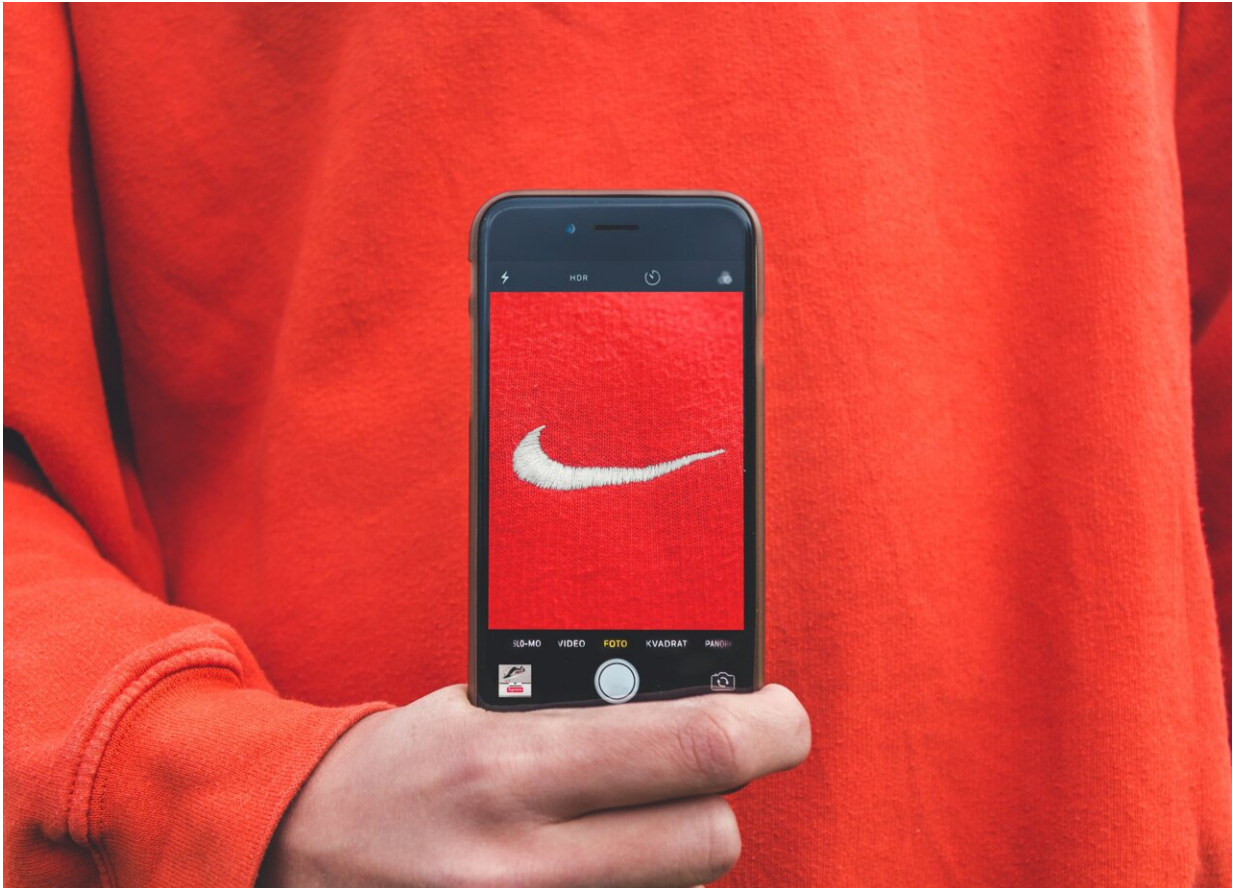


When social irresponsibility goes viral

April 15 2022, by David Bradley



Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Branding is everything in marketing and the public perception of a company and its products and services. If consumers engage with a brand, if they love a brand, they are likely to be repeat customers and

moreover will often be evangelical in their representation of a brand to other people whether in the online or offline world.

But, as there is brand love, so there can be brand hate. The concept is discussed in the context of corporate social irresponsibility in the *International Journal of Business Governance and Ethics*. Whereas much research has focus on the positivity of brand love, a team from Iran has investigated its opposite brand love and found that when corporate entities are irresponsible at the social level this can reflect negatively on their [brand identity](#) and consequently be reflected in changing the behavior of customers detrimentally.

In the [digital age](#), many companies have come to recognize that they must have a strong and positive presence on the internet. Initially, this would have been in the form of a website and conventional advertising of that site in the media and on other websites. The advent of Web 2.0 and the era of so-called [social media](#) brought with it new opportunities for engaging with consumers and [potential customers](#) where electronic word-of-mouth allowed the crowd to almost dictate the public perception of a brand.

The notion of "going viral" became the dream of marketing executives everywhere hoping to push their product or service to a wider and wider audience. The public relations nightmare was when [bad news](#) about the company or its products took the same viral route. Indeed, earlier research has already shown that negative emotions surrounding a brand can have a greater impact than the positive on, in that case, detrimental brand awareness. When they once said no news is bad news, this really is not the case in the world of social media where a reputation can be destroyed by the crowd in an instant and a product "canceled" for any of countless reasons.

The work of Elaheh Roozbahani and Reza Salehzadeh of Shahid Ashrafi

Esfahani University in Isfahan and Seyed Mehdi Mirmehdi of the University of Malayer in Malayer supports the idea that brands that do not operate in accordance with the consumer's perception of ethical, legal, and [social issues](#) are not ideologically compatible with consumers, which leads to [negative emotions](#) and brand hate. Irresponsible behavior in society ultimately leads to a negative reaction from that society. Companies from the ownership and board level down to the "shop floor" need to be aware of this and adjust their stance so that they and their brands take a more ethical and moral stance for the sake of society and for the sake of their bottom line.

More information: Elaheh Roozbahani et al, Evaluating the effects of corporate social irresponsibility on brand hate and its behavioural outcomes, *International Journal of Business Governance and Ethics* (2022). [DOI: 10.1504/IJBGE.2022.121919](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJBGE.2022.121919)

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