



The Role of Social Media in Sustainable Branding: A Systemic Literature Review

Sara Santos, Maria Vasconcelos, Sónia Ferreira, Luísa Augusto, Pedro Espírito Santo (/affiliate/pedro-espiritosanto/474641/)

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Abstract

Consumers increasingly expect brands to make a positive impact on communities and societies. Nowadays, communicating about corporate social responsibility can involve storytelling techniques, making the issues more understandable and relatable than straightforward and logical messages. However, in the academic field, research needs to gather and systematise the relationship between these topics and their influence on stakeholders' attitudes. This chapter aims to understand how stakeholders act towards storytelling content related to corporate social responsibility on social media. Thirteen academic papers were gathered from the Scopus and Web of Science databases, which were in English and openly accessible, fulfilling the inclusion criteria. These papers provided insights into stakeholders' perspectives on corporate social responsibility storytelling on social media. This study holds significant implications for businesses, emphasising the value of crafting narratives on social media.

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Compelling Storytelling Narratives for Sustainable Branding

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Introduction

The world is undergoing transformative shifts in social, political, and economic realms, giving rise to a new corporate culture. Regardless of size and industry, companies acknowledge the significance of their societal impact and the tangible advantages of embracing a proactive stance towards corporate social responsibility. As the digital landscape evolves, more than traditional approaches to brand value creation may be needed. Social media and other digital platforms are double-edged tools that facilitate interactive engagement between organisations and potential customers, playing a significant role in corporate communication. This topic becomes relevant in today's business environment, where consumers demand more from brands than goods and services. Therefore, businesses must communicate with their stakeholders—whether internal or external—about their corporate social responsibility initiatives in an effective manner. Online platforms have become a prime platform for businesses to discuss corporate social responsibility efforts (Araujo & Kollat, 2018). The debate surrounding social media's role in sustainable branding emphasises how crucial it is to match company ideals with public expectations, underscoring the connection between social responsibility and commercial success in the digital era.

The increasing focus on corporate social responsibility communication has sparked extensive research into the most effective ways to communicate and promote initiatives related to this matter (Ahmad & Crowther, 2013). Lectures and case studies, simulations, and storytelling are illustrative techniques practical in raising moral queries and stimulating social debate on corporate social responsibility subjects (García-Rosell, 2016). Corporate storytelling is creating a tale about people, the business, its operations, past accomplishments, and future objectives to promote or create a unique viewpoint (Gill, 2011b). The researchers suggested that human memory works narratively, which proposes that people like to engage in stories rather than focus on factual information (Woodside, 2010). Storytelling, by rephrasing ideas in a relatable and easily understood manner, aids in making things more relatable and accurate to the listener than explanatory communications, making them more memorable and convincing (Pérez et al., 2020). According to Barker and Gower (2010), stories are a valuable communication tool that can create a sense of shared understanding and legitimacy. Therefore, people may gather insights and connect and comprehend other people's viewpoints through stories created through storytelling (Hall et al., 2021).

Engaging stakeholders in a way that reduces their scepticism of corporate social responsibility online initiatives is a significant challenge when developing an effective communication strategy (Lee et al., 2018). Furthermore, effectively communicating these initiatives to stakeholders increases trust and involvement with the firm, cultivates brand affection, and influences purchase intentions (Chu & Chen, 2019). Various researchers identified storytelling as an effective method. It significantly impacts the narrative on stakeholders' decision-making, experiences, and brand ratings, aiding with

corporate positioning (Baker, 2014; Youssef et al., 2018). For example, since 2010, P&G has been running an Olympics-related storytelling campaign, "Thank you Mom", which praises mothers' sacrifices to support their child athletes. This initiative shows the values that P&G holds and helps to attract and approach its stakeholders through brand advocacy (Coombs, 2019). First National Bank is also an example, with its "You Can Help" campaign that involves sharing and narrating welfare stories of people, animals, and other social protagonists. This action generated positive responses from stakeholders (Steenkamp & Rensburg, 2019). However, according to Delgado-Ballester and Fernández-Sabiote (2016), there is still a significant lack of adoption of this approach in the business sector, particularly online, indicating a disconnect between theory and practice and a chance lost for businesses to improve communication efficiency, namely within the corporate social responsibility context.

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