Chapter 61

Creating Consumer–Based Brand Equity With Social Media Content Marketing

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ABSTRACT

Due to the growing importance of company-initiated online brand communities (OBCs) like Facebook brand fan pages, details about consumers' perceptions of these sites need to be linked to their effects on customer-based brand equity. This research builds on Keller and Lehmann's brand value chain as the theoretical foundation and adopts the theory to fit the social media context. This approach enables the simultaneous evaluation of the impact of consumer online content perceptions on both fan-page engagement and consumers' brand mindset. Specifically, this research investigates the consumer-based outcomes of perceptions of content's vividness and interactivity as well as the effects of perceived information and entertainment value of brand posts. In addition, this empirical study evaluates the consequences of positive brand fans' comments for consumer online engagement (e.g., liking), brand awareness, image, and attitude. Results show that consumer-oriented brand pages can stimulate positive offline brand engagement such as loyalty and recommendation.

INTRODUCTION

Strong consumer-brand relationships produce positive outcomes for both relationship partners: While consumers benefit – amongst others – from satisfying their social needs, brands profit considerably from the loyalty and advocacy of their committed customers (e.g., Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005). 'Online brand communities' (OBCs) are one instrument to strengthen consumer-brand relationships and to increase relational bonds by fostering interaction with customers (e.g., Teichmann, Stokburger-Sauer, Plank, & Strobl, 2015). OBCs are "online aggregations of customers who collectively co-produce and consume content about a commercial activity that is central to their interest by exchanging intangible

resources" (Wiertz & de Ruyter, 2007, p. 349). In OBCs consumers gather together in sub-groups of the brand's clientele – sharing a common interest on a specific brand (Woisetschläger, Harleb, & Blut, 2008). Consumers participate in company-created OBCs in order to share their passion for a specific brand, to exchange consumption-relevant information and knowledge (e.g., brand stories), to provide recommendations and/or to simply express their affection for a specific brand.

Today, marketers regularly put much effort in the creation of maintenance of specific forms of OBCs: company-initiated 'brand fan-pages' on *Facebook*. Given *Facebook's* popularity, these brand-focused social media sites shall facilitate the interaction and information flow with and among consumers who are able to read, comment or 'like' brand posts (i.e., marketers' postings) and/or comments of fellow shoppers (i.e., consumers' postings) (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Within the last years, marketers have continued to invest both time and budget in social media outlets to foster dialogic communication with their customers online: Worldwide marketing spending on social media reached $31 billion in 2016 (Statista, 2017). Well-known examples include brand fan-pages hosted by *Coca-Cola* with 107m members (facebook.com/cocacola), *Starbucks* with 37m members (facebook.com/starbucks), and *Walmart* with 34m members (facebook.com/walmart). All these pages aim to promote companies' brands, services as well as products and – at the same time – seek to actively involve customers in the value creation process by providing the "right" content (Pagani, Hofacker, & Goldsmith, 2011).

Given its increasing marketing relevance, academic research has put much emphasis on the investigation of brand pages' effects on consumer reactions. For instance, Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) find that members of brand fan-pages are more committed and loyal to the company. In addition, this consumer group is more susceptible to marketing messages. Simultaneously, positive consumer behavior seems to emanate to the non-online sphere as Royo-Vella and Casamassima (2011), amongst others, demonstrate: The scholars show that 'brand fans' (i.e., individuals who 'liked' the brand's official *Facebook* page) have higher satisfaction and affective commitment towards the brand in contrast to non-fans. Various studies support a positive relationship between the degree to which consumers are engaged in a brand's online community and consumer commitment (e.g., Kim, Choi, Qualls, &, Han, 2008), brand attachment and identification (e.g., Zhou, Zhang, Su, & Zhou, 2012), brand loyalty (Algesheimer, Dholakia, & Herrmann, 2005; Casalo, Flavian, & Guinaliu, 2007), and purchasing intentions (e.g., Hur, Ahn, & Kim, 2011).

Until today, however, only limited research addresses the direct effects of consumers' *Facebook* brand page content (i.e., brand posts) perceptions (i.e., subjective evaluations) on both (i) consumers' *brand page engagement* and (ii) consumers' *brand reactions*. Specifically, by developing a conceptual model, this research aims to investigate the diverse content factors driving community members' brand fan-page engagement (i.e., online community engagement or activities on the brand fan-page – e.g., 'liking', commenting, contributing) and consumers' brand mind set (i.e., brand-related attitudes). The conceptual model further assumes that both elements have an effect on consumers' *brand engagement* (i.e., loyalty and positive word-of-mouth). The framework of investigation is based upon current academic insights. This research contributes by investigating the role of consumer perceptions of various fan-page content characteristics (e.g., vividness; interactivity; information and entertainment value; valence of other brand fans' comments) in driving important social media outcomes. That is, consumer community and brand engagement as well as brand awareness, brand image and brand attitude. By doing so, this research develops a deep understanding of how consumers' perceptions of a brand-focused *Facebook* page can foster their relationships with the brand.

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