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Brand Relationship on Instagram in Example of Sport Accessory Companies

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ABSTRACT

The increasing popularity of social media and digitalization have made the electronic environment to become a part of people everyday lives. That provides new possibilities for individuals and businesses to interact with each other. Thus, this research is to find out how brands may engage customers, and how to communicate and collaborate with them on social media.

This research aims to find out how users can be engaged on Instagram. Also, it is to sort out how and why some Instagram accounts are getting more engagement on their posted content.

The case companies for the research are Suunto and GoPro which are studied using mixed methods. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods are used to perform the research. The major method for the research is the quantitative analysis and the results of it are supplemented with the qualitative analysis. By the quantitative analysis, the author aims to find out quantifiable results and compare the results of two case companies whereas, the qualitative research methods are used to interpret and analyze the reasons behind the quantifiable results.

As the outcome of the research, brands should pay attention to its social media relationships with customers. Brands should endorse users to create content as it can be used in favor of a brand in branding or marketing. User-generated content should be included in brands social media content as it has a positive impact on customer engagement. Also, it is more efficient than hashtags in increasing the engagement on content on Instagram.

Keywords: Branding, eWOM, Social Media, Customer Engagement, User-Generated Content

INTRODUCTION

While laptops and mobile devices have developed to the level that they are light to carry with you and pleasant to use, they have become the most used media and entertainment source for many people. Social media such as Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, Facebooks, and LinkedIn are used for entertainment but also for professional and business purposes. Different social networking sites need different kinds of content to be published as well with different commitment and activity level.

Social media and digitalization are rapidly changing the way brands utilize and engage with the public online and new social media apps come to exist all the time and the comparison and research of all of them cannot be done in this research. Thus, this research focuses only on Instagram to narrow down the research area and topic. Also, the author is using Instagram most of all social media and is the most interested in Instagram marketing and its algorithms. Instagram as a social media platform has an ability to publish photos and videos and along with the text which can be liked or commented. The study is to find out how brands can increase the engagement on their Instagram posts.

Instagram as a social media platform does not have so strict character limitation like Twitter, where the character limit is only 280, whereas Instagram has much higher limit with 2200 characters (Jackson, 2017). Due to that, also the qualitative analysis on Instagram posts may be considered more interesting as there are not so strict limits and users can express more freely and elaborately whatever they want.

The popularity of social media and networking through digital communication channels has been increasing among people, all over the world. In 2017 social media had 2.46 billion users, which makes it 71% of internet users and it is projected to grow each year reaching 3.02 billion in 2021 (Statista 2019). Individuals and companies have different ways and means to use social media. Social media and digital transformation enable a lot of new opportunities and marketing tools for companies to interact with customers and also individuals may communicate with companies.

Social media as a marketing tool is not only for eCommerce companies but all industries and types of businesses have an opportunity to boost their performance with good social media management and presence.

User-generated content is a popular e-commerce trend on Instagram which digital marketers are emphasizing. User-Generated content is a good indicator of the quality of a brand and it is considered trustworthy. Besides, it is free marketing content for brands so it is crucial to be successful in online marketing. (Gallegos 2016)

The aim of this research is to find out how users can be engaged on Instagram and what are the reasons behind the users' decisions to interact with brands on social media. The research problem for the thesis is that some brand accounts are not as successful as others in getting their content engaged and thus enjoy the benefits it provides directly and indirectly. In order to fulfill the aim and sort out the research problem this thesis has the main research question being; How brands can benefit from customer relationships on social media marketing?

To complement the main research question there are two sub-questions;

1. How brands can benefit from user-generated content?
2. How customer engagement can be affected on social media?

1. Theoretical Framework

This research starts with the theoretical part which examines different brand characteristics, social media's features and other marketing issues relevant to the research.

1.1. Brand

The idea of brands has possibly existed for thousands of years. However, the up-to-date idea of brands has been around from the late 19th century which consists of such things as trademarks and seductive packaging. (Avis 2009, 2)

The definition of brand varies and has varied depending on the philosophy and perspective the concept is reviewed. The American Marketing Association (AMA) has defined in 1960 the brand from a company-oriented perspective as:

> "A name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors." (Wood 2000, 664)

The definition of the brand has differed throughout the concept's existence. Due to different approaches and new perspectives, there may be needed additions and supplements to definitions. The AMA's early definition does not include the deliberation of intangible brand features. Later on, AMA added to its definition (1995) "any other feature" which would differentiate the brands from competitors. (Ibid.)

1.1.1. Branding

During recent years, one of the main discussion topics in marketing and branding has been the concept of brand equity and intangible value created through branding (Keller 2009, 140). According to Keller (Ibid.), despite different approaches to branding, there is a mutual agreement

that brands equity should be defined in terms of marketing effects targeted to a brand and also that differences between brands are due to past marketing outcomes.

By enhancement of a brand, companies look for marketplace benefits which are linked to having a strong brand. Benefits of having a strong and recognizable brand may be very diversified and unexpected. However, Hoeffler and Keller documented a wide variety of possible benefits in 2003,

- customer perceptions of product performance improve;
- the loyalty of customers increases;
- less vulnerability to competitive marketing actions and marketing crises;
- larger margins;
- more elastic customer response to price decreases and inelastic customer response to price increases;
- greater trade or intermediary cooperation and support;
- effectiveness of marketing communication increases;
- additional licensing and brand extension opportunities.
  (Keller 2009, 140)

Social media presence for brands is needed to build a connection and engagement with customers. Due to being able to communicate with brands on social media customers engage and can feel the satisfaction of being part of 'us' with the brand they are willing to be associated with. Traditionally, customers have been tending to see brands as 'they' but now they can feel the belongingness via new communication channels and within new communities. (Yan 2011, 690)

Some brands have taken an advantage of social media interactions with a customer not only in terms of research and development but also by cooperating with the customer. Thus, companies benefit not only externally but internally. For example, Linux benefits from its wide user base which collaborates on developments to the operating system and helps the operating system to be user-friendly and up-to-date. With new social media communication channels both parties, the brands, and the customers benefit from communication going into both directions. (Ibid., 690-691)

1.1.2. Brand Equity and Brand Value

The term brand equity is created to describe the relationship between the company and the customer in marketing literature. Brand equity is used differently by marketers and accountants as it is used for different purposes. To separate from the asset valuation meaning, which is used in

financial accounting, marketers may also refer to brand equity as consumer brand equity. (Wood 2000, 662-663)

However, in this research brand equity is reviewed from the marketers' point of view. Thus, according to Wood (2000, 662) brand equity is considered as brand strength and brand image.

Brand value is similar to the equity but not the same. Both are measuring how much a brand is worth. While Brand equity focuses on the brand's characteristics seen by a customer and related to the customer, brand value is considered as a financial asset. Brand value is often seen as the financial worth of the brand. (Aaker 2016)

Brand value is more used in accounting and it is seen as a quantifiable asset which can be included in business transactions while brand equity is more focusing on the customer and can be characterized more as a qualitative feature (Wood 2000, 663).

1.1.3. Brand Identity and Image

Brand identity and image are interrelated by trying to be as close to each other. In an ideal situation for a brand, the brand image is very close to its brand identity. Brand identity is how a company is attempting to identify itself. Companies often use a branding strategy as a mean to deliver the brand identity and brand value to the public. (Nandan 2005, 265)

The brand image then is a customer-constructed notion of the brand (Ibid., 267). It considers how customers perceive the value of the brand and what one associates the brand with.

1.2. Social Media as a Marketing Tool

It is a bit obscure about what social media precisely is. But it is generally defined as "Internet-based, disentrained and persistent channels of mass personal communication facilitating perceptions of interactions among users, deriving value primarily from user-generated content" (Carr, Hayes 2015, 49).

To formally define social media one first need to draw a line between Web 2.0 and User-generated content. Web 2.0 is a platform which enables content and applications being modified continuously

by all users participating. To generalize, Web 2.0 has brought blogs and wikis to live and to be modified and created by individuals not only by software developers and due to that it has enabled the evolution of social media. User-generated content is often used to describe the various forms of media content that are available public or for a certain group of individuals made by end-users. To clarify and to be used as a definition in this research, Social Media is a group of Internet-based applications which utilizes web 2.0 as the platform. (Kaplan, Heanlein 2009, 60-61)

Before Web 2.0 individuals were not able to interact in the internet environment but it was made as a mass production by professionals to individuals who wanted to get access to the data. Thus, Web 1.0 was also named as the web of documents and it was considered as read-only web whereas Web 2.0 is called the web of people and it is read and write web. So, Web 2.0 was a mandatory progress step for social media to be created since not until Web 2.0 was created bi-directional communication was enabled. Due to new innovations in technology around Web 2.0 environment also web applications and cross-site sharing social networks could be created. (Hiremath, Kenchakkanavar 2016, 705-708)

It is fairly argued whether Web 3.0, which was coined already in 2006, is already in use and utilized as it is rather used in marketing purposes than in everyday life (Comben 2018). However, Web 3.0 is to be more personalized web environment and semantic web rather than the social web (Hiremath, Kenchakkanavar 2016, 705-708). Accordingly, Web 3.0 will bring improvements into personalized marketing and social networks but the major turn point for social media and digital marketing was the invention of Web 2.0.

Social media subdomain social networking sites (SNSs) is defined as "a networked communication platform in which participants 1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-provided data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site". (Ellison, Boyd 2013, 157)

From the marketers' point of view, the increased popularity of social media should not be missed. The rate of using social media is risen among all American internet-using adults from 10 percent in 2005 to 76 percent in 2015. Even faster growth in popularity of social media has seen among young American which also includes young adults who remain offline. Young adults (ages 18 to

29) are the most likely to use social media with a rate of 12 percent in 2005 risen all the way to 90 percent in 2015. (Perrin 2015)

1.2.1. Customer Engagement on Social Media

The Web 2.0 environment and new marketing and social media tools offered by it have reformatted the marketing strategies and concepts. Customer engagement has become a more vital part of companies marketing strategies.

Economist Intelligence Unit defines the customer engagement as "an intimate long-term relationship with the customer" and in terms of strategy, it refers to the "creation of experiences that allow companies to build deeper, more meaningful and sustainable interactions between the company and its customers or external stakeholders. (Sashi 2012, 256)

Increased focus to customer engagement has led to an evolution of marketing from the marketing concept era to market orientation to relationship marketing (Ibid., 257). By increasing customer engagement the companies try to enhance and improve the relationship between the brand and the customer and it is very customer-centric.

Engagement rate is a measure used to asses efficiency or quality of content posted on social media. The rate is calculated by dividing the engagement volume by some base volume. Engagement volume is typically describing how social media efforts resonate with the audience. Resonating can be considered as as a number of actions and reactions of the audience. The base volume can be followers, reach or impressions. The choice of base metric is done according to the purpose and availability of data. All these three base metrics involve a different type of audience. (Yamaguchi 2014)

This research utilizes the engagement rate as a research tool to evaluate and compare the efficiency of the posts. In Instagram posts, the number of followers is used as the base value and the engagement volume includes likes and comments. Thus, the formula used in this research to calculate engagement on Instagram posts is:

(Likes + Comments)/Number of followers.

The engagement rate tends to decrease when the number of followers increases and the correlation is seen to happen both for business and personal profiles on Instagram (Dimmock 2018; Markerly 2016). Thus, when individual users' or businesses' Instagram accounts grow they need to pay more attention to engagement to maintain the current level.

As the overall engagement also the rate of comments also decreases more or less similar to the like rate when the number of followers increases. Users on Instagram with less than 1000 followers generate comments around 0,5% of the time, compared to 0,04% for accounts with over 10 million followers making the difference to be almost 13 times less for comments for bigger over 10 million follower accounts. (Markerly 2016)

1.2.2. Hashtags Usage on Social Media

Hashtags are social media keywords prepended with '#' used to indicate the content of the social media posts and to increase the audience by allowing users to search with hashtags. However, sometimes hashtags are not used to describe the content but as a metacommunicative function which is to increase awareness and impressions of the post. (Giannoulakis, Tsapatsoulis 2016, 115-116)

In terms of customer engagement, hashtags are a controversial topic to discuss. Some social media professionals argue them to increase interaction which they consider as an automatic way to increase the engagement whereas some reports have proven the number of hashtags and engagement having a negative correlation. (Nicholson 2017; Whatman 2018)

According to Whatman (2018), the engagement suffers heavily for each additional hashtag up to ten hashtags. After ten the decrease in engagement slows down. Another collapse in engagement comes when the number of hashtags exceeds 30 hashtags.

1.2.3. User-generated content

User-generated content (UGC), also known as user-created content (UCC) is a bit shady concept in today's social media as the difference of professionals and non-professionals is a blurred line. Besides, if a professional create content which is not done on the job it can be considered as UGC. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) states that user-generated content includes three central characteristics which are:

- “Publication requirement: A principal characteristic is that the work is published in some context, for example on a publicly accessible website or on a page on a social networking site only accessible to a select group of people (e.g. fellow university students), even though UCC could be made by a user and never published online or elsewhere. This characteristic excludes e-mail, two-way instant messages and the like.” (OECD 2007, 18)

- “Creative effort: A certain amount of creative effort has to be put into creating the work or adapting existing works to construct a new one; i.e. users must add their own value to the work. UCC could include user uploads of original photographs, thoughts expressed in a blog or a new music video. The creative effort behind UCC may also be collaborative, for example on websites that users edit collaboratively. Merely copying a portion of a television show and posting it on an online video website (a frequent activity on UCC sites) would not be considered UCC. Nevertheless, the minimum amount of creative effort is hard to define and depends on the context.” (Ibid.)

- “Creation outside of professional routines and practices User-created content is usually created outside of professional routines and practices. It often does not have an institutional or commercial market context and UCC may be produced by non-professionals without expectation of remuneration or profit. Motivating factors include: connecting with peers, achieving fame, notoriety or prestige, and expressing oneself.” (Ibid.)

Many companies utilize user-generated content in today's marketing as users have the ability and tools to create high-quality content. User-generated content can be used in brands social media accounts as it may create higher customer engagement and create trust among the customers. 90 percent of online consumers trust organic, user-generated content more than traditional advertising methods and posts. Also, it decreases the demand for content produced by professionals which can help to reduce costs. (Chappel 2018)

Malthouse et al. (2016, 440-441) show in their study that the greater the elaboration in the user-generated content, the greater the consumer behavioral response. Individuals elaborating consistently was also proved to have a more positive behavioral response in purchase decisions. The study was done for an airmail reward program members and they were asked to engage via

email which included a small 10-mile incentive for every member without the requirement of producing content.

Even though, the study shows user-generated content is an effective engagement strategy only a small fraction of invited chose to engage. Such engagement tool may work to increase the loyalty among the small fraction that wants to engage with the organization by producing the content. Even if the fraction to participate is small companies should consider its amplifying effects as many other customers view the content produced by individuals. (Ibid.)

Such brand-building activities may also increase connections with the brand and thereby increase the chance of future participation in engagement activities. Even if the posts generated are not 'on strategy' or negative the study proves UGC elaboration to be a new and potentially powerful dimension in influencing consumer behavior. (Ibid.)

As user-generated content can save time and money of the business marketers should increase the leverage of user-generated content on Instagram. Some brands rely solely on user-generated content and as it has proved to increase the engagement by almost 7%, brands should at least consider taking it to a part of content strategy. Because of the benefits, 58% of Instagram marketers plan to use UGC more in 2019. (Iconosquare 2019, 11)

1.2.3. Possibilities of eWOM

Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication has traditionally been considered as a highly effective tool to impact on customer behavior Besides the impact on purchase decision it has also a significant impact on the post-purchase perception of the product. Like WOM, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is also considered more reliable than marketer-created online sources of information on the product. (Gruen, et al. 2005, 449)

Customer-to-customer information exchange has a notable effect not only on the perceived value of the firm's offering but also with loyalty intentions (Ibid., 455). Thus, companies are trying to create a positive buzz on the Internet around them to bring positively affecting eWOM.

Like user-generated content, also eWOM is free or relatively cheap and easily utilized complement to firm's marketing strategy. They both have been noted to increase brand loyalty and exposure. In the electronic environment, the information spreads much faster and wider than with

regular WOM. As brands may want to support users to create content related to them they need to be aware that eWOM increase even if they would not include the created content on their websites or Instagram accounts.

Theory Summary

- The popularity of social media is growing rapidly.
- Web 2.0 has enabled content and applications being modified continuously creating a pleasant environment for social media to exist.
- Social media provides new communication tools and means for brands and customers to interact with each other.
- Through social media, brands are able to increase customer engagement.
- Having a strong brand brings many advantages such as higher customer loyalty and increased marketing communication effectiveness.
- Increased focus to customer engagement has led to an evolution of marketing from the marketing concept era to market orientation to relationship marketing.
- Engagement rate is a metric to evaluate how social media accounts perform in terms of engagement.
- Instagram has relatively high engagement rate compared to other social networking sites.
- A number of followers and engagement correlate negatively.
- Hashtags are used to increase the traffic on social media posts and thus to increase engagement.
- There are controversial studies on whether hashtags have a positive or negative impact on engagement.
- User-generated content is created outside of professional routines and practices and usually without expectation of profit.
- Many brands utilize user-generated content on their social media content strategies.
- User-generated content is considered trustworthy and as the proof of the quality of a brand.
- User-generated content gets more engagement than company created content.
- eWOM is free or relatively cheap to use as a part of marketing strategy.
- Customers considers eWOM more reliable than content made for marketing.

2. Market Overview and Case Company Introductions

The research focuses on two case companies Suunto and GoPro. Suunto and GoPro both are brands providing smart sport accessories for active people. As in any industry, new technology and innovations are involved also in sports to provide new features and improve performance.

The smart sports accessory industry is growing up quickly. The number of gadgets are expected to grow from around 300 hundred million in 2016 to over 800 million in 2020. According to Lamkin (2016), the popularity of the accessory will increase the industry's worth to about 34 billion US dollars by 2020. Innovation and technology can add value to sports and activities by enabling new data to be linked to performance. The data can be used to be shared on social media platforms but also to help preventing injuries, improving sport technique or to asses the performance. (Barbosa 2018, 1)

2.1. Instagram's Position as a Social Networking Site

Instagram was first presented as a mobile app which enables the users to instantly turn their mobile snapshots into visually appealing images, which are then shared with other users on the platform. Content on Instagram can also be shared to other social networks, as well, like Twitter and Facebook. Instagram was launched in 2010 and after its growth, it was purchased by Facebook in 2012. A possibility to share short videos on Instagram was added in 2013 to compete with the popularity of Vine which was owned by Twitter. (Salomon 2013)

Instagram is dedicated to the mobile experience and its growing popularity was fueled by the rapid adoption of smartphones and development in mobile cameras. Even though it also provides a web page which allows users its other functions but no sharing possibility without a workaround, for instance, a third-party extension. (Ibid.)

Instagram is the sixth largest social network site but excluding the SNSs which primary purposes are to be chat applications (WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and WeChat). Instagram can be considered the third biggest player in the social media with 1 billion monthly active users after Facebook and Youtube. (Statista 2019)

On Instagram, the engagement rate is decreasing significantly. From January 2018 to January 2019 the average engagement rate dropped by more than 50%, from being over 2,5% to 1,2%. The drop is due to new Instagram features such as Instagram story feature and the increase in ads. The more ads and stories are shown the fewer users see the organic content. The Instagram algorithm cannot show as many organic posts due to paid advertising it is obligated to show. (Pepe 2019)

Still, the engagement rate on Instagram is much higher compared to Facebook and Twitter. Median engagement rates including the top ten industries median in from January-December 2017 were 0,16% for Facebook, Twitter at only 0,046% and Instagram 1,73% (Feehan 2018).

According to Feehan, (2018)the high engagement can sometimes be caused by a hyper-targeted and engaged audience. In the publication, higher education stands out which can be due to these reasons. Also, from the charts in Feehan's study can be seen that every industry's engagement is at the about the same level compared to others on each social media. There are not big differences in positions. On every platform the same industries are the top performers and also the weakest performers are somewhat the same.

2.2. Background of Suunto

Suunto was established in 1936 by a Finnish orienteer and engineer Tuomas Vohlonen who invented the mass production method for the liquid-filled compass. Since then Suunto has been a forerunner and one of the leaders in the industry. Its advanced design and innovation of sports watches, dive computers and sports instruments have made athletes and adventurers, all over the globe, to use Suunto products. (Suunto 2019) Suunto employed 385 people in 2017 (Asiakastieto 2018).

2.3. Background of GoPro

GoPro was founded in 2002 by a surfer, skier and motorsport enthusiast to find a better way to film action sports. GoPro product portfolio includes cameras, drones, apps and accessories which are aimed at filming and taking photos with ease of sharing the content. GoPro is an international with over 26 million sold GoPro cameras in more than 100 countries. The company employed 891 people in 2018. (GoPro; O'Kane, 2019)

3. Research

This part presents how the empirical study is conducted by starting with the research methodology and continuing with describing the process of gathering data for the empirical study. The research uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods and the methodology and strategies used in the research are chosen according to the purpose of the study (Hirsjärvi et al. 2010, 136–137, 183).

An empirical study assesses and compares the two target brands Suunto and GoPro. The study first delivers the background of the brands and the study of the significant statistics which are attained directly from brands Instagram profiles and from third-party social media statistics platform Social Blade. By analysis, this research aims to understand the results and consequences of users participation in branding and if interactions between customers and brands on social media have an impact on their relationships.

To give an overall overview this research starts with the introduction and the theoretical part and then continues with the empirical study, discussion and conclusion. An empirical study is conducted as a quantitative and qualitative content analysis which assesses and compares the two target brands Suunto and GoPro.

3.1. Research Methodology

The research uses mixed methods research but the quantitative analysis is playing the key role and by the qualitative analysis the author aims to explain the results of the quantitative analysis.

The quantitative content analysis is used to interpret and clarify the statistical data acquired from the social media pages (Tuomi, Sarajärvi 2002, 107-108). Numerical data is acquired directly from the social media accounts of the case companies GoPro and Suunto and also social media statistical data providers.

The qualitative content analysis strives to connect the results to broader concepts and to existing theory relevant to the results. Data studied by qualitative content analysis methods can be almost any data in the form of text or transferred into text. (Tuomi, Sarajärvi 2002, 105)

3.2. Research Design

The quantitative analysisise made by comparing the statistical data and engagement of different types of posts are assessed and compared. The quantitative analysis is based on the author's calculations and the data for the calculations is retrieved between 10th and 11th April 2019 from case companies Instagram accounts. The information of whether the post is user-generated or company created is based on the accreditations of the captions of the posts.

The qualitative analysis is playing a minor role in the research but it focuses on captions and what social media marketing techniques it utilizes, for instance, the usage of hashtags and if it implies where the user-generated content is proceeded from. Also, by the qualitative analysis, the author aims to deepen the analysis to figure out if there are any qualitative content which would trigger the piece of content to perform extraordinarily in terms of engagement compared to the average and the other content.

The qualitative and quantitative analysis are based on the author's observation and statistical analysis of the data acquired. The data is collected both from internal and external sources. External data is typically created by sources outside the organization and it may exist in the form of published material, online databases, or information made available by syndicated services Whereas, internal data is generated by the company or organization itself. (Maholtra, Birks 2008, 100-101).

Theory section of the research relies on external data while both external and internal sources of data are used in the empirical part of the research.

3.3. Suunto on Instagram

Suunto main account on Instagram @suunto has 285 700 followers and has 992 posts (5 April 2019). The first post to Suunto Instagram account has been published on 14 May 2014 and it has

339 likes (5 April 2019). The study focuses on the main accounts of the case brands but Suunto also has many relatively bigInstagramm sub-accounts for different purposes of countries such as @Suuntodive, @Suuntohuntfish, @Suuntosuomi, @Suuntoindeonesia and @Suuntorussia.

According to Social Blade (5 April 2019), Suunto main Instagram account gets 3 922,84 likes and 35,64 commentsonn average on each post. Engagement rate on Social blade is based on the latest 20 posts and for Suunto, the rate is 1,39%. Monthly average of the change in the number of followers is +5580. So the audience of the account is growing. Average posting frequency is 30 posts in a month (5 March to 5 April 2019) soonn average there is one new post in a day. (Social Blade)

With Suunto's main hashtag #Suunto there can be found over 731 500 posts. As the Suunto's largest account has 992 posts it can be deduced that Suunto has been able successful in encouraging its customers to share content relating to Suunto and also to use its hashtag. The number of #suunto mentions divided for each main account's follower is around 3,5. So excluding the company's own posts if only followers would have posted with the hashtag there would be around three anda half posts by each follower.

3.4. GoPro on Instagram

GoPro's main account on Instagram @gopro has around 15,5 million followers and 4 847 posts (5 April 2019). The account has its first post from 29 March 2012 which is a user-generated photo by a GoPro fan Dom Moore. The photo has 3806 likes and 559 comments. Like Suunto also GoPro has multiple sub-accounts in addition to the main account. Sub-accounts are mainly targeted for different regions as there are for instance @gopronordics, @goprou, and @goprofr, but there is also @goprobombsquad which is GoPro's human flight team.

Social Blade's statistics point out that GoPro gets 126 423,00 likes and 649,40 comments on average on its posts. The engagement rate of the latest 20 posts is 0,82% which is much less than Suunto has. As stated, this is the typical phenomenon that when the number of followers gets bigger the number of engagement decreases. The size of the audience compared to Suunto cannot only be explained by the longer time of being active on Instagram as the GoPro's account is

growing with much higher rate getting +5 221 new followers daily and +156 630 monthly in average. So, @gopro is gaining almost as many followers in a day that @suunto gets in a month.

The most popular GoPro hashtag #gopro is mentioned on Instagram over 41,1 million times. As Suunto also GoPro has been very efficient in promoting its audience to use its hashtag when sharing their content. Rate of comparing the number of the shared posts with #gopro and number of followers is over 2,65. Even though, GoPro has been able to generate a much larger noise and volume of posts with #GoPro, comparing users activity to participate to the number of followers, it has not been as efficient as Suunto.

GoPro is known for its big user or fan base which produces and shares actively their photos and videos. GoPro has found a way to monetize content that is made by its customer for free as the vast majority of GoPro's customers have purchased after consuming the content created by their customers. The CEO of GoPro states that the strength of the brand is the reason why people want to be associated with it and that their customers are the world's largest production force in for of the customers. (Dillon 2015)

GoPro marketing team has not only successfully been leveraging the user-generated content but also get users to create content as there are over 41,14 million posts tagged #gopro (11 April 2019). When compared to the followers it over 2,5 posts per one follower of the main account. In 2014 GoPro made a contest where the winner photos got featured on their main account. With the contest, @goprowas enablinge to increase the amount of the posts without losing engagement but increasing the interactions whichares not usual when posting frequency gets denser. (Burney 2015) After the contest, GoPro has been able to maintain the dense posting frequency as it is posting still 60 times in a month on average (Social Blade).

GoPro's Instagram has a relatively high share of posts as videos. Because of that, the research is also studying how engagement differs between different types of posts and there are calculations of GoPro's engagement of videos they have posted on Instagram.

Many of the GoPro's posts on Instagram are created by GoPro Athletes who are not professional content creators or marketing professionals. However, in the calculations comparing user-generated content and content created by the company the sponsored athletes are excluded as they are still in GoPro's payroll. Thus, it is hard to classify the posts made or published by the sponsored

athletes to either category. So, only photos which can be classified to either of the categories with a certainty through accreditations in posts captions are used in the calculations.

3.5. Results of Quantitative Analysis

Suunto has high engagement rates overall as stated its latest 20 posts engagement rate is 1,39% when the average on Instagram January 2019 was 1,2%. As shown in figure 8, the latest five posts which were user-generated with certainty base on the credits, Suunto gets higher engagement on the posts generated by users as the average engagement rate is 1,77%. Also, posts generated by the company were doing great compared to the average engagement rate on Instagram. As proven in the theory, the bigger the account the less the engagement is normally. With that taken into account, Suunto gets high engagement on Instagram as according to Markerly (2016) engagement decreases significantly when the account is bigger than ten thousand followers. The number of hashtags ranges from 1 to 3 averages being 1,8 and 2 in user-generated and company created photos.

Table 1. Author's calculations of Suunto Instagram content statistics (engagement rate uses the number of followers as the base value = 285 700)

Suunto User-Generated Photos	Likes	Comments	Engagement Rate	Number of Hashtags
Photo (13 March 2019) by @hildehoffnordskar	5249	68	1,86 %	1
Photo (9 March 2019) by @animaluminium	3235	33	1,14 %	3
Photo (26 February 2019) by @lindsaydawnwebster	3650	10	1,28 %	1
Photo (21 February 2019) by @sawna	6044	52	2,13 %	2
Photo (14 January 2019) by @jvinnari	6920	75	2,45 %	2
Average	5020	48	1,77 %	1,8

Suunto Company Created Photos	Likes	Comments	Engagement Rate	Number of Hashtags
Photo (5 March 2019)	6863	41	2,42 %	2
Photo (3 March 2019)	3354	28	1,18 %	2
Photo (22 February 2019)	3867	43	1,37 %	2
Photo (14 February 2019)	1984	3	0,70 %	1
Photo (30 January 2019)	3747	18	1,32 %	3
Average	3963	27	1,40 %	2

Source: Instagram; author's calculations

GoPro's engagement rate of the latest 20 posts being 0,82 and the averages of photos created by users and the company being 0,76% and 0,89% respectively show GoPro performing worse than Instagram average and Suunto in terms of engagement. GoPro has a relatively large follower base (15,5 million) which has a negative impact on engagement as stated previously. However, according to figure 5, the reduction in engagement after exceeding ten thousand followers is not that significant than before reaching ten thousand followers. The number of hashtags ranges from 7 to 10 on GoPro's photos averaging 8 in both categories.

Table 2. Author's calculations of GoPro Instagram photo statistics (Engagement rate uses the number of followers as the base value = 15 500 000)

GoPro User-Generated Photos	Likes	Comments	Engagement Rate	Number of Hashtags
Photo (26 March 2019) by @Jknollie	133500	278	0,86 %	7
Photo (23 March 2019) by @kurosch.borhanian	120005	226	0,78 %	9
Photo (22 March 2019) by @every.shade.of.wolf	127102	236	0,82 %	9
Photo (21 March 2019) by @hiroki_takashu	94863	152	0,61 %	7
Photo (20 March 2019) by @mq_raine	109460	298	0,71 %	8
Average	116986	238	0,76 %	8

GoPro Company Created Photos	Likes	Comments	Engagement Rate	Number of Hashtags
Photo (3 April 2019)	93931	183	0,61 %	8
Photo (5 April 2019)	172237	349	1,11 %	7
Photo (19 March 2019)	83921	299	0,54 %	10
Photo (6 March 2019)	191805	485	1,24 %	8
Photo (4 March 2019)	145894	398	0,94 %	7
Average	137558	343	0,89 %	8

Source: Instagram; author's calculations

When comparing the figure 9 and 10 it can be seen that GoPro gets higher engagement on user-generated videos than photos as the average engagement of videos is 1,11%. Anyhow, there is one posts created by user @olly.bridge with relatively high engagement 2,48% which affects the average greatly. The remarkable finding of the calculations is the low engagement rate of GoPro's videos created by the company the rate being only 0,38%. With photos, the difference between user-generated and company generated was not very significant at least with this small sample but videos show that the user-generated videos have some advantage over videos created by the company in terms of engagement. In videos, there is more deviation in engagement but also in the number of hashtags as the number in hashtags range from 4 to 10 andthe average is 7,8 in user-generated videos. Videos created by the GoPro have hashtags from 7 to 15 with 8,6 average.

Table 3. Author's calculations of GoPro Instagram video statistics (Engagement rate uses the number of followers as the base value 15 500 000).

GoPro User-Generated Videos	**Likes**	**Comments**	**Engagement Rate**	**Number of Hashtags**
Video (7 April 2019) by @keahideaboitiz	113862	718	0,74 %	8
Video (31 March 2019) by @ColinOBrady	66804	277	0,43 %	4
Video (27 March 2019) by @olly.bridge	374710	8917	2,48 %	9
Video (25 March 2019) by @brendandubs	190625	1872	1,24 %	8
Video (21 March 2019) by @camille.armand	101730	567	0,66 %	10
Average	169546	2470	1,11 %	7,8

GoPro Company Created Videos	**Likes**	**Comments**	**Engagement Rate**	**Number of Hashtags**
Video (8 April 2019)	37845	135	0,25 %	7
Video (4 April 2019)	87858	558	0,57 %	8
Video (30 March 2019)	49548	316	0,32 %	7
Video (17 March 2019)	72007	197	0,47 %	15
Video (16 March 2019)	49199	131	0,32 %	6
Average	59291	267	0,38 %	8,6

Source: Instagram; author's calculations

The number of hashtags does not show having any consistent impact on engagement as there is not any logical pattern between the engagement and number of hashtags. From the calculations can be also interpreted that there is not any factor which would guarantee higher engagement so there might be other factors which have more impact on engagement such as content or visuality of the post or posting time.

3.6. The Results of Qualitative Analysis of the Extraordinary Content

The qualitative content of the best-performed video in the research was drawn up around a new world record in kite surfing. The caption of the video, published on 27 March 2019, included nine hashtags of which six were related to the brand such as #GoPro, #GoProUK and #GoProHERO7. The rest three were linked to the sport or the record being #Kitesurf, #WorldRecord and #kitesurfing.

The caption of the video also involves three Instagram profiles tagged into it which are the user who has created the video @olly.bridge, the account of the worldwide authority on record-breaking achievements @guinnessworldrecords and GoPro's subaccount targeted to the United Kingdom @GoProUK.

The poorest performed video in the research in terms of engagement was published on 8 April 2019 and it was about going out of a tent to see a mountain view. The caption started off with "If you camped on a cliff, but didn't capture the moment, did it even really happen?", continuing with an announcement of a discount.

Also, in this video GoPro has used hashtags which are related to the brand and also hashtags relevant for the visual content. In the advertisement part of the caption, there has been included a hashtag in the text, whereas other hashtags are separated from the text.
Thebest-performedd photo in terms of the engagement is generated by @jvinnari and is published in Suunto's Instagram account on 19 January 2019. In the photo, Suunto's sports watch is mounted to the handlebar of a bicycle and snow being in the background.

The caption is simple “How was your weekend?” and two hashtags #suunto9 and #suuntoride. Also, at the end of the caption, there is the accreditation for the user who has taken the photo.

The poorest performer of the photos in the research was from 19 March 2019 published by GoPro and it was a company created content. The photo was about a lighthouse in the night and had a description of the settings that were used to capture the photo. The GoPro seems to be pretty consistent with hashtags as like in the best-performed video also this photo has a few brand-related hashtags and few hashtags related to the visual content such as #StarPhotography #NightPhoto.

4. Discussion

Every social media marketer should consider utilizing user-generated content as the analysis implies that using it at least do not have a significant negative impact on engagement and provides free or relatively cheap content to be used as means of marketing. And in the previous studies, it has been proven to have 7% higher engagement as well as better consumerbehaviorall towards it than content created for marketing purposes (Iconosquare 2019, 11; Malthouse et al. 2016, 440-441). Besides, engagement on the companies account many of the posts used in the calculations were also posted on users accounts which increases the total reach of the audience as the content is available in multiple channels.

As already stated user-generated content provides positive impact directly but also indirectly when users create and share content featuring brand's products mentioning the brand with tagging the brand's social media account or using the hashtag the brand is visible not only its followers but also the followers of the publisher. In this way the brand awareness will increase and the brand may increase its engagement on social media and audience as some may visit the brand's account through the tag on the customer's post. Also, users may access the content which is posted with the hashtag.

Hashtags may not be useful to increase engagement but in terms of eWOM it can be used by users so that people may find the relevant content and topic they want to interact with. To get users to use the wanted eligible hashtag, brands should encourage and point out the hashtag which they want to be connected with. As Malthouse et al. (2016) proved user-generated content having a positive impact to purchase decisions, it is vitally important for companies to get users to share content with the brand's hashtag so that, people considering to purchase a good or service can find posts of other consumers, and not only content made in marketing purposes to reinforce their willingness to buy.

Even though, paid Instagram marketing is a relatively cheap form of marketing Instagram marketers should include user-generated content in their social media marketing strategies.

By having successful customer engagement brands are able to keep their loyal customers keep buying or increase their purchases while creating togetherness and the customer satisfied. Through positivebehaviorall response in purchase decisions and satisfaction after purchase brands are more

likely to generate positive eWOM which not only increases brand awareness but is likely to impact positively on brand value and brand image. The previous factors may increase brand loyalty among the existing customers but also attract new customers to use brand's products or new users to interact and engage with brands on social media. New people are likely to be attracted and traffic increased as on Instagram it is easy to find content posted by like-minded users. (Olszanowski 2014, 93)

4.1. Suggestions for Future Research and Companies

The research does not concentrate on the visual content of the posts but the reason behind the biggest distinction of results, the engagement on GoPro's Instagram videos, may be in the visual content. Videos made by the company were rather product-centric whereas user-generated videos were made by utilizing GoPro's products. However, the visual content's impact on engagement requires future research.

Also, to get more detailed statistics such as impressions, telling how many have seen the post, more detailed analysis of the posts would be done. An actual number of the reach and engagement should be acquired to get more accurate analysis. However, that would need the target brands to be sharing the information.

The results conveyed from the qualitative analysis did not bring any factors which would have guaranteed the content to get high engagement. As the content which got the best and the worst results in engagement implemented the same pattern of the caption it seems that the text content in the caption does not have a substantial impact on engagement. To support that, the best-performed photo had a very short and simple caption with only two hashtags.

However, the captions of content on Instagram include the notion of the creator and as the quantitative research and theory suggest that the user-generated content gets more engagement, the customers whether need to pay attention to the caption to notice the accreditation or they perceive and interpret it from the visual side of the content published. In order to find out how users on Instagram recognizes the creator of the content would need more detailed research in which they pay attention to. In this research, it cannot be explained if users engage more with the

user-generated content because they perceive and assume it to be user-generated or if they pay attention to accreditation and if they really are aware and assured it is created by users.

Many of the GoPro's user-generated posts in the research were attained trough contest. To get users to produce and share content companies should encourage users to do that by offering incentives and removing barriers. As the theory and the results of the research are proving the user-generated content to be more engaging brands should emphasize it on their accounts witha good mix of their own content. Hashtags can be used for other purposes but they do not benefit in improving the engagement rate.

CONCLUSION

The general objectives of the research were to give answers how customer engagement can be impacted by using user-generated content whilst also taking other features in consideration such as hashtags which are controversial tool among Instagram marketers as some studies state them to increase and some to decrease the customer engagement on the posted content. The theory combines the fundamental notions of branding, social media, and marketing with the latest available reliable sourcesof informationn about social media and Instagram trends and insights.

The quantitative analysis is crucial when assessing the efficiency of marketing efforts in terms of engagement. The quantitative analysis gives great general insights on how different features affects and how brands or different types of content perform compared to others. This research utilizes only slightly qualitative content analysis to evaluate text data of the posts in order to recognize content sources and means to attain them and to find out whether extraordinary results in engagement are caused by the captions. However, a deeper understanding of the reasons leading to the popularity of content would need more detailed qualitative analysis as well as the extension of timeframe to research the development of engagement and audience. Also, the visual content should be evaluated to see how it impacts on engagement.

To conclude the results, user-generated content is not only beneficial in terms of eWOM but also as a part of an online marketing strategy on Instagram. As argued, it seems to have rather positive than negative impact on customer engagement among its other positive sides such as being free marketing content which users tend to consider trustworthy. Thus, marketers should include user-generated content in their marketing content strategies and support users to create and share content.

The number of hashtags does not show having any logical correlation with the engagement and thus in this research the impact of hashtags when considering engagement remains unclear. However, it may have an impact on the size of the audience or an increase of followers. To research such things the studied companies should be cooperating by sharing their private data which is not publicly available. As both target brands are sports and lifestyle accessories offering extra value for people’s activities the future research suggestions would be extended to compare different industries or social media platforms and how visual content is affecting on customer engagement.

To increase customer engagement and keep customers loyal and buying in the future brands should consider using user-generated content over numerous hashtags. So, companies should pay attention to include user-generated content to it social media strategies with a good mix of the company created content.

By having a good brand relationship with customers and supporting them to create and share content, which can be associated with the brand, brands can benefit customers in terms of marketing and other benefits from customer engagement. That may lead to a higher overall engagement on Instagram as user-generated content improves it and to higher rate of eWOM as the content can be published in multiple channels.

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Appendices

Table 1: Instagram, Suunto, Accesible: https://www.instagram.com/suunto/?hl=fi, 10 April 2019

Table 2: Instagram, GoPro, Accessible: https://www.instagram.com/gopro/?hl=fi, 10 April 2019

Table 3: Instagram, GoPro, Accessible: https://www.instagram.com/gopro/?hl=fi, 10 April 2019