

Different Behavior on User-Generated Content Networks

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Abstract

Consumers use user-generated content (UGC) networks to serve a range of purposes in their day-to-day lives (e.g., to compare, review and purchase products online). This special session focuses on research projects that explore the different behavior that occur on UGC networks and that impact marketing outcomes.

“Fake News Sharers and News Fact-Checkers: Profiling and Targeting Beyond Demographics and Ideology” by Verena Schoenmueller (Bocconi U), Gita Johar (Columbia U), and Simon Blanchard (Georgetown University): We aim to generate a better understanding of “fake news” sharers: who are they and what motivates them to share fake news? We access a comprehensive set of sharers’ characteristics by collecting the Twitter profile information and the content of their tweets posted. Our results indicate interesting communalities but also differences between fake news posters and fact check sharers.

“Brand Selfies: Risks and Rewards of Consumers Taking Self-Photos with Brands” by Reto Hofstetter (U of Lucerne), Gabriela Kunath (U of Lucerne), and Leslie John (Harvard U): We test how brand selfies affect purchase interest of those who take the selfies (i.e., takers), and those who view them (i.e., observers). Field evidence reveals that the presence of a brand selfie in a review positively correlates with the star rating given. Three experiments establish causality: taking a brand selfie increases taker’s purchase interest, especially when many others view it. Attractive brand selfies can also increase purchase interest of observers.

“How Sophisticated are Consumers? The Case of Digital Newspaper Subscriptions” by Klaus M. Miller (Goethe U Frankfurt), and Navdeep S. Sahni (Stanford U): We study the profit-maximizing contract design if firms are facing naïve and sophisticated consumers. We analyze a large-scale field experiment amongst 3 Mio. users. Our results indicate that users show some level of sophistication. Consumers are able to forecast their future “cancellation costs” and incorporate them into their present decision-making. We contribute to the literature whether a firm should consider behavioral economics inputs when setting policies.

“Targeting Influence Corridors – A New Path to Influencers in User-Generated Content Networks” by Jacob Goldenberg (IDC Herzliya and Columbia U), Andreas Lanz (U of Mannheim), Daniel Shapira (Ben-Gurion U), and Florian Stahl (U of Mannheim): Ordinary individuals can be effective seeding targets (Lanz et al. 2018). Yet, some of them prove to be not so ordinary after all, because they might have a follower who is an influencer. Using data from SoundCloud, we find that the expected return on such individuals (we call them “influence corridors”) is by order of magnitude higher.