

Chapter 17

The Use of New Media Applications in Corporate Social Responsibility: Vodafone “#BuMamaBenden” Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Corporate social responsibility is the responsibility of the corporations towards the stakeholders, the environment, and society. It covers the voluntary practices for the solution of social problems. Similar to other areas, new media applications offer new opportunities in terms of corporate social responsibility practices. In addition, it is now possible for companies to benefit from four different types of media: “paid, earned, shared, and owned media”. The purpose of this study is to reveal how corporations take advantage of paid, owned, earned, and shared media using new media applications in their social responsibility practices. For this purpose, the Vodafone Turkey Foundation’s #BuMamaBenden project is selected as a case study and examined. The research results show that new media applications can be used as an effective tool to reach people. Moreover, the coordinated use of these four media types can increase the impact of corporate social responsibility projects and keeps them alive.

INTRODUCTION

Corporate social responsibility practices, which are a significant part of both public relations and applications in terms of corporations’ image and reputation, are dealing with social issues as well as corporations’ interests. Corporate social responsibility is defined as an organization’s responsibility toward society and its environment or an effort to support the solution of social problems.

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The developments of the internet and new media applications have provided new facilities and opportunities for practitioners in many fields, such as communication, public relations, and advertising. Unlike traditional communication tools, new media technologies and the internet enable corporations to change the way they communicate with the consumers and stakeholders. They enhance dialogue, disseminate information rapidly, and engage with audiences/consumers in the content creation process. In particular, this development in the content creation process can be explained as the power gaining by the audiences, consumers or users. Nowadays, users can share their satisfactions, dissatisfactions, ideas, experiences, and opinions on any subject. Thereby they disseminate information about any corporate according to their own experience. In this sense, it is possible to discuss the user's function as a source of information and news. Accordingly, developments in communication technologies, the internet, and new media tools stand out as channels that allow users to produce content about corporations. These developments draw attention to two types of new media namely "earned" and "shared" media which can be regarded as new reflections of the possibilities offered by new media and digital technologies.

Before the internet and digital technologies come to the fore, it can be noted that two other types of media have been used very actively in the traditional sense. They have been conceptualized as "paid media" which refers to paid communication channels used by corporations, and "owned media" which are described as communication channels owned and/or controlled by the corporations.

When these four media types are defined respectively, paid media refers to traditional advertisements, sponsorships, social media ads, and more. The main purpose of paid media is advertising. Owned media is more like corporations' own media such as corporate websites, blogs, official social media accounts and comprises of content that is created and control by corporations. Earned media includes publicity and media relations. Finally shared media refers to social media and new media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram which are the leading tools that allow users to create and share content. This type of media also covers comments, shares, and contents (i.e., mentions, repost, reviews) created by users. In light of these explanations, the PESO model in which these four media types are handled integrally in the literature will be examined within the scope of the study. At this point, it is possible to say that both earned and shared media contents can be assumed to be more effective than corporation generated content. It can be said that these types of media, which have a similar effect to traditional word of mouth (WOM) communication, has a greater impact on consumers' decisions compared to the paid or owned media contents.

The main purpose of the study is to examine the function of new media applications in corporate social responsibility practices. This study, which is based on the case study method, analyzed media contents of Vodafone's social responsibility project "#BuMamaBenden" (#ThisFoodIsOnMe) initiated in 2018. The project aims to allow users to help street animals independently from Vodafone and enables them to formula feeding animals via tweeting #BuMamaBenden hashtags. It encourages users to create content with the specified hashtag on behalf of the corporation and to be a part of the social responsibility project, as well it ensures the continuation of the social responsibility activity planned by the corporation. Vodafone campaign is an indication of how efficiently new media can be used in terms of social responsibility applications. In this context, the study is thought to be important to see how new media tools can be used actively in social responsibility practices.

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