.5% of SMEs with 10 or more employees have their own website, this percentage drops to 31.5% in the case of SMEs with fewer than 10 employees. In this sense, with Spanish SME websites (Gutiérrez-Artacho & Olvera-Lobo, 2017a, 2017b), the information they provide and their technical aspects show an acceptable quality. However, a number of deficiencies can be found as regarding their service quality (a section where the authors analyzed aspects such as the website's empathy, interactivity, playfulness -the ability to maintain the user's attention through fun and enjoyment- and esthetic appeal). Another improvable aspect is the fact that most websites do not exhibit responsive design, which would make the website more easily accessible from devices such as tablets or mobile phones. In a previous study using a sample of SMEs belonging to the Spanish chemical sector (Gutiérrez-Artacho & Olvera-Lobo, 2017b), it was noted that less than half of the companies (48%) were active on social media and, within these, only 15% enabled the creation and publication of opinions and contents. Finally, it was concluded that website localization quality (another analyzed aspect) should be significantly improved. For example, it is noteworthy that translated or localized versions have a drastically reduced amount of information compared to the original website and many of the links redirect to websites in Spanish (Gutiérrez-Artacho & Olvera-Lobo, 2017a, 2017b). Likewise, there are substantial differences in the degree of localization of each website, with some websites being completely localized and others hardly at all.

As pointed out previously, social media channels are contributing to the development of new communication spaces and show great potential as a marketing tool. However, there is a significant number of SMEs that are not yet using these platforms. Batikas (2013) reveal that only 61% of SMEs established in the following six countries use social networks: The United Kingdom (90%), the Netherlands (79%), Latvia (75%), Spain (54%), Bulgaria (37%), and Italy (28%). Companies not employing social media argue that they cannot find a compelling reason to do so. However, 29% of companies that use them pointed out that their financial situation had improved throughout the 3 y prior to the study, compared with 18% of companies that do not make use of social network sites. A strategic social media use was also identified as a common factor among those companies that enjoyed better economic figures. In general, some of the main reasons

why SMEs are not using social media are a lack of resources and technical knowledge, the small number of employees and their reduced management and administration capacities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Stockdale et al., 2012; Zeiller & Schauer, 2011). In addition, many companies still do not know how to make a strategic use of these tools (Ahmad, Ahmad, & Abu Bakar, 2018; Bharati Zhang, & Chaudhury, 2014).

To the best of our knowledge, there is very limited research in the academic setting on the level of adoption of social media and the cultural and linguistic adaptation of corporate websites by Spanish SMEs. Marín Dueñas and Lasso de la Vega González (2017) point out that the quality of the contents of corporate websites belonging to SMEs in the province of Cádiz is very low, although they score well in other aspects such as the clarity of the language employed or the usability of the website. One of the few studies dealing with Spanish SMEs and social media is that of Sixto García, Aguado Domínguez and Riveiro Castro (2017), who focused on Galician SMEs and concluded that the use of social media by these companies lacked engagement and user interaction. Research pertaining other regional areas include Ahmad Abu Bakar, & Ahmad (*in press*), who found no relationship between social media adoption and the business performance of SMEs in the United Arab Emirates. These findings are inconsistent with those of Ainin et al. (2015), who determined that using Facebook has a very positive impact both on the financial and non-financial business performance of Malaysian SMEs and pointed out compatibility, cost effectiveness, and interactivity as the main factors that influence SME use of Facebook. Likewise, Negoită (*in press*) finds a strong correlation between social media usage and the online success of a sample of Romanian SMEs. Similarly, Meske and Stieglitz (2013) examines the level of adoption and benefits of social media usage in Germany and concludes that German SMEs still face problems to manage adoption and to identify relevant business values. Kim et al. (2011) obtained similar results in a study on 100 U.S. SMEs. Regarding research focused on an economic sector, Tajvidi and Karami (*in press*) pointed out a positive relationship between the use of social media and the performance of a sample of hotels in the U.K. Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) performed a literature review of social media usage in tourism and argued about the necessity of demonstrating the economic contribution of this type of Web 2.0 tools to the industry. Additionally, McCann and Barlow (2015) signaled the importance of measuring the return of investment (ROI) of social media usage paying attention to both qualitative and quantitative indicators, and they provide a model for such purpose. As pointed out by Fuchs-Kittowski, Klassen, Faust, & Einhaus (2009), one of the main obstacles for social media adoption is that cost-benefit analyses yield unclear results.

In Spain, according to a report by Telefónica (2014) concerning microenterprises, social media management is rarely professionalized – instead, it is often done by non-specialized internal staff and content publication often lacks planning and strategy. Moreover, companies that do not use social media argue that they do not perceive any associated benefits in the way of new customers or increase in business volume. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that social media is not a type of technology aimed at increasing the number of transactions, but rather at encouraging collaboration and communication between groups inside and outside the company (Bharati et al., 2013). Another benefit derived from the use of social media channels is the fact that they are (almost) free tools that help improve and maintain brand reputation (Ioanid, Deselnicu, & Militaru, 2018).

However, Spanish SME activity on social media does not seem to match that of the rest of the population. According to an annual study on social networks conducted by the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB Spain, 2017), an organization representing the advertising and digital communication sector in Spain, social media penetration reaches 86% of Spanish Internet users between 16 and 65 y, which accounts for more than 19 million users. Facebook is the most used social media service (91% of respondents use it) followed by WhatsApp (89%), YouTube (71%), and Twitter (50%). Instagram is the service with the biggest increase in number of users (45% use it) and visit frequency compared with the previous year. For its part, Twitter is the social platform with the poorest retention rate (its use has dropped 13% compared with the previous year), followed by Telegram, Google+ and Snapchat. Google+ is also one of the networks with the worst rating by users. Regarding the relationship between social networks and companies, it is remarkable that 8 of 10 users in this study declare that they follow brands on social media. In addition, the use of social networks with an aim of obtaining information on products or services is becoming more common: 53% of the respondents claim to do so, 16 percentage points above the previous year.

The objective of this article is to study the processes of multilingual information dissemination and interaction with Web 2.0 users that Spanish SMEs are carrying out. With this aim, we have examined their online presence by analyzing their corporate website and the number and variety of languages into which their contents have been translated or localized. Likewise, we have examined SME presence on a broad range of social networks, and we have applied a series of indicators that help us explore the way in which these companies use social platforms. We have also verified whether corporate websites offer contact information (email or contact form, telephone number, and physical address) as an additional means of establishing interaction with users. Finally, we have examined if there is a

correlation among different factors analyzed that could help establish which type of practices have a more positive impact on SME business development.

Methodology

Study sample

The *1000 Companies to Inspire Europe 2017* report carried out by the London Stock Exchange Group (2017) is a selection of the 1000 ‘fastest-growing and most dynamic’ European SMEs in the year 2017. The 70 Spanish companies that can be found in this selection constitute the study sample. Figure 1 shows the economic sectors to which the companies belong, according to the report classification.

Indicators for evaluation

A growing body of research points to appropriate online presence as a beneficial factor for achieving SME objectives (Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides, 2011). Nobre and Silva (2014) argue that presence on social media can have a positive influence in both relationship influence and increased sales of SMEs. Lopes and Melão (2016) concluded that website content and design features are positively related with enterprise size in the SME context. Additionally, Yamazaki (2011) found out that Japanese SMEs with corporate websites in a single language in 2007 had ceased their business or merged with other companies by 2011, while SMEs with multi-lingual websites had managed to survive. In light of this previous research,

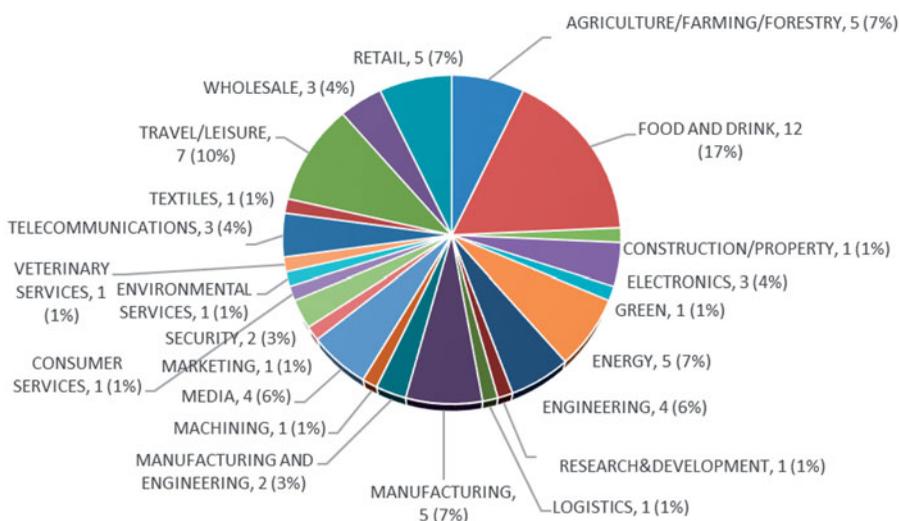


Figure 1. Number and percentage of SMEs grouped by economic sectors.

the following indicators regarding SME online presence have been considered:

- Social media
 - SME presence on social media.
 - Number of profiles on social networks.
 - Followers.
 - Profile updating.
 - Location of social media links on corporate websites.
 - Visibility given to social networks on corporate websites.
- Websites
 - Ownership of a corporate website.
 - Translation/localization languages: identification and number.
 - Degree of translation/localization.
 - Number of languages into which websites have been translated/localized.
 - Identification of languages into which websites have been translated/localized.
 - Contact information: this indicator assesses the presence of the email address, contact telephone number and physical address of the company on the corporate website.

Data relative to the presence of the sample SMEs on social media were collected on the following platforms: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google+, Instagram, Vimeo, Flickr, and Pinterest. The procedure used to determine the existence of profiles on these networks consisted in checking if there were any links to social media on the corporate website of each company. Likewise, additional searches were performed using both Google (“[company name] Facebook” or “[company name] LinkedIn”), and the internal search engine of each social network. This was done to rule out the existence of profiles whose links had not been incorporated to the corresponding corporate website. Profiles created on other social media platforms that had not initially been considered were also recorded whenever there was a link to them on the corporate website. These profiles have been grouped under the label Other.

The evaluation of the remaining indicators (degree of translation/localization, languages, and contact information) was conducted by exploring the corporate websites of each sample SME.

Data were collected during January and February 2018.

Data analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to examine Spanish SME online presence. The statistical package SPSS was used to analyze

data. Descriptive statistics were employed to provide background information such as the mean number of languages on corporate websites and social network platforms used and the range of revenue of the sample companies. Furthermore, we analyzed the possible existence of correlations by calculating Pearson's correlation coefficient among the following variables: number of social networks, maximum revenue, and number of languages.

Results and discussion

We present our results organized around three main aspects: use of social networks, presence of translation/localization on corporate websites, and existence of contact information.

Social media

Presence on social media

The sample SMEs (70 companies) have a total of 261 profiles on social media. The average number of profiles per SME is 3.73 (standard deviation 2.219). Almost 90% of the sample SMEs have a profile on at least one social network. Only 8 of the 70 sample SMEs (11.4%) do not have a profile in any social network.

SMEs that use social media usually create profiles on at least two platforms. As shown in [Table 1](#), most SMEs (21.4%) have profiles on five social networks. Two companies have the highest number of profiles, specifically nine. Furthermore, the percentage of SMEs that have profiles on three or more networks amounts to 70%.

Facebook is a social network used by most companies (74% of sample SMEs have a profile on it). The second most used social media service is LinkedIn – however, this network only holds the seventh place on the list of the most used social networks by Spanish Internet users (IAB Spain, 2017). Nevertheless, characteristics of this professionally oriented social network would justify its high use in the business sector, as the platform aims to help both employers and employees by assisting in job searches and coming into contact with potential staff members. Twitter's third position is striking considering that it is one of the social networks with the biggest

Table 1. SMEs according to their number of social networks (SN).

SMEs	% (#)	SMEs	% (#)
9 SN	2.9% (2)	4 SN	17.1% (12)
8 SN	1.4% (1)	3 SN	12.9% (9)
7 SN	4.2% (3)	2 SN	12.9% (9)
6 SN	10% (7)	1 SN	5.7% (4)
5 SN	21.4% (15)	0 SN	11.4% (8)

loss of users in recent years. According to the study by IAB Spain (2017), only a half of Spanish Internet users were Twitter subscribers.

A peculiarity observed is that 5% of SMEs manage their presence on Facebook using a personal profile instead of a page. This practice infringes the platform conditions and does not let SMEs make use of interesting functions specifically designed for companies, such as access to statistics or advertising (Facebook, 2018). The same issue is observed in 4% of profiles created on LinkedIn.

Followers on social media

As shown in Table 3, the three social networks that accumulate the highest number of followers are Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Remarkably, Instagram profiles account for the third-highest number in followers even though this network is not one of the most used by the sample SMEs (see section *Presence on Social Media*). However, this would be consistent with the increase in the number of users that this network has experienced in the last year in Spain. The high number of followers on Instagram contrasts with that of YouTube, which is in fifth position despite being the third most used network in Spain (IAB Spain, 2017), and the fourth most used by the sample SMEs. One of the factors that would explain the lack of followers on YouTube (or subscribers, as they are denominated on this network) could be the infrequent updates - as will be discussed later, only 22% of companies with a profile on this media platform have made an update in the month prior to data collection. The low number of followers on Google+, one of the networks with the worst rating by users (IAB Spain, 2017) seems to confirm that the presence of SMEs in this medium is only testimonial and seeks to exploit the benefits associated with website positioning on Google (Sixto García et al., 2017).

Posts on social media

Another aspect considered was the existence of social media profiles that do not display any posts.

Although percentages are not excessively high (see Figure 2), the highest number of profiles without posts were found on LinkedIn and Google+. In the case of the latter, this would confirm that SMEs do not use it with the intention of communicating with their followers (who are scarce in Spain, as it has already been mentioned). No “empty” profiles have been found on YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr, Pinterest, or other social media platforms.

To determine the degree of activity of corporate profiles on social media, we registered profiles where at least one post had been published during data collection period. Although as shown on Table 2 only 29% of SMEs

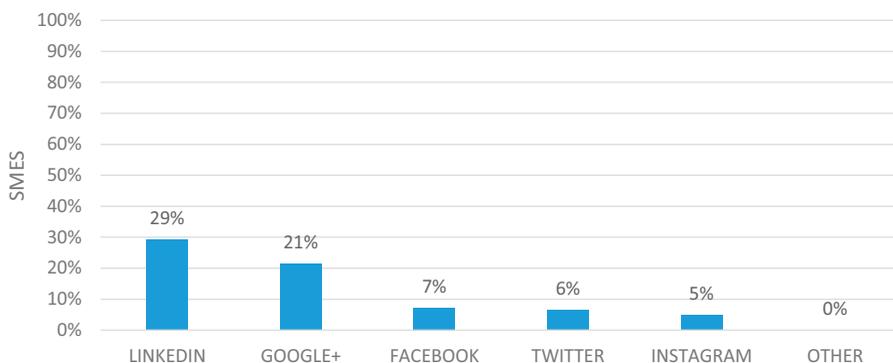


Figure 2. Profiles without posts.

Table 2. SMEs with profiles on each social network.

Social network	# of SMEs	Social network	# of SMEs
Facebook	74% (52)	Google+	40% (28)
LinkedIn	69% (48)	Instagram	29% (20)
Twitter	64% (45)	Vimeo, Flickr, Pinterest, other	36% (25)
YouTube	61% (43)		

Table 3. Followers on social media of the sample SMEs.

Social network	# of followers (all sample SMEs)	Social network	# of followers (all sample SMEs)
Facebook	919853	Pinterest	2317
Twitter	312479	Google+	1884
Instagram	152633	Flickr	225
LinkedIn	80516	Vimeo	80
YouTube	28748		

Table 4. Profiles with posts published during the analyzed time frame.

Social network	Updated profiles	Social networks	Updated profiles
Instagram	85% (17)	Google+	32% (9)
Twitter	78% (35)	YouTube	21% (9)
Facebook	69% (36)	Vimeo, Flickr, Pinterest, and others	4% (1)
LinkedIn	46% (22)		

are registered on Instagram, it is noteworthy that 85% of them updated their profiles at some point throughout data collection month (see [Table 4](#)). Twitter profiles were also updated more often than other social media profiles. Both microblogging social networks feature short posts with minimum text and predominance of audiovisual content (especially in the case of Instagram), which makes it easier to disseminate information to a large number of users quickly. The third most updated social media platform is Facebook, probably because it is still the most widely used network (IAB Spain, 2017), and therefore posts on this site are disseminated more widely. For the rest of the social media sites, less than 50% of profiles were updated. The percentage of updated YouTube profiles is 21%, which might

be related to the greater amount of resources required to produce a video compared with posting on any other social network.

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Links to social media

Another factor considered was the specific location of links to social networks within the corporate website of each SME. To determine this aspect, we analyzed the website homepage in its source language.

As shown in [Figure 3](#), a considerable percentage of SMEs (31%) do not include links to their social media profiles on their homepage. The percentage of SMEs that link their social networks from any area of the footer (33%) is greater than those that place links on any area of the header (26%). However, the most frequent location is the right side of the header (21% of SMEs). Considering that users normally scan web pages using an F-shaped ocular movement (Nielsen, 2000), the choice of placing links on the header may be deemed more appropriate.

Not only is Facebook a social network with the highest number of registered sample SMEs, but it is also the most frequently linked one. As [Figure 4](#) shows, 74% of SMEs have a profile on this network and 61% offer a link to it on their website homepage. Most companies with a profile on LinkedIn, Google+, Vimeo, and Pinterest do not include a link to it on their homepage. In the case of LinkedIn, this might be associated with the professionally oriented nature of the platform, with the information offered on it not usually aimed at general users and customers, but at other companies and potential employees. Regarding Google+, despite the fact that 40% of companies in the sample have a profile on this social network, few

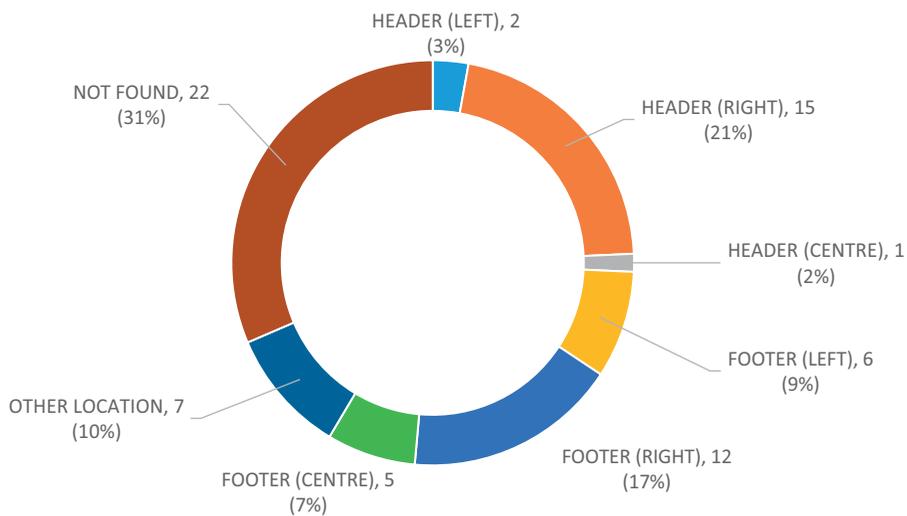


Figure 3. Visibility of social media links on website homepages.

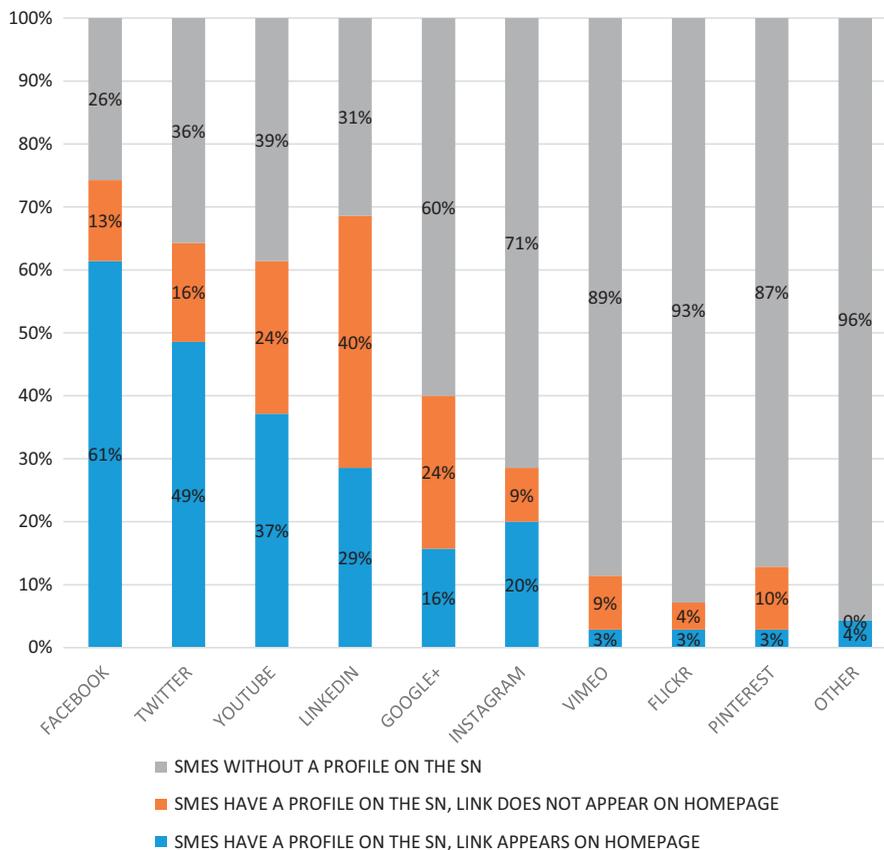


Figure 4. SMEs that link each social network from their homepage.

consider it profitable to make it visible on their corporate website and keep it updated.

Websites

Nearly, 100% of sample SMEs have a corporate website. For our analysis, special attention has been paid to a variety of languages offered on these corporate websites and the degree to which they have been translated.

Languages

Table 5 shows the most frequently used languages on corporate websites of the sample. We also show some other languages that are of particular interest for our analysis, although they have not been as frequently used as a target language. This is the case for Arabic (a major language) and Spanish and other co-official languages. It is interesting to note that despite 95.7% of SMEs showing their website in Spanish, there are three companies that have decided to publish their website only in English. This decision may

Table 5. Target languages of corporate websites.

Language	% (#)	Language	% (#)
Spanish	96% (67)	Mandarin	7% (5)
English	74% (52)	Japanese	6% (4)
French	24% (17)	Polish	6% (4)
Portuguese	17% (12)	Dutch	6% (4)
German	17% (12)	Basque	3% (2)
Italian	11% (8)	Arabic	3% (2)
Catalan	10% (7)	Galician	1% (1)
Russian	7% (5)	Other languages	7% (5)

indicate that these companies have undergone a deep internationalization process and have given priority to users from anywhere in the world being able to access their information, considering the current status of English as a lingua franca. English is also the most frequent target language, followed a long way behind by French, Portuguese, and German. Regarding Spanish co-official languages, there is a predominance of translations into Catalan, although only 10% of SMEs offer their contents in this language. Similarly, only two SMEs have had their website translated into Basque, and one into Galician.

The average number of languages used on each website is 3.16 (standard deviation 3.295).

Translation/localisation

Nearly three quarters of SMEs in the sample (74%) have had their website contents translated, either partially or totally, into at least one language. 26% (18 SMEs) offer their contents in one single language, which is always Spanish except in the case of three companies that only use English, as indicated above. It must be noted that, although there is a clear distinction between the concepts of translation and localization (see Introduction), for the purposes of this study, we have only focused on the degree of translation of texts. However, some of the sample websites have undoubtedly been localized and not only translated – that is, they have been linguistically, culturally, and technically adapted to users from other sociocultural backgrounds.

Varying degrees of translation could be found within the translated websites. Partial translations have a negative impact both on the way users access the provided information and on the company image, and in this study, we have considered such cases of partial translation to be every website in which at least one source-language sentence could be found in its localized versions. In the vast majority of cases, however, the amount of untranslated text was not limited to a single sentence. Instead, there were entire untranslated pages and sections such as contact forms, footers, legal provisions (legal notice, cookies policy, and terms of sale), blog entries, and

news. According to the criterion used, 36% of sample websites were completely translated, 38% were partially translated, and 26% had not been translated into any language.

Another error that has been noticed on translated websites is the considerable number of broken links or links that redirect to pages in the original language. Furthermore, there are a number of cases where some of the languages that appear on the language selector cannot be accessed, either by clicking on them or by other means (writing */en,/fr*, etc. at the end of the URL). As a positive aspect, some companies that have completely translated websites have also dubbed their corporate videos into all the target languages offered.

About 36% of SMEs offer their contents in two languages, comprising the biggest group (see Figure 5). Only 8% of websites can be accessed in six or more languages. In this last group, particular attention can be drawn to the case of a site translated into 18 languages, the highest number found in the sample. On the other hand, SMEs that use two languages choose between Spanish, English, and Catalan. Regarding the rest of the websites grouped by number of languages (web sites in three, four, five, six, or more languages), the great variety of languages results in a strong disaggregation of collected data, which is therefore of little analytical interest. However, there is a considerable presence of languages whose number of

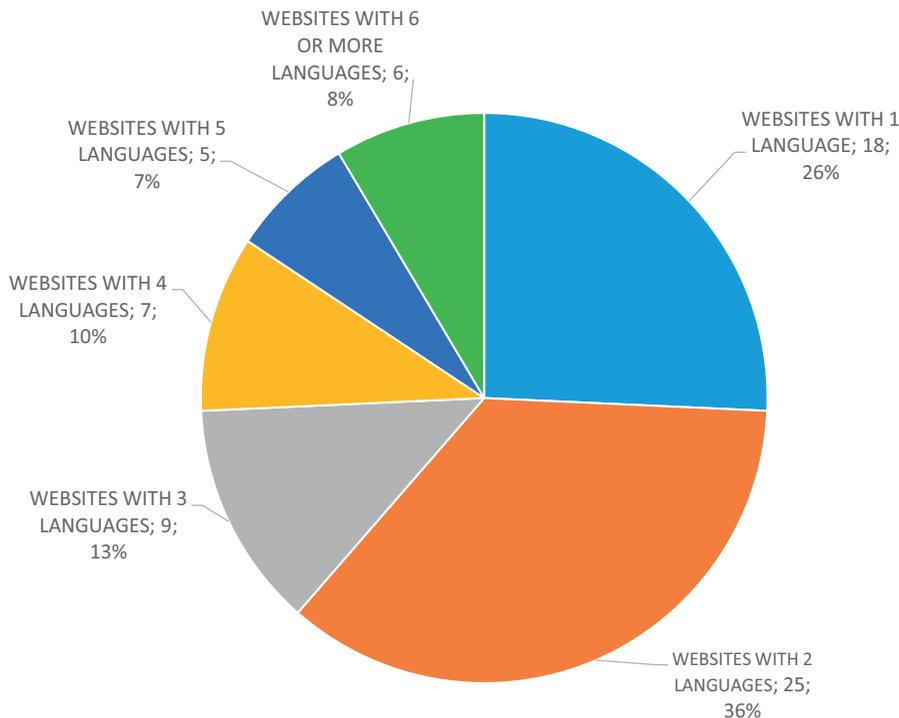


Figure 5. Number of languages on websites.

speakers is relatively small, such as Japanese, Dutch, or Polish. This means that websites are not always localized into major languages – instead, companies are taking into account the markets with which they work and sometimes they do not consider an English translation to be sufficient to communicate with these.

Contact information

Almost all companies offer users the possibility of communicating with them by writing (either per email or using a contact form, see Figure 6). Most offer a contact telephone, too. However, it is sometimes necessary to access sections such as the legal notice to find the physical address of the company.

Finally, Table 6 shows a summary of the analyzed data. The revenue band of each company is included in the London Stock Exchange report from which the sample has been drawn.

As a final aspect of this study, we analyzed the possible existence of correlations by calculating the Pearson’s r among the following variables: number of social networks, maximum revenue, and number of languages. However, no significant correlation coefficients among these variables were found. It could have been expected that companies with higher levels of income, for example, had registered on a higher number of social networks, as their greater amount of resources may allow them to have some kind of professionalized management of their online presence. It could also have been expected of companies with higher levels of income to have invested in offering a wider variety of languages at some point in their development

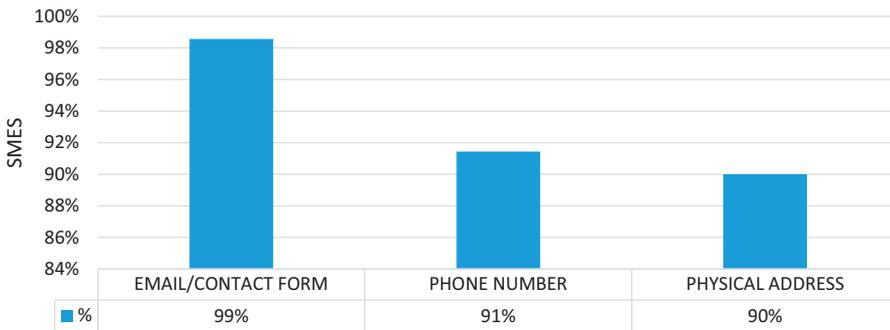


Figure 6. SMEs that offer contact information on their websites.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of the analyzed variables.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation	Variance
Languages	70	1	18	3.16	3.295	10.859
Social networks	70	0	9	3.73	2.219	4.925
Maximum revenue	70	20	250	56.07	39.926	1594.125

(either before reaching said level of income or as a consequence thereof). However, results do not confirm these hypotheses. There is no relationship between the number of profiles on social networks and the number of languages offered on each corporate website, either. Likewise in our sample, there are companies with large volumes of income for which English seems to be sufficient to communicate with their audience. Other companies, perhaps due to the nature of their business (e.g. companies dedicated to selling to professionals such as those belonging to the machining sector) consider it unprofitable to establish their presence on social networks. Finally, SMEs specialized in fields such as tourism must necessarily offer a large number of languages, regardless of their income. Therefore, given that there are many factors that influence SME business performance, it is not possible to draw conclusions as to what type of practices related to information dissemination and interaction with Internet users contribute to boosting SME activity.

Conclusions

This article analyses several factors related to information dissemination processes and interaction with Internet users by Spanish SMEs. The first aspect analyzed was the presence of these companies on some of the major social networks: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google+, Instagram, Vimeo, Flickr, and Pinterest (although profiles created on other platforms have also been recorded when links to said profiles were offered on the corporate website). The social networks where most SMEs were registered were Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter. The average number of social networks used by each SME was 3.73, although most companies used five networks. Only 11.4% of SMEs did not use any type of social media. On corporate websites, links to social networks were usually located anywhere on the footer, but if a more precise distinction was made among different areas, the most common location was the right side of the header. However, it should be noted that almost one in three websites did not offer any links to their social media profiles – therefore, it was necessary to use Google and the internal search engines of each social network to find them.

Additionally, the greater or lesser popularity of each social network in Spain did not seem to match the intensity of use of the sample SMEs. A striking example of this is Instagram. This platform went from a 35–45% usage rate between 2016 and 2017 in Spain (IAB Spain, 2017) and, as we have seen, profiles created by the sample SMEs were followed by a very considerable number of users. However, only 20 of 70 the sample SMEs used this network. Meanwhile, more than half of the sample SMEs used

Twitter, a network whose user numbers are in decline. At any rate, Facebook continued to be the most heavily used network both by users and companies, and this is demonstrated by the fact that pages created by SMEs on this platform accumulated almost three times more followers than the next most popular network, Twitter. Even so, companies published on Instagram and Twitter more often than on Facebook. As pointed out at the beginning of this study, the use of social networks by SMEs indicates a certain lack of professionalism, planning and awareness of current trends. Additionally, their presence does not seem to respond to a willingness to interact with users – rather, what SMEs apparently want is simply “to be present.”

We also analyzed the number and variety of languages that SMEs offered on their corporate websites and the degree of translation of their webpages. Nearly 74% of sites translated their content, to a greater or lesser extent, into at least one language. The average number of languages offered by each website was 3.16, and the most common number of languages was two. More than half of the companies translated their website only partially, which means that a large part of the information they offer was missing in the translated version (blogs, news, contact forms and legal notices among other sections). This, which may suggest that these websites were not translated by professional translators or localizers, has an extremely negative impact on both the corporate image and the quality of the information users can access. The most used languages by the sample websites were Spanish and English, followed a long way behind by French, Portuguese, and German. When information was offered only in two languages, these were normally chosen between Spanish, English and Catalan. One of the most striking cases observed during the language analysis was that of 3 SMEs (4.2%) that only offered their website in English.

Email addresses, telephone numbers, and physical addresses have been considered as additional methods of interaction with users. More than 90% of the companies studied offered at least one of these details on their website - however, it was often only possible to find the physical address in sections such as the legal notice.

Our results are in line with those of Sixto García et al. (2017), who argued that Galician SME use of social media lacks consistency and denotes lack of willingness to interact with users. However, it should be noted that both the size and characteristics of the sample limits the generalizability of our results to other countries or even to the Spanish SME context as a whole. Companies in the sample have been singled out by an international organization and defined as some of the fastest-growing, most dynamic SMEs in Europe, therefore considerably worse results should be expected if the same analysis were to be performed using a different sample. It must

be emphasized that the Internet, the context to which our study belongs, is characterized by an extremely rapid evolution, which makes it even more difficult to obtain conclusions with long-term validity.

Future studies may focus on qualitative indicators (as proposed by Goncalves & Cornelius Smith, 2018) of aspects such as user interaction or use a bigger sample that allows researchers to find possible similarities among SMEs belonging to the same economic sector or type of activity. Likewise, an in-depth analysis on the relationship between business performance of SMEs (from Spain or other European countries) and their online presence remains to be done.

Funding

This work was supported by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation under the research project CSO2015-64532-R, partially funded by the FEDER program of the European Union.

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