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Brand-sponsored versus Consumer-generated Online Brand Communities

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of:

Masters of Business Studies
in
Marketing

At Massey University, Auckland, New Zealand.

Stephanie J McKenzie
2009
I declare that this research study is entirely the product of my own work and that it has not been taken from the work of others. When the work and ideas of others have been used in the study, the work has been properly cited in the text.

Stephanie J McKenzie

December 2009
Abstract

This research focuses on online brand communities from a brand management perspective. The purpose of this study is to contribute to understanding of online brand communities by examining differences in brand-sponsored and consumer-generated online brand communities, and to extend research into online brand communities by examining online brand communities for a sports brand. The first phase of this study investigates how consumption practices differ in brand-sponsored and consumer-generated online brand communities. Online brand communities for the All Blacks brand were selected as a case study for this research. The All Blacks brand-sponsored and consumer-generated online brand communities were observed for eight weeks and afterwards discussions in both communities were analysed for two weeks to identify consumption practices. Ethical issues pertinent to this research design meant raw comments and discussions could not be collected and instead discussions were immediately analysed through a coding process. The second phase of this study investigates marketing industry expert views on brand-sponsored and consumer-generated online brand communities. Interviews with three representatives from service and sports organisations were held. The findings from this research contribute to literature on online brand communities by demonstrating brand-sponsored and consumer-generated online brand communities differ in consumption practices, language, self-expression, modes of interaction, and legitimacy. This study also extends research into online brand communities by investigating online brand communities for sports brands. Findings imply there are minimal differences between online brand communities for service or sports brands compared with online brand communities for goods. The outcomes from this research may also have a number of implications for marketers, hoping to capitalise on the growth of online brand communities.
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Table of Contents

1. Introduction 9

2. Literature Review 11
   2.1 Consumer-brand relationships 11
       2.1.1 Introduction to brands 11
       2.1.2 Introduction to consumer-brand relationships 13
       2.1.3 Identifying and measuring the quality of consumer-brand relationships 14
       2.1.4 Critique of consumer-brand relationship theory 16
       2.1.5 Consumer-brand relationships in this research study 18
   2.2 Approaches to, and definitions of communities 19
       2.2.1 What is a community? 19
       2.2.2 What is a brand community? 21
       2.2.3 What is an online community? 23
       2.2.4 What is an online brand community? 25
       2.2.5 The role of the Internet in establishing communities 27
       2.2.6 Summary of community approaches and definitions 30
   2.3 Research into online brand communities 31
   2.4 Consumption practices 34
       2.4.1 Research into fans 34
       2.4.2 Consumption practices and fans 35
       2.4.3 Communities and consumption practices 36
   2.5 Language and self-expression in online brand communities 40
   2.6 Modes of interaction and member types within online communities 42
   2.7 Summary and proposed research objectives and questions 45

3. Research Design 49
   3.1 Overview of methods 49
   3.2 Phase One: Analysis of discussions to identify consumption practices 51
       3.2.1 Justification for choice of case study 51
       3.2.2 Case selection criteria: brand-sponsored online community 53
       3.2.3 Case selection criteria: consumer-generated online community 55
       3.2.4 Immersion in online brand communities 56
       3.2.5 Analysis of community discussions to identify consumption practices 58
   3.3 Phase two: Marketing industry views on online brand communities 61
   3.4 Ethical issues pertinent to data collection and analysis 62

4. Results and Analyses 65
   4.1 Context of community discussions: Key events surrounding the All Blacks 66
   4.2 Results and analysis of the brand-sponsored online community 68
       4.2.1 Language dominating community discussions 69
       4.2.2 Analysis of community discussions 72
       4.2.3 Consumption practices 75
   4.3 Results and analysis of the consumer-generated online brand community 83
       4.4.1 Language dominating community discussions 84
       4.4.2 Analysis of community discussions 86
       4.4.3 Consumption practices 89
   4.4 Differences in consumption practices 94
   4.5 Marketing industry views on brand-sponsored and consumer-generated online brand communities 102
       4.6.1 Online brand communities for goods versus for service or sports brands 103
       4.6.2 Differences in online brand strategy for brand-sponsored and consumer-generated online brand communities. 106
4.6.3 Evolving trends in online brand communities 109
4.7 Summary of results and analyses 112

5. Discussion 114
5.1 Consumption practices for brand-sponsored and consumer-generated online brand communities 115
5.2 Language and self-expression in online brand communities 117
5.3 Modes of interaction within online brand communities 119
5.4 Differences in legitimacy of online brand communities 122
5.5 Online brand communities for goods versus service or sports brands 125

6. Conclusion 128
7. Limitations and directions for future research 132
7.1 Research limitations and ethical concerns 132
7.2 Directions for future research 132

8. Bibliography 134
Appendix A: Interview guideline 140
Appendix B: Ethical consent 144
List of Tables

Table 1: Top ten best global brands. Source: Interbrand, 2009. 12
Table 2: Definitions of communities 21
Table 3: Definitions of brand communities 22
Table 4: Definitions of online communities 24
Table 5: Definition of online brand community. Source: Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001. 26
Table 6: Brand communities and consumer durable products (a) 31
Table 7: Brand communities and consumer durable products (b) 32
Table 8: Communities and consumption practices 37
Table 9: Global All Blacks Awareness Study: Attitudes towards the All Blacks. Source: Continental, 2007. 52
Table 10: Identifying All Blacks online communities 54
Table 11: 2009 Philips Tri Nations Results. Source: NZRU, 2009. 67
Table 12: Frequency of interaction in online brand communities 69
Table 13: Codes from the brand-sponsored online community 73
Table 14: Codes from the consumer-generated online community 88
List of Figures

Figure 1: Six facets of brand relationship quality. Source: Fournier, 1998. 15
Figure 2: Four consumption interaction modes in online communities. Source: Kozinets, 1999. 43
Figure 3: Four community member types in online communities. Source: Kozinets, 1999. 44
Figure 4: Research Design Outline 50
Figure 5: Researcher immersion in the All Blacks community 57
Figure 6: Example of a typical online community discussion 68
Figure 7: Word cloud for the brand-sponsored online community 70
Figure 8: Consumption practices in brand-sponsored online brand community 76
Figure 9: Word cloud for the consumer-generated online community 85
Figure 10: Consumption practices in consumer-generated online community 90
Figure 11: Differences in consumption practices 95
Figure 12: Differences in key words dominating online communities 114