

# Review of the literature on the corporate brand: towards an integrative definition and management

## *Revisión bibliográfica de la marca corporativa: hacia una definición y gestión integradoras*

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**Abstract:**

The corporate brand is an intangible and strategic asset of great value, related to concepts such as identity and image. This has led to it attracting the attention of several disciplines, not only communication. The purpose of this work is to identify those disciplines involved and their leading authors, to offer an integrative definition of the corporate brand, and to identify related concepts and the department(s) responsible for brand management. We aim to shed some light on the importance of the proper management of corporate brands. To this end, we have performed a systematic review of the academic papers published between 2016-2018. We have carried out a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of 112 academic publications in 66 journals, finding a scarce contribution from the field of communication when compared with those of management and marketing, with these latter fields providing the most frequently cited authors. Regarding the management of corporate brands, senior management and Marketing departments have the most prominent roles. However, the great variety of fields of study and the strategic value of corporate brands suggest the need for a multidisciplinary approach to managing and studying corporate branding.

**Keywords:**

Corporate brand; communication; marketing; content analysis.

**Resumen:**

*La marca corporativa es un activo intangible y estratégico de gran valor que se vincula a conceptos como identidad e imagen. Esto le ha supuesto la atención de diversas disciplinas, no solo de la comunicación. El objetivo de este trabajo es identificar dichas disciplinas, los autores destacados, ofrecer una definición integradora de la marca corporativa, identificar conceptos relacionados y el área a la que se asigna su gestión. Se trata de arrojar luz sobre la importancia de una adecuada gestión de la marca corporativa. Para ello, se ha realizado una revisión bibliográfica sistematizada de los trabajos académicos publicados durante el periodo 2016-2018. Sobre ellos se aplica un análisis de contenido cuantitativo y cualitativo. Tras la revisión de 112 publicaciones académicas en 66 revistas, se observa la escasa aportación del área de la comunicación en contraste con la gestión y el marketing, de donde proceden también los autores más citados. Respecto a la gestión de la marca corporativa, destaca el papel de la alta dirección y el área de marketing. Sin embargo, la variedad temática de las aportaciones y el valor estratégico de la marca corporativa sugieren la necesidad de aportar un enfoque multidisciplinar en la gestión y estudio de la marca corporativa.*

**Palabras clave:**

*Marca corporativa; comunicación; marketing; análisis de contenido.*

## 1. Introduction

Since its inception in the 90s, the study of the concept of the corporate brand has attracted researchers from several disciplines such as marketing, strategic management (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Balmer *et al.*, 2017; He & Balmer, 2006; Schultz & de Chernatony, 2002) and corporate communication (Balmer, 2008a). This interest has generated considerable advances in both the conceptual development and empirical research of the term “corporate brand”, often associated to other concepts such as corporate identity, corporate image and corporate reputation (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012), corporate mission and philosophy, corporate personality or visual identification (Balmer, 1995).

Some of these terms, such as identity or reputation, correspond to the discipline of corporate communication and may lead us to think that its management corresponds to that discipline (Balmer, 2008b; Biraghi & Gambetti, 2015). However, the concepts of brand and image are more closely related to marketing, their management and the corporate marketing mix (Balmer, 2008b; Sujchaphong, Nguyen, & Melewar, 2017). Furthermore, management of corporate brands may be seen as a crucial element for any organization (Balmer, 2001a, 2001b; Ind, 1997; Jo Hatch & Schultz, 2003a; Schultz

& de Chernatony, 2002) and as a key strategic asset in differentiating between the organization and current or future competitors (Balmer & Greyser, 2006), which would suggest the need for closer attention from senior managers.

In this context, the first step is to review what functions are ascribed to corporate communication and its potential link to the corporate brand and to other related concepts. Having considered these concepts, several questions arise concerning the disciplines that study the corporate brand and its management.

In order to answer the questions that arise from the theoretical framework, we have performed a content analysis of recent papers focused on the “corporate brand”. The results of this analysis will allow us to determine which disciplines and authors have the greatest weight, as well as the role of communication. We also analyse which fields embrace its study, so as to make recommendations for further research.

## 2. Theoretical framework

The functions of corporate communication were settled upon as internal and external *stakeholders* began to demand more information from organizations (Cornelissen, 2008). Corporate communication thus acquired an integral focus to articulate the organization's communication (van Riel & Fombrun, 2008) in order to both connect with and to influence all *stakeholders*.

Organizations sought to project a positive image, which has often been tagged as corporate identity or corporate brand, focused on connecting with and responding to the needs of *stakeholders*, to better construct, maintain and protect their reputations (Cornelissen, 2008). In this sense, the prime responsibility of corporate communication requires “the development of initiatives designed to minimize the non-functional discrepancies between the desired identity and the desired image” (van Riel, 1995: 22), bearing in mind the interaction between the triad of a company's communication policy: strategy-image-identity.

According to van Riel & Fombrun (2008), communication may be able to influence the perceptions of the participants and observers of an organization, “thereby affecting the image, brand and reputation of the organization” (p. 13). Consequently, identity, image and reputation become central concepts in corporate communication (Podnar, 2015).

The literature related to these concepts belongs to the genesis of the corporate brand (Balmer & Gray, 2003). Communication is considered in these cases as the conceptual link between those assets which make up the corporate brand (Balmer & Greyser, 2006; Biraghi & Gambetti, 2015; Harris & de Chernatony, 2001; Jo Hatch & Schultz, 2001).

In light of these observations, it would appear logical to place the study and management of the corporate brand within the field of corporate communication. However, before proceeding to consider if the literature sustains this vision and the relevance of this approach, it is worth considering how the concept of the corporate brand and other related concepts have developed over time.

## 2.1. From corporate identity to the corporate brand

Corporate identity has been marked from the beginning by its strategic intent and its inter-connection with image (Costa, 2001) and the organization's strategy. It may be related to the "brand's implicit" function, by which products were identified and differentiation facilitated, and which took shape as the corporate identity (Costa, 2001: 223).

As noted by Villafañe (1998), corporate identity is composed of a series of features and attributes which define its essence, some being visible and others invisible (Villafañe, 1998). Such features converge on three axes: the history of the organization, the commercial project, and the corporate culture (Villafañe, 2012; Villafañe, 1999). Therefore, it is more than a mere iconographic representation (Costa, 2001). It represents the personality of the organization, by which it differentiates itself.

Corporate identity is also defined as "the current manifestation of the reality of the company, transmitted via the name, logo, motto, brands, products, services, buildings, headed notepaper, uniforms and all types of tangible evidence created by the organization and communicated to all its publics" (Argenti, 2013:72). The complexity of the concept demonstrates its relationship with the company's communication on a fundamental level. It represents the synthesis of the company's identity (Villafañe, 1999), its essence, which is expressed in various ways by this identity (Balmer, 1995), and thus influences the image (González-Oñate, 2008).

According to Argenti & Druckenmiller (2004: 369), image is a "a reflection of the identity of the organization and its corporate brand". Consumers and other *stakeholders* make decisions based more on the perception or image they have of an organization rather than on its products or services (Argenti, 2013). Therefore, image is considered to from a part of the mix of unique and untransferable attributes of each organization and contributes to the development of competitive advantage (Balmer & Soenen, 1997; Podnar, 2015).

As a result, understanding of the term "image" may vary depending on the type: "graphic image, visual image, material image, mental image, company image, brand image, corporate image and global image" (Capriotti, 2013; Costa, 1994). However, in regard to the management of communication in organizations (Capriotti, 2013), it is important to determine the difference between two types of image: brand image and corporate image.

Brand image is understood to include a series of associations (Aaker, 1991) and/or perceptions which consumers have concerning a brand or a product (Malmelin & Moisander, 2014). It may be "identified to a lesser or greater degree with the image of the company" (Capriotti, 2013: 28). It is hardly surprising then, that brand image has traditionally been seen as a term related to marketing rather than to communication.

Nevertheless, when we speak about corporate image, we are referring to the "integration of all the *inputs* created by a company in the minds of its *stakeholders* and in their relationships with them" (Villafañe, 1999: 30). Consequently, this corporate image is the perception of the global identity of an organization. All the signals and elements that are part of the company and which are communicated, whether voluntarily or otherwise, influence in the construction of the external image that the *stakeholders* will have of a company or organization. Along these lines, Einwiller & Will (2002) consider that

image has repercussions for the corporate reputation and later forms part of a “systematically planned and implemented process which will be seen as the corporate brand” (p. 101).

Drawing on the literature on corporate identity and image, we can date the birth of the study of corporate branding to the second half of the 90s (Balmer, 2010; Balmer & Wang, 2016; Biraghi & Gambetti, 2015). Several authors coincide in pointing to an article by Balmer (1995) “Corporate branding and connoisseurship” as the first to refer to and mention the importance of corporate branding (Mohan, Voss, Jiménez, & Gammoh, 2018; Schmidt & Redler, 2018; Schroeder, 2017; Sevel, Abratt, & Kley, 2018).

Balmer (1995) defined the corporate brand as an institutional identity that may be highly significant for the different *stakeholders*. Jo Hatch & Schultz (2001) relate it to the origin and daily activities of an organization (its culture), to where it aspires to go (its strategic vision), and to its image and identity. Knox & Bickerton (2003:103) consider it as “the visual, verbal and behavioural expression of the unique business model of an organization”. It is a representation which unites and represents the set of products, services, units and businesses under a common name (Podnar, 2015).

Thus, the corporate brand is conceived as an intangible asset that seeks to represent the whole organization (Balmer, Powell, Kernstock, & Brexendorf, 2017). It is the organization's face (Balmer & Gray, 2003), albeit a dynamic face, which expresses referential values for internal and external publics (Villagra, López, & Monfort, 2015).

In an attempt to bring together several authors' proposals and, for the purposes of this study, the corporate brand will be defined as:

- a dynamic, living entity (Villagra, López, & Monfort, 2015);
- that differs from product brands in terms of scope and management (Balmer, 1995, 2001a; Balmer & Gray, 2003);
- through which recognition is achieved, as well as a lasting competitive advantage, allowing the company to be recognizable to all publics (Podnar, 2015);
- that must be aligned with the origin and daily practices of the organization (organizational culture) and with where it aspires to get to (strategic vision);
- and which reflects how the organization is perceived externally (images), in line with who it truly is (identity) (Jo Hatch & Schultz, 2001; Jo Hatch & Schultz, 2003a).

With this conceptualization in mind, it is worth reconsidering the role of corporate communication in the study and management of the corporate brand. Given its strategic importance, it seems logical to think of its relevance for other departments. Furthermore, although we have highlighted its relationship with identity or image, it is important to understand this relationship better, as well as knowing which other concepts -and in which fields- are related to the corporate brand. Last, but not least, we must know how to approach, from the theoretical standpoint, the management of this asset, the departments involved and, consequently, the academic fields involved, in order to contribute to the creation of value in organizations' day-to-day management.

### 3. Questions of research and methodology

The theoretical framework leads us to formulate four important research questions:

1. Which disciplines have made the greatest contribution to the study of the corporate brand and what position does communication hold among them?
2. Who are the leading authors in the study of the corporate brand and in which disciplines do they work?
3. What other concepts, apart from image and identity, are related to the corporate brand and how are they interrelated?
4. Which areas are most recommended for the management of the corporate brand?

In order to answer these questions, we have applied a quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The scope of the study was determined by specialized academic papers which include the term “corporate brand”, identified by a scientific search of these publications.

A systematic process was employed to select cases (Codina, 2018) which allowed us to objectively and synthetically identify those papers that develop the object of our study (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Having identified these papers, a quantitative and qualitative content analysis was carried out. The former involved the full reading of the papers in order to: find all the authors mentioned, answer the question about related concepts and to categorize the fields of study which are cited in the papers. Furthermore, a quantitative analysis is performed, using the data bases of the journals themselves, of the authors mentioned and of the subjects covered, which gives us frequency data and allows us to see which authors stand out.

We used the data bases of Scopus, Complementary Index and BASE, among others (see Appendix 1)<sup>1</sup> to find the papers. Their tools allow, among other things, searches by terms, language, discipline, and geographical region.

The search was limited to papers in English and Spanish which included the expression “corporate brand” or “*marca corporativa*”. Papers which utilized the two words separately were not included. We thereby avoided the inclusion of papers seeking to study brands alone, or corporative matters, seeking only “corporate brand”.

The search was not limited by discipline, geographical region and/or subject, thus allowing us to see precisely where corporate branding is studied and to answer the afore-mentioned research questions.

An initial search for academic papers without any time limitation showed the existence of a vast number of cases, a total of 13,557 papers (see Figure 1). As we needed to read through all the papers in our study, we decided to limit the timeframe to those papers published between 2016 and 2018, as recommended in such situations (Machi & McEvoy, 2009).

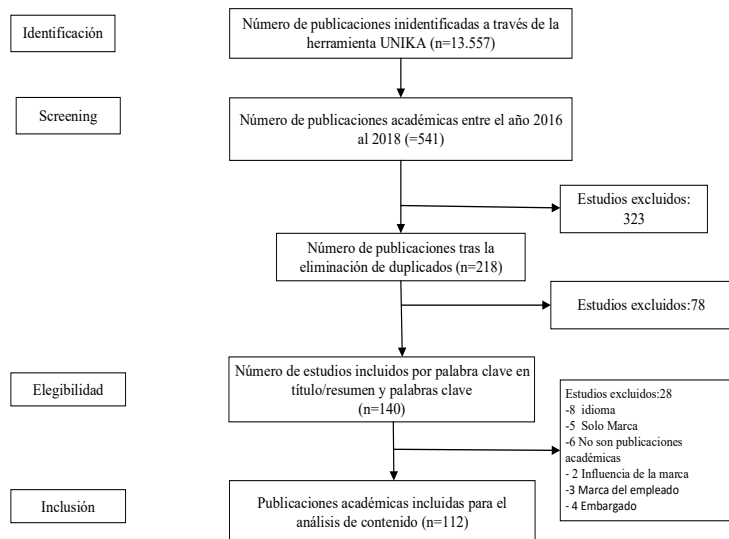
Although the concept which we are studying, the corporate brand, has been subject to study since the 90s, the limit set to more recent years did not impede our achieving a broad vision of the matter, as the papers cited previous and thus classic contributions. As the fieldwork was carried out in 2020, 2019 was not included to avoid problems with scientific embargo, which prevents access to papers.

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<sup>1</sup> The cited data bases were accessed using Unika, available in the Library of the Universidad de Navarra.

Having limited our search to the period 2016-2018, the sample was reduced to 541 papers. Our next step was to eliminate the duplication of those papers which appeared in more than one data base, thus excluding 323 cases, for a total of 218 papers.

**Figure 1**



Source: created by the authors (PRISMA flow diagram)

To confirm that each paper belonged within the scope of our study, once the papers were identified, the next step was to limit the sample to those which included the term in their title, abstract and/or keywords. The sample was thereby reduced to 140 papers (see Figure 1) dealing with the corporate brand in some depth.

Detailed examination of the papers detected 10 cases where, although the term was utilized, the corporate brand was not properly addressed. A further 6 papers were excluded due to their non-academic nature, and another 12 could not be read due to the embargo or that the complete text was not in English or Spanish (only the abstract). Having applied these criteria of inclusion and exclusion, we finally identified 112 units for analysis (see Figure 1).

With our sample selected, the names of the journals in which the papers appeared were added to spreadsheets. We identified 66 different journals and their corresponding discipline or disciplines.

For the identification of these disciplines, we employed the classification provided by Scimago Journal & Country Rank. The SJR was used as it is a web portal that includes scientific journals and indicators based on the information contained in the Scopus (Elsevier BV) data base. This allows for the classification of journals by subject matter (27 principal subjects), category (313 specific categories) or by country (SJR, 2020). Out of the total of 66 journals classified, 18 did not figure on

the SJR data base. In these cases, the subjects or fields indicated by the web pages of the respective publications were assigned.

The second part of the work involved the complete review of the 112 papers registered in order to identify the author(s), the presence of other terms related to the corporate brand, such as corporate identity and corporate image, as well as the relationship between them, in addition to the identification or not of the manager or department responsible for its management.

After this reading, 8 areas were determined for the classification of the papers, given their central focus:

1. Conceptualization of the corporate brand
2. Construction of the corporate brand
3. Management of the corporate brand
4. Identity of the corporate brand
5. Image of the corporate brand
6. The corporate brand and its relationship with *stakeholders*
7. Reputation of the corporate brand
8. Value of the corporate brand

This classification was employed to place the authors involved, which were used to detect who was of the greatest importance in each category (see Table 4).

#### 4. Results

As stated above, the 112 papers identified were published in 66 magazines. 54% (61) were published in 15 of these 66 journals (see Appendix 2), in particular the *Journal of Product and Brand Management* with 15 papers related to the corporate brand, including a special in volume 27 from 2018 on *corporate branding* (see Table 1).



Table 1. Journals with at least two articles

Journals 2016-2018	Number of papers published
Journal of Product & Brand Management	15
Journal of Brand management	10
European Journal of Marketing	5
International Studies of Management & Organization	5
Journal of Business Research	5
Journal of Strategic Marketing	3
Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics	2
Business ethics quarterly	2
Corporate Reputation Review	2
International Journal of Bank Marketing	2
International Marketing Review	2
Journal of Business Ethics	2
Marketing Intelligence & Planning	2
Profesional de la información	2
Revista Latina de Comunicación	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>54,5% of the 112 papers</b>	

Source: created by the authors

The *Journal of Brand Management* is the second magazine with the greatest number of papers published between 2016-2018, with a total of 10. This publication, together with the *European Journal of Marketing* has published the largest number of papers related to the corporate brand since 2000, as shown in Mingione (2015).

The remaining 12 journals published from two to five papers (see Table 1). As in Mingione's study (2015), there is a scarce presence of journals from the field of communication.

The two journals with the highest number of papers are dedicated to *Business, Management and Accounting* and, as a category, *Marketing* (see Appendix 2). However, analysis of the 112 papers and the 66 journals allows for the identification of over 20 fields of study, many shared, apart from the two mentioned.

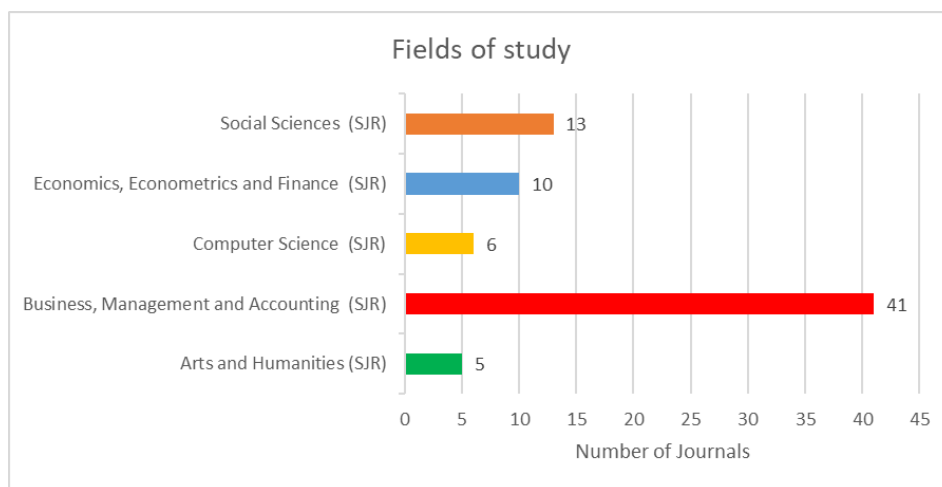
Disciplines the papers are dedicated to and the role of communication

In order to determine the importance that each field has in the whole sample, the list of all the fields of study was analysed (see Appendix 3) by means of a word count. Utilizing the *WordCounter* application, the field of *Business, Management and Accounting* stands out with a total of 21 possible, non-exclusive disciplines. Looking at the 66 journals, 41 are related to this field (see Graph 1). Out of the total of 112 papers, 83 (74%) are classified as part of this group.

Within *Business, Management and Accounting*, lies the category of *Marketing*, with 18 journals and 55 papers. The two journals which published the greatest number of papers were both in the same category. If we sum up the field and the category of *Marketing*, we find a total of 59 papers (53% of the 112 classified), demonstrating the indisputable importance of *Marketing* for the study and analysis of the corporate brand.

The second commonest field of study on the list of disciplines (Appendix 3) is *Social Sciences*, with 13 journals (see Graph 1). The category of *Communication* lies within this field, with one journal and two papers. Only two of the 66 journals are related to *Communication* as a field, with three of the 112 classified papers, giving a total of five papers from the field of communication.

**Graph 1. The five main fields of study of the journals\***



\*There are a total of 66 journals, though they may deal with more than one field.

Source: Count performed with *WordCounter*, using fields identified by the *Scimago Journal & Country Rank* or the web pages of the journals.

*Economics, Econometrics & Finance* is the third most common field of study: 13 journals with 15 papers cover this field (see Appendix 3). A fourth field of study with work on the corporate brand is that of *Computer Science*. Fifth place is taken by *Arts & Humanities* with five journals shared with *Business, Management and Accounting*.

In addition to these five fields of study, which cover at least 40 of the 66 journals (see Graph 1), there are another 16 fields shared by 22 journals (see Appendix 2). Thus, we find a wide variety of subjects, particularly from journals in the disciplines of management and marketing, but not communication.

#### Leading authors in the study of the corporate brand

Turning to the authors cited in the work on the corporate brand, instead of the fields of study, it is possible to detect some outstanding names. The most frequently cited researcher to conceptualize the corporate brand, its management or values, among other things, in the papers considered (2016-2018) is John M.T. Balmer (see Table 2).

**Table 2. The five most frequently mentioned authors in the 112 papers**

Authors most cited in the papers	Number of papers cited	% of references in the 112 papers
Balmer	55	49,1%
De Chernatony	25	22,3%
Hatch and Schultz	24	21,4%
Keller	22	19,7%
Aaker	21	18,8%

Source: created by the authors

Of the 112 papers analysed, 55 cite John M.T. Balmer. Moreover, he is also the author of seven papers related to the corporate brand within the considered time (Balmer, Abratt, & Kleyn, 2016; Balmer & Chen, 2016; Balmer, 2017; Balmer & Wang, 2016b; Santos, Burghausen, & Balmer, 2016).

Table 3. Authors &amp; areas covered in the papers

Category	Authors
Conceptualization of the corporate brand	Aaker (2004); Aaker y Joachimsthaler (1999, 2000, 2012); Abratt y Kleyn (2012); Argenti, Druckenmiller y Novelli (2004); Balmer (1995, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013); Balmer y Gray (2003); Balmer y Greyser (2002, 2003, 2006); Balmer y Thomson (2009); Biraghi y Gambetti (2015); Burmann <i>et al.</i> (2009); De Chernatony (2002); De Chernatony y Dall'Olmio Riley (1998); Christensen, Morsing y Cheney (2008); Cornelissen <i>et al.</i> ; (2007); Cornelissen, Christensen y Kinuthia (2012); Fetscherin y Usunier (2012); Foster <i>et al.</i> (2010); Griffin (2002); Halliday (1998); Harris y de Chernatony (2001); Hatch y Schultz (2001, 2003, 2009); Ind (1997, 1998); Kapferer (2002); Kay (2006); Keller (1998, 2003, 2008); Keller y Lehmann (2006); Keller y Richey (2006); King (1991); Knox y Bickerton (2003); Laine (2011); Leitch & Richardson (2003); Mann y Ghuman (2014); Melewar y Jenkins (2002); Merz, He y Vargo, (2009); Miyazaki <i>et al.</i> (2005); Morsing (2006); Olins (2000); Pillai (2012); Pratihari y Uzma (2018); Rao, Agarwal & Dahlhoff (2004); Rao y Ruekert (1994); So (2013); Schmidt & Redler (2018); Schultz, Antorini y Csaba (2005); Schultz y Chernatony (2002); Schultz (2005); Urde (2003, 2007, 2013); Van Riel (2001); Wiedmann (2015).
Construction of the corporate brand	Aaker (2004); Andreassen y Lindestad (1998); Anisimova (2007); Balmer (2009, 2012); Ballantyne y Aitken (2007); Biraghi y Gambetti (2015); Brown y Dacin (1997); Brown, Dacin, Pratt & Whetten (2006); Cornelissen, Christensen, y Kinuthia (2012); Daffey y Abratt (2002); Dacin y Brown (2002); Edvardsson <i>et al.</i> (2011); Einwiller y Will (2002); Franklin (2008); Fetscherin y Usunier (2012); Fombrun y Shanley (1990); Hatch and Schultz (2001, 2003, 2010); Hulberg (2006); Keller (2001); Keller y Aaker (1998); Knox y Bickerton (2003); Pratihari y Uzma (2018); Rubin (2012); Schultz <i>et al.</i> (2005); So (2013); Srinivasan <i>et al.</i> (2010); Stuart (2011); Urtde, <i>et al.</i> (2011); Vallaster <i>et al.</i> (2012); Worcester (2009).
Management of the corporate brand	Aaker (2004); Abratt y Kleyn (2012); Balmer (1995, 2001, 2008, 2011, 2012, 2013); Balmer <i>et al.</i> , (2017); Balmer y Greyser (2003); Balmer y Soenen, (1999); Balmer and Wilkinson (1991); Christensen y Cornelissen (2011); Einwiller y Will (2002); Fetscherin y Usunier (2012); Hatch y Schultz (2009, 2010); Harris y de Chernatony (2001); He y Balmer (2006); Helm y Jones (2010); Ind <i>et al.</i> (2013); Jaju <i>et al.</i> (2006); Juntunen (2012); Knox (2004); Knox y Bickerton (2003); Leitch y Richardson (2003); Merrilees (2016); Merrilees y Miller (2008); Melewar <i>et al.</i> (2012); Muzellec y Lambkin (2008); Punjaisri y Wilson (2011); Shahri (2011); Strebinger (2014); Ugglä (2006).
Corporate brand identity	Aaker (2004); Aaker y Joachimsthaler (2012); Abratt (1989); Balmer (2001, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012); Balmer y Burghausen (2015); Balmer y Gray (2003); Balmer y Greyser (2002); Baumgarth (2010); Blombäck & Ramírez-Pasillas (2012); Cornelissen <i>et al.</i> (2012); Currás, (2010); Christensen & Cornelissen (2010); Edvardsson, Tronvoll, & Gruber (2011); Gryd-Jones <i>et al.</i> (2013); Harris & de Chernatony (2001); Hatch & Schultz (2001); Heding, Knudtzen y Bjerre (2008); Hur <i>et al.</i> (2014); Kapferer (2002, 2012); Keller (2008); Loe, Ferrell y Mansfield (2000); Melewar y Jenkins (2002); Melewar (2003); Merz <i>et al.</i> (2009); Mulki y Jaramillo (2011); Petkova <i>et al.</i> (2008); Simões <i>et al.</i> (2005); Silveira <i>et al.</i> (2013); Schultz <i>et al.</i> (2005); Urde (1999, 2013); Urde (2013); Urde, Baumgarth, & Merrilees, (2013); Urde y Greyser (2015, 2016); Witt & Rode (2005).
Corporate brand image	Aaker (1996); Balmer (1995); Blombäck y Axelsson (2007); Chi-Shiun <i>et al.</i> (2010); Cretu y Brodie (2007); De Chernatony (1999); Dennis <i>et al.</i> (2007); Hatch & Schultz, (2003) Ind (1997); Leitch & Richardson (2003); Muzellec and Lambkin, (2009); Torelli <i>et al.</i> (2012); Wiedmann <i>et al.</i> (2011).
the corporate brand & its relationships with stake olders	Abratt y Kleyn (2012); Anisimova (2007); Argenti y Druckenmiller (2004); Balmer (1995, 2001, 2005, 2010, 2013); Balmer y Gray (2003); Balmer y Greyser, (2002, 2006); Balmer and Wilkinson (1991); Balmer <i>et al.</i> (2017); Bergami y Bagozzi (2000); Biraghi & Gambetti (2015); Bhattacharya <i>et al.</i> (2009); Brown and Dacin (1997); de Chernatony (2001, 2002); de Chernatony y Harris (2000); Fatma y Rahman (2015); Gugler y Shi (2009); Gyrd-Jones & Kornum (2013); Harris y de Chernatony (2001); Hatch y Schultz (2003); Ind (2001); Janssen <i>et al.</i> (2012); Kaufmann <i>et al.</i> (2012); Knox and Bickerton (2003); Leitch y Richardson (2003); Melewar (2003); Merz, He y Vargo, (2009); Oberseder <i>et al.</i> (2013); Papasolomou y Demetriou (2005); Podnar (2015); Podnar, <i>et al.</i> (2011); Polonsky y Jevons (2006); Roper y Davis (2007); Rubin (2012); Schultz, (2005); (Schwaiger & Sarstedt (2011); Suvatjis y de Chernatony (2005); Veselinova, <i>et al.</i> (2015).
Corporate brand reputation	Abratt y Kleyn (2011); Anisimova (2010); Balmer (2001, 2011, 2012); Balmer y Gray (2003); Boulding (1956); Boyd <i>et al.</i> (2010); Chabowski <i>et al.</i> (2011); De Chernatony y Harris (2000); Deephouse (2000); Erdem, Erdum & Swait (1998); Fombrun (1996); Gatewood, Gowan y Lautenschlager (1993); Glynn (2012); Gomes <i>et al.</i> (2016); Gruning (1993); Jung (2011); Hatch y Schultz (2008); Hur, <i>et al.</i> (2014); Low, Blois (2002); Sweetin <i>et al.</i> (2013); Roberts y Dowling (2002); Roper y Fill (2012); Urde y Koch (2014); Van Riel y Balmer (1997); Voss & Mohan (2016); Weun <i>et al.</i> (2004); Zuckerman & Kim (2003).
Value of the corporate brand	Aaker (2004); Abratt y Kleyn (2011, 2012); Argenti y Druckenmiller (2004); Balmer (2001, 2008, 2010, 2011); Balmer y Greyser (2003); Balmer y Gray (2003); Chang y Ko (2014); Chang, <i>et al.</i> (2009); Hamzah, <i>et al.</i> (2014); Hatch y Schultz (2003); Harris y De Chernatony (2001); Heinberg <i>et al.</i> (2018); Hur <i>et al.</i> (2014); Hsu (2012); Lynch, de Chernatony (2007); Lin (2013); Malcolm y Driesener (2016); Rao <i>et al.</i> (2004); Shahri (2011); Stanaland, Lwin, & Murphy (2011); Trauer y Ryan (2005); Urde (2003); Urde y Koch (2014); Ugglä (2006); Uriely, Yonay y Simchai (2002); Van Riel, De Mortanges, Streukens (2005); Wang & Sengupta (2016).

Source: created by the authors

It is worth mentioning that, out of the 112 papers identified, 13 did not make reference to any author related to the concept of the corporate brand. This adds even greater value to the role of John M.T. Balmer: of the 99 papers including references, he is mentioned in over half (55,5% of the articles). If we look at the subjects of Balmer's papers (see Table 3), we can see that he is one of the few authors who has published in all of the 8 identified areas. Apart from dealing with the conceptualization of the corporate brand, he has made a contribution concerning its construction and management, and studied identity, image, the relationship between the brand and the *stakeholders*, reputation or brand value.

The second ranked author is de Chernatony, quoted in 25 papers, as well as contributing to the field along with different researchers (Dall'Olmo Riley & de Chernatony, 2000; Harris & de Chernatony, 2001; Schultz & de Chernatony, 2002). He is also an author who was cited in all the areas, with the sole exception of the construction of the corporate brand (see Table 3).

The authors Jo Hatch & Schultz, are third on the list, having been quoted in 24 papers (see Table 2). These academics have contributed to the theoretical construct of the corporate brand in every area, except for the conceptualization of the corporate brand, as related references were not identified in the work analysed (see Table 3).

Regarding the fields in which these authors usually work, communication does not appear as such on their curricula. John M.T. Balmer indicates that his fields of research are corporate marketing, brand management and corporate identity. Leslie de Chernatony, Professor of "*Brand Marketing*", points to brand management as her field of interest. Mary Jo Hatch sets her research in the management, marketing and theory of organizations. Finally, Majken Schultz lists her three main areas of research as organizational identity, corporate brand and organizational culture.

In summary, the four most quoted authors in the papers on the corporate brand show a greater interest in researching management or marketing than communication. It should be noted that all of them are related to Business Schools, which would explain their specific focus on management.

#### 4.3. *Related concepts*

A content analysis of the papers allows us to place the origin of the concept of the corporate brand in the differentiation between product brands and corporate brands, two terms which differ in their scope and disciplinary management (Balmer, 1995, 2001a; Balmer & Gray, 2003; King, 1991; Schultz *et al.*, 2005). Some papers maintain that the product brand represents a service by a single producer, while the corporate brand refers to the whole organization, with a more strategic perspective (Balmer, 2001b; Balmer & Gray, 2003).

However, the development of the corporate brand came hand-in-hand with corporate image and corporate identity (Schmidt & Redler, 2018: 189). Some works in the area defined as "identity of the corporate brand" indicate that the brand can be seen as a distinct type of identity, one with a life of its own (Balmer, 1995; 2001b); which can be described as the expression of the identity of an organization (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012), by virtue of which the company is defined and which is responsible for supporting the product which the customer is to purchase (Aaker, 2004).

The articulation of an identity is a prerequisite for success in the construction of a corporate brand (Stuart, 2011). Through the articulation of an identity, the clientele's preference for the organization can be achieved, thus gaining a competitive advantage (Anisimova, 2016; Daffey & Abratt, 2002; Keller & Aaker, 1998).

Authors such as Törmälä & Gyrð-Jones (2017) say that corporate brand identity can be decided upon by asking: “Who are we as a company?” (Balmer, 2001a; Melewar & Jenkins, 2002), and: “How do we wish to be perceived by interested parties?” (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Alwi, Ali, & Nguyen, 2017). The importance of corporate brand identity is reflected in the fact that companies need to address consumers and other interested parties through the construction of their corporate identity, image and reputation (Alwi *et al.*, 2017).

Another concept studied by the papers on corporate branding is the “image of the corporate brand” and not that of the “corporate image”. From this perspective, it is argued that the corporate brand represents more than the external manifestation of an organization, that is, more than its name, logo, or visual code. The corporate brand personifies, symbolically, the representation of the underlying values of the organization (Balmer & Gray, 2003b; Ind, 1997). As we have seen previously, Knox & Bickerton (2003) also define it as a visual, verbal, and behavioural expression.

The definition of the image of the corporate brand is important for the development of the concept itself and for the development of the corporate brand. The corporate image of the brand constitutes a set of external perceptions or mental associations concerning the whole company (Balmer, 2001b; Balmer; Gray, 2003; Brown; Dacin; Pratt; Whetten, 2006), which is built over time through customers’ experiences with the company’s brand (Wiedmann, Hennigs, Schmidt, & Wuestefeld, 2011).

But, apart from identity or image, some papers can be included in the study of the relationship of *stakeholders* with the corporate brand. They are all involved in the creation, and, at times, in the administration of corporate brands (Balmer & Wang, 2016a). Thus, relationships with *stakeholders* may contribute to shaping the company’s corporate brand (Schwaiger & Sarstedt, 2011). Despite speaking of *stakeholders*, it is noteworthy that only one of the 112 papers mentions public relations (Erdal, 2017).

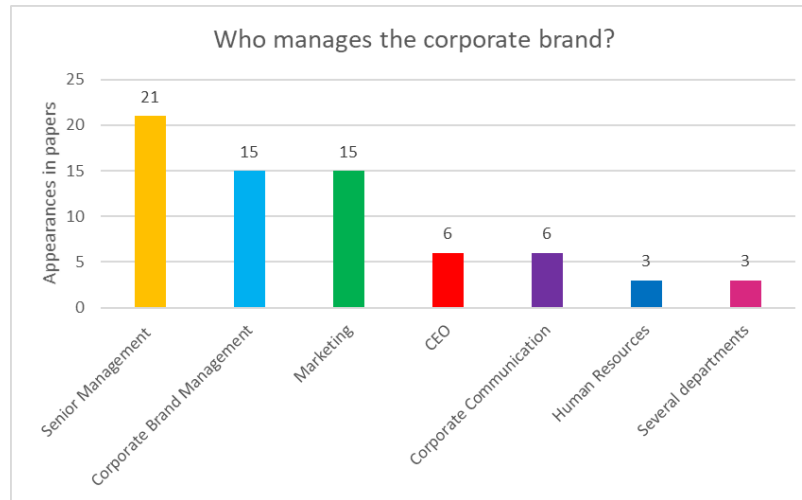
Finally, two other concepts discussed in the papers analysed were those of the reputation and value of corporate brands. Again, in this area, only one paper was identified which highlighted the role of public relations (Heller, 2016). This paper notes its contribution to the creation of strategies that give importance to organizations’ activities to improve their corporate reputation and the reputation of the corporate brand.

In summary, we find the concept of brand to be related to the corporate brand, but so are others such as corporate brand identity, corporate brand image, *stakeholders* and reputation, associated with institutional communication or public relations. However, only two papers point to the role of these in promoting relations between *stakeholders* and companies or in improving the company’s reputation.

#### 4.4. Management of the corporate brand

On examining the references to the areas of management related to corporate branding in the papers studied, we can see that not all the papers analysed name who was responsible for the management of corporate branding. Clear reference is made in 69 of the 112 papers (see Graph 2).

Graph 2. Which areas should manage the corporate brand?



Source: created by the authors

The outstanding area is senior management, which was identified as having direct responsibility for management of the corporate brand in 21 papers. The CEO is explicitly referenced in six papers (see Graph 2).

In second place, corporate brand managers are cited as being responsible for handling corporate branding, being mentioned in 15 of the 112 papers. Third on the list is Marketing, which appears in 15 papers (see Graph 2).

If we analyse the papers which associate corporate brand management with Communication, we find that this department is considered to be responsible solely for those communication channels and tools which the organization utilizes to communicate with its *stakeholders* (Balmer, 2001a). There is no reference to its value as a strategic asset.

Another department mentioned when speaking of corporate brand management is Human Resources (HR) (Buil, Catalán, & Martínez, 2016; Markovic Markovic, Iglesias Bedós, Singh, & Sierra Olivera, 2018), in three papers. However, HR is not referenced for its management of the brand but rather that the corporate brand is an element that must be considered by this department, aligning corporate brand strategy with HR policies and practices.

In summary, there is no consensus as to which department or departments should be responsible for corporate branding. However, as a strategic asset which derives from the identity of the corporation, the references to senior management and to the support needed from all members of the organization are clear.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

This paper coincides with previous studies (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Fetscherin & Usunier, 2012; King, 1991) in finding that the development and study of corporate branding does not correspond to one single discipline. In our study of 112 papers published between 2016 - 2018, up to 20 disciplines are identified in the 66 journals which published these works.

The two leading disciplines are management and marketing. These have recognised the importance of the corporate brand and its role as an asset in achieving differentiation relative to the homogenization of products and to globalization, making a major theoretical contribution. It is also seen as an increasingly important, powerful, and visible part of the economy of organizations (Balmer, 2001b; Urde, Greyser, & Balmer, 2007).

The corporate brand has even been studied by computer scientists, with positioning studies or other studies based on customer perception. Arts & Humanities have discussed how ethical image can build equity in the brands of corporate services (Sierra, Iglesias, Markovic, & Singh, 2017), or how negative patrimony can affect the development of brands of corporate patrimony (Sørensen, Korsager, & Heller, 2018).

Several authors have underlined the importance of the consumer experience and relations with different *stakeholders* in the creation of corporate brand value and in reputational improvement (Balmer, 1995; Jo Hatch & Schultz, 2003b; Schmidt & Redler, 2018). However, only two papers in this study highlight the role of Public Relations departments in promoting the relationship between companies and their *stakeholders*, and the importance of this for corporate branding. The absence of further references in this field is noteworthy, given that theories on public relations, such as the situational theory of publics, could provide a more than complementary approach to the study of relationships with the varied *stakeholders* of corporate branding.

Neither is communication the field providing the authors who have contributed most to the development of corporate branding in 2016-2018. The four most cited authors in the 112 papers studied are John M.T. Balmer, Leslie de Chernatony, Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Schultz. All of them work in Business Schools and their research is focused on management and marketing. Van Riel is the only author specialized in Communication who is cited in a considerable number of papers, 11 (9,8%), whereas the other authors appear in over 20.

Communication again fails to play a key role in corporate brand management. Although corporate branding was at one time seen as a matter for Corporate Communication departments (Balmer, 2008a; Biraghi; Gambetti, 2015), our study highlights the role of senior management and CEOs when it comes to designing and implementing corporate branding strategies. Authors such as Balmer & Wang (2016a) confirm this, emphasizing the importance and the obligations of senior managers and of the CEO in corporate brand management.

Another possible department is that of Corporate Marketing (Balmer, 2001a). This department would be in charge of maintaining continuous contact with customers and other *stakeholders* through the corporate brand (Balmer & Greyser, 2006; Balmer, 2017). This would involve transferring association with the brand to other sub-brands (Brexendorf & Keller, 2017). Therefore, congruence between the desired and perceived brand identity should be part of the corporate branding manager's job (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012). In this sense, Sevel *et al.* (2018) state that corporate brand management requires the



support and consensus of the other members and other departments of the organization, which leads us to the need for it to hold a position high up the organization's organigram.

Corporate branding requires an understanding that involves all of the organization's *stakeholders*, careful handling of the elements that make up the identity (Dall'Olmo Riley & de Chernatony, 2000), organizational culture and that it represents the values of the organization. It therefore seems difficult that Corporate Communication departments alone can create and develop a solid brand (Kay, 2006) which manages to respond to all the needs of the various *stakeholders*.

In line with Cornelissen (2008), we consider that corporate branding requires contributions from different departments in a company, the Marketing department amongst them. The goal is to achieve a broad, integrative vision, one that has the support and commitment of the highest echelon of the organization, the CEO (Balmer; Gray, 2003; Uggla, 2006; Balmer, 2008b; Shahri, 2011) and one with a focus that integrates all *stakeholders* (Balmer & Wang, 2016a; Dunnion & Knox, 2004; Vallaster, Lindgreen, & Maon, 2012).

In conclusion, the management of the corporate brand, as a strategic asset, should involve a long-term strategic plan, focused on the construction of a solid and recognizable corporate brand, which backs the company's whole product portfolio. Associations that are favourable to the company can be created through the brand, allowing for a response to a changing context and to all the publics involved. Therefore, the brand, corporate or not, should not be studied in isolation, but should rather be considered as a strategic asset.

It is a matter of managing a corporate brand that communicates, differentiates, and positions the organization. This means, the design of corporate branding strategy should involve the coordinated, holistic, and synergic efforts of the departments of corporate communication, internal and external, together with Marketing, Human Resources and Business Areas. From an academic point of view, this means it makes sense to count on the contribution of all these elements to branding, with a multi-disciplinary vision being recommendable.

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## 7. Appendices

**Appendix 1. Data bases included in the search tool**

Data base	Number of papers
Academic OneFile	1
Academic Search Index	2
BASE	42
Business Insights Global	6
Business Source Ultimate	7
Complementary Index	56
Directory of Open Access Journals	6
EconLit	1
ELibrary.RU	1
Emerald Insight	5
InfoTrac Informe	1
PsycINFO	8
RCAAP	3
SciELO	1
ScienceDirect	4
Scopus	59
Social Sciences Citation Index	9
Supplemental Index	5
RePEc	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>218</b>

Source: created by the authors from data on UNIKA



## Appendix 2. Journals 2016-2018

Revista 2016-2018	Área temática	Nº artículos publicados	Categoría
Advanced Science Letters	Computer Science/Energy/Engineering/Environmental Science/Mathematics/Social Sciences	1	
Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources	Business, Management and Accounting	1	
Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics	Business, Management and Accounting	2	Marketing
BRQ Business Research Quarterly	Business, Management and Accounting/Economics, Econometrics and Finance	1	
Business ethics quarterly	Arts and Humanities/ Business, Management and Accounting/Economics, Econometrics and Finance	2	
Cadernos EBAPE.BR.	Management	1	
Cogent Business & Management	Management/Marketing/Operations Research, Information & Technology/Accounting, Corporate Governance & Business Ethics/Banking & Finance	1	
Competition Forum	Business	1	
Corporate Reputation Review	Business, Management and Accounting	2	
Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management	Business, Management and Accounting/Environmental Science/Social Sciences	1	
Critical Studies in Education	Social Sciences	1	
Decision:Official Journal of the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta	Management	1	
Economic Annals-XXI	Economics, Econometrics and Finance/Social Sciences	1	
Ekonomika Poljoprivrede	Economics	1	
European Journal of Marketing	Business, Management and Accounting	5	Marketing
Expert Systems with Applications	Computer Science/Engineering	1	
Global Business Review	Business, Management and Accounting	1	
Handel Wewnêtrzny	Economics	1	
Health Marketing Quarterly	Business, Management and Accounting/Health Professions	1	Marketing
Humanomics	Arts and Humanities/Economics, Econometrics and Finance	1	
IMP Journal (merge Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing)	Marketing	1	
Industrial Management & Data Systems	Business, Management and Accounting/Computer Science/Engineering	1	
Industrial marketing management	Business, Management and Accounting	1	Marketing
International Journal of Bank Marketing	Business, Management and Accounting	2	Marketing
International Journal of Hospitality Management	Business, Management and Accounting	1	
International Journal of Innovation and Learning	Business, Management and Accounting/Social Sciences	1	
International Journal of Innovation and Technology Management	Business, Management and Accounting	1	
International Journal of Marketing Studies	Marketing	1	
International Journal of Psychology	Arts and Humanities/Medicine/Psychology	1	
International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management	Business, Management and Accounting	1	Marketing
International Journal of Simulation: Systems, Science and Technology	Computer Science/Mathematics	1	Marketing

International Marketing Review	Business, Management and Accounting/ Economics, Econometrics and Finance	2	Marketing
International Studies of Management & Organization	Business, Management and Accounting	5	
Interntext: Revista Eletrônica de Negócios Internacionais	Management	1	
Journal of Brand management	Business, Management and Accounting	10	Marketing
Journal of Brand Strategy	Business, Management and Accounting	1	Marketing
Journal of Business Ethics	Arts and Humanities/Business, Management and Accounting/ Economics, Econometrics and Finance/Social Sciences	2	
Journal of Business Research	Business, Management and Accounting	5	Marketing
Journal of Consumer Culture	Arts and Humanities/Business, Management and Accounting/ Economics, Econometrics and Finance/Psychology/Social Sciences	1	
Journal of Economics	Microeconomic	1	
Journal of Fashion Marketing & Management	Business, Management and Accounting	1	Marketing
Journal of General Management	Business, Management and Accounting	1	
Journal of Marketing Communications	Business, Management and Accounting	1	Marketing
Journal of Marmara University Social Sciences Institute	Social Sciences	1	
Journal of Poverty, Investment and Development	Technological development/ Innovation/ International affairs	1	
Journal of Product & Brand Management	Business, Management and Accounting	15	Marketing
Journal of Research for Consumers	Commerce	1	
Journal of Strategic Marketing	Business, Management and Accounting	3	Marketing
Journal of Technology Management & Innovation	Business, Management and Accounting	1	
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	Business, Management and Accounting/Economics, Econometrics and Finance	1	Marketing
Management & Labour Studies	Management/ Labour	1	
Marketing Intelligence & Planning	Business, Management and Accounting	2	Marketing
People & Strategy: Journal of the human resource planning society	Economy	1	
Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities	Social sciences	1	
Place Branding & Public Diplomacy	Business, Management and Accounting	1	Marketing
Procedia Computer Science	Computer sciences	1	
Proceedings of the 12th Global Brand Conference of the Academy of Marketing, School of Business and Economic.	Marketing	1	
Profesional de la Información	Computer Science/Social Sciences	2	Communication
Review of Contemporary Business, Entrepreneurship and Economic Issues	Economics	1	
Revista de Ciencias Sociales	Social Sciences	1	
Revista Latina de Comunicación Social	Social Sciences/ Communication	2	
Revista Mediterránea de Comunicación	Social Sciences/ Communication	1	
SAM Advanced Management Journal	Management	1	
Scandinavian Journal of Management	Business, Management and Accounting/Psychology	1	
Sebelas Maret Business Review	Business and Management	1	
Turizam : meunarodni znanstveno-struni asopi	Tourism	1	
<b>Total</b>		<b>112</b>	

Source: created by the authors

Appendix 3. Fields of study in journals &amp; number of academic papers

Fields of study	Number of journals	Number of academic papers
<b>Arts and Humanities (SJR)</b>	5	7
Banking & Finance	1	1
<b>Business, Management and Accounting (SJR)</b>	41	83
Commerce	1	1
Communication	2	3
<b>Computer Science (SJR)</b>	6	7
<b>Economics, Econometrics and Finance (SJR)</b>	10	15
Energy (SJR)	1	1
<b>Engineering (SJR)</b>	3	3
Environmental Science (SJR)	2	2
<b>Health Profession (SJR)</b>	1	1
Innovation	1	1
International affairs	1	1
Labour	1	1
Marketing	4	4
<b>Mathematics (SJR)</b>	2	2
<b>Medicine (SJR)</b>	1	1
<b>Psychology (SJR)</b>	3	3
<b>Social Sciences (SJR)</b>	13	15
Technological development	1	1
Tourism	1	1

Source: created by the authors in *WordCounter*