

opción

Revista de Antropología, Ciencias de la Comunicación y de la Información, Filosofía,
Lingüística y Semiótica, Problemas del Desarrollo, la Ciencia y la Tecnología

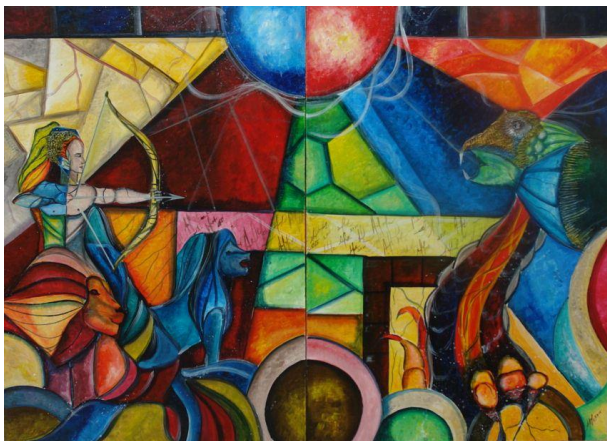
Año 35, agosto 2019 N°

89-2

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

ISSN 1012-1537/ ISSNc: 2477-9385

Depósito Legal pp 198402ZU45



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Maracaibo - Venezuela

Responsible communication strategies for small and medium-sized enterprises

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Abstract

Organizational communication must respond to the demands of social responsibility and corporate sustainable development, establishing systemically productive interactions. The research aimed to propose responsible communication strategies for small and medium-sized enterprises. The study was projective, with a contemporary, transectional descriptive, documentary and virtual design. The findings show the importance of the management of organizational communication in small and medium enterprises, and the need to formulate a communication strategy articulated to social responsibility, for this reason, ECoRE-SME strategic guidelines are presented.

Keywords: communication strategy, responsible communication, organizational communication, promotion of social responsibility.

Estrategias de comunicación responsable para pequeñas y medianas empresas

Resumen

La comunicación organizacional debe responder a las demandas de responsabilidad social y desarrollo sostenible corporativo, estableciendo sistémicamente interacciones productivas. La investigación tuvo como objetivo proponer estrategias de comunicación responsable para las pequeñas y medianas empresas. Se realizó un estudio de tipo proyectivo, con un diseño contemporáneo, transeccional descriptivo, documental y virtual. Los hallazgos evidencian la importancia de la gestión de comunicación organizacional en pequeñas y medianas empresas, y la necesidad de formular una estrategia de comunicación articulada a la responsabilidad social. Por tal motivo, se presentan lineamientos estratégicos ECoRE-Pyme.

Palabras clave: estrategia de comunicación, comunicación responsable, comunicación organizacional, promoción de la responsabilidad social.

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational communication is a process that integrates productive, administrative-commercial and financial functions of companies, promoting the construction of corporate brand identity for the management of signs and meanings with their public and interest groups. In this regard, RINCON, MARANI, and CONTRERAS (2018) point out that communication can be conceptualized as the process that allows the harmonious generation of relationships to obtain common benefits for an individual or organized groups, which requires the formulation of communicative strategies that adapt to the corporate, institutional and association nature.

Research carried out by KLAPPER (1957), WRIGHT (1986), SEVERIN and TANKARD (1988), MCQUAIL (2000) and MAJKEN (2006), have highlighted the multiple theories of communication, its elements, processes and dimensionality, emphasizing its effects and reach, seen as a powerful tool to respond to the constant changes and requirement of the global age, creating novel spaces of synchronous and asynchronous interaction to consolidate goals.

In this way, every organization is called to formulate its own communication strategy, considering: its corporate name, essential characteristics, needs and interests, public map, essential basic processes and the environment where it operates, according to its nature and organizational size. The organizational size is established as a feature that must be highlighted, in the construction of the communication strategy. Without a doubt, it is not the same to manage communication in a micro company that, due to its size, integrates a maximum of 10 workers, a small one in which 50 workers are articulated, a medium sized that operates with a maximum of 200 workers; and not to mention the large companies that operate over 200 employees.

The classification of small and medium enterprises varies according to the legislation of each country; in the Colombian case, Law 590 of 2000¹, Article 2. Modified by article 2 of Law 905 of

¹Law 590 of 2000, in art. 1 consecrates its object as follows: "Promote the integral development of micro, small and medium enterprises in consideration of their aptitudes for job creation, regional development, integration among economic sectors, the productive use of small capitals and taking into account the business capacity of Colombians.

2004, establishes the parameters of micro, small and medium enterprises, any economic exploitation unit, carried out by natural or legal person, in business, agricultural, industrial, commercial or service activities, rural or urban (Republic of Colombia, Law 590 of 2000, Article 2).

It is important to note that many organizations dismiss the need to build an organizational communication strategy, especially in micro and small sizes; this in virtue of the volume and flow of communication, so it seems less important to generate organizational communication strategies with the support of a knowledge professional, since it is considered an individual human competence, which becomes nobly handled in the most basic level of training.

In this sense, organizations face more frequently demands to respond to social demands. In the last twenty years, it has been gaining increasing force as an indicator of productivity, competitiveness, positioning, and loyalty; considered by public, interest group, pressure, opinion, decision, and commercial allies; making it evident how communication is a key factor in responding to them. Social responsibility, as a capacity to respond to organizational audiences, constitutes an important variable for the development, sustainability and acceptance of organizations, which is focused on three basic aspects: social, economic and environmental, usually referred to as "Triple Button".

Based on the above, the researchers ask the question "How should the organizational communication strategy be in coordination with social responsibility in SMEs"? To fulfill the purpose of the investigation, it is necessary to identify the organizational communication needs according to the organizational size, determine the dimensions of communication in coordination with the social responsibility of the organizations, and establish the communication categories that support social responsibility in SMEs.

2. THEORETICAL FUNDAMENT

2.1 Responsible communication: strategies for SMEs

Organizational communication is an integrating process that articulates dimensions and business functions for the benefit of productivity and the provision of services based on their corporate and public names. It corresponds precisely to the wishes, expectations and interests of the segment in all corporate dimensions, based on the following criteria: (a) objective or purpose, (b) actors, (c) grammar, (d) interaction needs, (e) barriers, (f) scope of the context and environment; that will determine the forms, messages, and means of business communication. FERNÁNDEZ (2002) points out that there is a need for a shared system of referring symbols; it implies an exchange of common symbols among the people who intervene in the communicative process. DODGSON, GANN and PHILLIPS (2015) and CHINEDU, VERA and OLUYEMI (2018), they emphasize that

for management in innovation, it becomes important to align with the strategy of the organization, being the communication of vital importance for this purpose.

Organizational communication is a strategic component, strategy understood as a dynamic concept that although initially associated with combat or war, more recently it has been approached from a more managerial perspective. In response to the considerations of PÉREZ (2014), when considering the strategy from other perspectives and theoretical developments, these currents represent a challenge for the economic paradigm and imply a certain degree of transdisciplinarity. It was thus that words such as sustainability, emotion, relationship, communication, and connectivity have become protagonists within the directive sciences.

Thus, the model of the New Strategic Theory (NST) is guided by seven changes: (1) From fragmentation to complexity; (2) From the rational actor to the relational individual; (3) From a production unit to a node of innovation and significance; (4) From the science of conflict to the science of articulation; (5) From economics to communication; (6) New tools; and (7) New models. All this has to be approached from a transdisciplinary approach (OLIVARES, DEL GIUDICE, ARANGO & CARUSO, 2018; PÉREZ, 2014).

In this way, the communication strategy can be formulated from different perspectives, notwithstanding the NST, it generates a much more human, communicational and articulatory imprint. On the other

hand, CHIAVENATO (2011) indicates that the communication strategies conform a process of organizational adaptation oriented to the managerial perspective and to the organization; while, CARNEIRO (2010) points out that the strategy is the orientation in the future acts, towards which to guide the business course. While CAMBRIA (2016) addresses strategic communication as a process that arises in different areas, especially in the news, allowing a competitive advantage over the other groups; and LÓPEZ (2003), conceives it as a series of programmed actions that are implemented based on interests and needs, in a human interactive space, in a great variety of times. As can be seen, CAMBRIA (2016) and LÓPEZ (2003), are aligned with the humanizing proposal of PÉREZ (2014).

On the other hand, HENNESSEY and RINCÓN (2018, p.110), conceive the communicative strategy as "an interaction that enables forms of communicative action and interaction between people, which also allows generating synergies and articulations to instruct, guide, fix position, decide, coordinate and evaluate ideas, actions, processes and organizational dynamics ". Given these considerations, it seems appropriate to highlight the types of strategy based on the considerations of ELÍAS and MASCARAY (2002), whose proposal is focused on facilitating the implementation of effective and efficient communication strategies that accelerate the elements of responses and favor human and organizational growth (Table 2).

Table 2. Types of communication strategies

Type of Communication Strategie	Definition
Leverage strategy.	This strategy consists in the methodological ordering of decisions and resources, aimed at finding out the underlying or ultimate reasons that cause a certain problem or situation that is intended to be solved or modified and, once discovered, act on them to obtain the proposed objective.
Franchising strategy.	It consists of professionally and rigorously transferring the exploitation of internal communication to a coordinating command in a defined territory-space.
Overtaking strategy.	The overtaking strategy consists in preparing the means, establishing the procedures and carrying out the actions aimed at ensuring that the intercommunication always takes the lead and has the initiative to make known all the events of clearly defined and timely actions, which translates in the proactivity.
Nomination strategy.	The same authors point out that this strategy consists of arranging what is necessary to ensure that any communication action is not a cold exchange of information between anonymous elements of the organization, but that it occurs within the framework of an empathetic relationship between two or more people, identified.
Approach strategy.	This strategy consists of using the logistics of the distribution to guarantee that the information that is going to be transmitted (in both directions) reaches its destination in good conditions.

Accompanying strategy.	It consists of programming individualized and personalized actions in which a guide supports the transition from one situation to another, clarifies the doubts that arise and dispels uncertainties so that personal decisions can be made with knowledge of the cause.
Ritualization strategy.	This is the strategy that raises the need to set in motion rituals or acts, which, in short, are able to visualize or transmit internal communication by themselves.
Facilitation strategy.	It consists of investigating what obstacles or obstacles stand in the information process and, once identified, proceed to its elimination, or at least to set it aside.
Design strategy	It consists in using the techniques and methods of design in intercommunication with the aim of helping to capture the attention of the recipients of the information and to awaken their attention, in a way that opens the door to the knowledge of the message that is to be transmitted.
Anchoring strategy.	It consists in the methodological and systematic ordering of processes and resources aimed at achieving the consolidation of change, to foresee any involutory attempt and to act with a sense of participation to prevent such involution from prospering.

Source: Elías and Mascaray (2002).

PEREZ (2009), defines the communication strategy as a system of formulations leading to the achievement of organizational objectives; activating assertive decision-making and directing actions that encourage, persuade the organizational public, enabling a

favorable public opinion, while classifying communication strategies (Table 3).

Table 3. Communication strategies

To motivate.	The direction of communication actions is proposed in order to encourage or motivate the organizational public.	Performance. Team spirit. Sense of belonging. Participation. Activation of individual leadership.
To generate opinion.	It pursues the control of the opinion of the public in favor of the organization.	Define the public issue. Public awareness. Agreements and resolutions. Participation of leaders.
To persuade.	They seek to win the trust of the public in such a way that they adopt with a conviction of thought and action the system of signs, values, and beliefs of the organizations.	Persuasion with information. Persuasion with arguments. Persuasion with emotional stimuli. Persuasion with testimonies. Persuade with key messages.

Source: Pérez (2009).

The foregoing allows to outline those who investigate the concept of communication strategy as the route that will enable through the appropriate and proactive use of communication components in all dimensions of the organization and articulation with the public, maximizing their benefits and usefulness in the processes,

ratifying that communication strategy has a purpose for the development, management of an individual, organization, and/or brand; in correspondence to the context of application. ROMERO, CONTRERAS, MOLINA & RINCÓN (2018: 35), indicate how:

Strategic communication is essential for organizational sustainability, understood as the set of strategies that enable the development and maintenance of organizations over time, guaranteeing not only their permanence but their evolution. Therefore, the resources for its projection, positioning, and diversification, especially in the case of SMEs, must make serious efforts to stay in the market and survive the average lifetime of three years for this business sector.

In this sense, ROMERO, CONTRERAS, MOLINA, and RINCÓN, (2018); and RAMÍREZ, CHACÓN and EL KADI (2018), establish that strategic communication is projected as a strengthening element of sustainable development in organizations; while it is considered that organizational communication should correspond to social responsibility; the latter defined by PIZZOLANTE (2009), as a state of individual consciousness that is assumed in the social or collective context, passing to a shared state of consciousness.

According to RAMÍREZ, RINCÓN, ALEMÁN, and CHACÓN (2018, p.427), "social responsibility is an initiative that overcomes legal requirements, involves economic, social and environmental aspects, uses resources to free funds for other purposes, increases access to services and improve the environment of organizations ". RINCÓN, MONTOYA and VÉLEZ (2018), point out how corporate social responsibility influences organizational aspects such as quality,

productivity, competitiveness, identity, image and reputation; consolidating the statements of CARIDAD, SALAZAR, RINCÓN and SOTO (2018), who establish that a socially responsible behavior in organizations has the purpose of satisfying the needs and expectations expressed by their stakeholders without forgetting the community.

For their part, RAMÍREZ, ROYERO and EL KADI (2019), RAMÍREZ, VILLALOBOS and HERRERA (2018), and RAMÍREZ and HUGUETH (2017), confirm that the issue of social responsibility has been strengthening organizations, since these are socially responsible when they carry out activities oriented to the satisfaction, wishes, needs and expectations of their members, and of all the beneficiaries of their activity, in the context of the preservation of the environment.

Every day there are more tools for the promotion of social responsibility with which organizations count, such as Global Compact², ISO 26,000³; based on the above, the Millennium Development Goals⁴ (MDGs) were formulated, as a

² Global Compact of the United Nations: this is aimed at organizations so that they voluntarily commit themselves to internalize ten principles on human rights, labor standards, environment, and anti-corruption. In the area of external communication, since 2004, member companies must prepare a Progress Report (CoP) annually to the Secretariat of the initiative.

³ Practical guide to guide companies in the implementation of their social responsibility policies, thus discarding the traditional standard format, such as ISO 9001, which would have allowed establishing an international certification standard, and ISO 14001 that guides international certification under the environmental component.

⁴ In September 2000, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, world leaders agreed to set measurable goals and targets, with defined deadlines, to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women. These objectives and goals, which constitute the essence of the global program, are now called "Millennium Development Goals".

proposal to guide the global issues in the context of social responsibility issues. However, once the deadline for the scope of these was reached, they were evaluated and, based on the achievements, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were set, in the context of the so-called 2030 Agenda, an inclusive agenda to achieve a change in people and the planet for a more prosperous and sustainable world.

In this context, RAMÍREZ, CHACÓN and EL KADI (2018), point out that the social responsibility of SMEs in Latin America, is seen as an integral part of their processes and operations, basically because consumers, their reason for being, have imposed requirements of products that are friendly to the environment, with clean production processes, giving an important twist to the concept of sustainability.

Meanwhile, RAMÍREZ, AVENDAÑO, ALEMAN, LIZARAZO, RAMÍREZ and CARDONA (2018), RAMÍREZ, LAY, AVENDAÑO and HERRERA (2018), FERRARO and STUMPO (2010), SUKIER, HERNÁNDEZ, PORTILLO, VALLE, GARCÍA and GARCÍA (2018) and RODRÍGUEZ (2003), point out some of the problems of small and medium-sized enterprises, among which are: lack of articulation and coordination in pursuit of the complementarity required by the public and private sectors; low access to technology markets, human resources, capital and specialized technical assistance.

SMEs are viewed at a time of high importance due to the dynamics and changes facing Latin America and the Caribbean,

establishing a scenario conducive to challenges and opportunities in this context, given the resources and potential of the SMEs sector to meet and respond to global business needs, which demand articulation, cooperation and partnership with other governmental organizations and institutions (RAMÍREZ & AMPUDIA, 2018; RAMÍREZ, CHACÓN & VALENCIA, 2018; VILLALOBOS & RAMÍREZ, 2018; RINCÓN & CONTRERAS, 2014; VILLALOBOS, GUERRERO & ROMERO 2019).

Without a doubt, the management of organizational communication cannot be dissociated from the reality in which the organizations are immersed; thus RINCÓN & CONTRERAS (2014), formulate the "Organizational Communication Strategies for small and medium enterprises", [ECo- SMEs], to correspond to the factors considered as key for the development and strengthening of SMEs in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Caribbean, among which stand out: corporate governance, strategic organizational thinking, empowerment of resources and capital, management indicators, development of strategic alliances, promotion, and visibility.

According to the considerations of RINCÓN & RAMÍREZ (2018), by combining communication with social responsibility, 'responsible communication' emerges as the communication capabilities that the organization possesses to correspond to its public and interest groups, around the dimensions: organizational social responsibility. In three aspects: the social, economic and environmental; dimensioned into three subcategories: (a) socially

responsible communication, which aspires to respond and ensure that the communication process occurs in correspondence with social dimensions, which implies: bio-psycho-social awareness of the human being, nonviolence, fair treatment and Equitable, gender equity, truthfulness of information, protection of sources, health and work well-being, cultural diversity, positive approach to language, adaptability to context, happiness, citizen development, state sovereignty, healthy eating, among others.

(b) The communication for financial sustainability aspires to correspond with the economic dimensions; such as productivity, quality, benefits and utility, justice and equity, fair prices, entrepreneurship, value, financial sustainability. And the (c) environmental or green communication, generates from the interaction a harmony with the environment; respect for species (flora, fauna); valuation of renewable and non-renewable natural resources, use of technologies and clean energies, preservation and conservation of the environment, recycling and waste management, among the fundamental ones.

3. METHODOLOGY

The present investigation is framed in the holistic paradigm, of projective type, which consists in the elaboration of a proposal as a solution to a problem, covering a certain need (HURTADO, 2012). The research provides strategic guidelines of responsible

communication to the small and medium-sized companies. Suggested activities are included according to the type, level and design of the research, proposed by HERRERA, GUERRERO & RAMÍREZ (2018); BERNAL (2016); BRYMAN (2015); HERNÁNDEZ, FERNÁNDEZ & BAPTISTA (2014) and HURTADO (2012).

In the same way, it is declared as a contemporary, descriptive transactional design according to HURTADO (2012), since it is developed with an observation in the present time, and in a single moment; with a documentary source design, since it is based on literature, articles, theses, texts, linked to organizational communication, social responsibility, SMEs, responsible communication with a view to capitalizing on the determining aspects that enable the formulation of strategic guidelines. In addition, it is recognized as a non-exploratory study, given that it does not intend to manipulate or alter the study variables, while it is identified as a virtual design by virtue of the data to be generated.

4. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In correspondence with the objective to identify the needs of organizational communication according to the organizational size, it is established that communication needs vary according to the nature, characteristics, and size of the organization; in this sense, although barriers, limitations, problems and communication needs in organizations and more specifically in SMEs can be recognized in a

general way; the generation of a strategic communication proposal merits a Strategic Analysis of the communication supported in a process of research that identifies the needs, problems and areas of priority attention in correspondence with the aspects of social responsibility.

In this respect, RINCÓN, MARANI & CONTRERAS (2018), present an important list of problems, among which are: (1) Undefined and / or disarticulation of organizational objectives, strategies and functions; (2) Absence of a communication professional or strategic communication unit that supports organizational communication strategies; (3) Absence of a management philosophy; (4) Development of isolated and disjointed activities; (5) Consider that a communication strategy is not required; (6) Profusion of barriers and organizational rumors; and (7) Excess meetings. In this regard, RINCÓN, CONTRERAS & RAMÍREZ (2017: 331), state that:

... communication is not considered as a relevant aspect among emerging trends in human management, as it is reflected as an individual competence that dynamizes and empowers the individual in his performance, articulating the dynamics and organizational processes; likewise, the management of the emotions that today is necessary to glimpse in the dynamics between guaranteeing the otherness and balance in the relational synergies is lost in the map of emerging trends for the substantial improvement in the human management of talent at present.

To correspond to the objective to determine the dimensions of communication in articulation with the social responsibility of the

organizations, the dimensions of the organization (contour, dintorno, and environment) are considered; from where the management communication (outline) is usually established, the internal communication (dintorno) and the commercial communication (environment); however, SMEs usually make invisible and dismiss the communication that is oriented to the contour and the dintorno, considering that it is a fact and does not merit effort, and they are oriented to commercial communication.

Nevertheless, the articulation of organizational communication with social responsibility merits the articulation of organizational audiences and groups of power, interest, decision, and opinion around social, economic and environmental aspects. Regarding the objective of establishing the categories or dimensions of communication that support social responsibility in SMEs, three categories were originally considered: socially responsible communication, communication for financial sustainability, environmental or green communication.

Conversely, the nature, size, characteristics and location of the SME could merit the generation of responsible communication strategies in support of a specific category such as: family communication, entrepreneurial communication, communication for co-creation, communication for well-being, communication for peace, resilient communication, communication oriented to the responsible consumer, among the most outstanding; with which all the communicational dimensions are of interest to promote responsible communication in the organization, in articulation with various aspects

of social responsibility, for which the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda of the Organization should be considered (United Nations). After analyzing the strategic communication component in correspondence with responsibility, we proceed to formulate Responsible Communication Strategies for SMEs, [ECoRE-SMEs], whose objective is to promote the management of responsible communication before the organizational and public interest, opinion and influence groups; inattention to the subcategories: socially responsible communication, communication for financial sustainability, environmental or green communication.

(1) Socially responsible communication: (a) attends to the integrity of the human being and enable his role as a person, professional, and citizen respecting their family and community ties; (b) inspires fair and equitable treatment of people without distinction of social status, race, religion; (c) respects the adoption of gender of people and conditioning their sexual preferences; (d) promotes the transparency of data and the right to truthful information; (e) discretionary treatment of the sources that wish and should remain anonymous, as long as this does not affect morals, ethics and transparency; (f) promotes the adoption of social, work and healthy practices habits; (g) respects for cultural diversity, of thought and right to divergence; (h) empowerment of the word as an element to inspire the adoption of positive practices; and (i) develops codes for language and behaviors for peace.

(2) Communication for financial sustainability: (a) develops financial literacy campaigns; (b) inspires win-win behaviors with equitable benefits and proportional to the dedication; (c) balance of the cost-value relationship, and accessibility of goods and services at fair and equitable prices; (d) promotes creative and entrepreneurial practices; (e) revalues the practices of small and medium enterprises; (f) promotes the value of work and generation of products and services; (g) develops quality practices that guarantee processes, services, and attention; and (h) guarantees survival and extend the life cycle of small and medium enterprises.

(3) Environmental or green communication: (a) promotes respect for the land and for the species; (b) stimulates the adoption of species within the framework of organizational dynamics; (c) inspires the adoption of behaviors for the preservation of natural, renewable and non-renewable resources; (d) guides the use of technologies and clean energies; (e) guides practices of environmental sustainability and preservation of areas under special regimes; and (f) develops campaigns to promote waste management, composting development, and waste recycling through ventures.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The communication strategy is the route that will make possible through the proper and proactive use of the interactive components in all the dimensions of the organization, the articulation with the public,

in search of the maximization of benefits and utility for the processes and functions of the same, forming a system conducive to the achievement of organizational objectives to which SMEs do not escape, activating assertive decision-making and directing strategic actions that encourage, persuade the organizational publics associated with this business sector, enabling an adequate public opinion of the same and the favorable articulation with entities and government institutions that promote and facilitate their management.

For this reason, it requires prior recognition of needs and potentials through a diagnosis of organizational communication which must consider as fundamental aspects of communication components, communication skills on an individual and team scale; types of communication and any other management indicator that enables the recognition of opportunities for improvement, to respond to the requirements of companies in a glocal context, increasingly oriented towards social responsibility.

Responsible communication strategies are presented for SMEs, [ECoRE-SMEs], whose objective is to promote the management of responsible communication before the organizational publics, interest groups, opinion and influence, based on the three subcategories initially proposed by RINCÓN & RAMÍREZ (2018); however, the nature, size, characteristics and location of the SME, could merit the generation of responsible communication strategies in specific categories such as: family communication, entrepreneurial communication, communication for co-creation, communication for

welfare, communication for peace, communication resilient, communication oriented to the responsible consumer, among the most outstanding.

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Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

Año 35, N° 89-2, (2019)

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital por el personal de la Oficina de Publicaciones Científicas de la Facultad Experimental de Ciencias, Universidad del Zulia.
Maracaibo - Venezuela

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