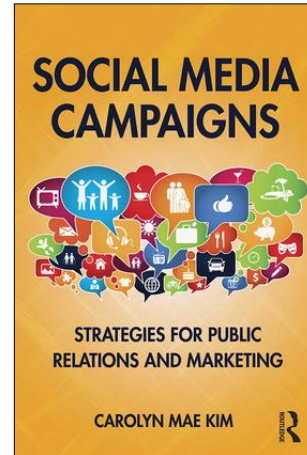


Carolyn Mae Kim, **Social Media Campaigns: Strategies for Public Relations and Marketing**, New York, NY: Routledge, 2016, 182 pp., \$220.00 (hardcover), \$53.95 (paperback).

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***Social Media Campaigns: Strategies for Public Relations and Marketing*** is a book for both professionals in the industry and academics. Author Carolyn Mae Kim holds a PhD in communication and is also a practicing PR professional in the field. Dr. Kim introduces a four-step model for social media campaigns that enables organizations to engage in mutually beneficial, friendship-like relations with stakeholders. The book is divided into six chapters that explain the role of social media in communication campaigns. In addition, every chapter provides a commentary by PR professionals (“Expert Insight”), a list of relevant literature (“Suggested Readings”), a brief summary of the chapter (“Key Concept Snapshot”), and a list of references.



The first chapter, “Social Influence—Understanding the Development, Value, and Role of Social Media for Organizations,” provides a framework for understanding communication in social media. The author argues that several factors shape the landscape in which public relations professionals are operating today. First, customers expect organizations to implement a holistic approach to communication. Second, organizations are expected to build personal relationships with their stakeholders. In addition, customers participate in generating content (i.e., companies are not able to fully control messages about their brands). Finally, there is a deep mistrust toward organizations today.

Although other ventures have addressed the aforementioned factors (see, e.g., Solis & Breakenridge, 2009; Weber, 2009), this book provides a unique perspective on how communication via social media interrelates with other communications performed by an organization. Kim focuses on considering social media not as a tool but as an expression of an organization’s willingness to engage in transparent relations with its publics. She argues for treating social media as part of a big-picture communication strategy. The book suggests that, when used strategically, social media might help organizations in overcoming the growing mistrust directed toward them, as well as in maintaining two-way relationships with the brand’s publics. The four-step social media model is seen as a way “to build dynamic campaigns that truly leverage the power of a social community” (p. 20). The four suggested steps are: (1) listening, (2) strategic design, (3) implementation and monitoring, (4) and evaluation. This model looks a lot like models used in traditional offline PR (see, e.g., Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000; Wilcox, Cameron, & Reber, 2015). However, Kim’s book provides a new perspective on strategic communication along with step-by-step instructions about how PR professionals should approach social media communication.

Chapter 2 describes the first step of the four-step social media model, listening. This step includes formative research of the foundational background and of the social landscape. First, any social media

campaign should start with reviewing an organization's mission statement, structure, communication, and policies and procedures. This step can be compared to the well-known stage of analysis in traditional PR that goes by such names as "formative research" or the step of "defining public relations problems" (see, e.g., Cutlip et al., 2000). However, Kim expands our understanding of formative research in PR planning by considering features of social media communication and providing detailed instructions about how to analyze the social landscape before launching a campaign.

The analysis of the social landscape aims "to identify what conversations are taking place on social media that may be relevant to the brand, who is having those conversations, and ways that the organization might engage with that dialogue" (p. 32). Researching the social landscape requires listing keywords that might be used by stakeholders to discuss a brand on the Internet, identifying platforms where stakeholders are having conversations about the brand, analyzing brand communities, identifying influencers and building effective relationships with them, and analyzing how competitors communicate with their publics via social media. After analyzing the foundational background and the social landscape, a communication professional would be able to move to the phase of "sense-making" that should be performed by doing a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis and coming up with a problem/opportunity statement. Summarizing key points of the formative research using these two tools will enable a communication professional to develop a data-informed, strategic social media campaign.

Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the second step of the four-step model, strategic design. Designing a social media campaign requires communication professionals to go through two stages: developing a general social media strategic plan and designing the campaign itself. A good social media campaign has goals, identified audiences, SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timely) objectives, strategies, tactics, key messages, social media map, budget, and resources. It goes without saying that such elements will be unique for each organization. Moreover, anyone familiar with the topic of social media marketing would readily agree that a big challenge in this field is the enormous speed of technological development. Every year technology takes a new turn, thus making a number of strategies, tactics, and objectives irrelevant. Kim overcomes these challenges by addressing timeless values that most likely will be relevant to any organization and will be up to date for a long time after publication of the book. Drawing upon classical approaches to PR such as the Excellence theory (Grunig, 1992) and TARES (truthfulness, authenticity, respect, equity, social responsibility) ethics model (Baker & Martinson, 2001), Kim suggests that social media campaigns should be grounded in high ethical principles that would enable a company and its publics to build a mutually beneficial relationship. In addition, social media campaigns should be creative and aim for meaningful communication (i.e., "to be designed with people and relationships in mind"; p. 91). Engaging others, building a community, and leveraging the platform culture are the key elements that communication professionals need to keep in mind when moving to the next step.

Chapter 5 focuses on the third step of the model, implementation and monitoring. The author suggests using a content calendar to implement the strategy developed within the previous two steps. After creating the content calendar and launching the campaign, communication professionals should focus on engaging with their social media publics, avoiding social media fatigue within the brand's community, and monitoring social media communication. It is worth noting that when working with social media,

communication professionals should be flexible and ready to respond to crises, including those external from social media and those derived from social media activities of the brand or its publics.

The last chapter is about evaluation. This step results in summative data that are used “not only to evaluate whether a campaign was successful but also to lay a foundation for the listening phase of future campaigns” (p. 148). Interestingly, while some communication professionals focus only on the impact of their social media, Kim argues for evaluation of the three sections of the campaign, which are preparation, implementation, and impact. Presented along with the four-step model, these three sections look a little confusing, as now, it breaks a campaign into three parts instead of four. However, in general, such an approach provides insight into possible contributions of social media to the organization’s goals and objectives. The author also urges communication professionals to consider features of each platform when deciding key performance indicators of the campaign. In addition, collaborating with other departments within an organization makes the evaluation step more beneficial for the company as it provides “a truly holistic understanding of the impact of social media within an organization” (p. 176).

In sum, this book will be insightful for academics and communication professionals interested in digital public relations, Internet marketing, and social media campaigns. The book provides a theoretical background for understanding communication in social media, which will be interesting for scholars studying online PR and marketing. At the same time, professionals from the industry will find best practices and step-by-step instructions about how to plan and launch a social media campaign especially valuable for their work. In addition, the book provides a number of infographics, real-world examples, and Internet tools that might be helpful both for people in academia and in the industry. A possible limitation of the book is that it requires basic PR knowledge such as knowing professional jargon (e.g., “stakeholders”, “publics”) and having some sense of trending approaches in the field (e.g., the two-way symmetrical model of communication). Another possible limitation is that the book relies mostly on Western social media practices, which might be not applicable outside of the United States and Europe. Nevertheless, *Social Media Campaigns: Strategies for Public Relations and Marketing* will enrich your toolbox whether you are a scholar or a practicing professional in the industry.

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