

The Dual Role of Product Accessibility in the Chain of Effects from Firm-Generated Content to Brand Sales

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Abstract

This study investigates whether firm-generated content (FGC) on social media can simultaneously drive both social media engagement (SME) and sales in low-involvement product categories. We simultaneously assess the chain of effects of FGC on sales—both directly and indirectly via SME—across two platforms (Facebook and Twitter). Additionally, we employ an abductive inquiry to consider the role of product accessibility on said effects. By developing comprehensive models to estimate the chain of effects triggered by social media activity, we discover an inverted U-shaped relationship between FGC and brand sales, contingent on the level of product accessibility. This aligns with a dual role of product accessibility: namely, that increasing levels of accessibility lead to the attention needed to make FGC effective, but with diminishing or even decreasing returns due to information overload if levels of accessibility get too high. The findings suggest that while brands can boost engagement via increased social media communication, doing so does not necessarily lead to higher sales, particularly for highly or slightly accessible products in stores.