

# Should Firms Encourage Employees to Engage in Work-Related Social Media Use? An Abstract



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**Abstract** Gartner (2020) reports that 82% of the US population uses Facebook, followed by Instagram, with 42% using the social media network. Social media provides an opportunity for firms to encourage employees to post on their personal social media about their work. However, firms still terminate the employee for work-related personal social media posts. Loyal employees passionate about the brand could potentially attract new customers by posting work-related content. Thus, an effective marketing strategy could motivate employees to create positive electronic word of mouth (eWOM) for their employers (Zhang et al., 2021) by sharing firms' posts or work-related posts.

Resource advantage theory (RA theory) posits that firms use available resources to achieve competitive advantage and superior financial performance (Hunt & Morgan, 1995). These resources do not need to be owned by firms but are only available to them. For example, Hunt (2014) proposed that skilled and knowledgeable employees are operant resources for firms. Likewise, social media could be viewed as a resource that provides firms with the dynamic capability to facilitate customer engagement.

Two research questions guided this exploratory study. R1 asks: Do most employers implement formal social media policies, and does this impact employees' social media usage related to work? R2 asks: Do frontline employees use social media to connect with customers, or are managers more likely to engage in work-related social media use?

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The sample for this exploratory study includes B2C salespeople. Qualtrics was used to set up the survey with a panel from Prolific to collect data from marketing, sales, and retail employees. The model tested was a 2 (frontline employee vs. manager)  $\times$  2 (employer social media policy vs. no social media policy) MANCOVA with two dependent variables (new customer outreach and communicating with existing customers) from the Landes and Callan (2014). Perceived ease of using social media (Rauniar et al., 2014) as a covariate. The results indicate that a social media policy doesn't impact work-related social media use, answering R1. However, the position in the firm was significant; thus, R2 is partially answered. Next, we looked at the direction of the means for further insight into the differences. Managers ( $M = 4.86$ ,  $SD = 2.80$ ) are far more likely than frontline employees ( $M = 2.75$ ,  $SD = 2.03$ ) to use their social media to communicate with existing customers. For reaching out to potential (new) customers, managers ( $M = 4.94$ ,  $SD = 1.97$ ) are more likely, but frontline employees ( $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = 2.04$ ) are also a bit more likely to use social media.

RA Theory supports the suggestion that employees can serve as effective brand ambassadors by using their social media accounts to communicate with existing and potential customers.

**Keywords** Employee social media use · Social media policy · Resource Advantage Theory · Work-related social media

References Available Upon Request.