Why Are Some Brand Co-Creation Activities More Effective Than Others?: the Effects of Brand Knowledge Potential and Self-Brand Connection on Brand Engagement Intentions

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We explore conditions under which interactive brand co-creation activities affect subsequent brand engagement. Results from three studies using real brand co-creation campaigns provide support for the proposition that when highly connected (i.e., loyal) consumers co-create the brand through activities that enable them to generate personal brand knowledge, brand engagement behaviors increase.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Under Armour recently launched a Stories website tied to its “Protect this House. I will.” campaign, where consumers could craft their own story of how they protect their Houses or rate other consumers’ stories. Though this example is found online, brand co-creation campaigns exist offline as well and are employed by over 85 percent of marketers (Deloitte 2012). The objective of co-creation campaigns is to provide consumers with a means of interacting with the brand, thereby encouraging deeper brand engagement via social media or other public outlets (Van Doorn et al. 2013). In this paper, we examine how marketers can design co-creation activities that lead consumers to engage further with the brand.

Based on the notion of customer-based brand equity (Keller 1993, 2003), we suggest that consumers are more likely to further engage with the brand when co-creation activities allow consumers to generate new, personal brand meanings or strengthen existing ones. We propose that brand engagement intentions will be affected by two factors: consumers’ self-brand connection and the co-creation activity’s potential for creating brand knowledge. Self-brand connection (SBC) refers to the link between the brand and the consumer’s values and identity (Escalas 2004; Escalas and Bettman 2003; Park et al. 2010). Compared to those with low SBC, consumers with high SBC pursue self-goals through the brand (Kirmani 2009; Kopetz et al. 2012), have more complex autobiographical memory structures for the brand (Escalas 2004) and higher brand loyalty (Escalas and Bettman 2003; Ferraro, Kirmani, and Matherly 2013). This would imply that those with high, rather than low, SBC have more motivation to co-create and greater ability to generate meanings.

However, we suggest that the co-creation activity’s potential for brand knowledge creation moderates the effect. Some co-creation activities, such as writing one’s own brand story or posting an idea, have greater brand knowledge potential (BKP) than other activities, such as evaluating others’ brand ideas or playing a game because they better enable consumers to express personal brand meanings. A pretest provides support for the notion that activities vary on this dimension and serves as the basis for manipulations in the studies. Based on motivation and ability, we predict that consumers with high self-brand connection will be more likely to engage with the brand after participating in an activity with high, rather than low, brand knowledge potential.

Three experiments examined the effects of brand knowledge potential (BKP) and self-brand connection (SBC) on brand engagement. In study 1, we hold the activity constant and examine whether high SBC consumers are more motivated to co-create. Participants (n = 101) first reported SBC using Escalas and Bettman’s 7-item (2003) scale (α = .94) and then were assigned to a high or low BKP condition. As a measure of motivation, participants were given the choice to co-create. Brand engagement was measured as an average of “How much would you like to check out Chiquita’s brand page on Facebook?” (1 = not at all, 7 = very much); “I would Like Chiquita’s brand page on Facebook next time I login to my Facebook account” (1 = definitely would not like Chiquita, 7 = definitely would like Chiquita); and “How likely would you be to share a new Chiquita brand promotion with friends or family?” (1 = very unlikely, 7 = very likely; α = .91). We observe the expected effect that high SBC consumers were more motivated to co-create in general (β = .04, Wald = 2.53, p = .1; 57.4% vs. 42.6%, \( \chi^2 = 4.55, p < .05 \), based on median-split SBC). For those who choose to co-create (n = 54), we find main effects of both SBC (p < .01) and BKP (p < .05) and an interaction effect (p < .03). Using spotlight analysis, we see that, as predicted, consumers with high (vs. low) SBC express increased brand engagement intentions in the high vs. low BKP condition (p < .01; Aiken and West 1991; Fitzsimons 2008). Low SBC consumers were not affected. Enjoyment does not explain the pattern, and there is no interaction effect for those who choose not to co-create (n = 47).

In study 2, 153 participants read about the My Starbucks Idea campaign website. In the high BKP condition, participants voted and wrote about the idea that best expressed what the brand means to them. In the low BKP condition, participants rated the same three ideas (on a seven-point bad-good scale). Brand engagement and SBC were measured as in study 1. Regression analysis found an effect of SBC (p < .01) and BKP x SBC (p < .05) on brand engagement intentions. Participants with high SBC (+1 SD) had increased brand engagement intentions in the high vs. low BKP condition (p < .01); participants with low SBC (-1 SD) were unaffected. In addition, these differences could not be attributed to involvement, time spent co-creating, or process effort.

In study 3 we replicate this pattern in a different brand and product category, using Under Armour’s “Protect this House. I will.” Stories campaign. Participants (n = 126) either wrote a story (high BKP) or rated someone else’s story (low BKP). SBC was measured after brand engagement. Regression analysis reveals a significant effect of SBC (p < .01) and a significant interaction effect (p < .01). A spotlight analysis showed that participants with high Under Armour SBC (+1 SD) expressed greater brand engagement intentions in the high vs. low BKP condition (p < .02). In contrast, participants with low SBC (-1 SD) were unaffected. A behavioral measure of brand engagement also follows this pattern.

The paper contributes to the branding literature by considering customer-based brand equity in the context of co-creation. We distinguish brand co-creation activities from more extensive product-based interactions, such as co-production (Moreau and Herd 2010; Troye and Supphellen 2012) or participation in user-maintained brand communities (Kozinets 2001). The paper also contributes to managerial and empirical knowledge of the types of brand co-creation activities that are likely to affect the engagement of loyal consumers in brand-related social media.

REFERENCES


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