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Engaging for Good:
Drivers of Social Media Engagement with Pro-Social Messages

Abstract
Over the last decade, brands have increasingly embedded societal causes into their communication with consumers. This trend has accelerated in social media, where brand managers often mix more traditional promotional brand messages with pro-social messages, defined as messages about the societal benefits or contributions of a brand. Significant research attention has been given to understand factors that explain consumer engagement with promotionally oriented social media messages, but no studies to our knowledge have specifically examined the nature of social media engagement of pro-social messages by brands. This research contributes to the domain by studying the effect of content design characteristics of pro-social messages on engagement in social media. The study draws on post-level pro-social media messages by 18 brands in both Twitter and Facebook. After controlling for traditionally examined message characteristics, the results suggest that both motivation related factors, namely mission based goals and calls to action effort and ability related factors, namely brand fit and responsibility have a significant impact on social media engagement. The results differ in significant ways from prior findings in traditional media. The results are robust to selection and endogeneity related concerns.

Short Bio
Sundar Bharadwaj is the Coca Cola Company Chair Professor of Marketing at the Terry College of Business, University of Georgia. Prior to joining the Terry College in Fall 2011, he served as a Professor of Marketing at the Goizueta Business School, Emory University for 18 years. He has held visiting faculty positions at the Wharton School, Cornell University, HEC (Paris), Indian School of Business and Singapore Management University. His research focuses on business problems relating to current and long-term returns and risks to marketing investments in brands, customers, innovation, and marketing strategy. He was recently listed among the 50 most productive researchers worldwide in the top 4 marketing journals for the period 2008-2014 by the AMA DocSig. His research has been published in the Journal of Marketing, Journal of Marketing Research, Marketing Science, Management Science, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, International Journal of Research in Marketing and the Journal of International Business Studies.