Corp Reputation Rev
https://doi.org/10.1057/s41299-018-0053-8

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Antecedents of Corporate Reputation and Image and Their Impacts on Employee Commitment and Performance: The Moderating Role of CSR

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Abstract The aim of this investigation is to identify how culture and communication may influence corporate reputation (CR) and corporate image and their impact on workers' attitudes and behaviour, like organizational commitment and individual performance. The moderating role of the perceptions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is also analysed. This investigation proposes a theoretical model tested using structural equation modelling. In total, 473 valid questionnaires were collected from a sample of employees of the biggest dairy union of cooperatives in Iberia. The results highlight the relationships between culture, communication and reputation and their influence on image. Furthermore, they show, as well, how corporate reputation impacts on commitment which contributes to improving individual performance. Perception of CSR practices may increase the way CR is perceived and boost the bonds between employees and their organization. This investigation is based on cross-sectional data collected from a union of cooperatives of the dairy milk industry. These results may raise the interest in deepening investigation in this field, showing how CSR practices create a new context to investigate these relationships. They can also help to improve the effectiveness of the human resources management strategies, giving a central role to CSR. This investigation shows how organizations involved in responsible attitudes and practices are challenged to find the right balance between making a profit and serving the community. CR, commitment and productivity may be strengthened when companies develop a bigger engagement with socially responsible practices.

Keywords Corporate reputation · Communication · Culture · Organizational commitment · Image · CSR and individual performance

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Introduction

Throughout the recent decades, a significant number of scholars and practitioners have been focusing on trying to understand how employees—through their interactions with other employees—identify themselves as part of a collective, within their work environment (Bauman and Skitka 2012). At the same time, employees have been regarded as key players for most organizations (Yang and Driffield 2012; Gill 2015). These stakeholders play a unique role, as they are relevant to other stakeholders and to the organization. They have significant power and internal legitimacy to influence the company and the achieved results (Lee et al. 2013).

Authors, such as Shamma and Hassan (2009), highlighted the importance of employees in building the reputation of an organization. In addition, Cravens and Oliver (2006) pointed out the importance of employees as the key connection to managing CR. Melewar (2008) found that successful organizations with strong reputations used their employees as a way to humanize their organization and to promote public trust. Moreover, an increased reputation may reinforce the links between employees and the

Published online: 05 September 2018

organization, thereby improving the corporate image and increasing the commitment and performance (Bauman and Skitka 2012), which may be boosted in a work environment rich in social practices.

CR plays an important role in the way employees relate with the organization, and therefore it (a) promotes personal fulfilment; (b) increases identification with the organization; (c) helps the organization meet their objectives; and (d) boosts the sense of responsibility and the way they interact with the outside world. Therefore, employees have a great awareness of the importance of proper reputation for the company, know what their contribution to its improvement is and are more willing to belong to a company with a good reputation (Olmedo-Cifuentes and Martínez-León 2014).

It is well established that employees are a key stakeholder group (Donaldson and Preston 1995; Freeman 1984; Matten and Crane 2005; Greenwood 2007; Kaler 2009). Workers have a role to play to ensure the quality of management, and to improve competitiveness though their individual loyalty and productivity (Othman et al. 2014). Employees relate in a special way with CR, creating unique features that generate positive financial performance and creating sustainable competitive advantage (Cravens and Oliver 2006). Management can achieve significant advances in corporate strategic objectives using the synergetic interaction between employees and CR (Cravens and Oliver 2006), knowing that CR may be a critical link between employees and management. As a matter of fact, the impacts of CR have already been conceptualized and tested but the literature has failed to explain the chain of effects that may help understand how CR is formed and produces its effects both on the image- and on the work related outcomes.

In this process, corporate social responsibility (CSR) can generate positive attention from current and potential employees (Lee et al. 2013). The contributions of CSR initiatives to the organizational image may improve employees' pride and willingness to be associated with such a reputable organization (Turker 2009; Kim et al. 2010) and therefore, reconfigure the relationships between them. Consequently, employees' perceptions of CSR are going to be tested as a moderator in the relationship between organization, CR and the workers attitudes and behaviour.

The objectives of this study are to understand the antecedents of the CR and its impacts on organizational commitment and individual performance from the perspective of employees, and the moderating role of perceived CSR practices in these relationships.

Data collection is based on a research sample comprising 473 employees of the biggest dairy union of co-operatives in Iberia. This union arises from the merger in 1996 of the three biggest dairy co-operatives in Portugal, resulting in the biggest company operating in Portugal and Spain. This kind of companies are well established in the rural areas, adopting traditional management practices that are changing to face competitiveness challenges, like most of the private companies in this and other fields (Othman et al. 2014).

According to the European Commission (2011), there are 250,000 cooperatives with more than 163 million of members (800 million according to the Cooperative Alliance). In several countries, cooperatives may control over 50% of different raw materials and over 60% of food products. Consequently, investigation is needed to investigate and compare cooperatives and their competitors in the market (Othman et al. 2014), as the final outcome has to compete with other companies in the market. According to the same authors, the search for efficiency, profitability, and therefore for competitiveness, must be a priority both for governments and for cooperatives, themselves; and the way human resources are managed may be the right path.

Research Background and Hypotheses Development

Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation has been considered as the most valuable intangible resource that firms can have (López 2006). Corporate reputation can influence the potential to generate sustainable competitive advantages and to improve the intrinsic value of a firm (Dowling 2006). Some authors have argued that the relationship between corporate reputation and performance can be a two-way relationship (de la Sabaté and Puente 2003; López and Iglesias 2010; Park et al. 2014).

Interest in CR is increasing among both practitioners and scholars, and the number of published articles is continuously growing (Barnett et al. 2006; Ponzi et al. 2011). Reputation has been defined as an intangible asset where the public and present image and quality of an entity are "based on the past demonstration of quality" (Ertug and Castellucci 2013, p. 409). It is a collective assessment that stakeholders do about an organization that prevails over their real knowledge (Fombrun and Van Riel 2003; Van der Merwe and Puth 2014). According to Selvaraj and Joseph (2014), organizational reputation can be defined as the evaluation of an organization in being trustworthy, consistent and fair.

The reputation of an organization is characterized by a number of factors, including satisfaction and quality of the services and products, corporate transparency, social responsibility, staff qualifications, social facilities and the

rights provided to staff and salary policy, preventing unfair competition (Geçikli 2008; Golgeli 2014). Reputation seems to be a specific and centred concept, based on social expectations of specific stakeholders (Berens and Van Riel 2004) or on their points of view (Brown et al. 2006; Fombrun et al. 2015).

Corporate reputation is singular and impossible to replicate. Reputation is fundamental for corporate success. According to Wong and Boh (2010), reputation is synonymous with competence, effectiveness and trustworthiness. As Rindova et al. (2005) observe, organizational reputation is valuable because of the reduction in uncertainty that stakeholders face when evaluating companies as potential suppliers of products and services. Employees are a critical stakeholder to which CR may be decisive and, at the same time, the employees‘ contribution can make to enhance CR are considerable and often at no cost.

Reputation may benefit the firm over time. The various advantages of a good reputation include cost savings, as suppliers and employees seek to be associated with the firm; favourable access to capital given the perception of lower risk, as well as the ability to charge premium prices to generate superior margins (Fombrun 1996; Roberts and Dowling 2002).

The persistent character of a company reputation, which has been built over time (Roberts and Dowling 2002; Ang and Wight 2009), leads to a lasting quality and an overall performance, without short-term fluctuations, being one of the intangible assets with the utmost strategic importance for a company (Surroca et al. 2010). The potential for value creation of an intangible asset such as corporate reputation is inherent to the difficulty of replicating a competitor's reputation (Roberts and Dowling 2002).

According to Odriozola et al. (2015), reputation acts as a driver to implement CSR (Marom 2006; Vilanova et al. 2009), since CSR has its impact on the build of reputation through the legitimation of their activities by stakeholders (de Quevedo-Puente et al. 2007; Reverte 2009). The concept of CSR is defined as "the voluntary commitment of companies with the development of society and the preservation of the environment, from its social commitment and responsible behavior, towards companies and social stakeholders with whom they interact" (Abadía and Álvarez 2004, p. 32). A positive reputation in the labour market is a source of information that reduces the cost of the firm with work staff, the cost of training and the costs associated with labour turnover (Chauvin and Guthrie 1994), and increases the motivation and the attraction of good employees (Roberts and Dowling 2002). Chauvin and Guthrie (1994) claim that a positive reputation in the labour market generates value for the company as well as an advantage in the efficiency of human resources (Fombrun 1996), therefore, reinforcing competitive advantage.

Communication

Corporate communication is defined as the process through which stakeholders perceive the identity, image and reputation of the company (Van Riel and Fombrun 2007; Thomaz and Brito 2010). Corporate communication is a key element used by managers to communicate with each of the stakeholders (Shamma 2012).

Communication can be a powerful and effective tool to connect the dots corresponding to the internal and external stakeholders and to create the kind of culture that will serve as basis for a strong reputation that may help in less favourable moments of the company (Romenti 2010). Communication contributes to the process of formation of the image and reputation and may be used by companies to strengthen long-term relationships with stakeholders (Argenti and Druckenmiller 2004). Moreover, a bad communication among co-operatives' members, as well as between the board of directors, management and the community may be a reason for difficulties or even failure.

Van Riel (1995), Romenti (2010) and Shamma (2012) argue that the role of communication is to engage stakeholders, so CR will be more stable and sustainable.

Gradually, communication is important for building CR. It reinforces the values that express the organization culture as well as its essence, the power of the brand, along with behaviours and symbolism (Argenti and Druckenmiller 2004; Gill 2015). Consequently, the following hypotheses were defined:

Hypothesis 1 There is a relationship between communication and corporate reputation;

Hypothesis 2 There is a relationship between communication and corporate image.

Culture

Corporate culture is defined by values, beliefs and basic assumptions. It is guided by leaders and shared by employees, impacting on employees‘ attitudes and behaviour and, ultimately, it influences organizational performance (Flatt and Kowalczyk 2008). Corporate culture is considered as an intangible asset adding value providing individuality, uniqueness and stability (Flatt and Kowalczyk 2008). Corporate culture can be seen as the glue that keeps the unit of the organization, grounded in three major components: beliefs and organizational values; explicit and formal knowledge of the organization's business; and future vision (Pagano 2004).

Corporate culture is an agent of absolute importance to build the reputation of an organization, impacting on the different outcomes such as employee morale, safety,

quality of products and services, customer satisfaction, profitability and performance (Gümüs and Öksüz 2009).

The links between image and CR are critical for organizations seeking to differentiate themselves successfully in the market. However, they are not easy to establish without the development of an appropriate corporate culture and effective management, building a corporate image of excellence (Solnet 2006).

According to Nguyen (2006), corporate image will be influenced by organizational culture. Values such as social responsibility, environmental sustainability and business ethics as part of the organizational culture can contribute to the improvement of corporate image. Dimensions related to power distance and hierarchy may have a negative impact on CR and image, whereas dimensions related to uncertainty avoidance and cooperation may have a positive impact (Hofstede 1991; Nazari et al. 2011).

Consequently, the following hypotheses were defined:

Hypothesis 3 There is a relationship between corporate culture and corporate reputation.

Hypothesis 4 There is a relationship between corporate culture and the corporate image.

Corporate Reputation, Image and Organizational Commitment

Corporate image has been studied as an indicator of social performance of the organization. The corporate image is defined as the total sum of its reputation, the way it organizes and operates its activities and conducts its business, the attitudes of their employees and even the way they respond to clients and associates (Powell 2011). The corporate image refers to the net result of knowledge, beliefs, ideas, feelings or impressions of an organization (Furman 2010).

The differences between CR and image are not always clear neither is the nature of the reciprocal impacts (Weiwei 2007; Podnar et al. 2012; Almeida and Coelho 2016). Reputation seems to be a more specific and centred concept, based on social expectations of specific stakeholders (Berens and Van Riel 2004) or on their points of view (Brown et al. 2006). For the contrary, Brown et al. (2006) show how corporate image seems to have a broader scope combining how the company expects to be seen with the construed external image (Shamma 2012). Some authors suggest that CR depend on image (Fombrun 1996) while others show how CR may influence image (Mason 1993) and finally, the reciprocal effects are suggested by Gotsi and Wilson (2001).

CR is a more stable variable while image may be influenced by contextual elements like communication (Radomir 2014). According to Srivastava et al. (1997) and Lewellyn (2002), CR plays a central role in crisis management, contributing to managing firm's image. At the same time, "It is suggested that a good on-line reputation and branding strategy can potentially strengthen corporate image, increase the gap between the brand and the competition and add value and competitive advantage to the business" (Jones et al. 2009, p. 934). Hess et al. (2002) and Worcester (2009) have revealed evidence that companies and employees involved in social causes tend to develop a better reputation and consequently, a better corporate image. CSR practices may influence and boost a positive organizational image that enhances employees' pride and willingness to be associated with such a reputable organization (Turker 2009). This chain of effects is also supported by the conclusions of Nguyen and Leblanc (2001) suggesting that due to the meaning of these concepts, CR is expected to influence Image. Accordingly, Goldring (2015) found that image mediates the relationship between CR and performance. At the same time, a culture that values and promotes the maintenance of corporate reputation will affect the employee's perception of the company's image (Cravens and Oliver 2006, p. 297).

Consequently,

Hypothesis 5 There is a relationship between corporate reputation and corporate image;

Chen and Cheng (2012) pointed out that the concept of job commitment arises when people employ higher levels of effort and energy in their work, considering it as a self-employment, which improves self-expression in organizational performance. A recent survey found that social performance has direct effects on the behaviours and attitudes of the organization's employees (Rupp et al. 2006).

Ali (2013) found that employees involved in the company are more motivated and improve their performance due to the existence of a significant link between employee engagement and profitability. The employee commitment could result in increased self-esteem, leading to a greater satisfaction at the workplace (Ismail 2013). Trust between them and the organization tend to increase, creating a sense of loyalty in a competitive and dynamic work environment (Selvaraj and Joseph 2014). Thus, the employee engagement is critical to any organization, as it seeks to retain valuable employees (Ali 2013).

The image of the organization is influenced by HRM practices (Selvaraj and Joseph 2014). Organizational reputation is likely to improve if HRM practices are based on participative management. Prospective employees often make career decisions based on the reputation of firms (Fombrun and Shanley 1990). In fact, the reputation has a decisive impact not only in the customers' mind and behaviour, but also on the commitment of employees and shareholders (Sims 2009).

Consequently, the following hypotheses were defined:

Hypothesis 6 There is a relationship between corporate image and organizational commitment;

Hypothesis 7 There is a relationship between corporate reputation and organizational commitment.

Individual Performance

Individual employee performance has been a central variable in much research in employment relations (Viswesvaran et al. 1996; Viswesvaran and Ones 2000; Poropat 2002; Díaz-Vilela et al. 2015). Individual Performance is a set of behaviours or actions of an employee that are relevant to the goals of the organization (Campbell 2008). Employees that perform well are considered a valuable asset and a cutting-edge organizational resource (Aghdasi et al. 2011; Nazari et al. 2011; Yang and Driffield 2012; Rao et al. 2014). Yozgat et al. (2013) defined employee performance through the tasks listed under the descriptions of the normal functions. Carmeli and Tishler (2006) pointed out that employees with a high level of intelligence can manage their emotions, leading to better performance. Thus, employees' performance is fundamental to the organization success (Pan 2015).

Although limited, empirical evidence suggests that the reputation of the organization promotes employee commitment and, simultaneously, a better individual performance and thus better results (Karatepe 2011). Fombrun (1996) argued that when employees are empowered and involved in decision making, they become more likely to have a better relationship with the company and do a better performance. Employee performance includes work behaviours observables and measurables, which are relevant to organizational goals within the individual's control (Viswesvaran and Ones 2000; Poropat 2002; Díaz-Vilela et al. 2015).

CSR activities, sometimes understood as CR, with regard to the different stakeholders, namely employees, may improve their individual performance. Similarly, a better reputation in the workers' perception normally coincides with plans of advantages and incentives that encourage and lead to higher performance (Samnani and Singh 2014).

Consequently, the following hypotheses were defined:

Hypothesis 8 There is a relationship between corporate reputation and individual performance;

Hypothesis 9 There is a relationship between organizational commitment and individual performance.

The proposed hypotheses may be represented by the conceptual model represented in Fig. 1. The proposed hypotheses are supported by the literature and past investigation, even if some of them lack empirical investigation.

These hypotheses can be influenced or moderated by the perceptions of CSR practices adopted by the company (Bhattacharya et al. 2009). CSR may be defined, according to the European Commission (2011) and Odriozola et al. (2015), as a voluntary commitment of companies with the development of society and the preservation of the environment, adopting practices socially responsible. Reputation acts as a force to implement CSR (Marom 2006; Vilanova et al. 2009), since CSR has its effect on the build of reputation through the legitimation of their activities by stakeholders (de Quevedo-Puente et al. 2007; Reverte 2009).

The social engagement of a cooperative is somehow embedded on their foundations and on their actions (Mayo 2011; Hammad Ahmad Khan et al. 2016). The way the workers perceive the social nature of their cooperative may be the main driver of the workers' involvement with their employer (Joshi et al. 2013; Hammad Ahmad Khan et al. 2016). Turker's study (2009) on employees' affective commitment shows that CSR initiatives directed to

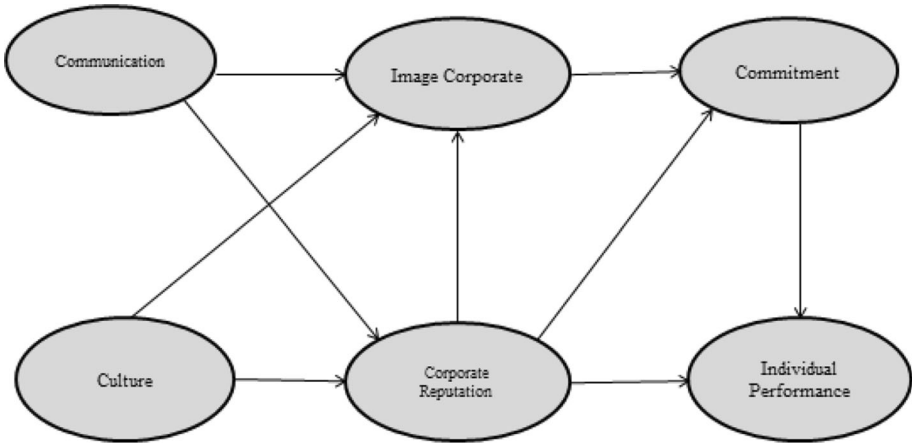

Fig. 1 Conceptual model. *Source* Authors' own research

different stakeholder groups (customers, employees, government, environment and so forth) can influence employees' attitudes. Given the case of a cooperative, CSR initiatives may be one of the best indicators of the nature of this form of organization, guiding workers' attitudes and behaviour. Odriozola et al. (2015) show the possible links between the labour social responsibility practices and corporate reputation, and in particular between the labour social responsibility practices and the labour reputation, which may be a novel contribution to the investigation on the field of reputation, especially on what concerns the contributions to CR.

De Roeck and Delobbe (2012) suggest that CSR initiatives can help an organization to define its ethical stance with regard to society's moral values and therefore drive employees' organizational identity. CSR activities may increase the moral commitment of current employees and increase retention rates (Turker 2009). They are found to positively influence employees' attitudes and behaviours, which are considered critical internal stakeholders (Kim et al. 2010). However, these impacts are not necessarily direct. At the same time, CSR may create a positive environment (Hess et al. 2002; Worcester 2009) where HRM practices may flourish and reinforce their outcome. Consequently, CSR is going to be presented as a moderating variable in the model we are proposing.

Method

Sample and Data Collection

In order to test the proposed investigation model and the research hypotheses, data collection was based on a structured questionnaire. The research universe in this study comprised the workers in the biggest dairy cooperative in the Iberian Peninsula. Data was collected through a survey applied to all factories and trading posts of the organization. The research instrument is a structured questionnaire, developed through an electronic tool called Survey Monkey.

The data collection has a total of 473 valid responses. The sample comprises 59.4% men and 40.6% women. Most respondents are aged between 31 and 45 years (51.0%) and 46 and 60 (24.1%). Concerning the level of education, the majority has the secondary level (51.4%). As for the workers tenure, the majority (59.8%) has over 10 years of work. With regard to the functions performed by the respondents, it was observed that most of them (51.6%) perform operational activities, followed by technical and administrative positions with 18.6%.

Measures

In order to operationalize variables, we conducted a literature review and adapted scales used in previous investigations, changing and adapting the vocabulary so that the scales were more perceptible for respondents. The scales used are presented on Table 1.

The construct communication was operationalized, according to Thomaz and Brito (2010). The scale is composed of eleven items like "I trust in the data on products and services".

The construct culture was measured based on Nazari et al. (2011). The construct culture consisted of three subscales representing co-operation (five items), power distance (three items) and fear of the unknown (three items). The interpretation of these dimensions is, most of the times close to the conceptualization of Hofstede (1991). A total of 11 items were defined. Items like "in this organization, common core values guide co-workers/associates in a unified direction" are used. A second-order model was used for the latent construct culture (Zheng et al. 2010).

The construct image was operationalized according to the study by Nguyen and Leblanc's study (2001). The scale is composed of three items like "I believe that this organization has a better image than its competitors".

The CR scale was based on Walsh et al. (2009) and treats the construct as multidimensional. The measure has five sub-scales, as follows: customer orientation, good employer, reliable and financially strong company, product and service quality and social and environmental responsibility. A second-order model was used for the latent construct CR (Agarwal et al. 2015). The same scale or scales with similar items and dimensions were used by Fombrun (1996), Helm (2007) and Arikan et al. (2016), comparing the same 3 groups of stakeholders and by Terblanche (2014, 2015) with supermarket customers. The use of this scale is based on the idea from Eberl and Schwaiger (2005), Helm (2007), Walsh and Beatty (2007) and Almeida and Coelho (2016) that CR must be comparable among different groups of stakeholders. A total of 28 items were defined. Items like "Management seems to pay attention to the needs of its employees"; Develops innovative services" and "Is environmentally responsible" were used.

Organizational commitment was measured based on Yousef (2003). The scale is composed of six items. Items like "I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond what normally is expected in order to help this organization be successful".

Individual performance was measured based on MacKenzie et al. (1993). The scale is composed of twenty-two items divided into tree dimensions: productivity, integrity and cooperation. A second-order model was used

Table 1 Measures scales

1—Reputation corporate: Walsh et al. (2009)

Customer orientation

- In the company employees treat customers courteously
- The company really worries with their clients
- The company treats its customers fairly
- The company has employees concerned about the needs of customers
- The company is aware of consumer rights
- The company cares about all customers, regardless of size

Good employer

- The company looks like a good company to work for
- The company seems to treat its people well
- The company seems to have excellent leadership
- The company seems to maintain high standards in the way that it treats people
- The company seems to have good employees
- The company has management who seems to pay attention to the needs of its employees
- The company seems to be well-managed

Reliable and financially strong company

- The company tends to outperform competitors
- The company seems to recognize and take advantage of market opportunities
- The company looks like it has strong prospects for future growth
- The company looks like it would be a good investment
- The company appears to make financially sound decisions
- The company is doing well financially
- The company seems to have a clear vision of its future

Products and services quality

- The company develops innovative services
- The company is a strong, reliable company
- The company offers products and high-quality services
- The company is responsible for the products and services it offers

Social and environmental responsibility

- The company seems to make an effort to create new jobs
- The company seems to be environmentally responsible
- The company would reduce its profits to ensure a clean environment
- The company appears to support good causes

2—Communication: Thomaz and Brito (2010)

Organizational communication

- I can rely on information about products and services provided by my company
- I like the quality of advertising for my company
- I am curious about the information my company provides
- The information my company provides is adequate
- My company disseminates information to all audiences involved in its activities
- My company provides channels to communicate with all the public involved in its activities

Table 1 continued

- I like the internal advertising of my company
- The information disclosed by my company is consistent
- The financial information disclosed by my company is reliable
- My company advertises your products intensively
- My company has appealing advertising.

3—Image: Nguyen and Leblanc (2001)

- I've always had a good impression of the company
- In my opinion, this company has a good image in the minds of consumers
- I believe that this company has a better image than that of its competitors

4—Commitment: Yousef (2003)

- I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful.
- I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar.
- I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization.
- It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this organization.
- There's not too much to be gained by sticking with this organization indefinitely.
- Deciding to work for this organization was a definite mistake on my part.

5—Culture: Nazari et al. (2011)

Organization culture—deference to power

- Most members of this organization would feel comfortable disagreeing with their supervisors
- Employees are frequently asked to participate in our organization's decision making
- There is a willingness to allow anyone on the team to take the lead, based on who is most experienced

Organization culture—fear of the unknown

- Mistakes are acceptable in this organization as long as we learn from them
- We are enthusiastic about taking on challenges in which we do not have complete information
- We are comfortable with uncertainty in our organization

Organization culture—isolation and collaboration/cooperation

- Most people in this organization think that teamwork provides appropriate recognition
- People in this organization get ahead working on their own rather than in a team (recoded)
- The most valuable people in this organization are team players
- Most members are willing to put team objectives ahead of personal objectives
- In this organization, common core values guide co-workers/associates in a unified direction

6—Performance individual: MacKenzie et al. (1993)

Productivity

- The amount of work I do is
- The quality and effectiveness of my work are
- The efficiency achieved by me in making the best use of resources is

Table 1 continued

My ability to achieve the defined objectives is
My ability to respond to variations in the amount of work is
My ability to respond in crisis situations is
My ability to anticipate problems is
My ability to build effective solutions to potential problems is
My speed in incorporating new working methods and the use of new equipment and technologies is
My speed in decision making in situations of change is
Citizenship behaviour (integrity)
I strive to keep myself abreast of what happens in my company
I sometimes perform functions that are not mandatory but that help my business
I am willing to risk the disagreement of others, to express what I think is best for my company
I spend little time lamenting small problems
I do not usually exaggerate the importance of
I avoid considering the negative side of situations, rather than the positive
Citizenship behaviour (cooperation)
I help in the orientation of new colleagues, even if I am not asked to
I am usually willing to help or advise those around me.
I spend some time voluntarily helping others
I strictly follow the rules and regulations implemented in my company
I usually finish my work within the stipulated deadline
I usually respond to requests that are addressed to me quickly

for the latent construct individual performance (Johns and Miraglia 2015) Items like "Attends functions that are not required but that help the company image" and "All things considered this manager performs his/her job the way I like to see it performed".

All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). Confirmatory factor analysis was used to assess the psychometric properties of the scales and the measurement model fit, using AMOS 19. The final model shows a good fit (IFI = 0.950; TLI = 0.942; CFI = 0.949; RMSEA = 0.04; CMIN/DF = 1.722; GFI = 0.876).

Composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE) were computed. All the scales showed values above 0.7 on critical ratio and above 0.6 on AVE, which are in line with the recommendations (Hair et al. 2009). Discriminant validity is evidenced by the fact that all correlations between the constructs are significantly smaller than one and the squared correlations calculated for each pair of constructs is always smaller than the variance extracted for correspondent constructs (Fornell and Larcker 1981), thereby confirming the discriminant validity (Table 2).

Common Method Bias

When self-administered questionnaires are used, a common variance bias problem can emerge or increase (Podsakoff et al. 2003). According to Podsakoff et al. (2003), the common method variance (CMV) tests will help identify the existence of variables that can cause measurement errors and systematic bias in the estimation of the relationships between constructs. The emergence of this problem may arise when the information about the independent and dependent variables comes from the same respondent; the same scale format is used throughout the questionnaire; and different constructs are measured at the same time and using the same instrument.

Using Harman's single-factor test, we loaded all indicators of the constructs into an exploratory factor analysis using principal components analysis. The results revealed 15 factors with Eigen values greater than 1.0 and explaining 69.96% of the total variance extracted, while no single factor explained more than 27.99% of the total variance (Podsakoff and Organ 1986). A confirmatory factor analysis was performed, in which all indicators included in the structural model were restricted to load on a single factor (Podsakoff et al. 2003). The obtained fit indices obtained indicated a very poor model fit. Overall,

Table 2 Standard deviation, square correlations, Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability and variance extracted

	SD	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6	CC	AVE
CULTURE (X1)	1.24	**0.88**						0.88	0.69
CORP REPUT (X2)	0.76	0.59	**0.85**					0.86	0.66
COMMITM (X3)	0.98	0.19	0.62	**0.68**				0.74	0.50
PERF IND (X4)	0.89	0.15	0.30	0.27	**0.87**			0.90	0.66
IMAGE (X5)	0.70	0.09	0.63	0.41	0.33	**0.84**		0.86	0.67
COMMUNIC (X6)	0.79	0.63	0.59	0.50	0.16	0.36	**0.79**	0.81	0.59

The bold values refer to the alpha cronbach's, which shows us the internal consistency of the variables. Cronbachs' alpha measures reliability or internal consistency and should range from 0.7 (reasonable) to more than 0.9 (excellent). Values between 0.6 and 0.7 may be acceptable

Obs The principal diagonal presents Cronbach's Alpha, *SD* standard deviation, *CC* composite reliability, *AVE* average variance extracted

the results of the two tests indicate that common method bias does not appear to be a problem in this study.

Finding and Discussion

Amos 19.0 was used to perform confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling to test the proposed hypotheses. The final model shows a good fit (IFI = 0.903; TLI = 0.893; CFI = 0.903; RMSEA = 0.05; CMIN/DF = 2.332; GFI = 0.830).

A multigroup analysis was performed to identify the differences between employees with low and high perceptions of CSR practices. The cut point considered was based on the average for this variable and the groups were composed of 250 employees with a lower perception of CSR and 223 employees with a higher perception of CSR. The following table presents the final results: Table 3.

Communication has a significant impact on CR (SRW = 0.359: $P < 0.05$), thus as expected, supporting H1. These results are similar to those from Kim et al. (2010). This positive relationship can be found among workers with a low perception of CSR (SRW = 0.440: $P < 0.05$), but not among workers with a high perception of CSR (SRW = 0.135: $P > 0.05$). Perhaps, more attentive workers or more touched by the CSR practices tend to devaluate or to mistrust institutional communication while less attentive workers to CSR tend to develop an image more based on communication. Co-operative workers ten to give a particular attention to the social engagement of their organization and to the CSR practices they may perceive.

The relationship between communication and image is statistically significant and hypothesis 2 is supported (SRW = 0.207: $P < 0.05$). This result is on line with the investigations of Romenti (2010) and Shamma (2012). However, when we introduce the effects of CSR these results are significantly different. This relationship is stronger (SRW = 0.292: $P < 0.05$) among workers with a low perception of CSR than among workers with a higher perception of CSR (SRW = 0.162: $P < 0.05$). These results show how "traditional communication" based on instruments above-the-line can be less effective than CSR activities and practices that seem to have a great impact on image, or simply, communication is more important when workers have little knowledge about the company practices, namely, CSR practices.

The relationship between culture and CR is significant and positive (SRW = 0.519: $P < 0.05$). Consequently, hypothesis 3 is supported. These results are similar for both groups. A stronger culture based on a low power distance, low fear of unknown and on a high cooperation among workers have a positive impact on CR. When workers perceive a higher distance to power, organizations tend to be more bureaucratic and to have less communication, especially horizontal communication (Hofstede 1991; Nazari et al. 2011). In a cooperative, where a rather democratic exercise of power is expected, a higher power distance may be associated to a lower CR, and these results are expected and probably stronger than for a common private company.

The relationship between culture and image is negative and statistically not significant (SRW = − 0.250: $P < 0.05$). Consequently, hypothesis 4 is not supported. Contrary to the ideas of Nguyen (2006), perhaps the efforts to transform the cooperative spirit and values into a rather private company, in order to boost competitiveness, may be disturbing the cultural effects inside the cooperative, and building a negative image among its workers.

The relationship between CR and image is statistically significant (SRW = 0.620: $P < 0.05$), therefore supporting H5. According to the suggestions from Fombrun (1996)

Table 3 Results Structural Model

	Relationships	GLOBAL n = 473		WORKERS Low n = 250 high n = 223				
		SWR	$P < 0.05$	SWR	$P < 0.05$	SWR	$P < 0.05$	
H1	Communic → C Reput	0.359	***	0.440	***	0.135	0.166	Supported
H2	Communic → Image	0.207	0.017	0.292	0.018	0.162	0.057	Supported
H3	Culture → C Reput	0.519	***	0.421	***	0.372	***	Supported
H4	Culture → Image	− 0.250	0.016	− 0.283	0.031	− 0.074	0.432	Not Supported
H5	C Reput → Image	0.620	***	0.374	0.009	0.620	***	Supported
H6	Image → Commitm	0.433	***	0.489	***	0.341	0.002	Supported
H7	C Reput → Commitm	0.390	***	0.318	0.016	0.474	***	Supported
H8	C Reput → Indiv PerF	0.036	0.653	− 0.079	0.429	0.001	0.997	Not Supported
H9	Commitm → Indiv PerF	0.267	***	0.267	0.014	0.304	0.037	Supported

The asterisks refer to $P \leq 0.001$

and Shamma (2012), CR and image are close concepts and CR tends to improve the company image. These assumptions give additional support to our results. This impact is much stronger among high CSR group (SRW = 0.620: $P < 0.05$) than among low CSR group (SRW = 0.374: $P < 0.05$). Apparently, in the process of image building, communication is more important for the low CSR group, which needs an extra effort of communication, while the high CSR group has a solid idea of the company based on their traditional reputation, expressed on higher perceptions of CSR. The social engagement of a cooperative may contribute to reduce the efforts to build a strong image.

Image has a positive impact on commitment (SRW = 0.433: $P < 0.05$), thus supporting H6. Workers having a better image of their employer tend to be more committed to it, as suggested by prior investigation (Farooq et al. 2014). Apparently, this relationship is stronger for the group with a lower perception of CSR (SRW = 0.489: $P < 0.05$). Workers perceiving a higher CSR activity (SRW = 0.341: $P < 0.05$) tend to give more importance to social practices and less to image (Lee 2008; Kim et al. 2010; Farooq et al. 2014), while the lack of socially engaged practices lives these impacts to image, giving support to the idea that CSR may moderate this relationship.

CR has a positive impact on commitment (SRW = 0.390: $P < 0.05$), thus supporting H7. A perception of higher reputation leads to more committed workers. Reputation is a force that pushes worker's attitudes and strengthens the bonds between workers and their employer (Lourenço et al. 2014). Therefore, this relationship is stronger for the group with a higher CSR perception (SRW = 0.474: $P < 0.05$). Apparently, CSR is very important and, somehow, may overlap or be assumed as CR itself (Lindgreen and Swaen 2005), boosting these effects.

The relationship between CR and individual performance is not statistically significant (SRW = 0.036: $P > 0.05$), thus not supporting H8. These results are not in line with the literature review that points out a positive relationship between CR and the dimensions of individual performance (Karatepe 2011). However, being part of a cooperative with a presumed traditional management (Osterberg and Nilsson 2009) and where the relationship is assumed to be definitive or forever (Ogunola et al. 2013), workers may tend to underperform most of the times (Othman et al. 2014), regardless of the context or the stimulus they may receive. Perhaps, the impacts on individual performance are rather indirect, via commitment, due to the close relationship between workers and the cooperative.

Commitment has a positive impact on individual performance (SRW = 0.267: $P < 0.05$), thus supporting H9. Commitment is expected to reinforce the ties between workers and their employer (Lee 2008). More committed workers are usually more motivated, feel a better social climate and tend to perform better. So, even if CR does not have a direct impact on individual performance, this role may be mediated by commitment. Commitment seems to play here a very important role converting CR efforts into a stronger employees' involvement with the organization and therefore, in an increased individual performance (Fu et al. 2014). The role of commitment seems to be crucial in these relationships, especially because we are investigating work relationships in a cooperative, where organization, cooperants and workers are rather symbiotic and the attachment to the organization is expected to be crucial to the overall productivity and performance. The results are rather similar for both groups, confirming that importance. The lack of a direct relationship between CR and individual performance, found in this investigation, may be explained by the mediation introduced by commitment. Moreover, even if these relationships are usually investigated and assumed as direct and unidirectional (Weiwei 2007; Podnar et al. 2012), the retroaction effects are more than expected and the causality may be, most of the times, questionable (Gotsi and Wilson 2001). The following table presents the final results: Table 4.

Companies may achieve better results when they are really engaged in socially responsible behaviour, since many strategies and practices can be employed in these projects, which may contribute to a more positive image for their employees and foster the organization reputation. Theory suggests that CSR may impact on CR and therefore encourage workers to perform their tasks with more passion, commitment and loyalty (Fu et al. 2014). Our results suggest that a CSR environment may reinforce the effects of CR and, consequently, the work-related outcomes. More than the specific and direct impacts CSR may have, this investigation shows that socially engaged practices may

Table 4 Direct and Indirect Effects

Corporate reputation	Commitment			Individual performance		
	Direct	Indirect	Total	Direct	Indirect	Total
	0.147	0.101	0.248	0.011	0.052	0.063

boost the relationships between culture, communication and CR and their outcomes like commitment and individual performance. The proposed hypotheses seem to be influenced or moderated by the specific atmosphere created by CSR in the terms suggested by Bhattacharya et al. (2009) and the impacts of social responsible practices on CR and other outcomes may represent a novel contribution to the strategic management literature (Odriozola et al. 2015). Moreover, the social nature of a cooperative (Hammad Ahmad Khan et al. 2016) gives additional support to these results.

Contributions

A company's reputation is a sign of differentiation in the market and a source of competitive advantage (Vilanova et al. 2009; Odriozola et al. 2015). This investigation shows how CR, based on internal communication and culture, may impact on individual performance, particularly increasing organizational commitment. At the same time, CSR plays an important role as a moderator of these relationships. Consequently, this investigation brings additional contributions explaining the chain of effects starting on the CR formation, explained by culture and communication, and ending exploring its impacts on image- and on work-related outcomes, like commitment and individual performance. At the same time, the role of CSR is explored not as an antecedent but as a moderator, creating a specific organizational environment where the impacts of CR may be boosted. Finally, this investigation is performed on the cooperatives' field, where more investigation has been claimed, especially on the reputation area, that has been deeply ignored by most of the units in the sector.

This research investigates the role of CR among co-operatives' workers, which may create a specific context to identify the CR formation and establish its impacts. Moreover, it is a sector with a significant influence on the global economy, which may play a decisive role, especially in a crisis scenario, given its resilience. Additionally, we introduced the moderating role of CSR showing how it may influence the internal relationships between CR-, image- and the work-related outcomes, which may be an important topic for further investigation, according to Odriozola et al. (2015). Even if CR and CSR should be basic features of the daily life of a co-operative, little investigation has been developed on the co-operatives' sector, especially on the intangibles field.

Fombrun (1996) is one of the most cited authors in the literature, who posits that reputation is formed based on the stakeholders' assessment about the firm's performance. Thus, the social performance of a cooperative may be the starting point to build a reputation (Odriozola et al. 2015).

Apparently, CSR might be closely associated with CR and sometimes the two concepts may overlap (Lindgreen and Swaen 2005). However, a stronger perception of CSR practices may increase the way CR is perceived and boost the bonds between employees and their organization, therefore increasing individual performance. These results may raise the interest in deepening investigation in this field, showing how CSR creates a new context to investigate this relationship and also, how to reconfigure the human resources management strategies (Obeng-Odoom 2015).

Moreover, employees are a critical stakeholder in a co-operative and a critical element to CR both as a target and as a contributor to enhance CR, often at no cost. Due to increasing competition in a global market, managers should be aware of the most efficient strategies to achieve better results and ways to adapt them to their organizations (Ellis 2010). Human resource management has to be improved as well as the stimulus to get people engaged with their tasks and with their organization, in order to improve social climate, employees' commitment, job resourcefulness and productivity. The adoption of a socially responsible behaviour and the CSR practices the company may engage with, are powerful tools to redress human resources management while boosting the impact on people.

This investigation highlights both of these dimensions. The investigation in the cooperatives field is relevant and recommended (Othman et al. 2014) due to the importance of the sector and to the attraction they represent. Cooperatives usually lack of managerial skills to face globalization and competitiveness (Ismail and Mohd Sarif 2010; Othman et al. 2014). Workers don't receive any training, don't have a career planning and personal development (Othman et al. 2014). Individual and organizational performance is often not satisfactory. A new generation of cooperatives is looking for a place in a market characterized by aggressive strategies, adding more value to their offers (Begalli and Capitello 2012). According to Birchall and Hammond (2009), European Commission (2011), Diaz-Ruiz (2015), and Almeida and Coelho (2017) several different companies are finding in the cooperative form a way to reinforce their resistance to closure and unemployment, an alternative to the actual competitiveness framework and a way to ensure the workers commitment and loyalty and a shared vision. Cooperatives may represent the right balance between individual objectives from specific stakeholders and survival and competitiveness. Our results show how to combine the traditional practices, closer to the cooperative main stakeholders like cooperants and workers, with the management of Reputation which may contribute to be closer to the markets and to the

customers, therefore, being more competitive. Therefore, companies need a strategy that includes a mix of good communication and socially responsible behaviour through internal reports, training, CSR practices and communication, targeting supervisors and employees in general (Maignan and Ferrell 2004).

Managers may find here some clues to make their human resources' policies more effective. Improvements on communication and culture may reinforce CR which has been shown to be directly linked with workers' performance. A CSR environment may increase the impacts of the HRM measures, therefore reinforcing the impacts on work-related outcomes like commitment and individual performance.

Limitations and Future Investigation

This investigation is based on cross-sectional data. When causal relationships are to be investigated, longitudinal data may help in the understanding of causality. Of course, this provides an opportunity for further research in this field.

This research is based on a sample of workers from a union of cooperatives from the dairy industry. The measures used, especially the CR scale, is usually used for other stakeholders like consumers and shareholders, but also for employees, when it comes to comparing the results among different stakeholders. A specific measure could be developed and used.

This study is based on a sample of cooperative workers from the dairy industry, and it may not be generalizable to other organizations. At the same time, it could be extended and applied to other stakeholders like customers and shareholders, to compare results as well, as comparing these results with cooperatives from other regions and cultures would help to understand the impacts of different cultures on the way CR acts. In addition, measures adopted may not fit equally among different stakeholders, especially workers.

Organizational commitment seems to play a crucial role in the relationship between CR and individual performance. However, the mediating roles of other variables like job resourcefulness and job satisfaction are significant suggestions for further investigation. The impacts of CR on employer brand and on intentions to leave are examples of relationships to be explored. The development of a multidimensional scale that can collect CR evaluation from different stakeholders, with good psychometric properties, would be a good task to be performed to ensure some comparability of results.

Concluding Remarks

This research highlights the importance of intangible assets such as reputation management. Corporate reputation has received growing attention in recent decades, while research from the employee perspective is relatively limited. Employees, as one of the most important internal stakeholders' group, are currently drawing attention from both researchers and practitioners. Employees' awareness of the corporate reputation will directly affect their sense of self-esteem, job satisfaction, emotional commitment and perception of the corporate reputation (Helm 2011; Fu et al. 2014).

The overall results are conclusive and contribute to a better understanding of CR, the antecedents and impacts. The results of this study reveal opportunities for managers to use these findings as a contribution to increase the competitiveness of their companies throughout a better use of human resources management, based on CR and CSR.

According to Avram and Kühne (2008) and Moura-Leite and Padgett (2014), the strategic decisions surrounding the socially responsible behaviour of a company may become a source of competitive advantage. Consequently, managers and owners have the opportunity to take advantage of all that CSR practices provide.

The effect of social actions on CR can assist the companies in designing or modify social responsibility strategies used by the firm in order to build a positive CR (Moura-Leite and Padgett (2014).

Finally, it is expected that the results of this research can help companies of the cooperative sector to change and adapt their management practices and traditional principles and to achieve greater convergence with the challenges that organizations will face in this twenty-first century.

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