

Assessing SME Perceptions of Using Green Social Media Marketing

Dr Shelley B Beck, Dr Ayanda P Deliwe, Prof Elroy E Smith

Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The image of an enterprise in relation to the environment in which it operates is currently of increased importance (Liskova, Cudlinova, Partlova & Petr, 2016, p.64). An enterprise's brand image is a customer's perception of a brand and can help customers assemble information, discriminate brands, create positive feelings, and create a reason to purchase (Huang, Yang & Wang, 2014, p.263). Therefore, enterprises aim to create a strong positive image of their brand which can be generated through marketing programmes. Social media marketing is the application of marketing principles, tools and techniques to social media platforms to differentiate and position the brand better than competitors (Neti, 2011, p.3). Enterprises should therefore use social media to promote and communicate their green initiatives to their stakeholders because of the prominent benefits it offers. Conscious and careful use of social media is the most promising investment for furthering an enterprise's green marketing strategies and by implementing green projects as a CSR initiative SMEs can satisfy their stakeholders (Williams, Page & Petrosky, 2014, p.26). SMEs do not effectively and efficiently market their enterprises due to the lack of funding, insufficient cash flow and the need for technical assistance to market their enterprise (National Small Business Chamber, 2016). Social media is the most popular means of communication in society and provide a good solution as it allows enterprises to interact with their stakeholders through dialogue and engagement to identify and satisfy stakeholder expectations (Bibri, 2008, p.14). The implementation of marketing activities that communicate enterprises' social and environmental initiatives creates added value and enhances financial performance (Bibri, 2008, p.14). If SMEs promote their green initiatives in their marketing communications that are directed at their stakeholders, they could succeed in marketing their business effectively and as a result grow and survive in the long term. However, few SMEs in South Africa are aware that implementing green strategies can improve their profitability and their survival.

Keywords: Green marketing; social media marketing; SME's