

# QUESTIONES PUBLICITARIAS

**Revista Científica Internacional  
de Comunicación y Publicidad**  
*International Journal  
of Advertising and Communication*

## V1N21

### Social media content value for a brand: study case *Valor del contenido de medios sociales para una marca: estudio de caso*

Joan Francesc Fondevila Gascón; Pedro Mir Bernal; Josep Rom Rodríguez.  
[joanfrancesc.fondevila@upf.edu](mailto:joanfrancesc.fondevila@upf.edu); [pedromirbernal@gmail.com](mailto:pedromirbernal@gmail.com); [josepr@blanquerna.url.edu](mailto:josepr@blanquerna.url.edu)

**Abstract:** This article aims to study the effects of the social media posts of sports brand (Nike) on the target audience and focusing in Facebook and Instagram, part of the top three most popular social media sites used by teenagers and young adults in the USA. We look at the content of the post (both the photo and caption) and analyze the audience's responses. We conclude celebrity endorsements have the ability to enhance a brand image, adding further credibility and encouraging User-Generated Content (UGC) and generating more responses in terms of number of likes, hashtags, comments, shares and views.

**Keywords:** Social media; digital advertising; sports brands; digital communication; User-Generated Content (UGC)

**Resumen:** Este artículo pretende estudiar los efectos de los posts de medios sociales de una marca deportiva (Nike) en su público objetivo en Facebook e Instagram, dos de los tres medios sociales más populares utilizados por adolescentes y adultos jóvenes en los EE.UU. Observamos el contenido del post (foto y texto) y analizamos las respuestas del público. Concluimos que la promoción de celebridades mejora la imagen de marca, aportando mayor credibilidad, promoviendo el Contenido Generado por el Usuario y generando más respuestas en términos de número de "Me gusta", hashtags, comentarios, acciones y visionados.

**Palabras clave:** Medios sociales; publicidad digital; marcas deportivas; comunicación digital; Contenido generado por el usuario (UGC)

**ENSAYO** pp. 21 a 26

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Fondevila, J., Mir, P., Rom, J. (2018): "Social media and User-Generated Content (UGC): the case of sports brand". *Questiones Publicitarias*, 1(21), p. 21-26. <<https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/qp.298>>

## INTRODUCTION

The topic at hand is the study of the effectiveness behind the promotion of User-Generated Content (UGC) through social media on brand loyalty. The term UGC refers to any type of published content put out by unpaid contributors. This could come in the form of pictures, testimonials, videos, blog posts, tweets, and everything in between. UGC comes from users promoting the brand, and not the brand itself.

## STUDY OBJECT

We consider that brands that encourage more UGC have a higher percentage of consumer brand loyalty. We analyze the audience's responses in terms of number of likes, number of hashtags generated, number of comments, number of shares and number of views. The posts are classified (contained celebrity endorsement; contained any hashtags as part of a campaign). Data were collected in October, 2016. Results were averaged across all posts in each category and presented in an excel table.

Celebrity endorsements have the ability to enhance a brand image, adding further credibility and encouraging UGC; hashtags have the ability to encourage (UGC). In measuring UGC, we counted the number of user-generated posts with the hashtags as they were created by the users themselves.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We have adopted the definition of social media to be a group of internet based applications that is built on the technological and ideological foundation of Web 2.0, and it allows for the creation and exchange of UGC. Social media are tools that can be used for communication that have Web 2.0 attribute (collaborative, participatory, knowledge sharing and user-empowering tools made available on the web). The field of social media has developed tremendously over the years and present brands with new opportunities to reach out and connect with consumers. According to Lang (2010), consumers on average devote close to one third of their time to the consumption of online social media. Our two chosen brands have similarly jumped onto the social media bandwagon and have established their presence on the various social media platforms.

Brands have been promoting UGC for many years now, and with internet developments in the form of an increased number of social media platforms, this has become increasingly easier to achieve. Word-of-mouth referrals have proven to be the best kind of referral, and this includes the digital age. Studies have shown that 86% of millennials believe that UGC is a good indicator of brand quality and 68% of social media users (ages 18-24) take into consideration information shared on social media. Brands have to be authentic in this digital day and age. With the excess amount of information easily accessible on the Internet, brands can no longer fool consumers. Gone are the days that consumers were passive, being led television commercials. Consumers have now evolved to become active choosers who want a say in who they do and do not purchase from. Consumers choose brands that share the same values to which they can connect with. Therefore, UGC has the power to create brand communities.

We propose that the reason why brands choose to take their business online and establish their presence on social media is a result of the effectiveness of social media in creating online brand communities. Through social media, like-minded people and businesses can come together on a common platform no matter where they are in the world (Hagel & Armstrong, 1997).

Studies have also shown that the level of entertainment engaged by brands on their social media platforms have direct correlation with (UGC). According to Muntinga, Moorman & Smit (2011), entertainment encourages people to create, consume or contribute to brand-related content online. Fashion is a very sensitive sector on it (Fondevila, Del Olmo & Bravo, 2012). Our chosen hypothesis revolves around the idea that the promotion of UGC makes brands more popular digitally. Taylor, Lewin & Strutton (2011) hypothesize that entertaining ads do

in fact have a positive effect on consumer's attitude towards the ad. Therefore, consumers might have a greater positive attitude towards entertaining brand posts, compared to non-entertaining brand posts, thus generating higher popularity.

Furthermore, the pursuit of information explains why people consume brand-related content (Muntinga, Moorman & Smit 2011). Hence, if a brand post contains information about the brand or product, then the brand fans' motivations to participate or consume the content are met. Therefore, brand consumers might develop a greater positive attitude towards informative brand posts compared to non-informative brand posts, thus leading to higher popularity.

In the development of our research hypothesis, we called into question the effects of celebrity endorsement on UGC (Brian & Till, 1998), essential in the Broadband Society (Fondevila, 2013) and in cloud journalism (Fondevila, 2010). Any given brand has the ability to evoke its own set of associations (Till, 1998). Marketers can use a variety of tools, like hypertext (Fondevila & Segura, 2012), to expound on and maintain the appropriate associations linked to a brand, and the use of celebrity endorsement is one way for meanings to be transferred to brands. A study conducted by Walker, Langmeyer & Langmeyer (1992) revealed that pairing products with different celebrities had an effect on subjects' images of those products and these were consistent with the image of the celebrity which the product was paired with.

Through the endorsement process, an associative link is established between the brand and the respective celebrity endorser. When this happens, the two become part of each other's association set. What this means is that when a consumer thinks of brand, he/she will think of the associated endorser and vice versa. Advertisers believe that the use of celebrity endorsers affects advertising effectiveness, brand recognition and recall, and encourages purchase and follow-through (Spry, Pappu & Cornwell, 2011). This is backed up by Ohanian (1991), who states that celebrity endorsement improves the perceived quality of the brand and has a correlation with the intention-to-use.

#### METHODOLOGY

We hypothesized that posts with celebrity endorsement and hashtags will generate more responses in terms of number of likes, hashtags, comments, shares and views. The greater the number of likes, hashtags, comments, shares and views, the more popular a company is digitally. In essence, our hypothesis is: the company that encourages UGC is more popular digitally; and popularity is measured in terms of the metrics aforementioned.

In the formulation of our hypothesis, we came up with questions that could possibly help us along with this research. The first of which was whether the use of hashtags (#) really encourages UGC. Research into the subject matter has shown that brands upload posts onto social media with hashtags related to the content. We hope to discover the effectiveness of using these hashtags in encouraging consumers to share or post content. The second question that arose in our hypothesis formulation was with regards to celebrity endorsement. Brands such as Nike have used celebrities to promote and endorse their products. Thus, we wanted to find out whether the use of celebrity endorsement did in fact encourage UGC, and in turn, boosting brand popularity online.

We used both quantitative and qualitative analysis as part of our research, with a study case. Both analyses aim to support each other and our findings. For the purpose of this research, we limited it to the month of October, 2016 (n= 31).

For quantitative research, we look at Nike's Facebook and Instagram page to assess their digital presence. Although social media encompasses a variety of platforms including YouTube, Tumblr and else, we decided to use only Facebook and Instagram as we felt that these are more relevant platforms and more widely used across the world. Social media enables consumers to share information with their peers about the product and service brands (Stileman, 2009). As our aim is to find out consumers' responses to posts, we will look at the brand post popularity of Nike. Brand post popularity can be measured using

statistics that can come in the form of the number of likes, number of comments, number of views and number of hashtags for the brands' campaigns. For qualitative research, we look at research papers that have touched on the topic of social media marketing.

According to Weinberg (2009), social media marketing can be defined as the process that enables individuals or companies to promote their products, services, or websites through online social platforms, and reach out to a larger community that might not have been available via traditional platforms. Additionally, social media marketing is related to relationship marketing, where the brand shifts from "trying to sell" to "making connections" with consumers (Gordhamer, 2009). Keller (2008) conceptualizes brand loyalty as the final dimension of consumer brand resonance and is a representation of the consumer's relationship and identification with a brand.

#### DEVELOPMENT

We analyzed posts on Instagram and Facebook. For Instagram, we listed the numbers of likes, comments, video views and use of hashtags on each posts. In addition to this we classify each post by defining if it's a non-consumer post or an UGC. For this classification, we used the tool of hashtags.

When there is a hashtag on an Instagram post, we can say that it can generate content because Instagram users can use this hashtag again to post their own content under the brand's behalf. The use of the hashtag creates an online brand community as other users can use the same hashtag for posts of similar content.

On our Excel sheet we also gave details of the post for a better qualitative understanding of it. We gave details and reason of each post. With this overview we are able to have an overview of Nike's digital strategy on Instagram and the impact that each post has.

#### RESULTS

Nike's Facebook page is fed efficiently, and their posts have a reasonably regular occurrence. Posts on Facebook are interactive that allows for them to be shared, liked and commented on. Nike's posts are often spotted with a celebrity appearance in it, and this contributes to the increase in UGC as consumers who identify themselves with their favourite celebrities would be more inclined to click on the content.

Their idea is to keep the attention of the Net surfers in the incentives with videos / photos, regularly but without being too present, which allows the user to appreciate every post of Nike. The enormous number of Followers of Nike on Facebook (27,300,000) allow them to be seen everywhere.

In fact, on their last post of October, which was a video of LeBron James, their video has been seen 7.1 million times, be liked 350k times, commented 3,631 times, and shared 46,678 times. This shows how much their post reveals engagement.

This allowed them to have enormous marketing and communication power around the world. So there has to be a very efficient team, who knows the needs of consumers on the Internet, knows how to attract him into his trap. The consumer is caught in a sports universe where everything is possible with will; and this is where the magic of Nike comes in, since it keeps the consumer hostage of his magic.

We observed that on Nike's official Instagram brand page for the month of October there were five publications that gathered approximately 2.5 million likes in total, and almost 10 million views which corresponded to the reach of those campaigns.

Furthermore, each post corresponds to a different campaign for Nike. Each post is different than the other. This proves that the total reach calculates previously for the month of October not only represent one campaign of Nike but their whole communication strategy result on the Instagram platform for this timeline.

In this article we attempt to analyze the strong link between fan engagement (likes, comments, sharing and clicks) and exposure of the activity on social media. The more fans engage regularly with a brand, the more publications will be featured in their newsfeed. This is how for example Facebook helps those brands, noticing that people are interested in what

they have to say. So in every status or publication you publish on Facebook you need to influence your audience to engage with you in four ways: by clicking on I like, commenting, sharing, or clicking on a link.

The posts in Instagram are totally focused on the emotional side. No simply pictures of products or date releases of sneakers but instead short videos campaign with a strong emotional message and a high rate of celebrity endorsement.

Concerning the celebrity endorsement for Nike's campaign we observe that on the five publications and on five different campaigns, four of them were represented and supported by celebrities. First Michael Jordan with the now famous Jumpman campaign for the AirJordan sneakers, secondly Marco Materazzi for Nike Football, also Neymar also for the Football campaign, then LeBron James, a famous basketball player and finally Kevin Hart a famous American humorist who was chosen to support the collaboration between Nike and the Apple Watch.

With this list of celebrity, we can observe that Nike keep playing with the basics that works good: well known persons from basketball and football areas but tries also to diversify by hiring celebrity that are from different areas like Kevin Hart from comedy and stand up scene to support their campaign and being able to reach not only sports passionate but also open their target line.

#### CONCLUSION

After the analysis of the data gathers for Nike's social media pages (Instagram and Facebook) we can conclude that Nikes, in general in their social media, focus on emotional advertising and fosters UGC (like Walker, Langmeyer & Langmeyer, 1992). Their posts are not simply pictures of products but in contrary campaign videos or pictures with a strong emotional message and a strong average of celebrity endorsement. This means that the brand choose to focus celebrity endorsement and hashtags to generate significant consumer activation (in the way of Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2011).

More than limitations of the sample or a case study, we suggest future research challenges, establishing comparisons with other brands, or in other social media. We can develop a longitudinal analysis of the same brand.

This strategy allows the brand to make its viewers interested not only in their products but also in the lifestyle of the brand thanks to the personification of Nike. Indeed, we previously noticed that they don't post too much compare to its competitors (average 5 posts per month) but they also use celebrity not only targeted in the sports environment (Kevin Hart-humorist). This allows the brand to diversify its strategy and attract viewers outside from the sports and apparel industry thanks to a strong sponsorship strategy.



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