

The Influence of User-generated Content on the Brand Image at the Example of GoPro

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User-generated content has not only become a buzz word in the marketing environment over the past years, but also a very powerful tool digital marketers should not miss out on. The present master thesis follows up on relevant theory and latest research results in the field of brand management and (content) marketing to find out which influence user-generated content has on the brand image. A quantitative online survey with an experimental design – at the example of the brand GoPro – is conducted.

→ Ever since the passive user became a prosumer, companies try their best to involve their users, trigger their engagement and create a dialogue on eye-level in the digital world. User-generated content in various forms such as online reviews, Facebook posts or YouTube videos has gained attention and popularity in two ways: creating and consuming it. Hence big brands like Coca Cola or Spotify make use of this unique content and even include it in their communication activities.

There has been research conducted on user-generated content, but the influence on the brand image has not been researched yet. Answering this question has on the one hand a high economic relevance for marketers, who increasingly use user-generated, as well as empiric relevance since the state of research does not provide decent results if and how user-generated content has an impact on the brand's image.

The theoretical background includes a literature review in terms of brand management and marketing, focusing on the concept of brand image. According to Esch the brand image can be operationalized into e.g. kinds, strength, number, uniqueness, (...) of brand associations. Keller adds favorability of associations and emphasizes as well on the importance of uniqueness. In terms of user-generated content latest research results are taken in consideration, e.g. the attitudes of consumers towards user-generated content (Hansen, Lee & Lee, 2014), the effects of user-generated content on consumers' brand liking (Kohlmann, 2015) and the trust in advertising vs. user-generated content (MacKinnon, 2012).

The superordinated research question is formulated as follows: Does user-generated content have a different influence on a brand's image than content professionally produced by a brand? Another subordinated research question is formulated: In what way do recipients of user-generated content rate a brand's image differently than recipients of content professionally produced by a brand?

To answer these questions a quantitative online survey with an experimental setting is conducted. An experiment is the suited tool since it analyses causality by manipulating the independent variable and measures the effect on dependent variables (e.g. brand image and perception of brand personality). For the present research a user-generated GoPro video is chosen – the experimental group is exposed to the original unbranded version, while the control group is exposed to the branded version of the video.