

Chapter 4

The Benefits of Social Networking Sites in Building Reputation for Enterprises

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to clarify the role of social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn in building the reputation of enterprises. SNSs have a vast potential in the digital environment to build reputation and thus a long-term competitive advantage for companies. The chapter opts for a literature review with which to discuss the difficulties and possibilities companies have in building reputation through SNSs. The SNSs used in companies are marketing-centered. Engagement is promoted only with customers, and is short-term and centered on results instead of being long-term and centered on competitive advantage and promoting engagement with different stakeholders. This issue is not dependent on the size of the company. Instead, it is dependent on understanding the concept of reputation from a strategic point of view, with companies adapting their management to their own particularities and to the different possibilities offered by SNSs.

INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses Social Networking Sites (SNSs) as part of a Social Media (SM) strategy in building reputation for companies. Considerable research has been done into Social Media practices (Karami & Naghibi, 2014), and, over the last few years, SNSs and SM in general have been gaining popularity among both scholars and companies (Dutot & Bergeron, 2016).

Social Media are forms of electronic communication through which users share information, ideas, personal messages and other content such as videos.

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SNSs are part of a firm's social media strategy (Chung, Tyan & Chung, 2017), and act as communication platforms, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc. that allow, particularly, networking, as a way of establishing contacts for an organization to be known, and to listen and learn from others. Social networking sites present some different particularities from other social media channels such as webpages, blogs, wikis, etc. Social networking sites are "Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (Boyd & Ellison, 2008:211). According to these authors, SNSs "enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks" (op. Cit.: 201), and allow individuals to engage with strangers.

Although the issue about reputation and social media has been addressed by professionals (e.g. books such as Azevedo, 2018; Tyler, 2016; Miller, 2015) more than academically (Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom 2015; Pownall, 2015), however, the issue of managing reputation through SNSs in particular does not seem to have been sufficiently addressed. In this line, Zenelaj, Gambarov & Bilge (2016) confirm the importance of managing corporate reputation through the use of SNSs, finding it to have a significant effect on corporate reputation. Also, Rashid, Othman, Othman & Salleh (2016) argue that SNSs should be included in a firm's strategic planning as part of its effort to maintain long-term corporate reputation.

Given this context, the present work begins with a preview review of the literature found in Scopus, Google Scholar and WOS (Web of Science) database, using the keywords Reputation+SNSs, SNSs+Enterprises, and Enterprises+Reputation. All document considered relevant for this work are contained in WOS (although some of them were possible to find also in Scopus or Google Scholar). At any case, WOS is the most complete database due to the fact that it includes papers indexed in Science Citation Index, Arts & Humanities Citation Index, Emerging Sources Citation Index and Conference Proceedings, Book Citation Index among others (WOS, 2018).

The term of Social Networking Sites rather than Social Media was chosen since we consider all SNSs to be part of the Social Media strategy, but that the Social Media strategy includes other, broader, formats than just SNSs (Chung *et al.*, 2017).

The term reputation has been considered as corporate reputation excluding documents related to personal reputation or other concepts as prominence, prestige or well-known. The term has been defined widely in the specific literature related to corporate issues (Podnar & Golob, 2017) and has to be understood as different from other terms as corporate celebrity, corporate image or corporate identity (Gardberg, 2017).

The term enterprise has been considered and also different synonyms such as business, firm, organization and corporation.

The first combination of keywords (Reputation+SNSs) yielded a total of sixteen documents that were framed within the areas of knowledge of communication, marketing in general, tourism marketing, and information and technology. For the SNSs+Enterprises and synonyms combinations, most of the documents focused on the marketing environment from a commercial perspective. The combination Enterprises and synonyms +Reputation yielded more documents, of which those which addressed communication strategically were taken into account. It was clear that the scope of reputation linked to SNSs, in particular, has received little attention, and is an area of study that calls for further investigation. Due to the fact that although SNSs can be considered as a particular part of Social Media, when "Social Networking Sites" is introduced as key word in databases, the most part of documents referred generally to Social Media, not to social networking sites as particular platforms, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.

In this line, the present chapter will deal with explaining the following topics:

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