

Use of human voice in social media can help organizations build relationships

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As the proliferation of social media in society continues, companies and organizations are taking advantage of online platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate interactively with their customers and the public. With this influx of new technology, many organizations are struggling to find the most effective ways to manage these user interactions to maximize the positive experience for their customers. Now, University of Missouri researchers have found that utilizing a personal human voice when communicating online leads to much higher user satisfaction ratings than impersonal communication.

"There is great value in using a [human voice](#) when communicating and developing good relationships with the public," Hyojung Park, a doctoral candidate at the Missouri School of Journalism, said. "Perceptions of relationships with an organization seem to be significantly more favorable when the organization's [social networking](#) page has a human presence rather than an organizational presence. Levels of trust, commitment, and satisfaction from users all appear to be positively affected by the use of the human voice in social media."

In the study, the researchers presented participants with mock social media websites of large, pre-existing for-profit and nonprofit organizations, complete with user comments and direct responses from the organizations' public relations representatives. The user comments ranged in tones from positive, negative and neutral. Some social media sites included the name and picture of the organization representative with their messages, while other social media sites only included an

organizational presence on their sites with no names or pictures.

The researchers observed that the participants perceived social media websites utilizing conversational human voice much more positively than the websites with only an organizational presence online. The researchers also found that for-profit organizations were more likely to be perceived as using a conversational human voice than were the nonprofit organizations. Park believes using human voice on social media can generate important emotions within the receiving community.

"Communicating in a human voice adds a sense of personal and sociable human contact to the interaction with the public," Park said. "We have evidence that perceived conversational human voice may promote trust, satisfaction, and commitment in relationships between an organization and the public, which in turn results in favorable behavioral intentions toward an organization."

Park says the dynamic role of human presence versus organizational presence adds a new perspective as to how organizations can take more advantage of interpersonal aspects of social media. She believes this study provides a fundamental building block for constructing a body of knowledge that can help practitioners and scholars better understand how [social media](#) can be used for relationship management.

Park presented the study at the International Public Relations Research Conference this past March and won the top student paper award for her work.

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

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