

# Using a human voice in social media has a positive effect on company reputation

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The modern-day complaints department tends to be a direct mention on Twitter to the company that has wronged you. It's easier than ever to have a direct line to a company, but what does a corporation get out of this interaction? A recent study published in the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* by researchers at VU University Amsterdam, The Netherlands, found that people who follow corporate social media accounts that present a human voice are more likely to have a positive view of the company.

Corné Dijkmans (NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences), Peter Kerkhof (VU University Amsterdam), Asuman Buyukcan-Tetik (VU University Amsterdam), and Camiel J. Beukeboom (VU University Amsterdam) published their findings in the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. The researchers conducted a two-wave longitudinal study among customers and non-customers of KLM Royal Dutch Airlines.

Over the course of two years, the researchers surveyed 3,531 Netherlands residents from three different tiers: a random representative sample of Dutch adults, a sample from KLM's loyalty program and a sample recruited from KLM's Facebook and Twitter pages. The second wave took 1,969 of these respondents and asked them about their perception of the corporate reputation of KLM, the perceived level of "[human voice](#)" of KLM on their [social media](#) channels, and the level of exposure of respondents to the social media activities of KLM.

The researchers found evidence that the impact of consumers' exposure to a company's social media activities is strengthened by the level of "human voice" in the online communication of companies, and that this results in a positive effect on a company's reputation.

Previous studies have found correlational evidence of consumer's exposure to corporation's social media. This study is the first to demonstrate causal evidence for a positive effect on corporate reputation of consumers' exposure to a company's social media activities, and the crucial role of a company's "online human voice" in these activities.

"This study shows the importance for a company to communicate in a human-like way for establishing the best relationships with consumers. We show positive effects of communication style on perception of corporate reputation, which - in turn - plays an important role in the achievement of business objectives," said Dijkmans. "Burson-Marsteller found that 95% of US chief executives considered corporate reputation as very important in the achievement of business objectives. To be able to improve perception of corporate reputation by employing social media activities in a "human voice" has high managerial importance."

**More information:** "Online conversation and corporate reputation: A two-wave longitudinal study on the effects of exposure to the social media activities of a highly interactive company," by Corné Dijkmans, Peter Kerkhof, Asuman Buyukcan-Tetik, and Camiel J. Beukeboom; *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, [DOI: 10.1111/jcc4.12132](https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12132)

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