Bringing Dead Brands Back From the Grave: The Power of Social Media

Emergent Research Forum (ERF)

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Abstract

For years companies have periodically updated their brand portfolios either by selling a brand, merging different brands, or deleting a brand completely from the market. Previously, consumers had a limited number of outlets for communicating their disapproval of companies’ decisions to delete a brand. Today, however, social media platforms have become powerful information tools, which consumers are using to express their opinions and views about companies and their brands.

This paper aims to examine three key psychological factors that motivate consumers to engage in social media activisms in the context of brand deletion. They include: Brand Love, Brand Nostalgia and Brand Superiority. Brand Love “assesses satisfied consumers’ passionate emotional attachment to particular brands” (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006, p. 79). Batra, Ahuvia, Bagozzi (2012) established that consumer’s brand love includes seven dimensions: (1) perceived functional quality, (2) self-related cognitions, (3) positive affect, (4) negative affect, (5) satisfaction, (6) attitude strength, and (7) Loyalty. Brand nostalgia is a “positively valenced complex feeling, emotion, or mood produced by reflection on things (objects, persons, experiences, ideas) associated with the past” (Holak and Havlena 1998). Finally, brand superiority is the belief that the deleted brand is superior to all other current and available brands (Davari,Iyer and Guzman, 2017). These three psychological factors are thought to impact a consumer’s psychological reactance, defined as a rebound effect in which perceived coercion leads to an equal but opposite influence (Clee and Wicklund, 1980). Given the passionate feelings of many SURGE consumers and the success of their movement, the research focuses on the SURGE movement as a case study to investigate these psychological factors.

The results of this study will help information technology and marketing academics as well as practitioners. For academics, it will extend the current knowledge on the role social media technologies can play during brand deletions. It will enlighten the practices of both IT and brand managers, who must consider how these powerful technologies can be used by consumers to affect company decisions, such as brand deletion.