

Innovatives Markenmanagement
Christoph Burmann · Manfred Kirchgeorg *Hrsg.*

RESEARCH

Tanja Fink

Drivers of User Engagement in Influencer Branding

An Empirical Analysis of Brand-Related User-Generated Content on Instagram

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Innovatives Markenmanagement

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Marken sind in vielen Unternehmen mittlerweile zu wichtigen Vermögenswerten geworden, die zukünftig immer häufiger auch in der Bilanz erfasst werden können. Insbesondere in reiferen Märkten ist die Marke heute oft das einzig nachhaltige Differenzierungsmerkmal im Wettbewerb. Vor diesem Hintergrund kommt der professionellen Führung von Marken eine sehr hohe Bedeutung für den Unternehmenserfolg zu. Dabei müssen zukünftig innovative Wege beschritten werden. Die Schriftenreihe will durch die Veröffentlichung neuester Forschungserkenntnisse Anstöße für eine solche Neuausrichtung der Markenführung liefern.

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Tanja Fink

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An Empirical Analysis of
Brand-Related User-Generated
Content on Instagram



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Dissertation Universität Bremen 2020

(Promotionskolloquium: 3. November 2020; Erstgutachter: Prof. Dr. Christoph Burmann, Zweitgutachter: Prof. Dr. Martin Missong)

ISSN 2627-1109

ISSN 2627-1117 (electronic)

Innovatives Markenmanagement

ISBN 978-3-658-34650-8

ISBN 978-3-658-34651-5 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-34651-5>

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Responsible Editor: Anna Pietras

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The registered company address is: Abraham-Lincoln-Str. 46, 65189 Wiesbaden, Germany

Geleitwort

Soziale Medien verändern die Markenkommunikation nachhaltig. Vor allem Empfehlungen von Freunden in sozialen Medien sind aus Nachfragersicht besonders vertrauenswürdige Informationsquellen. Diese Entwicklung ebnet den Weg für die Erfolgsgeschichte von Social Media Influencern (SMIs). Als digitale Meinungsführer teilen SMIs ihren Alltag, Erinnerungen oder Markenempfehlungen mit ihren digitalen Freunden bzw. Followern. Deswegen sind SMIs heute ein sehr wichtiger und erfolgsentscheidender Brand Touch Point in der Kommunikationsstrategie vieler Marken.

Aufgrund ihrer hohen Vertrauenswürdigkeit beauftragen Marken die SMIs zur Erstellung und Veröffentlichung von markenbezogenen Inhalten, dem sogenannten „brand-related user-generated content“. Die konkrete Ausgestaltung dieser Social Media Posts und die Erfolgsmessung sind dabei wichtige Entscheidungsprobleme. Der am häufigsten genutzte Indikator für die Erfolgsmessung ist das „User Engagement“. User Engagement beschreibt die psychologische Verbundenheit eines Nutzers mit Online-Inhalten. Die Operationalisierung von User Engagement erfolgt häufig über verhaltensbezogene Manifestationen wie die Anzahl der „Gefällt mir“-Angaben (Likes) oder die Anzahl der Kommentare (Comments). Im Vergleich zu anderen quantitativen Erfolgsindikatoren bietet User Engagement den Vorteil einer einfachen Verfügbarkeit und guten Vergleichbarkeit. Zudem spielt User Engagement eine wichtige Rolle, wenn es um die Reichweite der zu kommunizierenden Markenbotschaft geht. Darüber hinaus belegen zahlreiche wissenschaftliche Studien die große Bedeutung von User Engagement zur Erreichung der Markenziele.

Hier setzt die vorliegende Dissertation von Frau Dr. Tanja Fink an. Sie adressiert damit eine ebenso aktuelle wie hoch relevante Fragestellung, die in der bisherigen Forschung noch nicht aufgegriffen wurde. Ziel ihrer exzellenten

Arbeit ist es, mittels eines sehr fundierten theoretischen Konzeptes und einer herausragenden empirischen Studie die wichtigsten Treiber des User Engagements zu identifizieren und deren relative Bedeutung exakt zu quantifizieren. Dabei besticht sie durchgängig durch ihre klare Sprache und die jederzeit sehr hohe Praxisrelevanz.

Die vorliegende Dissertation ist der **fünfundsechzigste Band der Buchreihe zum „innovativen Markenmanagement“** des Springer-Verlags. Diese Reihe dokumentiert die Markenforschung am markstones Institute of Marketing, Branding & Technology an der Universität Bremen und ausgewählte Markendissertationen der privaten Handelshochschule Leipzig (HHL) und anderer Universitäten. In dieser erfolgreichen Buchreihe wurden bislang jedes Jahr 3–5 neue Dissertationen veröffentlicht. Dadurch ist es gelungen, in kurzen Abständen immer wieder mit neuen Ideen das sehr große Interesse am innovativen Markenmanagement zu fördern. Diese große Nachfrage wird auch durch die Publikation des allen Dissertationen dieser Reihe zu Grunde liegenden Buches „Identitätsbasierte Markenführung“ in Deutsch (3. Aufl. 2018), Chinesisch (2. Aufl. 2017), Englisch (1. Aufl. 2017) und Französisch (1. Aufl. 2021) eindrucksvoll unterstrichen.

Abschließend wünsche ich der Dissertation von Frau Dr. Tanja Fink aufgrund der sehr hohen Aktualität des Themas und ihrer sehr guten Qualität eine sehr weite Verbreitung in Wissenschaft und Praxis.

Bremen
im November 2020

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Christoph Burmann

Vorwort

Die vorliegende Arbeit ist während meiner Tätigkeit als Mitarbeiterin am *markstones Institute of Marketing, Branding & Technology (AG Innovatives Markenmanagement)* entstanden. Die erfolgreiche Fertigstellung meiner Dissertation wäre ohne den Support zahlreicher Personen nicht möglich gewesen. Bedanken möchte ich mich zunächst bei meinem Doktorvater Prof. Dr. Christoph Burmann: für die Unterstützung während der Entstehung dieser Arbeit, die Möglichkeit mich einer kurzzeitigen Praxis-Pause zu widmen, das fortwährende Vertrauen trotz Verlängerung besagter Praxis-Pause und für die Übernahme des Erstgutachtens. Ebenfalls herzlich bedanken möchte ich mich bei Prof. Dr. Martin Missong: für die Zweitbegutachtung, ein immer offenes Ohr und dafür mein Interesse für das Thema Statistik geweckt zu haben, welches mich noch heute beruflich begleitet. Mein Dank gilt ebenso Prof. Dr. Marx und Prof. Dr. Kotzab für ihre Teilnahme an meinem Promotionskolloquium.

Ein großer Dank gilt natürlich meinen Kollegen vom LiM und markstones Institut. Was soll ich sagen, ohne euch wäre diese Zeit nicht ansatzweise so besonders gewesen: Andre Lienemann, Dr. Ayla Röbler, Dr. Eike Abraham, Dr. Henk Lütjens, Dr. Julia Sinnig, Dr. Marius Diegel, Dr. Michael Schade, Dr. Rico Piehler, Dr. Thomas Scholdra, Dr. Verena Sander, Jan Wiezorrek, Maik Dulle, Daniel von der Wense, Stefanie Barth, Tanja Koppen, Tanja Riggers und alle ehemaligen LiM-Kollegen.

Danke für die vielen unvergesslichen Momente – ihr seid Die Besten. Es war eine lange Zeit und ich habe in euch tolle Menschen und teilweise auch Freunde fürs Leben kennen lernen dürfen. Ich freue mich auf zahlreiche weitere post-doc Erlebnisse und insbesondere auf die vielen nachzuholenden Promotionsfeiern. Dank euch konnte auch mein zuvor nie geträumter Traum einer Goldenen Schallplatte endlich wahr werden. Ich werde mich beizeiten beim Initiator, Andre

Lienemann, mit einem “Pur Party Mix”-Überraschungsangriff bedanken. Besonderer Dank gilt (wie soll es auch anders sein) Dr. Michael Schade: Michi, deine fortwährende Unterstützung, deine zahlreichen Denkanstöße und mich stets erheitenden Excel-Wutanfälle haben zum erfolgreichen Bestehen dieser Promotion entscheidend beigetragen.

Meinen Freunden, meiner Familie und vor allem meinen Eltern möchte ich für die Unterstützung in all den Jahren von Herzen danken: ihr habt mir nicht nur während der Erstellung dieser Arbeit und bei all meinen nicht immer rationalen Entscheidungen zur Seite gestanden und habt euch jederzeit meine noch so winzigen Probleme ungefragt angehört. Ohne euch hätte ich diese Herausforderung nicht meistern können.

Last but not least: ohne mein persönliches Motivations-Mantra, welches ich beim täglichen Blick auf den Bildschirm auf einem grünen Zettel erspähen konnte (egal ob Büro, Bahnfahrten nach Hamburg, Home Office oder Litfass), würde ich wahrscheinlich noch heute Instagram-Posts analysieren. Diese Arbeit widme ich der Person, die mir diese zwei anscheinbar belanglosen Worte permanent ans Herz gelegt hat. Bruderherz, dadurch hast du nicht nur mich sondern auch zukünftige Doktoranden nachhaltig beeinflusst:

Einfach machen.

Tanja Fink

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Abbreviations

ANOVA	analysis of variance
B2B	business to business
B2C	business to consumers
BGC	brand-generated content
cf.	confer (compare)
CGI	computer-generated imagery
COBRA	consumers' online brand-related activities
DV	dependent variable
DW	Durbin-Watson-Test
ed./eds.	editor/editors
e.g.	exempli gratia (for example)
ELM	Elaboration Likelihood Model
et al.	et alii (and others)
et seq.	et sequens (and the following one)
et seqq.	et sequentes (and the following ones)
eWOM	electronic word-of-mouth
FTC	Federal Trade Commission
i.a.	inter alia (among others)
i.e.	id est (that is)
IV	independent variable
KPI	key performance indicator
M	mean
n.s.	not significant
p./pp.	page/s
PKM	Persuasion Knowledge Model
SD	standard deviation

SMI	social media influencer
UGC	user-generated content
U&G	uses and gratifications
VIF	variance inflation factor
vs.	versus
WOM	word-of-mouth

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User Engagement in Influencer Branding as Research Objective

1

1.1 Relevance of Social Media Influencers for Brand Management

The emergence of digitalization and especially the rise of social media¹ as a source of communication and information² has forced brands to find new ways to interact with their target audiences. As consumers greatly rely on social media channels while searching for information about brands or specific products³, the effectiveness of traditional advertising⁴ is dropping.⁵ Consequently, marketers

¹ Social media—as a part of digital media—can be defined as a “group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content”. KAPLAN/HAENLEIN (2010), p. 61.

² According to the latest long-term study of ARD/ZDF (2015, p. 18) regarding the topic “mass communication”, half of the respondents (n = 4,131; 14 + years) state to rely on the Internet while searching for information. Solely TV surpasses this number (63 percent). For the most accessible target group of social media communication—the so-called digital natives—the numbers are even clearer: 79 percent of the respondents (n = 837; aged between 14 and 29) state to use the Internet as a source of information; television is only named by 50 percent. Cf. BREUNING/ENGEL (2015), p. 331.

³ A recent study of BITKOM (2018, p. 7) reveals that the respondents (n = 1,011 social media users; 14 + years) intensely use social media to stay informed about product recommendations (38 percent) or about brands and companies (31 percent).

⁴ Traditional advertising can be classified as above-the-line communication. Advertisements published via newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and cinema or out-of-home media belong to this category. Cf. MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2015), p. 586.

⁵ Cf. DINNER/VAN HEERDE/NESLIN (2014), pp. 528 et seq.; MEDIENPÄDAGOGISCHER FORSCHUNGSVERBUND SÜDWEST (2017), p. 13.

have to adapt their communication strategies and thus gradually shift their advertising spending towards digital or online marketing.⁶ A recent forecast of DENTSU AEGIS NETWORK (2019a) states that advertising expenditures in digital media already account for 36.7 percent in Germany for the year 2018—with a year-to-year growth rate of 13.9 percent for 2020.⁷ Seen globally, digital advertising expenditures in social media grew by 29 percent in 2018.⁸ However, the amount of trust in social media advertising, e.g. via social networks⁹ such as Facebook, is rather low.¹⁰ According to the yearly so-called “Social Media Atlas” of the German agency FAKTENKONTOR (2019), Facebook users ($n = 2,417$; 14 + years) place the least trust in those information from brands or companies provided via Facebook.¹¹ Further common social networks, e.g. Snapchat, also underperform. On the contrary, consumers still trust information provided via traditional channels. 70 percent state to place at least rather high trust in brand information received via radio (see Figure 1.1¹²).

At the same time, a survey of the global performance management company Nielsen revealed that German consumers, above all, trust recommendations from familiar sources, e.g. friends (78 percent), followed by opinions or product reviews from other customers made available online (62 percent).¹³

⁶ “Online communication refers to all communication activities between companies and consumers, as well as among consumer themselves, that affect the achievement of marketing and corporate objectives and are handled through an internet protocol (IP).” BURMANN ET AL. (2017), p. 196 referring to MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2015), p. 633.

⁷ Cf. DENTSU AEGIS NETWORK (2019a).

⁸ Cf. DENTSU AEGIS NETWORK (2019b).

⁹ Social networks, e.g. Facebook or Instagram, “include platforms that focus on relationships among people with shared interests”. KLEINE- KALMER (2016), p. 2.

¹⁰ Cf. BURMANN/KLEINE- KALMER/HEMMANN (2014), pp. 62 et seq.

¹¹ Cf. FAKTENKONTOR (2019), p. 54. The respondents were asked to state how much trust they place in information received from commercial suppliers (e.g. companies) regarding the respective media sources. A further study conducted by PwC with 1,000 respondents (18 + years) confirms these results. Compared to traditional media channels (e.g. TV = 74 percent, radio = 72 percent), social media networks have the lowest level of trust in information (e.g. Twitter = 14 percent, Facebook = 18 percent). Cf. PwC (2018), p. 12.

¹² Note: the sample size varied with the investigated communication channels; $n = 2,933$ (Radio, TV, Print, Online Print), 973 (Blogs); $n = 2,581$ (YouTube); $n = 871$ (Twitter); $n = 1,291$ (Instagram); $n = 639$ (Snapchat); $n = 2,417$ (Facebook)

¹³ Cf. NIELSEN (2015). The latest survey of Nielsen’s “Global Trust in Advertising” was conducted in February and March 2015. More than 30,000 consumers in 60 countries throughout Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and North America were polled. The sample claims to be representative for Internet consumers in the respective countries. A

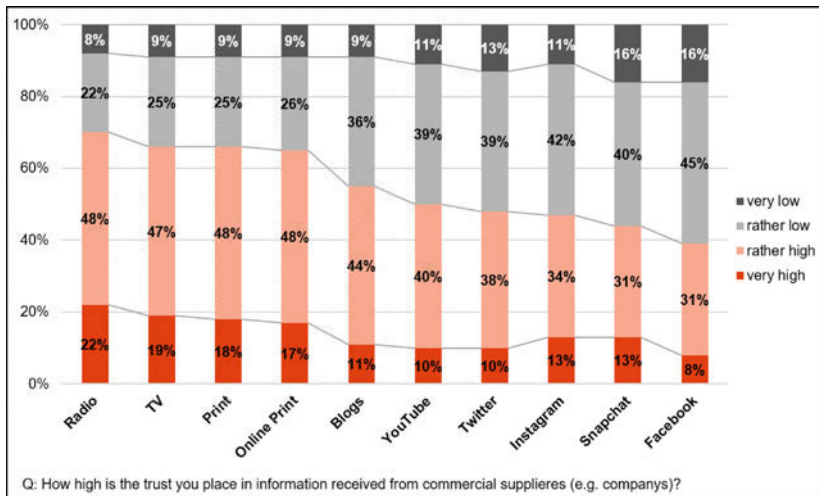


Figure 1.1 Source differences regarding user trust in brand information.

(Source: Own illustration based on FAKTENKONTOR (2019))

As a consequence of both — the shift towards digitalization as well as the demand for more trustworthy information sources — the call for “Social Media Influencers” has risen.¹⁴ Figure 1.2¹⁵ illustrates the development of worldwide search interest for the term “influencer” on Google over the last five years. The phenomenon captures increasing attention especially in the last three years.¹⁶

The concept of the so-called “Social Media Influencer” is not an entirely new phenomenon, but rather a development of the well-established concept of opinion leadership which builds upon the two-step flow of communication theory

more recent survey conducted by TRND in April 2017 with 12,500 users of the company’s own research community confirms these results and states that even 87.4 percent of the polled users rely on recommendations of friends before a purchase. Cf. TRND (2017).

¹⁴ Cf. AGRAWAL (2016); KHAMIS/ANG/WELLING (2017); SPROUTSOCIAL (2018a).

¹⁵ The values indicate the search interest relative to the highest point in the graph over the period considered. The value 100 stands for the highest popularity of this search term. The value 50 means that the term was half as popular and the value 0 equals a popularity of less than 1% compared to the maximum. Cf. GOOGLE TRENDS (2020).

¹⁶ Corresponding to the changing consumer behavior during the christmas period, i.e. a shifted focus on christmas-specific topics, search interest for the the term „influencer“ is likewise decreasing in the respective periods.

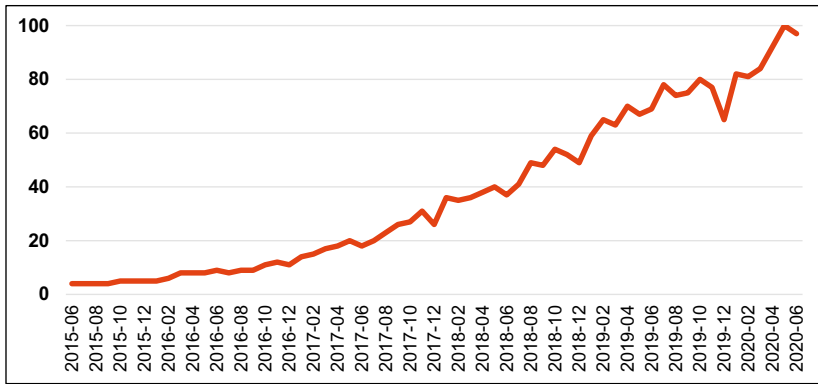


Figure 1.2 Development of worldwide search interest for the term “Influencer” (time period 06/2015 – 06/2020, normalized values).

(Source: Own illustration based on GOOGLE TRENDS (2020))

by KATZ/LAZARSFELD (1955).¹⁷ Accordingly, information sent by mass media is not directly addressed to people, but rather mediated by opinion leaders, who then pass on this information to their “every-day associates for whom they are influential”¹⁸. Additionally, KATZ (1957) states that opinion leaders and those who seek opinions belong to similar groups, mainly family, friends and co-workers, i.e. every-day associates.¹⁹ Opinion leaders are therefore characterized by an above-average interest and knowledge in specific topics.²⁰ Hence, traditional opinion leaders are defined as those individuals “who exert an unequal amount of influence on the decision of others”²¹. Specifically, they influence thoughts, attitudes or behavior along the customer decision journey²², leading other consumers to act in a certain way.²³

¹⁷ Cf. BURMANN ET AL. (2018), p. 253.

¹⁸ KATZ (1957), p. 61.

¹⁹ Cf. KATZ (1957), p. 77.

²⁰ Cf. CHAN/MISRA (1990), pp. 54 et seq.; FLYNN/GOLDSMITH/EASTMAN (1996), p. 138; KATZ (1957), p. 77.

²¹ ROGERS/CARTANO (1962), p. 435.

²² The customer (decision) journey symbolizes the chronological sequence of all brand touch points a customer is getting in touch with until the time of a purchase. Cf. BURMANN ET AL. (2018), p. 201.

²³ Cf. BERGER/SCHWARTZ (2011), p. 870; CHAN/MISRA (1990), p. 53; ROGERS (1983), p. 271.

This type of communication is commonly described as WOM²⁴ or — in an online context — electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Initially, WOM communication was restricted to a limited number of people.²⁵ Due to the emergence of the internet and social media in particular, eWOM communication is now extended to a larger audience and no longer subject to any geographical constraints.²⁶ According to HENNING- THURAU ET AL. (2004), eWOM communication is thus defined as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet”²⁷. Correspondingly, eWOM without any commercial intent is conceived as user-generated content (UGC), defined as “the sum of all ways in which people make use of Social Media. The term [...] is usually applied to describe various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users”^{28, 29}. The integration of a brand to some extent consequently depicts brand-related UGC, which, according to ARNHOLD (2010), is defined as “the representation of the voluntary creation and public distribution of personal brand meaning undertaken by non-marketers outside the branding routines and enabled by multimedia technology.”³⁰

Just like opinion leaders, social media influencers (SMIs) shape opinions of other social media users by spreading their personal eWOM.³¹ They do so by publishing UGC — both non-brand-related as well as brand-related — via their own profiles on social media platforms, such as YouTube or Instagram (see Figure 1.3). Since UGC created and shared by SMIs is attributed to be highly

²⁴ WOM represents an informal mode of interpersonal communication whereby consumers directly share information about products, brands or services. Cf. NEE (2016), p. 2.

²⁵ Cf. NEE (2016), p. 2.

²⁶ Cf. BOYD/GOLDER/LOTAN (2010), p. 1; GODES/MAYZLIN (2004), p. 545; KANE ET AL. (2009), p. 45; MARTIN/LUEG (2013), p. 801.

²⁷ HENNING- THURAU ET AL. (2004), p. 39.

²⁸ KAPLAN/HAENLEIN (2010), p. 61.

²⁹ Contrarily, brand-generated content (BGC) encompasses online content created and published by brands in order to reach commercial goals. Cf. ARNHOLD (2010), p. 31; EILERS (2014), p. 47.

³⁰ ARNHOLD (2010), p. 331. Moreover, brand-related UGC can further be subdivided into sponsored and non-sponsored brand-related UGC. Cf. BURMANN ET AL. (2018), p. 253.

³¹ Cf. FLYNN/GOLDSMITH/EASTMAN (1996), p. 137; SINNIG (2019), p. 30.