

Companies being responsible on social media

November 30 2015, by David Bradley

Companies that attempt to use social networking to communicate ethical messages of corporate responsibility to consumers are wasting their human resources and money if they do not engage with users directly, according to research published in the International Journal of Business Information Systems.

Reza Jamali of Tarbiat Modares University (TMU), in Tehran, Iran, and colleagues have undertaken a qualitative study of documents in the public domain published by fifty Fortune global 500 companies. The team analyzed the terms and statements that the companies used to describe their social responsibility policies and identified the types of [social media](#) they used as part of their efforts. The team also surveyed almost 1300 [consumers](#) who used at least one of those fifty companies for their interests and preferences.

Their results indicate that common "digital strategies" failed to meet the objectives of the companies in disseminating information about their corporate social responsibilities activities. Fundamentally, the team suggests that the main reason underlying this failure is that consumers are constantly bombarded by such messages but have little interest in them. Moreover, consumers seem to prefer video and photo messages whereas the majority of messages are coming from corporate websites and the [company](#) social network page. "Using social media without engaging users cannot be considered a success and should be considered an expense with no return," the team reports.

At least three quarters of Fortune 500 companies are officially on

Twitter and more than two thirds on Facebook page, the team adds, and yet, consumers do not perceive the presence of these companies as being effective in communicating with them, despite the companies themselves imagining that social media is an effective tool for them. Businesses that demonstrate social responsibility attract more supporters, that much is clear. However, the research suggests that companies in "broadcast" mode, simply churning out information is generally not listened to. The team concludes that a modern "digital strategy", or in the parlance of the research literature, "social strategy", must take into account the needs of customers almost at the individual level and must create interactions as if between friends or at the very least acquaintances, rather than between consumers en masse and the opaque company profile.

More information: Jamali, R., Moshabaki, A. and Kordnaej, A. (2016) 'The competitiveness of CSR communication strategy in social media', *Int. J. Business Information Systems*, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp.1–16.

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