

Social media en social entrepreneurship

Informational Governance



WAGENINGENUR
For quality of life



This project aims to explore how social media enables social innovation. It is part of a larger project which aims to explore the *role* of social media in social innovation.

Background

Social media is a relatively novel platform. Social media refers to a broad range of online word-of-mouth forums, such as blogs, forums, chat rooms, and social networking websites. The content of these platforms is created by the users themselves. In comparison with traditional media, social media enables more social processes (Kietzman *et al.*, 2011). As such, social media might enable social innovation.

Objective

This project is part of a larger project which aims to explore the role of social media in social innovation. This subproject aims to explore *how* social media enables social innovation. We explore whether social media increases social identification, collective action, collective emotions and sustainable behaviour.

Introduction

Informational governance arrangements are developed to transfer sustainability information to consumers with the aim of influencing consumers' food purchasing behavior. This study explores whether different media channels affect the way how information is processed.



Highlights project

- Literature review towards the role of social media in social innovation.
- Experimental study that shows that social media affect collectively experienced emotions and pro-environmental intentions.
- Explore which aspects of social media are most effective (e.g., social identification or information sharing).



Results

Literature review (2012)

The literature review (see *Sociale media: nieuwe wegen naar sociale innovatie* from Salverda *et al.*, 2012) shows that social media enables social innovation. Social innovation refers to novel cooperation, strategies, concepts, ideas and organizations that meet social needs and extend and strengthen civil society. We reviewed the literature and provided a large range of examples from practice. As such, we provide an overview of theoretical and practical examples of the social function of social media. In short, social media has several practical advantages (e.g., lower costs and large reach). Moreover, it facilitates group processes that are important for social innovation, such as social interaction and collective identity.

Experimental study (2013)

Then we conducted a preliminary scenario-based *experimental study* to explore whether and how social media enables social processes. We provided consumers with information regarding the emissions of Dutch consumers compared to other countries. We asked them to imagine that they received this information via different media channels (mail, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube). We show that the use of different media channels affects the emotions consumers experience. Information via social media results in more guilt, anger and sadness and less pride and joy compared to providing information via mail. We thus show that the same information is processed differently such that consumers experience more negative and less positive emotions when this information is provided via social media (LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube) compared to mail. Moreover, we show that there is no difference on emotions and pro-environmental intentions between

the different media channels. This implies that the same process occurs for several social media channels.

Furthermore, we explore *how* this mechanism occurs. We show that it is not the process of activating the social self (i.e. how individuals see themselves in relation to others) which accounts for this process. We show a first indication that social identification (i.e. the self is part of a relevant social group such as being Dutch) accounts for this process. Respondents who receive information via social media are more sensitive towards social identification.

Follow-up experiments

In 2014 we will further explore by means of an experimental study whether social identification accounts for the different effects of media channel on individuals emotional experience and intentions. By understanding how this process works, we can find routes to influence this process. Practical implications regarding social identification can for example be that individuals see directly that they are part of a group, or receive a notification behind their online names. Subsequently the information might be far more effective in guiding social behaviour.

References

Irini Salverda, Pat van der Jagt, Rijk Willemse, Marleen Onwezen en Jan Top (2012). *Sociale media: nieuwe wegen naar sociale innovatie*. www.zodoenwijdathier.nl



Bookcover *Sociale media; new ways to social innovation*.

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