

From Documentary Review to Self-observation in the Longitudinal  
Analysis of Atresmedia's Corporate Communication

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*De la revisión documental a la autoobservación en el análisis longitudinal  
de la comunicación corporativa de Atresmedia*

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**Abstract:**

The study of corporate communication of an organization like Atresmedia, the leading audiovisual group in Spain, requires various methodological techniques, fundamentally qualitative, that provide valuable information to understand how it has been transformed and developed over the years. From the documentary review, through in-depth interviews and completing with self-observation, this methodological proposal aims to analyze the evolution in its channels, messages, media and audiences, as well as the staging of greater interactivity and professionalization in all areas, due to the growing importance that companies give to communication management.

**Keywords:**

Communication, corporate communication, television, Atresmedia, methodology.

**Resumen:**

El estudio de la comunicación corporativa de una organización como Atresmedia, el grupo audiovisual líder en España, requiere de diversas técnicas metodológicas, fundamentalmente cualitativas que reporten valiosa información para comprender cómo se ha transformado y desarrollado a lo largo de los años. Desde la revisión documental, pasando por las entrevistas en profundidad y completando con la autoobservación, esta propuesta metodológica, pretende analizar la evolución de sus canales, mensajes, medios y audiencias, así como la puesta en escena de una mayor interactividad y profesionalización en todas las áreas, debido a la creciente importancia que las empresas le otorgan a la gestión de la comunicación.

**Palabras clave:**

Comunicación, comunicación corporativa, televisión, Atresmedia, metodología.

**1. Introduction**

In recent years, corporate communication has undergone a great evolution in companies and has gone from having a tactical role to becoming a strategic function. Any company that wants to be well positioned in its sector has understood the importance of corporate communication to achieve this, bearing in mind that "the results of communication are not always seen in the short term" (Morales, 2005, p. 119). The very name of corporate communication, as reflected by María Merino Bobillo and María Sánchez Valle (2020), has changed over the last few years - global, organisational, brand, business or corporate communication - and has incorporated current trends, such as bidirectional, strategic, responsible or transparent communication, among others. But not only has its name changed, but so have its elements. This progress has made it more interactive and direct and its management has been professionalised in all areas and has become extremely complicated.

This new situation has occurred in the majority of companies that in recent years have been concerned to study how they are communicating and to turn communication management into a transcendental area that depends on the management bodies of the organisations. Moreover, companies have undergone significant changes due not only to technological advances but also to social changes and the evolution of business dynamics, which have also favoured the evolution of corporate communication. In this context, corporate communication has also evolved significantly from the point of view of professionalisation. Uncertainty and permanent change have forced companies to have expert departments that allow them to be highly responsive and adaptable. But if in the business world in general corporate communication is essential, in the case of the media, due to their level of exposure and because they are always in the social conversation, this need is even more evident and fundamental. In the case of Atresmedia, the leading communication group in Spain and leader in all its business areas, corporate communication has evolved substantially from its origins to the present day, helping it to become, together with its commitment to a specific business model, the leading Spanish communication group.

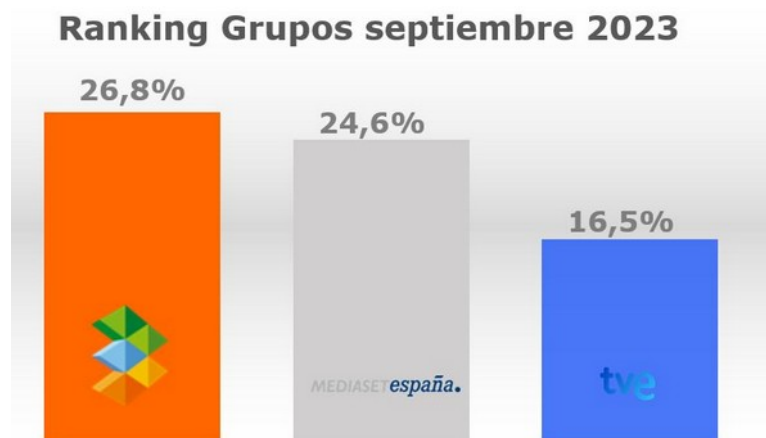
The company's main business areas are television and radio, through which it broadcasts audiovisual and radio content of interest to its audiences. Atresmedia Televisión is made up of the brands: Antena 3, the group's main channel, laSexta, Nova, Neox, Mega, Atreseries and the atresplayer platform. For its part, Atresmedia Radio broadcasts its message through Onda Cero, the company's main radio station together with Europa FM and Melodía FM.

Atresmedia TV is sweeping audiences and is the television of choice for viewers, achieving, in this season which began in September, the triple crown of audiences with an undisputed leadership: it is the leading television group (26.8%), despite having one channel less than its competitor, and also the group that most people watch every day, with more than 17.6 million unique viewers each day; Antena 3 (13%) is the most watched channel, dominating Prime Time (14.4%); and laSexta (6.5%) also wins over its direct competitor (KANTAR, 2023). For its part, atresplayer is the leading Spanish OTT, with more than 5 million users per month and having surpassed 500,000 subscribers, which is committed to a local and relevant offer, with quality, in-

novative and diverse content that has been recognised with important awards in recent years (COMSCORE, 2023).

**Table 1**

*Audience ranking of Spanish audiovisual groups in September 2023*



Source: Kantar, 01/09/2023-28/09/2023

In radio, Onda Cero stands out as the Group's leading radio station, reaching almost 2 million recurring listeners in 2022, consolidating its position as one of the leading stations in Spain. In addition, the Atresmedia Group is positioned as a leader in the digital sphere, exceeding 27.3 million unique visitors and occupying sixth place in the ranking of most visited sites in Spain according to COMSCORE 2023. Advertising insertion in radio and television is the main source of income, managed by Atresmedia Publicidad, achieving an EBITDA of 172.8 million euros and a Net Profit of 112.9 million euros in 2022, with the Group's net income reaching 959.8 million euros. In this context, and taking into account that communication is inherent to the existence of the different communication groups and their own business base, it is essential to manage corporate communication from a professional point of view, as it is a crucial element of differentiation and competitiveness. It is important to manage your reputation well, to anticipate with proactive, attractive and truthful messages in order to become a competitive and relevant brand.

**2. Methodologies in the study of Atresmedia's corporate communication**

In order to determine the methodologies necessary for the study of the evolution of corporate communication in the group in recent years, we first consider what aspects we should analyse. In particular, what is corporate communication? Theorists have defined it differently throughout its history. For Costa (Costa, 2015, p. 10), "communication is action and action is communication. Facts not only are, but also mean" and therefore it is interaction. Capriotti (1999), for his part, makes the following approximation of corporate communication "The corporate communication of an entity is everything that the company says about itself" (p. 30).

Other authors such as Castro (2007) consider that corporate communication has two aspects: internal communication and external communication. The first focuses on the creation and development of corporate culture, i.e. the values and principles that define the organisation. The main objective of Internal Communication is to foster cohesion and commitment among team members, as well as to effectively transmit relevant information within the company. On the other hand, external communication is responsible for managing the image that the company wishes to project to the market and to society in general. This involves communicating strategically and effectively with different external audiences, such as customers, suppliers, shareholders and the media. The objective of external communication is to build a strong and positive reputation for the organisation, which can have a direct impact on its profitability and long-term success.

In the same vein, Apolo, Murillo and García (2014) consider that corporate communication

is the set of internal and external communication strategies focused on the relationship between the actors and the institution, recognising their contexts, plots and scenarios for the construction of joint objectives, combining all efforts for their achievement and link with their environment (p. 23).

As a conclusion to the exploration of numerous concepts and among the wide variety of available definitions of business and institutional communication we choose the one by Martín Martín (1997)

is the creation, coordination, analysis, development, dissemination and control of all internal and external information management actions, which are produced daily in a company or institution at the level of activities, services or products, which affect a certain public or social group and which are transmitted through its own and external media, in order to strengthen its corporate/institutional image (p. 20).

In this context, our approach in this research will focus on examining external corporate communication through the application of three complementary methodological techniques. These strategies will allow us to achieve our objective of understanding the evolution of corporate communication at Atresmedia over time. Documentary review, in-depth interviews and self-observation will be used to provide the information required to analyse our object of study. An exhaustive analysis of Atresmedia's external communication, and its evolution over the years, requires the evaluation of several fundamental elements. This includes the analysis of the identity, its image and reputation, the positioning of the brand, the study of the messages and content, the review of the communication channels used, the segmentation of the target audiences, the evaluation of the general strategy, crisis management and the situation of the company in the market. Integrating these aspects will provide a global vision of Atresmedia's communication, allowing us to understand its evolution over time, which we will be able to understand thanks to the three methodological options proposed, which will complement each other.

Over the last hundred years, there is irrefutable evidence of the existence of multiple research studies carried out on organisational communication. This research can be classified into two large blocks: on the one hand, academic research that reflects on the different areas of corporate communication and which comes from the University, and on the other hand, professional research, which has been carried out by the different communication departments of organisations and which serve as working tools for the companies themselves.

However, the object of study is similar in both cases and they deal with essential aspects of communication, as Martínez Albertos (1983) refers, the sources and senders of communication are investigated. In the academic field, topics such as business economics, information law applied to organisations, ethics and professional deontology are explored, and at the professional level, diagnoses are made of business management, managerial efficiency, employee satisfaction, as well as analysing the company's philosophy and culture. The content of messages is also analysed, the aim is to understand what is transmitted in communication processes and the treatment of information in these messages, including analysis of message elements, types of language, as well as the organisation of events. Products are analysed and consumer behaviour is studied, also taking into account advertising.

However, Castillo and Carretón (2010) analysed communication research with bibliometric variables and their results showed that in Spain, in 2010, 53.9% of the research was carried out using quantitative approaches, with techniques such as content analysis predominating in 35% of the articles analysed, the other techniques varying between surveys, interviews, participant observation and focus groups, among others. On the other hand, as described by Palacios Charro (2015), recent studies on Organisational Communication are mostly descriptive and some of them "measure the effectiveness of the application of communication strategies to build image or reputation". However, there is a paucity of research that adopts interpretative or critical approaches. It is rare that communication processes are analysed from multi-paradigmatic perspectives or under approaches that integrate diverse visions.

In this context, Doerfel and Gibbs (2014) conducted a review of studies in the field of organisational communication published between 2001 and 2011. Their aim was to identify the topics and methods used by researchers in this period. They analysed 181 articles classified as empirical research in organisational communication, drawn from five leading communication journals. Among their findings, they found that 67% of the studies used interviews as the main data collection instrument, while social network analysis was applied in 10%, and content analysis (conversational) was used in less than 1% of the studies. Currently, corporate communication research is constantly evolving, and many experts (Angel, 2012; Bouzon, 2001) argue that there is no single method for approaching its study and emphasise the need to recognise its complexity by applying different methods of analysis, approaches to information collection and different ways of approaching research in this field that integrate different visions.

With regard to research on corporate communication carried out in the media, there are no major studies in Spain that show how they develop it, what their objectives are, their strategy, their methods, their channels, how they design their messages or which audiences they address. Our objective with this research is to show how Atresmedia forges and strengthens its corporate identity in a highly competitive context. To carry out our research we will use a fundamentally qualitative methodology, with a very important potential, which will include various techniques, it is important to be ambitious in this sense and not give up on being able to achieve a broad and global vision of the company's strategy. According to Hernández-Sampieri (2013), the objective of the qualitative approach is to collect data that will be transformed into information for analysis and understanding, thus allowing to answer the research questions posed. This type of research, according to Olabuénaga and Ispizua, (1989, p. 61)

It is subject to a development process basically identical to that of any other quantitative research. This process is carried out in five work phases: definition of the problem,

work design, data collection, data analysis, validation and report. Each of the main qualitative techniques (participant observation, personal interview, life history, case study, etc.) gives a particular stamp to each of the five phases.

In this methodology, the researcher reports objectively, clearly and accurately both on his or her own observations and on the experiences of others with whom he or she shares experiences or works as a subject matter expert. One of the crucial tasks of our research will be the collection and analysis of information, and the techniques and tools of qualitative research will provide us with greater depth of research and findings.

It involves examining and making sense of the diversity of perspectives that reveal both overlapping and contrasting views between researcher and participants. Paradoxically, this duality enriches qualitative research by bringing complexity and diversity to the research process. Franckel, Wallen and Hyun (1993) describe five essential aspects of qualitative methodology. First, they focus on the context in which the situation analysed in the primary source takes place. Then, they emphasise that data collection is conducted verbally, focusing on the analysis of the discourses of the subjects under investigation. Thirdly, they underline the researchers' interest not only in the results, but also in the process. Fourthly, they emphasise that data analysis is mainly carried out inductively. Finally, they attach great importance to the subjects' opinions and interpretations of the research topic.

Of the qualitative techniques we will use, the documentary review will be the first essential methodology we will apply to build a solid theoretical framework for our research, orient the study and validate the work. It will provide us with an initial vision of the study of the question that will help us to lay the foundations of our research. Subsequently, and with the skeleton of our information developed, we will proceed to conduct semi-structured interviews with managers with key roles in the organisation and specifically in the company's communication strategy. Once we have analysed the information gathered in the interviews, which will offer us different perspectives of the organisation and more sensitive information that is difficult to obtain in other ways, self-observation will serve to complete the research and corroborate the two initial methodologies.

### **Documentary review**

The first objective of the study is to analyse the current situation of the company and the evolution it has undergone in recent years by carrying out an exhaustive evaluation of its corporate image, corporate identity, its culture, its structure, its reputation, its public, its competition and the global environment. To do this, we start with a direct observation as a member of the organisation. From this technique we obtain primary data, that is, as Sabino (1974) calls them: "those that the researcher obtains from reality" (p. 57), among them, the data that I know from my experience working in the Communication department of Atresmedia. On the other hand, the "secondary data" will be the information gathered from the Internet, newspapers, specialised magazines, communication yearbooks, yearbooks of the medium or other academic studies carried out. Sierra Bravo (1995, p. 283) calls "secondary data" "Documentary Observation" and defines and justifies it as a research method:

That type of observation that deals with all the realisations that give an account of social events and human ideas, or are the product of social life and, therefore, insofar as they record or reflect it, can be used to study it directly.



This type of research is necessary and irreplaceable for historical studies on past social phenomena, in the case of Atresmedia's corporate communication research for the history of television, audience data, economic data or programmes, among others. In the research carried out using this methodology, we will use primary sources and secondary sources, i.e. the former will be those that we can obtain from the company, using the company's own means and resources, and the latter, the secondary sources, are those that the company may have, but which do not originate from the company itself.

The distinction proposed by Ortega Martínez (1998) between primary sources and secondary sources focuses on the fact that primary sources include information that has not been collected or published, that is, original or first-hand data that require specialised methods such as field or laboratory research, depending on the nature of the research. In contrast, secondary research encompasses all previously published information, such as existing books, journals and documents, which does not constitute first-hand information (books, journals or published documents, among others). Both sources will be used in our study. The documentary review will be carried out in a methodical way, taking into account the specific objectives of our research. First, we will carry out an exhaustive selection of the relevant material for the research process. Then, we proceed to the review of the material, where we classify and distinguish between what is essential and what is superfluous for the topic in question. Subsequently, we organise the selected material, extracting textual information to support theories and interpretations through quotations and references. Finally, we will carry out the analysis of the collected data. This structured approach guarantees a rigorous process based on documentary review. As Gómez Hernández (2005) asserts, it is important to strive for completeness and to apply rigorous ways of organising and using the information obtained.

Primary sources offer significant advantages in our study such as authenticity and originality of data, allowing for a deep and detailed understanding of the topic we are dealing with. However, they are often costly and time-consuming, especially in intensive methods. In addition, the researcher's interpretation may introduce biases. On the other hand, secondary sources are efficient, economically viable and provide a broad overview. Although they lack the specificity of primary sources, they are easily accessible and facilitate comparison of results. A balanced combination of both types of sources will provide a solid basis for research, taking advantage of their strengths and mitigating their limitations.

### **The in-depth interview**

One of the ways of obtaining information is by using the qualitative interview, which Janesick (1998) defines as a meeting between one person (the interviewer) and another (the interviewee) or others (interviewees), in which through questions and answers, communication and the joint construction of meanings regarding a topic is achieved. For Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 643) the interview is "a conversation, the art of asking questions and listening to answers". And as Erlandson et al. (1993, p. 85-86) describe:

In naturalistic research, interviews take more the form of a dialogue or interaction (...). They allow the researcher and interviewee to move backwards and forwards in time (...). The researcher and interviewee dialogue in a way that is a mixture of conversation and embedded questions.

It is necessary to take into account the characteristics of this type of interview, according to Hernández-Sampieri (2013) the questions and the order are adapted to the participants. The interviewer shares the pace with the interviewee and adjusts his/her communication to the norms and language of the interviewee and the questions are open and neutral, as they aim to obtain perspectives, experiences and detailed opinions from the participants in their own language. On the other hand, the social context is central to the interpretation of meanings. In terms of questions, the interviewer's intention will take into account opinion questions, knowledge questions and simulation questions.

The in-depth interview is one of the most widespread tools in the study of corporate communication, specifically and as Cardoso (2010) explains, unstructured interviews in which the interviewee is free to develop each situation in any situation he/she deems appropriate. They play a crucial role in providing exhaustive and detailed information, an essential aspect for our study, in contrast, a questionnaire with closed questions would not meet the expectations raised and would provide limited information on the current situation. For Glazier and Powell (1992) the distinctive strength of this approach lies in the detailed and in-depth descriptions it provides.

In the case at hand, we will conduct in-depth interviews whose universality is undeniable in any type of research and which obey an objective, according to Campoy and Gomes (2009): the interviewee offers information and opinion on an issue and the interviewer collects and interprets that particular vision. They will be open, face-to-face, in-depth and semi-structured interviews, which will offer us a focused, two-way communication that will allow the interviewee to expand on their answers and to contribute new ideas or visions that are relevant to the study. In this situation it is important that the interviewer is able to rephrase questions, elaborate on some aspect or ask for clarification of issues raised. The interviews will be organised in four stages, as described by González-Teruel and Barrios (2012), which include a preliminary phase, an opening phase, a development phase and, finally, a concluding phase. Open-ended questions will be used in order to collect detailed information that will later be examined and analysed. Prior to the final analysis, careful work will be carried out to organise the data.

This technique will serve two main purposes: the search for general information and the collection of compromised information, in order to obtain more sensitive data. In the opening phase, we will manage the interview, the place and time of day to conduct it, prepare the script with the questions and study the relevant company data. The opening stage will include a brief introductory reminder, explaining the purpose of the interview and research, its duration and intended use. During the development, questions will be formulated in a logical and effective manner, addressing topics from the most general to the most specific. Finally, in the concluding phase, we will ensure coverage of all necessary questions, ask for personal opinions and our thanks, with a guarantee to share the results once the study is completed.

In conclusion, semi-structured in-depth interviews will offer valuable information and flexibility in research, but also present challenges in terms of time, resources and subjective interpretation of data. In terms of the selection of interviewees, we chose to identify profiles that could provide us with direct, relevant and experienced information. The first interview will be conducted with the CEO of Atresmedia, who was previously the company's director of communication before taking over the general management of television. With him we will take a comprehensive approach to the relevance of corporate communication in Spain's leading media company. We are interested in analysing the reputation of the company and according to Solomon, S., Re-



ckers, P., and Lowe, J., (2005) the reputation of the CEO influences the majority of the company's stakeholders, puts a face to the company and is key to the configuration of its reputation and image of the company.

On the other hand, it will help us to know global information about the company to extract global information about it, it is important to listen to the management to understand the business strategy and to know what the corporate philosophy is, built by the mission, vision and values. What does the company do? Where does it want to go? What attributes define the way it works and behaves? This analysis should go back to the information available on the founders of the company and all the documentation that exists on the history of the company, from its origins, as all this content will have influenced the creation of the corporate culture. On the other hand, with this interview we will find out whether the overall communication strategy is aligned with the company's business strategy. The most important topics we will address with the CEO will be:

- o How he would define Atresmedia's corporate communication.
- o What is Atresmedia's strategic vision in terms of corporate communication.
- o What are the main corporate communication objectives of the company.
- o How these objectives are aligned with the company's general strategy.
- o How corporate communication has evolved in the company since its inception and what are the current challenges and opportunities in the field of corporate communication.
- o How the CEO is involved in defining and executing the corporate communication strategy.
- o How the CEO ensures that corporate communication reflects the values and identity of Atresmedia.
- o What is the strategy to differentiate Atresmedia from its competitors.
- o How they have managed to be leaders in audience, notoriety and reputation.
- o Who are Atresmedia's main target audiences. How the CEO communicates with them.
- o How the success of corporate communication in the company is measured.

The second interview, which is very important for our research, will be with Atresmedia's director of communication. After 23 years in the company, in the area of communication and 13 years as Atresmedia's director of communication, he has led the company's communication strategy in recent years. Under his management, Atresmedia has strengthened its image as a leading company in the audiovisual sector, committed to innovation and social responsibility. He is a respected professional in the communication sector, and his professional career is an example of success.

He is the one who will reveal the company's communication strategy, its strategic communication plan, its objectives, its methods, the audiences it communicates to, the channels it uses, the messages, the action scenarios, the cost of communicating, how it resolves a crisis situation and

how it manages to create and protect the company's corporate reputation, one of the most important intangible assets of companies and organisations in a context in which citizens are increasingly demanding more transparency, among other issues. The most important issues that we will address with DIRCOM will be:

- o How he would define Atresmedia's corporate communication.
- o What is Atresmedia's communication strategy and how is it implemented?
- o They have a strategic corporate communication plan.
- o How the company's reputation is managed through corporate communication.

What are the main tools and channels used to communicate with the different audiences of interest?

- o The new forms of communication with the advance of new technologies.
- o Crisis management.
- o How relations with the media are handled at Atresmedia.
- o How corporate communication has evolved at Atresmedia.
- o How the impact of corporate communication actions is evaluated.

In order to offer a more complete and closer view of the company, we will also interview the group's marketing director. The two divisions work together so that both strategies are coordinated with the company's identity and values. They also complement each other to establish a strong relationship with consumers.

The most important topics we will discuss with the marketing director will be:

- o How corporate communication is integrated into the company's marketing strategy.
- o What is the relationship between the marketing department and the communication department?
- o What are the main challenges faced by the marketing department and the communication department when managing corporate communication.
- o What is Atresmedia's approach to guaranteeing coherence between corporate communication and marketing campaigns.
- o What is the importance of corporate communication in building the brand image and the connection with consumers.
- o How responsibilities are shared between the marketing department and the communication department.
- o How conflicts that may arise between the marketing department and the communication department are resolved.

- o How they know their audiences and how they design their radio and television programming strategy to reach them.

Corporate image is a fundamental element of corporate communication; it is an instrument for differentiation and obtaining competitive advantages (Balmer, 2008; Melewar and Karaosmanoglu, 2006). Atresmedia's corporate image department is responsible for managing the corporate identity and is also closely coordinated with the communications department, working together to build a solid brand image. The most relevant aspects that we will address with the corporate communication director will be:

- o What is and what is the importance of the corporate image at Atresmedia.
- o What are the specific responsibilities of the corporate image management at Atresmedia.
- o Corporate identity is fundamental for any company, how do they manage to differentiate themselves from the competition through it?
- o How do they manage to create a relationship of trust through the corporate image with the public?
- o What is the relationship between the corporate image and the reputation of Atresmedia.
- o What are the objectives of corporate communication at Atresmedia.

Companies are giving increasing importance to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) due to the fact that investment in responsible practices has become a sign of differentiation in the market and a source of competitive advantages (Vilanova, 2009). Atresmedia is openly committed to using the broadcasting capacity of its media for the benefit of society, with responsible treatment of content and commercial communications. Sustainability forms part of its corporate culture along with accessibility, transparency and the protection of the most vulnerable groups. The fundamental principles guiding the Group's activity include impartiality, freedom of expression and plurality.

Corporate Responsibility plays a crucial role in building and maintaining a company's reputation. Responsible management not only benefits society and the environment, but also has a positive impact on the perception of the company by its stakeholders, which can have direct consequences on its long-term success. The management of Corporate Responsibility from external communication implies a coherent, authentic and long-term strategy that reflects Atresmedia's real commitment to society and the environment. In this regard, it is important that we also interview the company's Director of Social Responsibility so that she can reveal the strategy to us. The most important issues that we will address with the director of Corporate Responsibility will be:

- o What does Corporate Responsibility mean for Atresmedia and what are the main objectives.
- o What are the areas addressed by Corporate Responsibility at Atresmedia.
- o How external communication is integrated into Atresmedia's Corporate Responsibility initiatives.
- o What are the most important actions in terms of CR that have been carried out.
- o How Corporate Responsibility actions are communicated.

- o How Atresmedia deals with the accountability of its Corporate Responsibility actions in terms of transparency.
- o How the public has responded to Atresmedia's Corporate Responsibility initiatives.
- o How it sees the future of Corporate Responsibility at Atresmedia.

Interviewing key leaders at Atresmedia, such as the CEO, the Director of Communication, the Director of Corporate Responsibility, the Director of Corporate Image and the Director of Marketing will provide us with a comprehensive view of the company's corporate communication strategy. The CEO will provide a strategic perspective and explain how corporate communication contributes to the company's culture and objectives, the Communication Director will provide information on overall strategy, crisis management, developments with technological advances and media relations, among other issues. The Director of Corporate Responsibility will share how social and environmental initiatives are integrated into the company's strategy and how they are communicated.

On the other hand, the director of Corporate Image will talk about the management of the brand image and the coherence in the representation of Atresmedia. Finally, the Marketing Director will explain the integration with marketing strategies and the relationship that he maintains with the communication management, thus completing a holistic perspective of corporate communication in Atresmedia. This multifaceted approach would help to understand how the company communicates with its various stakeholders and how it builds and maintains its reputation in the market.

As an employee of Atresmedia, specifically in the Communication Department, you may encounter limitations when conducting interviews with company leaders, such as internal policy constraints, sensitive topics, time constraints and the need for approval. To address these conditions, establish clear communication with interviewees prior to the session, coordinate with the communications team to understand internal policies and processes, and respect corporate confidentiality. In addition, it is critical to set clear expectations about the format and objectives of the interview and work closely with leaders to find solutions to address the issues effectively while complying with internal guidelines. Managing these limitations with professionalism will allow us to conduct productive interviews that contribute to the study of Atresmedia's corporate communication, guaranteeing respect for the policies and sensitivity towards strategic issues.

### **Within Atresmedia: self-observation**

All phenomena that occur in a specific place and time are subject to observation. Science starts from observation. For Santos (1993, p. 425) "to observe is a process that requires attention, voluntary, selective, intelligent, oriented by a terminal or organising process". For the RAE, to observe is "to examine attentively ... to notice, to repair ... to look attentively. to look at with attention". And this observation can be converted into a scientific methodology, specifically qualitative when:

The process of observation is not only reduced to sensations and perceptions but also implies the active presence of theoretical schemes that allow the selection of data coming from reality. Secondly, the dynamics of observation is not a simple reading of the

data itself, but mainly has significance in the previous theoretical structures in which it is inserted and makes sense. External reality is observed as a structured interpretation that possesses meaning (Mejía, 2002, p. 202).

Observational methodologies provide researchers with tools to examine non-verbal expressions of emotions, identify interactions between individuals, enable an understanding of communication between participants and verify the duration of specific activities (Schmuck 1997). In this study, and given that the researcher is part of the communication team at Atresmedia, we considered the method of self-observation as we consider it a valuable tool that would complement the information obtained from the in-depth interviews and the documentary review.

This technique makes it possible to study the natural context of the company and allows information to be obtained beyond the companies' willingness to provide it. For Denzin and Lincoln (2011), the researcher is the main instrument of data collection and analysis, and self-observation is the key to understanding the subjective world of the participant. In the case of corporate communication, where internal and external dynamics are crucial, self-observation can provide a deeper and more authentic insight and will allow to analyse the interaction between corporate communication management and other divisions of the company, as well as to identify possible gaps or synergies.

It is a methodology in which the observer is both subject and object: he/she observes and is an element of the observed set, specifically, it constitutes an inverse learning/knowledge procedure to that carried out in participant observation: instead of being an external observer who pretends to be a participant observer, the native learns to be an observer of his/her own culture (Delgado and Gutiérrez, 1994). In Mejía's words:

The researcher is not a passive subject and external to the process, who is only limited to recording information, he is an active agent, a form of action, he has the capacity to control and give meaning to his observations according to criteria of distinction and, in addition, he possesses the faculty of self-observation on his own observations, of reflecting on his own thoughts. (Mejía 2002. n/p).

The self-observational methodology therefore implies the simultaneous integration of the participatory and observational dimensions. In this approach, the researcher becomes both object and subject at the same time, participating in what he or she studies while observing that participation. The term self-observation underlines the inseparability of both dimensions, highlighting the reflexive nature of the research. By using this technique in the study of corporate communication we will be quite pioneering as there are hardly any records of the use of this methodology in the study of corporate communication. Among the most commonly used observation techniques in this area are asystematic observation, systematic observation and non-participant observation (Cardoso, 2010).

In addition, we will carry out unstructured research so that the records of reality are more open and the aspects to be analysed will not be established in advance (González-Teruel and Barrios, 2012). On the other hand, Atresmedia colleagues will be aware that they are being observed and the objective for which the research is being carried out. Self-observation will allow us to verify the concepts explained by the interviewees, to observe events that the informants have not shared and others that they have described in the talks. It will be essential to understand several aspects:

Analyse the interaction between the Communication Directorate, Corporate Image Directorate, Marketing Directorate and Corporate Responsibility Directorate to identify communication patterns, roles and responsibilities:

- o Assess the coordination between these departments to achieve common corporate objectives, including building and maintaining a positive image.
- o Observe the planning and execution of marketing strategies, as well as the management of corporate events, to assess their effectiveness and alignment with strategic objectives.
- o Investigate specific challenges in the transmission of key information and the management of communication in crisis situations.
- o Observe the management and communication of collaborations and partnerships, as well as participate in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.
- o Evaluate communication with customers and consumers through various channels, including customer care, social media and others.
- o Analyse the alignment of corporate messages with the company's vision and values, considering strategic decisions and their impact on the direction of corporate communication.
- o Participate in and observe meetings, corporate events and team building activities to understand the communication of the company's vision, mission and goals.
- o Analyse the management of corporate social media and digital platforms, as well as participation in events and industry fairs to assess the effectiveness of the online communication strategy and interaction with different audiences.

Over the years, there have been many interesting debates about the limits to be considered in observation. For ethical reasons, some consider that it should not be carried out in private places, others argue that participants should always know that they are being observed. However, as Alvarez-Gayou (2003) asserts, it is also an irrefutable fact that some of the very valuable research that has been carried out through observation would not have been possible if such restrictions had been taken into account. Observation stands out as a valuable technique that provides meaningful information. Although some critics also point out that one of its weaknesses is that it relies heavily on the interpretation of the researcher, I believe that this does not discredit it. It is a reality that observation is increasingly used in combination with other methods, thus enriching the information obtained.

In this work, our objective is to learn about Atresmedia's external corporate communication through the complementation of the three techniques used. We are aware that the self-observation methodology, although valuable in its direct access to personal experience, has limitations that must be addressed to ensure its reliability. There is a risk of self-perception bias and lack of objectivity that we believe can be mitigated by incorporating the use of structured tools such as checklists to guide observation and minimise the influence of bias. There may also be aspects of self-behaviour that the observer is not aware of, which limits the completeness of the information collected, but we believe this can be overcome by supplementing self-observation with additional records.



However, despite these limitations, self-observation strengthens the research by allowing the detailed study of internal processes. The methodology fosters authenticity by allowing the individual to be the observer, which strengthens the sincerity of the data collected. Its flexibility and autonomy are attributes that make it adaptable to diverse contexts, maximising its applicability in different research settings.

#### **Limitations of the study with the proposed methodologies**

In the comprehensive study of Atresmedia's external corporate communication, which includes self-observation, documentary review and in-depth interviews with several of the company's executives, an internal collaborator of the group who works in the Communication Department faces some challenges. Her active participation in the study, which encompasses these methodological approaches, highlights the complexity inherent in her dual position as researcher and integral part of the organisation under study.

One of the key challenges evident is the management of conflicts of interest, a critical task given her role in the Corporate Communications Directorate. She must balance the need to maintain objectivity in analysis with organisational loyalty, ensuring that the research is not biased by internal influences. Addressing this challenge involves establishing clear transparency protocols, identifying and proactively managing any situations that may compromise the impartiality of the study.

In addition, the researcher faces the challenge of managing privacy issues, especially when interviewing company executives. Accessibility to confidential and sensitive information implies the need to safeguard the privacy of those involved. An ethical and cautious approach is required, including obtaining informed consent and implementing anonymisation measures where necessary. In short, effective management of conflicts of interest and protection of privacy are crucial imperatives to ensure the integrity and validity of the results, while maintaining methodological rigour in an environment where the researcher is both an observer and a fundamental part of the reality being studied.

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