

Brand Sponsorship and Social Media. Coca Cola and Carlsberg Illustrated with an Example of the European Football Championship 2016

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Abstract

Purpose of the article: Presentation of the issue of brand sponsorship of events in the light of the use of social media for the purposes of brand management in the customer-based brand equity paradigm.

Methodology/methods: Two brands (CocaCola and Carlsberg) which were the official sponsors of a sports event (EURO 2016) were monitored in social media. For this purpose information gathered by socialmention.com and likemore.pl were used. Presentation of the results of the analysis required the use of descriptive statistics as well as the Wilcoxon test and a network graph.

Scientific aim: Determination of the scope and nature of the influence of sponsorship of an international sports event on the way a brand is perceived by social media users based on a selected set of data derived from brand monitoring.

Findings: In case of Carlsberg the attitude of social media users did not change during EURO 2016, however, majority of their statements was connected with the issues related to this sports event. In case of Coca Cola, the perception of the brand by its clients changed within the studied period of time, however, the issues related to EURO 2016 were only one of many other issues raised by them.

Conclusions: Assessment of the influence of brand sponsorship of an event on social media users' perception faces the following difficulties: scope of monitoring, its efficiency, choice of data set generated by the monitoring tool for the analysis, level of recognition of brands and brand multi-sponsorship (parallel engagement of the brand in many events).

Keywords: CocaCola, Carlsberg, brand, social, media, sponsorship

JEL Classification: M19, M30

Introduction

While taking up a scientific problem related to the brand, one of the two main paradigms for explaining its meaning which is hidden behind its name, symbol or their combination which makes it possible to distinguish particular products/services from the offer of its competition (Keller *et al.*, 2008). The choice is made between understanding of the brand based on relationships between the brand and its clients, and as company's assets which might be measured in money (Kapferer, 2012).

Therefore, brand management in economic practice becomes a complicated challenge for an enterprise which requires establishment of relations between such aspects as customers' loyalty towards the brand and its monetary value, especially that from the point of view of various stakeholders of an enterprise, including also its employees (Burmam, Zeplin, 2005), different aspects of the brand which these paradigms entail will be desired. Simultaneously, the results of the studies indicate also that the issue of brand management translates into strategic management (Bilińska-Reformat, Sztangret, 2015). Current focus on brand management, which is related to building a competitive advantage by an enterprise in the long term (Louro, Cunha, 2001), translates into better economic results of an enterprise (Kotler, Pfoertsch, 2007).

This fact, therefore, requires also determination of a specific way of description which will be able to encompass the whole issue in the process of communication within an enterprise as well as between an enterprise and its customers (Wood, 2000). It is highlighted that the role of passion towards the brand becomes the key issue in brand management which should be initiated and propagated within an enterprise as well as among its customers by the management board/the owners

of an enterprise (Krake, 2005). The case of Decathlon may serve as an example of such attitude. The company based its development on the implementation of the so called passion brands connected with particular sport disciplines. For many years the company's mission has also been related to propagation of joy and benefits from doing sport, which was the main aim of the founders of the enterprise. The company's employees frequently show personal engagement in various sport or leisure activities as well (Komańda, Prochownik, 2016). This example indicates further challenge brand management has to face, that is ensuring its authenticity. For that to happen it is desirable for a brand to be set in a subculture, to become its part and to refer to timeless and significant social values of a particular subculture (Beverland, 2005). It means that since most of customers' behaviours are culturally conditioned (De Mooij, Hofstede, 2011), it is possible to talk about cultural brands (O'Reilly, 2005), which are supposed to be perceived and assessed by customers in a surprising way (Komańda, 2015). The assessment, in turn, is a derivative of values which are embedded in social systems and interactive relations within them (Dziubińska, 2015).

Loyalty of customers towards the brand in such case depends on the conformity of the brand identity with its image (Nandan, 2005). The brand image may be built, among other things, by engagement in various types of actions of a social, cultural or sport nature (mainly by sponsorship of such events). Nowadays, the presence of brands in social media and their users' attitude towards them are becoming more and more significant. It is them who, thanks to the possibility of rapid world-wide exchange of information, become the best tool for brand promotion. However, they may also become its most dangerous opponents.

1. Brand sponsorship of events in the light of social media conditionings

The term social media is not homogeneous. As it is pointed out, such forms of social interactions which take place in the virtual reality as: collaborative projects, social networking sites, blogs, content communities, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds may be indicated (Kaplan, Haenlein, 2010). This obviously leads to a series of challenges that brand management in social media must face. One of them is the fact that the roles assumed by participants of social media are not homogeneous, and they often change over time or depending on the medium (Komańda, 2010). However, a real motivation of participants/clients of social media, which enterprises are not fully aware of, seems to be the key issue from the perspective of brand management. The results of studies indicate that although clients are active and engaged on many social media platforms, use numerous applications and eagerly exchange popular content (Erdoğan, Cicek, 2012), they still expect an enterprise to provide them with tangible goods above all (Heller Baird, Parasnis, 2011). Proper recognition of the motivation of participants of social media, however, makes it possible to create a virtual community which will positively translate into building relationships between clients and a brand, products, an enterprise, or between clients themselves (Laroche *et al.*, 2013).

The application of social media in brand management requires paying attention to, above all, the fact that communicating about the brand does not only occur between customers (media users) and the brand, but also between customers (media users) themselves. Therefore, it might be assumed that these are the customers who constitute the key aspect of communicating about the brand in social media. Their opinion about the brand and attitude towards it, which is expressed by them in social media, are influenced by two communication platforms:

communication with the brand and communication with other customers (social media users) (Zailskaitė-Jakštė, Kuvykaitė, 2016). Mentioning social media leads to the reference to the paradigm connected with relationships which are built and maintained between the brand and its customers (Bruhn *et al.*, 2012).

The reality of social media leads to the situation in which, as far as brand management is concerned, enterprises need to implement a specific strategy of constant engagement in the process of communication with target customers with the use of various information distribution channels (social media). Implementation of this postulate creates the demand for employees specialised in this kind of activity (Booth, Matic, 2011). Among the main actions taken up by enterprises in social media from the perspective of the discussed issue, one may enumerate information concerning special prices, announcements about new products/services, presenting advice and useful information, course of the customer service process, and, finally, getting involved various kinds of relationships with the customer. Motivations for brand activity in social media are as follows: a strategy imposed by the company's headquarters, costs-cutting, and, finally, popularity of social media and potential presence of competition in social media (Tsimonis, Dimitriadis, 2014). Deliberate and organised activity of brands in social media entails also the necessity to determine the desired results of this activity. These may include: getting involved in relationships with customers, and what is related to it, winning new clients or maintaining existing ones, building the so called brand awareness and engagement among social media users (customers) (Tsimonis, Dimitriadis, 2014). Simultaneously, it is pointed out that it is important for the relationships between the brand and the customer (social media user) to be of personal nature or for the client to have such an impression. It translates into the effect of customer loyalty

towards the brand as well as tendency to provide it with information (Labrecque, 2014). Social media may therefore also serve as an area of study on the brand itself (Beuker, Abbing, 2010).

Potential application of social media in brand management may therefore be of special importance in case of sponsorship of events realised by the brand. Such situation takes place since, as the results of the research suggest, sponsorship of events may have a real influence on the increase in loyalty towards the brand. However, it is possible only if two conditions are met. Firstly, customers must be aware of the sponsorship in question. Secondly, they are engaged in the event in question themselves (Sirgy *et al.*, 2008). Communication via social media makes a two-way exchange of information between the brand and its customers possible, which, from the above mentioned point of view, is of key significance for efficient brand management.

On the basis of the above mentioned exchange of information between the brand and social media users (customers) the issue of image associations may also be considered between the event itself with constitutes the subject of the sponsorship and the sponsor (brand) (Coppetti *et al.*, 2009). It is essential for two reasons. Firstly, the brand may be engaged in the sponsorship of many events. In such case it should be determined what is the unique influence on the brand image in case of particular events and what is the common effect of this multi-sponsorship in this respect (Chien *et al.*, 2005). Secondly, it is pointed out that the issue of conformity between brand identity and the nature of a sponsored event, especially in case of sport events, is essential for the efficiency of the sponsorship in the context of brand management (Lee, Cho, 2009). Listening to social media users' opinions in this respect should be of key importance for tasks implemented within the scope of brand management as well as for the strategy of communicating

about it itself. Identification and communication with a selected group of customers distinguished on the basis of demographic and psychographic features can help the brand to choose the sponsorship of suitable events and more efficient building and maintaining of relationships with this group (Bennett *et al.*, 2009).

2. Methodology

The main objective of this work is to establish how being a sponsor of the European Football Championship 2016 (EURO 2016) which was taking place from June 10, 2016 to July 10, 2016 influenced the perception of Coca Cola and Carlsberg brands in social media. The choice of brands was based on the similarity of the subject of business activity among the main sponsors and their international recognition.

Brand monitoring offered by the website socialmention.com was applied to define a general attitude of Internet users towards these brands in social media. Data from social media regarding information that concerns these brands were downloaded from the above mentioned website twice. They were downloaded for the first time on June 9, 2016, that is the day before the championship began, and they contained information regarding the previous month. The second time was on July 11, 2016, that is one day after the championship ended, and therefore the obtained information concerned the month during which the championship was taking place. Whereas, in order to define the content of Internet users' statements related to these brands during EURO 2016 continuous brand monitoring was conducted with the use of the tool available on website likemore.pl (*i.e.* within the period of time from June 10, 2016 to July 10, 2016). It should be stipulated that the website socialmention.com states that it makes it possible to monitor over 100 of the so called social media, including above all

Twitter, Facebook, FriendFeed, YouTube, Digg, Google. In case of Likemore.pl these are, above all, the following social media: Facebook, Twitter, Google. According to its authors, the tool monitors also blogs and other forms of social media (there is, however, no detailed information available).

Data obtained from socialmention.com concerned the following aspects: strength, sentiment, passion and reach of the brands, as well as information related to the frequency of use of the so called key words and hashtags. The Wilcoxon test was applied to determine if there is a statistical difference in the frequencies of use of key words and hashtags before and during the championship. Calculations were made with the use of PS Imago (SPSS Statistics). In order to show the content of social media users' statements Gephi 0.9.1. for social network analysis was used.

3. Results

For the purposes of determining the attitude of social media users towards both brands one may use four main measurements offered by the socialmention.com tool. The first one is strength, that is probability that a given brand is, at a particular moment, being discussed by Internet users (the number of mentions within the last 24 hours in relation to the total number of statements). Secondly, there is a sentiment, that is the relation of mentions of positive value to those of negative value. Thirdly, passion, that is the probability that the same social media users will

repeat their statements about the brand. The fourth one is reach, that is the measurement of reach of influence measured with the number of unique social media users expressing their opinions about the brand in relation to the total number of mentions. The comparison of these four measurements for Coca Cola and Carlsberg for the periods before and during EURO 2016 is shown in Table 1. The information contained in the Table 1 makes it possible to notice a change in the value of measurements in case of Coca Cola.

In case of the key words which appeared in social media in mentions concerning these brands when it comes to Coca Cola before the championship the most common words were: "cola" (used 300 times), "coca" (used 262 times), "office", "cooler", "cavalier", "drink" (each of them was used 57 times). During Euro 2016 the most popular key words were: "cocacola" (199), "cola" (57), "submitted" (21 times), "comments", "links" (each of them was used 20 times). In case of Carlsberg the key words before EURO 2016 were: "Carlsberg" (228 times), "glyptotek" (39), "beer" (38) and "dahlerupaposs", and "vilhelm" (each of them was used 28 times). During the championship the words were as follows: "Carlsberg" (237 times), "glyptotek" (39 times), "beer" (35 times), "dahlerupaposs" and "vilhelm" (each of them was used 28 times). In order to assess whether there were any statistical differences in the use of key words in the opinions expressed by Internet users in social media the Wilcoxon test was applied for two related samples. The comparison of 5 most

Table 1. Measurements of social media users' attitude towards selected brands.

Coca Cola before EURO 2016		Coca Cola after EURO 2016	
45% strength	7:0 sentiment	75% strength	3:1 sentiment
36% passion	28% reach	46% passion	44% reach
Carlsberg before EURO 2016		Carlsberg after EURO 2016	
36% strength	4:1 sentiment	37% strength	3:1 sentiment
48% passion	23% reach	48% passion	23% reach

Source: data gathered by socialmention.com

Table 2. The Wilcoxon test values for the most frequently used key words in the mentions in social media for the selected brands.

Brand	Value
CocaCola	
Statistics Z	-1.386
Significance	0.166
Carlsberg	
Statistics Z	-0.447
Significance	0.655

Source: own work.

Table 3. The Wilcoxon test values for the hashtags used in mentions in the social media for selected brands.

Brand	Value
CocaCola	
Statistics Z	-1.890
Significance	0.059
Carlsberg	
Statistics Z	-2.862
Significance	0.004*

Source: own work.

commonly used words in both moments of time was analysed. It means that in case of Carlsberg it was a comparison of 5 words, whereas in case of Coca Cola – 10 words (in this case there was a change in the most popular key words). The comparison is shown in Table 2. Therefore the existence of a significant difference in the use of key words in Internet users' mentions concerning brands in question could not be confirmed. In case of Carlsberg the result does not come as a surprise since the difference in the number of times particular key words were used was slight, whereas the same result in case of Coca Cola may be explained, above all, with a different set of the most frequently used key words in both moments of time (before and during EURO 2016).

The same procedure was applied for hashtags used by social media users with

respect to both brands. In total, 10 hashtags were distinguished in case of Coca Cola, whereas in case of Carlsberg there were 23 of them. The Wilcoxon test results are shown in Table 3.

The results of the Wilcoxon test indicate that in case of Carlsberg there is a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.01$) in the number of hashtags used by social media users. It is worth noticing here that the two most often used hashtags are: #euros2016 (73 times before the championship began, 0 times during the championship) and #euro2016 (3 times



Figure 1. Content of social media users' statements connected with Carlsberg. Source: own work based on data gathered by likemore.pl.

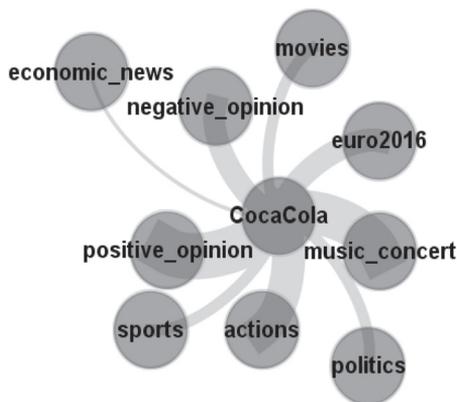


Figure 2. Content of social media users' statements related to Coca Cola. Source: own work based on data gathered by likemore.pl.

before the championship began and 57 times during the championship). The remaining hashtags were not used more often than 14 times within one of the periods studied. As far as Coca Cola is concerned, again, no statistically significant difference in the use of hashtags between the periods studied was confirmed. #Video was the most commonly used hashtag (used 0 times before the championship, 3 times during the championship). The remaining ones were used twice at most. However, in case of Coca Cola no hashtags directly referring to EURO 2016 were noted.

The analysis of the content of Internet users' statements containing references to Coca Cola and Carlsberg during the European Football Championship 2016 makes it possible to notice the differences concerning both brands. These facts are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. It should be stipulated that the term "actions" should each time be understood as social media users' statements informing about promotional campaigns of these brands (not connected with EURO 2016), whereas the terms "negative opinion" and "positive opinion" should be understood as their statements assessing these campaigns, products as well as the brands themselves.

The Figures 1 and 2 present information in the form of a normalized network graph. It means that if a particular category is near a centrally located brand label, it appeared relatively frequently. Whereas, if a category is located in the peripheral area, it signifies that it appeared relatively seldom in the Internet users' statements in social media.

In case of Carlsberg it may be noticed that the subject of statements related to EURO 2016 was the most popular among the Internet users' mentions. In total, 51 mentions about Carlsberg during the championship were registered by likemore.pl, out of which as many as 31 (53.45%) referred to EURO 2016. Positive opinions about the brand, its products and promotional campaigns (unrelated to EURO 2016) were second – there were 15 of them altogether (25.86%). In case

of Coca Cola the issue seems to be much more complicated. Out of 54 mentions about the brand the most frequently appearing ones concerned a positive opinion about it, its products and promotional actions unrelated to EURO 2016 (12 times; 22.22%), as well as music concerts branded by Coca Cola (11 times; 20.37%). There were 9 statements (16.67%) concerning the brand's special offers, whereas the number of those concerning EURO 2016 and those expressing negative opinion about the brand, its products and promotional actions amounted to 6 (11.11% share of these categories in the total number of statements respectively).

4. Discussions

Brand monitoring made it possible to establish a few significant things related to Carlsberg and Coca Cola. In case of Carlsberg the main measurements of social media users' attitude were basically the same in both periods of time when the monitoring was conducted. What is more, the most popular key words used by Internet users in both periods were also the same. However, the analysis of the content of statements proved that more than half of the studied entries in social media connected with this brand during EURO 2016 were related to this sports event. The most frequently used hashtags referred to the event as well (both before and during the championship). Moreover, it was the only group of Internet users' indications concerning the engagement of the brand in sports or cultural events (without taking into consideration constant engagement of Carlsberg in running of the Glyptotek museum in Copenhagen). It may signify that the engagement of this brand in EURO 2016 sponsorship was noticed and became the main subject of Internet users' statements, although it did not change their general attitude towards the brand.

In case of Coca Cola, the attention should be paid to several aspects which the brand

monitoring has revealed. First of all, the main measurements of social media users' attitude towards the brand changed within the studied periods of time. Secondly, the key words in those two periods changed as well. What is more, it may be noticed that there are various versions of the brand name/name of products used by the users (cola, coca, cocacola). Thirdly, the users relatively seldom used hashtags in case of this brand and none of them referred to EURO 2016 within the studied periods of time. Fourthly, the analysis of social media users' statements in which mentions about this brand appeared points out that during the European Football Championship Coca Cola was also engaged in other sports and cultural undertakings. It may signify that in comparison to Carlsberg Coca Cola is indeed involved in a wider range of various types of undertakings and implements the strategy of a socially active brand which wants to be a part of its clients' life. Taking into consideration the fact that social media users' mentions during EURO 2016 constituted only 11.11% of their total number, it is difficult to explain the difference in the attitude of Internet users towards this brand with the fact of sponsoring this sports event.

5. Conclusion

The results of the pursued research aim make it possible to draw a conclusion that sponsorship of sports or cultural events may be a significant aspect of building a brand image, which has, at least to some extent, its reflection in the attitude towards them expressed by social media users. However, the cases of Coca Cola and Carlsberg also seem to point out that there might be diversified strategies

of the engagement of brands in sponsorship of sports and cultural events and undertakings which are expressed both by the number of undertakings and nature of such engagement, which also hinders the attempts to determine, based on brand monitoring, the relationship between brand engagement in a particular undertaking and the attitude of social media users towards it (especially in case of the attempts made to compare different brands).

The analysis conducted in this paper may be characterised by a number of actual limitations. Firstly, two brand monitoring tools were applied (socialmention.com and like-more.pl). Although declarations of authors of both tools lead to the conclusion that at least the same main social media are monitored in their case, the user cannot be certain that efficiency of their searching is equal. Secondly, only arbitrarily selected information delivered by these tools was analysed for the purposes of this article. In case of socialmention.com the analysis may be potentially broadened by the source of mentions about the brand (type of social medium) or information concerning the most active users mentioning the brand. When it comes to Likemore.pl it is possible to use generated reports in a specially designed qualitative analysis of the content of users' statements. The obtained analysis results depend also on the level of recognition of brands which were monitored. Their recognition may influence: firstly, the number of references to the brands in social media, and, secondly, the measured aspects of Internet users' attitude towards the brand. All that makes brand monitoring in social media a comprehensive challenge for the purposes of which an appropriate set of analytical tools shall be selected which should depend on the situational context of the brand itself as well as the research aim.

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Received: 13. 12. 2016

Reviewed: 26. 04. 2017

Accepted: 24. 5. 2017

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