

PRODUCT KARMA

This latest incarnation of social media adds transparency to the branding game

SOCIAL MEDIA has overtaken pornography as the number one activity on the internet. The web is fast becoming more sociable than searchable, as recent data indicating that Facebook gets as many visits as Google demonstrates. If Facebook were a country, and its users its citizens, it would be the world's fourth largest. Social media, in fact, is another country. The difference being that you can't choose where you were born, but you can choose what social media you use.

It stands to reason therefore, that if you want to change the world, social media is the modern place to start. Active social media users may have noticed recently an acceleration in the number of "groups" they've been asked to join, from local rugby fan

pages through to Free Tibet and Boycott Nestle.

But Craig Davis, chief creative officer of Publicis Mojo Australia, has taken the concept a step further, building – in his own time and with his own money – a social media site dedicated to gathering the collective wisdom on the "goodness" – or not – of brands.

"People understand that their purchase decisions have consequences, and they want to do the right thing – if only they knew where to start," he says. His website aims to help.

Brand Karma (www.brandkarma.com) does everything that other social media sites do – its users create a profile, attract friendships and carry on conversations with other members

– but at this website, it is all brand-centric. For instance, you may love Google but hate Shell, and thus become a lover and hater, respectively, of those brands. You can rate each brand against five criteria: planet, customers, employees, suppliers and investors. The aggregate rating for the label along each of these five axes generates a "brand flower", the colour and shape of which provide instant feedback on the crowd's opinion of that brand's "karma".

There are, no doubt, plenty of consumers out there with time and energy to chatter away about their chosen brands and rate them. We'll have to wait and see if this kind of thing ends up changing the world for the better.