Brand-Hate Communities on Facebook:
Community and Collective Action against Top Global Brands

Young Ji Kim, Elisheva Weiss, Stylés Akira, and Andrea Hollingshead

Abstract

The Internet has dramatically enhanced the ability of people to self-organize into communities based upon their goals, values and identity. In some cases, these communities form to express dissatisfaction and take action against common targets, such as brands. Such groups represent the rapidly expanding potential of consumer influence in market dynamics as a result of the stated abilities afforded by new media platforms such as the internet. This study focuses on "online brand-hate communities" within Facebook and attempts to examine the presence, purpose, communication and technological innovation of such communities. We found that 81 of Interbrand's 100 Best Global Brands had brand-hate communities on Facebook. Content analysis of online brand-hate communities revealed that consumers organize in these virtual networks for a variety of causes, ranging from expressing product-related complaints, to publicizing brand injustice in practice, to signaling identity incongruence. These purposes were communicated mostly by emotional expression, although information sharing, social interaction, calls for action, and entertaining messages were present across the brands studied. This study demonstrates the diversity of brand-hate communities online by providing insight into the nature of these communities and the reasoning behind their activities.