



Development and Verification of the Commercial Value added Chain of Content Marketing Response

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Antonia and Hans-Jürgen Hirschfelder. With their unconditional support, love and believe in capability to overcome the challenge to complete the PhD in a second language, they laid a foundation for this long-term challenge.

ABSTRACT

The rapid technological progress in the last 10 years and the coherent opportunities for consumers to communicate among each other almost borderless 24/7, also impacted marketing strategies. Whereas accentuation of product values and pricing are still valuable marketing strategies, consumers are due to the 24/7 access to knowledge, information and consumer feedback, desensitized when it comes to advertising. Availability of the internet across borders, all the time is the main driving factor for marketing practitioners to progressively try to build up a non-purchase pushing relationship to the consumer. With the content communicated in the foreground (informative, helpful or entertaining) and the commercial message in the background this marketing strategy is also known as Content Marketing. Whereas the use of Content Marketing in corporate world is relatively popular, academic research is relatively rare. Indeed, some research was conducted on storytelling and signature stories -a tool of Content Marketing-, however, the functionality of the generic term Content Marketing resembles rather a black box. With the aim to illuminate the understanding and functionality of Content Marketing, this study explored the coherences between content communication vehicles and content generating vehicles. In the scope of this thesis, a theoretical framework conceptualizes the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response was developed and verified in a business to consumer scenario. This theoretical framework was substantiated with a real world application, more precisely the 'Be More human' video campaign from the sportswear manufacturer Reebok served as a research object. A non-probability sampling frame, using convenience sampling resulted in a total sample size of 750 respondents. Since this study focused on the development and testing of a theory, partial least square - structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was applied using the software package SmartPLS3. Through the development of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response this study exemplifies the commercial content generation process and the content value added by the consumer and thus contributes to a better understanding in academia as well as in corporate world of the complex generic term Content Marketing.

Keywords: *Content Marketing, commercial value added chain, Content Marketing response*

TABLE of CONTENTS

| | | |
|-----------|---|----------|
| 1. | Introduction and Background of Study | 1 |
| 1.1. | Contextual Setting | 5 |
| 1.2. | Problem Statement | 5 |
| 1.3. | Aim/Purpose of this Study | 6 |
| 1.4. | Potential Contribution of the Study | 7 |
| 1.5. | Literature Review | 8 |
| 1.5.1. | Firm-generated content | 9 |
| 1.5.2. | Communication Channels | 10 |
| 1.5.3. | Supplementary Content Generation Channels | 11 |
| 1.5.4. | Perception | 12 |
| 1.5.5. | Perceived Usefulness | 14 |
| 1.5.6. | Content Marketing Response | 14 |
| 1.5.7. | Theoretical Framework | 15 |
| 1.6. | Research Objectives | 16 |
| 1.7. | Research Question | 17 |
| 1.7.1. | Primary Research Question | 17 |
| 1.7.2. | Secondary Research Question | 17 |
| 1.8. | Hypothesis | 17 |
| 1.9. | Research Design and Methodology | 19 |
| 1.9.1. | Research Philosophy | 19 |
| 1.9.2. | Research Design | 19 |
| 1.9.3. | Research Strategy | 20 |
| 1.9.4. | Data Collection | 20 |
| 1.9.5. | Sampling | 21 |
| 1.9.5.1. | Definition of target population | 21 |
| 1.9.5.2. | Sample Frame | 22 |
| 1.9.5.3. | Selection of sampling technique | 22 |
| 1.9.5.4. | Determination of Sample Size | 23 |
| 1.9.5.5. | Execution of Sampling process | 23 |
| 1.9.6. | Questionnaire Design | 24 |
| 1.9.7. | Measurement and scaling | 25 |
| 1.9.7.1. | Scaling for Paper One | 26 |
| 1.9.7.2. | Scaling for Paper Two | 27 |
| 1.9.7.3. | Scaling for Paper Three | 27 |
| 1.10. | Pre-Testing | 28 |
| 1.11. | Data preparation | 28 |
| 1.12. | Data Analysis | 29 |
| 1.12.1. | Descriptive statistics | 29 |

| | | |
|-----------|---|-----------|
| 1.12.2. | Inferential statistics | 30 |
| 1.12.2.1. | Visualization | 30 |
| 1.12.2.2. | Measurement Model | 32 |
| 1.12.2.3. | Structural model..... | 32 |
| 1.13. | Ethical consideration | 33 |
| 1.14. | Scope and Limitations of Study..... | 34 |
| 1.14.1. | Scope | 34 |
| 1.14.2. | Limitations | 34 |
| 1.15. | Composition of the Study | 35 |
| 1.16. | Referencing style used in the study | 36 |
| 1.17. | Chapter Summary | 36 |
| 2. | Paper One: The importance of electronic word-of-mouth on consumer perception of content marketing..... | 37 |
| 2.1. | Principle of structuring..... | 37 |
| 2.2. | Abstract | 37 |
| 2.3. | Introduction | 38 |
| 2.4. | Composition of Content Marketing..... | 39 |
| 2.5. | Commercial Value-Added Chain of Content Marketing | 42 |
| 2.6. | Overview over Study | 46 |
| 2.6.1. | Procedure | 47 |
| 2.6.2. | Measures | 47 |
| 2.7. | Results | 48 |
| 2.8. | General Discussion | 49 |
| 2.9. | Limitations and further Research | 51 |
| 2.10. | Managerial Implications and Conclusion..... | 52 |
| 3. | Paper Two: Content Marketing Response: Background and Influencing Factors..... | 53 |
| 3.1. | Abstract | 53 |
| 3.2. | Introduction | 54 |
| 3.3. | Literature Review | 55 |
| 3.3.1. | Content Marketing Response | 56 |
| 3.3.2. | Consumer Perception..... | 57 |
| 3.3.2.1. | Story Fit..... | 58 |
| 3.3.2.2. | Brand Status | 58 |
| 3.3.2.3. | Trust into the Brand | 59 |
| 3.3.3. | Perceived Usefulness..... | 59 |
| 3.4. | Overview of study..... | 60 |
| 3.4.1. | Procedure | 61 |
| 3.4.2. | Measures..... | 61 |
| 3.5. | Results | 62 |

| | | |
|-----------|---|-----------|
| 3.5.1. | Measurement results | 62 |
| 3.5.2. | Structural Results | 63 |
| 3.6. | Discussion and managerial implications | 64 |
| 3.7. | Limitations and future research | 66 |
| 4. | Paper Three: The commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response..... | 68 |
| 4.1. | Abstract | 68 |
| 4.2. | Introduction | 69 |
| 4.3. | Constellation of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing | 70 |
| 4.3.1. | Communication Channels | 72 |
| 4.3.2. | Supplementary content generation..... | 73 |
| 4.3.3. | Indirect effects | 73 |
| 4.3.4. | Overview over Study | 74 |
| 4.3.5. | Procedure | 75 |
| 4.3.6. | Measures | 75 |
| 4.3.7. | Results..... | 76 |
| 4.3.8. | Measurement Results..... | 76 |
| 4.3.9. | Structural Results | 77 |
| 4.3.10. | General Discussion | 79 |
| 4.3.11. | Managerial Implications..... | 81 |
| 4.3.12. | Limitations and Future research recommendations | 82 |
| 5. | Conclusion and Recommendations | 84 |
| 5.1. | Introduction | 84 |
| 5.2. | Synopsis of the Study | 85 |
| 5.2.1. | Summary of Findings..... | 87 |
| 5.2.1.1. | Primary research question:..... | 87 |
| 5.2.1.2. | Secondary research questions: | 87 |
| 5.2.1.3. | Study 1: Proof of additional content generation triggered by FGC | 89 |
| 5.2.1.4. | Study 2: Operationalization of Content Marketing response..... | 90 |
| 5.2.1.5. | Study 3: Verifying the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response..... | 91 |
| 5.2.2. | Addressing the Research Objectives | 93 |
| 5.2.2.1. | Primary research Objective 1..... | 93 |
| 5.2.2.2. | Primary research Objective 2..... | 94 |
| 5.2.2.3. | Secondary research Objective | 95 |
| 5.2.3. | Recommendations..... | 95 |
| 5.2.3.1. | Managerial Implications | 95 |
| 5.2.3.2. | Future Research | 98 |
| 5.2.4. | Limitations | 98 |
| 5.2.5. | Conclusion..... | 99 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| References | 101 |
| Appendix | 112 |
| Appendix A: Ethical Clearance | 112 |
| Ethical Clearance: Paper One | 112 |
| Ethical Clearance: Paper Two | 113 |
| Ethical Clearance: Paper Three | 114 |
| Appendix B: Questionnaires | 115 |
| Questionnaire: Paper one | 115 |
| Questionnaire: Paper Two..... | 120 |
| Questionnaire: Paper Three: | 124 |
| Appendix C: Commercial value-added chain process..... | 130 |
| Appendix D: Sobel Test Results..... | 130 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1.1: Commercial social media engagement cycle..... | 3 |
| Figure 1.2: Selective Content Marketing research problem | 6 |
| Figure 1.3: Theoretical Framework: Commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response | 16 |
| Figure 1.4: Illustration of segmentation of study. | 30 |
| Figure 1.5: Composition of the Thesis. | 35 |
| Figure 2.1: Commercial value-added chain of Content Marketing | 44 |
| Figure 2.2: Content Marketing’s function as an umbrella term..... | 50 |
| Figure 3.1: Theoretical Framework: Content Marketing Response..... | 60 |
| Figure 3.2: Mediation by PU..... | 66 |
| Figure 4.1: Commercial Value added Chain of Content Marketing response)..... | 70 |
| Figure 4.2: Results | 79 |
| Figure 5.1: Selective Content Marketing research problem | 85 |
| Figure 5.2: Visualization of Hypotheses..... | 89 |
| Figure 5.3: Commercial content value added chain process (Results Paper One) | 89 |
| Figure 5.4: Influencing factors of Content Marketing response (Results Paper Two)..... | 90 |
| Figure 5.6: The commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response (Results Paper Three)..... | 92 |
| Figure 5.7: Real world applications | 96 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 2.1: Overview of basic Content Marketing constructs..... | 41 |
| Table 2.2: Structural Equation Model Results..... | 49 |
| Table 2.3: Traditional vs. Content Marketing | 51 |
| Table 3.1: Results | 63 |
| Table 4.1: Results | 78 |

LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|------|----------------------------|
| UGC | User-generated Content |
| CGC | Customer-generated content |
| FGC | Firm-generated content |
| WOM | Word-of-mouth |
| eWOM | Electronic word-of-mouth |

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The additional opportunities of communication, highly influenced by the technological progress during the last decade, changed the flow of information, access to knowledge and consumer behavior (Belk, 2014). The improvement of communication has its roots in the rapid progress in the telecommunication industry, enabling access (progressively mobile) to the internet 24/7. Furthermore, the user-friendly interface of Web 2.0., provides users the opportunity to consume, communicate and generate content 24/7 addressing an international audience (Scheurer & Spiller, 2015; Zenelaj, Gambarov & Bilge, 2016). The opportunity of international exchange of knowledge, information and experience changed consumers' and customers' behavior. In the past mass marketing with a push approach, impel commercial content (one sided) out to highlight the value of the product/brand, today's consumer and customer are progressively picky what commercial content they want to be exposed to (Knoll, 2016). Whereas in the past, entertainment and advertising was concomitant, today's entertainment industry progressively provides an ad-free interface (Hudson & Hudson, 2006; Cain, 2011). Furthermore, the user-friendly interface of Web 2.0 allows users to avoid advertising through free available ad-block software (Singh & Potdar, 2009). These opportunities changed consumer/customer behavior to progressively demanding, individual, independent, involved and more critical towards mass marketing (Lewis & Bridger, 2011; Mihart, 2012). In agreement with that, Constantinides (2006) and Dickinson-Delaporte & Kerr (2014) report a declining response to traditional mass marketing stimuli in today's advanced environment.

Due to its altruistic roots, user-generated content and customer-generated content (UGC/CGC) is perceived more trustfully (Poch & Martin, 2015; Huang, Burtch, Gu, Hong, Liang, Wang, Fu & Yang, 2018). Accordingly, today's consumers'/customers' rely more on, customers' product reviews (CGC) or independent test forums (UGC) than on commercially driven advantageous product specification (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Li & Zhan, 2011; Berger, 2014). Both UGC and CGC are created in a group or by an individual. Furthermore, Krishnamurthy & Dou (2008) subdivide the psychological motivation for engaging in UGC creation into rationally driven motivations (knowledge sharing and advocacy) and emotionally driven motivations (social connection and self-expression). In that respect, CGC (reviews, ratings, et cetera) has lost credibility by the users because of its suggestibility from corporate side. In contrast to CGC, UGC has due to its multiple opportunities to generate content and the accomplished impossibility to control the content generation, a high confidence level by the users (Banerjee, Dellarocas & Zervas, 2017).

These content generation opportunities provide due to its partially controllability risks but also due to the possibility to turn content viral, opportunities for marketing practitioners (Dickinson-Delaporte & Kerr, 2014). Thus, in combination with electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) as the main communication channel of UGC/CGC, consumers' gain alternative (non-to-face) response platforms allowing to communicate and create social content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This deprivation of control about what content gets communicated about the product/brand/company indicates a change from marketer dominance (push marketing) to consumer dominance (pull marketing) (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Schultz, 2017; Zhang, Guo, Hu, & Liu, 2017). According to Tiago & Veríssimo (2014) online social networking positively impacts and broadens consumers'/customers' opportunities concerning product diversity and cost reduction. The non-to-face anonymous electronic environment, increases consumers' and customers' confidence to communicate and exchange their opinions about a product/brand/company (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). In this regard Tiago & Veríssimo (2014:704) highlight *the shift in the locus of persuasive power*.

However, social media with all its channels of sharing (eWOM) and tools to participate (UGC) also provide firms the opportunity to analyze and address the consumer/customer in a different way (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Hence, firms started analyzing UGC connected to the product/brand/company. This non-commercial, but still firm connected content occurs as informative (product review), helpful (tutorial) or entertaining (video) content formats and is perceived due to its altruistic roots more trustful than traditional online advertising (Poch & Martin, 2015; Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, Janakiraman & Kannan, 2016). This non-commercial triggered UGC gives companies exclusive insights what problems or activities consumers and customers have and value with the product/brand (Poch & Martin, 2015). According to Mangold & Faulds (2009) and Tiago & Veríssimo (2014) it is important to determine a target audience and engage on social media, in order to build up a long-term relationship with the consumer/customer. These long-term relations are then used to trigger the co-creation of UGC (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). This cycle of content generation is conceptualized in Figure 1.1.

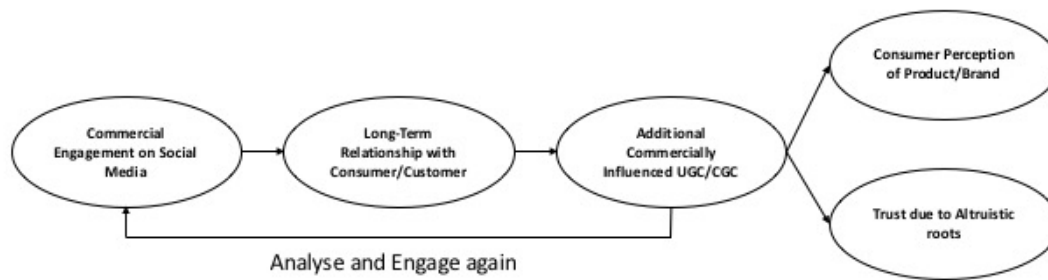


Figure 1.1: Commercial social media engagement cycle

Adapted and modified from: Mangold & Faulds (2009); Tiago & Verissimo (2014)

Figure 1.1 shows the engagement in social media leads to a long-term relationship with the consumer and customer. This long-term relationship, affects the consumer and customer differently due to the social media environment. Whereas in traditional marketing environment, the communication of special values/prices of the product only affected the consumer during the purchase decision process, social media allows marketing practitioners to build up a long-term relationship (Ma & Chan, 2014). Indeed, content marketing practitioners should in contrast to traditional marketing communicate valuable content (informative, helpful or entertaining) (Pulizzi, 2013). Thus the infiltration of social media by marketing practitioners has become a popular and additional promotion strategy to address the consumer/customer in a different way.

Probably the most popular UGC influencing promotional strategy is Content Marketing (Pulizzi, 2013). There is indeed still confusion concerning the terminology. The most common terms in academia used for the commercial communication of content are Content Marketing (CMI, 2017), Advertising Content (Rosengren & Dahlén, 2013) and Branded Content (Palista, 2012; Ashley & Tuten, 2015). These terms cover content communication channels as well as content generation channels and thus are used as generic terms. On the bases of all three definitions, Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018:1235) define Content Marketing as:

“A promotional strategy which extends the promotional mix, and makes use of several communication channels, capitalising particularly on the benefits and connectivity of social media. It focuses on offering something valuable to the consumer for free. By taking consumer- / user-generated content (UGC) into account and communicating with the audience with a non-purchase-pushing intention and by using appealing, useful or entertaining content, the strategy aims at building trust and a long-term relationship to the consumer/customer.”

This definition shows that the content communicated stands in the foreground and the product/brand/company is only perceived in the background. A good real world example for successful Content Marketing was the parachute jump out of space planned and realized by the energy drink manufacturer Red Bull (BBC, 2012). With the project in the foreground (Red Bull Stratos, 2018) and product/brand placement in the background the parachute jump was with 52 million views the most-watched live stream in history (BBC, 2012; Zmuda, 2013).

According to Handley & Beets (2018) Content Marketing strategies were adopted by 86% B2C businesses and 91% B2B businesses in North America in 2018. These numbers indicate the popularity of Content Marketing in the corporate world, whereas in academia research on Content Marketing is relatively low. Research was conducted on strategies applying the idea of Content Marketing. In this matter Kumar *et al.* (2016) proved that firm-generated content (FGC) significantly impacts social media, and thus makes FGC to a key component concerning Content Marketing strategies. A popular strategy to generate commercial interesting, helpful or entertaining content is storytelling. Storytelling, also known as signature stories, focusing on communication of intriguing, authentic and/or involving stories with the aim to provide additional extraordinary content (Pulizzi, 2013). This extraordinary content leads the consumer away from the commercial intention of the company and might build up a non-purchase pushing relationship with the consumer/customer (Aaker & Aaker, 2016). Whereas in corporate, the communication of commercial content has already become a popular promotion strategy -expanding traditional marketing strategies with non-purchase pushing relationships-, the coherences of commercial and non-commercial content generating constructs are in corporate, as well as in academia, not explored so far. Indeed, research was conducted on the use of Content Marketing (Handley & Beets, 2018) and several awareness enhancing tools (e.g. social media) are recommended to use for successful Content Marketing strategies. However, these studies have rather descriptive character (focusing on the rendition of facts) or only explore isolated areas/strategies applying the idea of Content Marketing. In order to enhance an all-encompassing understanding of the umbrella function of Content Marketing and its accompanying communication and generation channels in today's marketing environment, this dissertation focuses on the development and exploration of the 'commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response.

1.1. CONTEXTUAL SETTING

The selective perspectives that have been explored with reference to the communication and generation of commercial content underline the complexity of the generic term Content Marketing. In order to illuminate the coherences between content communicating and content generating channels, this study focuses on the exploration and verification of commercial content value generation paths. The object for all three papers was a video. With the aim to provide consistency all three videos have the same origin, namely the campaign 'Be more human' from the sportswear manufacturer Reebok. Very much in the spirit of the idea of Content Marketing, is the story communicated ('Be more human') in the foreground and the product/brand placement (Reebok) in the background (Gianatasio, 2015). Thus this campaign is a suitable real world Content Marketing application.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The term Content Marketing, is frequently misunderstood due to its complexity and novelty. This lack of understanding can be attributed to a fair amount of research in parts of the value creation triggered by FGC. In this regard conducted Ashley & Tuten (2015) research in brand sponsored social media, exploring which social media channels are popular for commercial use and which commercial social media content is attracting users. The results suggest in contrast to traditional advertising where the focus is on a specific value of the product, to provide multiple appeals not necessarily directly connected to the product/brand when communicating commercial content on social media. Whereas this study gives exclusive insights how to approach social media commercially, the coherences of commercial/non-commercial communication and generation channels stay unexplored. Addressing this problem, Kumar *et al.* (2016) conducted a study on the impact of FGC on social media, giving first insights on the coherences between a commercial content generating construct (FGC) and a non-commercial communication construct (Social Media). Taking the results from Kumar *et al.* (2016) into account this study addresses the problem of selective research approaches concerning Content Marketing by developing and exploring the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing.

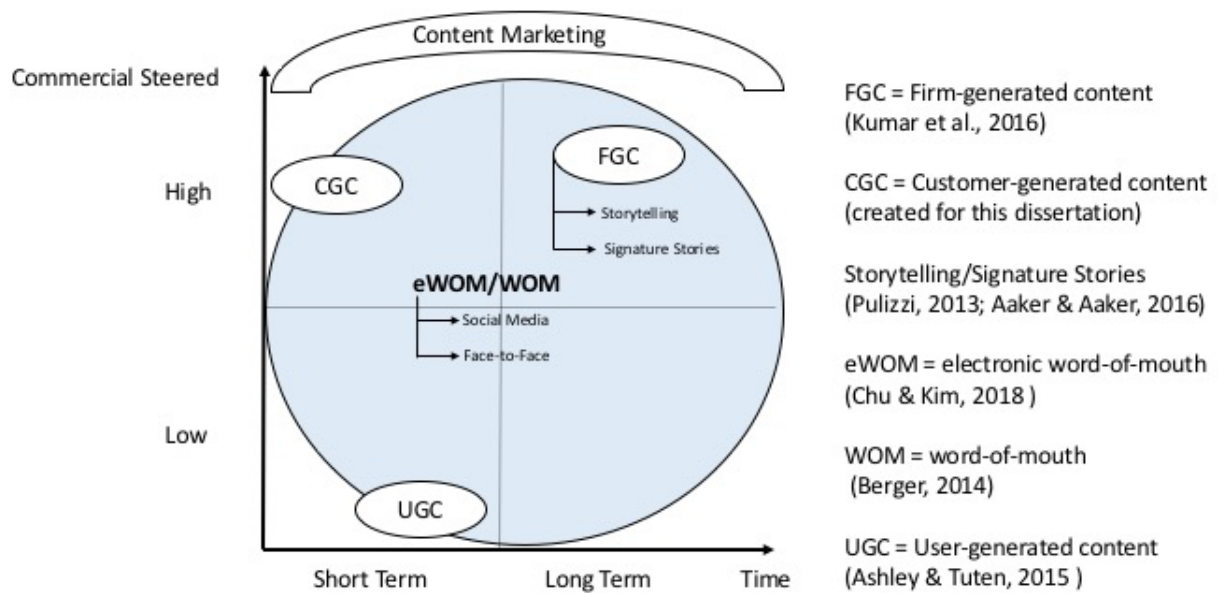


Figure 1.2: Selective Content Marketing research problem
 Developed by: Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018)

Figure 1.2 visualizes the problem of the selective research problem, with the term Content Marketing as an umbrella function. It can be obtained from Figure 1.2 that there exists research in selective areas, contributing to a better understanding of Content Marketing in specific areas. Furthermore, Figure 1.2 shows that eWOM and WOM as communication channels influence or being influenced by content generating constructs (FGC, CGC and UGC). This interaction between content transporting and content generating constructs has not been explored yet but could contribute to better understanding of the content value increase triggered by the communication of FGC. The following sections will discuss the aim and purpose of this study and how to incorporate the isolated constructs in one logical content value added chain.

1.3. AIM/PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

In light of the above, the aim of this study is to develop the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing with the purpose to exhibit the interfaces and chronology of commercial/non-commercial communication and generation channels in the Content Marketing context. Taking the selective research approaches (Figure 1.2) into account, this studies' aim is to provide an all-encompassing understanding of the umbrella function of Content Marketing and the resulting content value increase triggered by the communication of FGC in today's marketing environment. This study focused on a Business to Consumer (B2C) scenario. More precisely, the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response

was determined and verified in form of three journal papers. Paper one with the title: The importance of electronic word-of-mouth on consumer perception of Content Marketing; and Paper two with the title: Content Marketing response: Background and Influencing factors; focused on the verification of parts of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response. The third paper with the title: The commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response; combined and verified the entire theoretical framework. Due to the novelty of the research topic, Content Marketing, the researcher identified the need to gather as much feedback as possible before finalizing the composition of variables for the first two papers. Thus the content of the first paper was presented and constructive feedback was given at the European Marketing Academy (EMAC) conference 2017 in Groningen (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2017.a.). The second paper was presented and constructive feedback was given at the Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy (ANZMAC) conference 2017 in Melbourne (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2017.b.).

This study is composed of three articles in journal format, section 1.9. Research design and Methodology will provide additional insights about the composition of every single paper. The first research paper focused on the composition of content communication and generation vehicles. With the title: The importance of electronic word-of-mouth on consumer perception of Content Marketing; it got accepted for publication in the International Journal of electronic Marketing and Retailing. Whereas the first paper focused on the communication and additional generation of content, the second paper focused on the operationalization of Content Marketing response. With the title: Content Marketing Response: Background and Influencing Factors; it is under review for publication in the South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences. Building on the insights of the first two papers, the last paper focused on the fusion of the theoretical frameworks, verifying the entire path from FGC to Content Marketing response. With the title: The commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response; the third paper is not submitted to any journal so far, to allow the external markers of this study an unpersuaded judgment. The next section discusses the contribution of the study and after that existing literature is reviewed, which is important for the operationalization of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response.

1.4. POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The idea of providing commercial content for free with the aim to build up a non-purchase push relationship with the consumer is outdated. The first well known Content Marketing strategy

was launched by the agricultural machinery manufacturer John Deere 1895, publishing a magazine (The Furrow) focusing on agricultural topics instead of the advertising of their machinery (Pulizzi, 2016). Today, the application of Content Marketing is a popular strategy highly influenced by the user-friendly interface of Web 2.0. A good example of the extent that commercial content gets communicated, is the energy drink manufacturer Red Bull. In 2012, Red Bull sponsored, under the project name Red Bull Stratos, a parachute jump out of space (39km). With 52 million views, it was the most-watched live stream in history (BBC, 2012; Zmuda, 2013). Taking the popularity of Content Marketing into account, the biggest corporate research institution conducting research on Content Marketing is the Content Marketing institute (CMI) (CMI, 2018). Since 2010, the CMI is publishing a benchmarks, budgets and trends report providing Business to Business (B2B) and Business to Consumer (B2C) Content Marketing trends for North America (CMI, 2013). Whereas these research reports give informative insights about the progressive development and real world application of Content Marketing, the commercial value generation process illuminating the relationships between communication and generation variables is left in the dark. With the aim to address this lack of scientific knowledge, this study aims at providing knowledge in the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response. Thus, this study provides insights that may contribute to a better understanding of Content Marketing. Firstly, this study, premised on the theoretical framework developed by Hirschfelder & Chigada (2017.a.; .b.) provides a foundation on which new theory is discussed in relation to Content Marketing. Secondly, this study contributes to a better understanding of the social media 'black-box', giving insights of communication channels and generation channels in use of Content Marketing strategies. Thirdly, the exploration of the Content Marketing response variables provides a steady platform for future research, particularly the integration of perceived usefulness might provide a valuable starting point for additional research projects. Finally, the conceptualization and verification of the commercial value generation paths provides worthwhile theoretical as well as practical insights. The next section will illuminate the scope and limitations of this study.

1.5. LITERATURE REVIEW

The isolated research on specific areas in Content Marketing side tracked researchers from the main stay of content marketing - the value added via communication and generation vehicles. In order to improve the understanding of the content value adding process triggered by FGC, this section reviews literature helping to understand and develop the commercial

value added chain of Content Marketing response. Taking adjacent academic research concerning communication theory, stimuli-organism-response (S-O-R) theory and value chain concepts into account, the following concepts were found suitable for the development (value added chain of Content Marketing response) of a new framework: Firstly, the role of FGC in the commercial content value generation and the accompanying position in the theoretical framework is discussed more closely. After that, literature dealing with content communication vehicles is reviewed and position and function in the Content Marketing context is determined. On the basis of the determined position and function of the communication vehicles, literature regarding commercial and non-commercial content generation is reviewed and the content value adding function is illuminated. In the following, the connection between communication vehicles/generation vehicles and consumer perception is reviewed. Due to the change from marketer to consumer dominance the perceived usefulness for the content communicated takes in an important role in this study and thus is included in the literature review. Finally, the composition of the dependent variable, Content Marketing response, is discussed more closely.

1.5.1. Firm-generated content

The term firm-generated content (FGC) indicates that this form of content generation is commercially driven. Kumar *et al.* (2016) state that FGC is content generated and posted by firms in order to tighten the relationship to the consumer mainly using social media's interactive nature. According to Ashley & Tuten (2015) FGC campaigns also known as branded social media campaigns give firms an additional interface to communicate/interact with the consumer/customer. The non-commercial, neutral, anonymous environment of social media and the non-purchase pushing character of FGC indeed increases the willingness of consumer/customer to engage with commercial online content (Murdough, 2009; Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

Purchase pushing strategies in social media (e.g. paid display advertising) are commonly ignored or perceived annoying (Ström, Vendel & Bredican, 2014). However, the publishing of FGC and the accompanying engagement opportunities for consumer/customer (e.g. like button, comment box, instant messaging), has become a popular vehicle to exchange thoughts, feelings, perceptions and experiences regarding the product, brand or company among each other and with the firm (Kumar *et al.*, 2016). A popular tool to generate potential commercial content is storytelling or the communication of signature stories (Pulizzi, 2013;

Aaker & Aaker, 2016). In agreement with Kumar *et al.* (2016) understanding of FGC, - storytelling is no “selling” tool-, the story content communicated identifies the passion of the firm and through that builds up a foundation for further stories (Pulizzi, 2012).

A good example for successful ongoing FGC using storytelling is the Content Marketing campaign from the sportswear manufacturer - Reebok.

In January 2015 Reebok launched its entertaining/motivating ‘Be More human’ campaign embodying the team spirit for fitness followers’ worldwide (Gianatasio, 2015). Since the launch, the sportswear manufacturer is communicating entertaining/motivating/helpful online and offline content under the slogan ‘Be More human’. Very much in the spirit of storytelling the content of the videos focuses on the everyday challenges fitness followers are facing. Kumar *et al.* (2016) found a positive effect of FGC on customer profitability and the improvement of long-term relationships with consumer/customers. In agreement with the definition of Content Marketing from Hirschfelder and Human (2015) and Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018), underlining the long-term effects of Content Marketing, the commercial generation of content by the firm is the first logical step running a Content Marketing strategy. Taking FGC and the tool storytelling into account, this study makes use of this construct as departure variable (Figure 1.3). The next logical step is the communication of the commercially generated content. Which channels are taken in consideration to communicate FGC is discussed in the next section.

1.5.2. Communication Channels

Today’s communication options can be subdivided into online and offline communication vehicles (Goodrich & De Mooij, 2014). Online and offline communication vehicles include the mentioning of a product/brand or recommending a product/brand (For example; “I enjoyed the last run with my new Reeboks”), product/brand related dialogues (“these Reebok shoes have a great cushioning”) and the sharing of FGC (Reebok content on YouTube) (Berger, 2014). This study uses the term electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) as a generic term for all commercial online communication options and the term word-of-mouth (WOM) as a generic term for all commercial offline communication options. Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler (2004:39) define eWOM as: *Any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet.* In contrast to that, WOM focuses on a face-to-face consumer or customer dominated communication channel sharing product,

service or company information in which senders are independent of the market (Li, Liu & Suomi, 2012). The technological progress and the accompanying (mobile) access to the internet enable through the user-friendly interface Web 2.0 an additional convenient communication opportunity (Rosengren & Dahlén, 2015). Whereas Face-to-face communication slows down the ease and speed of content exchange (Berger, 2014), eWOM allows faster commercial content interchange. Commercially driven electronic communication provides beside electronic one-on-one communication (email), paid display advertising (e.g. digital push promotion) and optimized communication (search engine optimization (SEO)), social media marketing which allows easy and fast online communication between consumer/customer and the firm (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). It stands to reason that firms, consumers and customers use these communication vehicles to communicate commercial content. This study verifies the relation between FGC and WOM/eWOM.

1.5.3. Supplementary Content Generation Channels

With regard to the aim of this study, the development of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing, this section contributes to a better understanding of the additional value generation executed by the consumer/customer, triggered by FGC. Mangold & Faulds (2009), highlight the change from using traditional media (television, radio newspaper) to progressive use of online social media to gather private or commercially driven information. Whereas traditional media pushes the information to the consumer and thus only allows a one-way communication, social media gives users the option of a multi-dimensional, two-way communication (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Accordingly, consumers/customers have the opportunity to exchange among each other and with the firm internationally. Firstly, this indicates that the firm is no longer the only hub of product/brand communication and secondly gives consumers', customers' and firms' the opportunity of international multi-dimensional exchange (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

Content generation is a mostly online interaction in a hypermedia computer-mediated environment, highly influenced by social media users (Huotari, Ulkuniemi, Saraniemi, & Mäläskä, 2015). Weather ratings and reviews, which have a direct connection to the product/brand or pictures and videos, which have an indirect connection to the product/brand (intentionally/unintended product/brand placement) have become a popular content contributor in today's marketing strategies (Chevalier, Dover & Mayzlin, 2018). Content generation from consumer/customer side is, within the limits of this study subdivided into user-

generated content (UGC) and customer-generated content (CGC). Since Content Marketing communicates content with a non-purchase pushing intention, a pre purchase transaction could positively or negatively influence the content generation (Ozer & Gultekin, 2015). Thus the distinction between UGC and CGC is important in the Content Marketing context. CGC is defined by the researcher as any content that assesses commercial transactions generated by the general public, mainly communicated through Web 2.0. Content generated that has no pre transaction history, but still communicates direct or indirect commercial content is known as UGC. According to Daugherty, Eastin & Bright (2008) UGC operationalize any content generated by the general public, mainly communicated through Web 2.0 and its accompanying communication vehicles. In this matter Moon, Kim, & Armstrong (2014) note that the altruistic roots of UGC and the accomplished trust into the communicated content increase the interactivity among online users.

The access to a variety of online generated content provides consumers and customers a non-commercially driven product and service evaluation (Ngai, Tao & Moon, 2015). Thus consumers' and customers' progressively rely on user-generated content (UGC) instead of traditional marketing in the information gathering and buying decision process (Poch & Martin, 2015; Huang *et al.*, 2018). According to Pulizzi (2013), FGC (informative, useful or entertaining) encourage consumers/customers to share and/or generate additional content. This indicates that; 1. FGC might increase, due to its valuable content, the willingness to share commercial content, and 2. That FGC might increase the supplementary content generation from consumer/customer side. Taking these two content generation vehicles into account, UGC and CGC are both included in the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response.

1.5.4. Perception

The level of satisfaction of a brand increases with time, which in turn indicates that consumers'/customers' that have a close relationship to the brand, have had more than one touch point with the brand (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal & Evans, 2006). One of the main goals of Content Marketing is to build up a long-term relationship with the consumer/customer (Pulizzi, 2012). In this matter Rampl, Opitz, Welp, & Kenning (2017) notes that relationships to brands/firms are influenced by the first perception of the brand/firm. According to Barger, Peltier & Schultz (2016) the level of affiliation with the product/brand impact the perception of UGC with commercial background. In addition to that, Seraj (2012) found that co-generated

content influences consumer perception and relationships to brands/firms. A good relationship leads to a higher willingness to engage with the brand on social media, which includes the generation of content, triggered by FGC (Kumar *et al.*, 2016). With regard to the social media users, Kumar *et al.* (2016) underlines that consumers'/customers' that are active social media users are confronted by FGC and are more willing to consume FGC than traditional commercial media content. Taking this literature into account, it can be concluded that UGC and consumers' perception are influenced by FGC. In order to individualize and operationalize the construct consumer perception regarding Content Marketing, the three sub constructs Story Fit, Brand Status and Trust into the Brand were determined.

When it comes to Story Fit, this sub construct explores the perceived fit between FGC and the brand/product by the consumer/customer. A good example for Story Fit is the first video of the 'Be more human' marketing campaign from the sportswear manufacturer Reebok (Reebok, 2015). Indeed, actors in this video are wearing Reebok sportswear and thus there is an interface through product placement, however the plot/story, which is in the foreground is focusing on the message communicated (Be more human). Due to the positive feedback, Reebok continued with the 'Be more human' campaign, indicating that the perceived story fit of product/brand placement and entertaining/helpful content was convincing. Regarding Story Fit, relatively little research has been done on the influence on consumer perception. Taking these inputs into account the researcher predicts that a perceived fit between story and the product/brand helps to operationalize consumer perception. The second construct determined to operationalize Consumer Perception is Brand Status. According to Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018) influences the status of the firms' content communicated, the product/brand favorability. In this matter Speed & Thompson (2000) argue that events like the Olympics or the FIFA World Cup have a higher perceived status than local sport events and this also rubs off on the sponsorship partners. Taking these findings into account, the researcher predicts that the perceived status of the firms' communicated content helps to operationalize consumer perception. The third construct determined to operationalize Consumer Perception is Trust into the Brand.

Due to the user-friendly interface of Web 2.0 and globalization firms face a reduced product difference and intense international competition (Porter & Heppelmann, 2015). Further, the increasing firmness to what advertising consumer/customer want to be exposed to, makes it progressively difficult to address them. Content Marketing takes this change into account by focusing on the content, presenting the product or brand only in the background (O'Brien,

2012). Thus, Trust into the Brand and the accompanying willingness to be exposed to commercial content is a desirable status quo in the Content Marketing context (Ha & Perks, 2005). On the basis of these insights, the researcher predicts that the construct Trust into the Brand helps to operationalize Consumer Perception.

1.5.5. Perceived Usefulness

Perceived Usefulness (PU), a central construct concerning technology use, defines the level of acceptance of a system by the user regarding the improvement of his or her performance (Karahanna & Straub 1999). Indeed, Content Marketing communicates helpful, informative or entertaining content, which could be perceived by the consumer/customer as useful (Pulizzi, 2013). With regards to the real world application of Content Marketing, it is not rare that the content communicated is helpful, informative and entertaining at the same time (Pulizzi, 2013). For example, gave the first Content Marketing video from the grooming products supplier Dollar Shave Club, helpful and informative information concerning grooming products while communicating the content in a funny way (DSC, 2012). Admittedly, the applied communication of useful commercial content has become a popular strategy to communicate helpful and informative and entertaining content, however the link between PU and FGC has not been explored so far. That is why this study includes consumers/customers perceived usefulness for the content in the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response.

1.5.6. Content Marketing Response

Regarding the operationalization of a theoretical framework, it is to differentiate between dependent and independent variables. Whereas dependent variables are the ones being tested and measured in a specific scenario, the independent variables set the scenario and trigger the dependent variables with the aim to explore their behavior (Malhotra, 2010). In this matter Lilien (2011) states that marketing research is an applied discipline and accordingly should provide and improve marketing practitioners' decisions. According to Albers (2012) response functions are a popular vehicle to operationalize/measure the effectiveness of marketing instruments. In agreement with that Hirschfelder & Human (2015) and Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018) applied a response function, exploring the impact of Content Marketing on Sponsorship. On the basis of these insights, this study explores the behavior of Content Marketing response. Due to the relatively little research on Content Marketing response, the composition of this dependent variable was exclusively determined for this

research. Accordingly, Content Marketing response is operationalized and subdivided in the following three sub constructs: Interest, Identification and Intention to Buy. When it comes to the first sub construct (Interest), Berger & Schwartz (2011) and Berger (2014) state that the content communicated about and around a product, a brand or via an advert has to be interesting in some form to be talked about. Regarding Content Marketing, Pulizzi (2013) and Aaker & Aaker (2016) recommend to communicate signature stories, which communicate interesting/catching content in order to build up a long-term relationship with the consumer/customer. On the basis of this literature, the researcher determined interest for the communicated content as first sub construct operationalizing Content Marketing response. The second sub construct determined by the researcher operationalizing Content Marketing response is the 'Identification' with the content communicated. Since Content Marketing is highly influenced by UGC (Pulizzi, 2013) and UGC in turn has altruistic driven roots (Poch & Martin, 2015), the identification with the content is an important sub component when operationalizing Content Marketing response. Whereas the definition from Hirschfelder & Human (2015) and Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018) underlines the non-purchase pushing intention of Content Marketing, the third sub construct operationalizing Content Marketing response focuses on the intention to buy/purchase the product/brand recognized during the content communicated. At first glance this might be confusing, however since Content Marketing is still a commercially driven promotion strategy, the intention to buy triggered by helpful, informative or entertaining content is a possibility that should not be overlooked. A good real world example is the grooming product supplier Dollar Shave Club (DSC). Indeed, the video with Content Marketing character provides helpful, informative and entertaining content, however, in the end of the video consumers have the opportunity to buy grooming products online, highlighting the commercial component of Content Marketing (DSC, 2012). Taking a glance at the Theoretical Framework in Figure 1.3, it can be concluded that for every construct in the framework, literature has been discussed. The next section will explain the theoretical framework by illuminating the paths starting from FGC and ending in Content Marketing response.

1.5.7. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical Framework in Figure 1.3 is derived from the literature review presented above. Since this study explores a value adding process, there are clear starting and ending points. It is shown that FGC is the starting point, by providing helpful, informative and/or entertaining

content to the consumer/customer. The researcher predicts that this content is communicated via online (eWOM) and offline (WOM) communication vehicles. Particularly influenced by the rapid technological progress and the accompanying option to generate content, it can be assumed that additional content triggered by FGC is generated by the consumer/customer. Due to the altruistic driven roots of UGC, it is evident that UGC/CGC triggered by FGC might influence Consumer Perception. The construct, Consumer Perception, introduces the ending point of the value adding process. In this matter, the question comes up, if Content Marketing response is only influenced by Consumer Perception or if Perceived Usefulness takes in a mediating role between Consumer Perception and Content Marketing response.

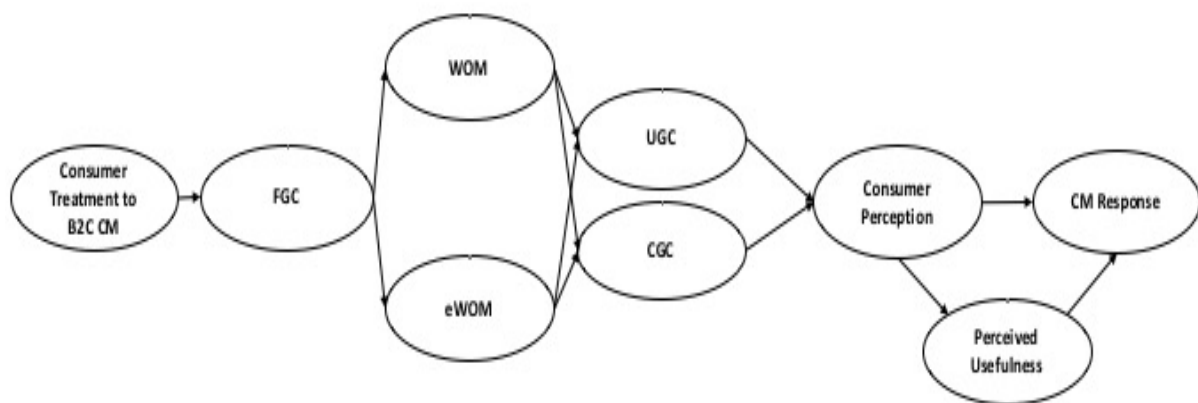


Figure 1.3: Theoretical Framework: Commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response.

Adapted and modified from: Hirschfelder & Chigada (2017.a; 2017.b.)

1.6. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In light of the above, the purpose of this study will be to determine and explore the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response. It can be indicated from Figure 1.3, that specific attention has to be paid on the exhibition of the interfaces and chronology of commercial/non-commercial communication and generation channels in the Content Marketing context. Thus this study will be guided by the following two primary research objectives:

To determine how FGC triggers the communication and additional generation of commercially influenced content.

To determine how Consumer Perception influenced by FGC impacts Content Marketing response.

Due to the importance of Content Marketing to provide something valuable the secondary research objective is:

To determine how perceived usefulness mediates the relationship between consumer perception and Content Marketing response.

1.7. RESEARCH QUESTION

Malhotra (2010:84) defines research questions as *refined statements of the specific components of the problem*. The development of research questions allows: 1). The specific definition of the problem and 2). The segmentation in primary and secondary significance factors. In this matter the research question formulation should be guided by the problem statement, the theoretical framework (Figure 1.3) and the analytical model. Particularly the theoretical framework and the analytical model are helpful concerning the operationalization and measurement of the variables defined and resulting from the research question (Malhotra, 2010). The following two sections present primary and secondary research questions.

1.7.1. Primary Research Question

1. What content generating and communicating connections between FGC and Content Marketing response result in a significant path?

1.7.2. Secondary Research Question

Since secondary research questions focus on the verification of parts of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response, the following questions are narrowed on specific areas in the theoretical framework.

- 1.1. Does eWOM mediate the relationship between FGC and UGC?
- 1.2. Does WOM mediate the relationship between FGC and UGC?
- 1.3. Does eWOM mediate the relationship between FGC and CGC?
- 1.4. Does WOM mediate the relationship between FGC and CGC?
- 1.5. Does UGC triggered by FGC has a significant impact on Consumer Perception?
- 1.6. Does CGC triggered by FGC has a significant impact on Consumer Perception?
- 1.7. Does Perceived Usefulness is taking in a mediation role between Consumer Perception and Content Marketing response?

1.8. HYPOTHESIS

A hypothesis, can be described as an assumption or proposed statement made on the basis of the connections conceptualized in a theoretical framework between the single constructs (Malhotra, 2010). Hypotheses can be rejected or supported and thus give clear indication

concerning the significance of a research outcome (Malhotra, 2010; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Since a hypothesis symbolizes the interface between statistical analysis and theoretical interpretation, this section takes in an important mainstay of this study. Taking the research objectives, research questions and the theoretical framework into account, the subsequent hypotheses were developed:

- Hypothesis 1:** *There is a positive connection between FGC and WOM.*
- Hypothesis 2:** *There is a positive connection between FGC and eWOM.*
- Hypothesis 3:** *There is a positive connection between WOM and UGC.*
- Hypothesis 4:** *There is a positive connection between WOM and CGC.*
- Hypothesis 5:** *There is a positive connection between eWOM and UGC.*
- Hypothesis 6:** *There is a positive connection between eWOM and CGC.*
- Hypothesis 7:** *There is a positive connection between UCC and Consumer Perception (Story Fit => H7a; Brand Status => H7b; Trust into the Brand => H7c).*
- Hypothesis 8:** *There is a positive connection between UCC and Consumer Perception (Story Fit => H8a; Brand Status => H8b; Trust into the Brand => H8c).*
- Hypothesis 9:** *There is a positive connection between Story Fit and Content Marketing response (Interest => H9a; Identification => H9b; Intention to Buy => H9c).*
- Hypothesis 10:** *There is a positive connection between Brand Status and Content Marketing response (Interest => H10a; Identification => H10b; Intention to Buy => H10c).*
- Hypothesis 11:** *There is a positive connection between Trust into the Brand and Content Marketing response (Interest => H11a; Identification => H11b; Intention to Buy => H11c).*
- Hypothesis 12:** *There is a positive connection between Consumer Perception and Perceived Usefulness.*
- Hypothesis 13:** *There is a positive connection between Perceived Usefulness and Content Marketing response.*

On the bases of theses hypotheses, questionnaires were developed, operationalizing each construct presented in the theoretical framework. The following sections will give insights into the research design process and the methodological considerations.

1.9. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine and explore the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response. Indeed, research in Content Marketing has become popular in the last 5 years (Handley & Beets 2018), however the acquisition of the value added chain of Content Marketing response has not been explored so far. Since the theoretical framework of this study was exclusively developed with the purpose of illuminating the commercial content communication and generation, pre-tests for paper one and paper two were necessary to exclude error of measurement and provide quality assurance of the questionnaire. Regarding the fact that the participants were exposed to a video before they were asked to complete the questionnaire, a paper-based questionnaire was a convenient procedure. Accordingly, for all three papers, a data evaluation (interviewing phase), a data cleaning and preparation (elimination of incomplete questionnaires and excel feed-in) and a data analysis (SmartPLS) was carried out. The next sections will give an overview of research philosophy, research design, research strategy, data collection, sampling, questionnaire design, measurement and scaling, pre-testing, data preparation and the data analysis employed in the three studies.

1.9.1. Research Philosophy

When it comes to the methodology, first and foremost the research philosophy, namely how to approach the data evaluation has to be determined. Bryman & Bell (2015) differentiate between positivism and interpretivism. Whereas interpretivism follows a qualitative research approach, positivism follows a quantitative research approach. Since this research relies on scientific evidence built on quantitative evaluation and statistical analysis, this research follows a positivism research approach.

1.9.2. Research Design

Taking the first decisions made concerning the research philosophy into account, this research focuses on a quantitative research approach. Since this research aim was to describe market features or functions with the help of a quantitative data analysis conducted through three main surveys, the research design of this study was descriptive. Malhotra (2010:106) defines a descriptive research approach as: A type of conclusive research that has as its major objective the description of something - usually market characteristics of functions. Further, descriptive research explores to what extent marketing variables are associated. This is in agreement with this study developing and verifying the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing

response, illuminating the composition of marketing variables in the Content Marketing context.

1.9.3. Research Strategy

According Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009:90) research strategy elucidates the “general plan of how the researcher will go about answering the research question”. Saunders & Lewis (2012) state that the research strategy is influenced by the research aim and purpose, the objectives and the research questions. Further the existing knowledge coverage, the availability of knowledge and the time spending on the actual execution of the data evaluation are all factors that influence the research strategy (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Research strategies can be subdivided into inductive, deductive and mixed research approaches. Whereas inductive research focus on the analysis of qualitative research approaches, deductive research focus on the analysis of quantitative research approaches (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The use of surveys (also known as questionnaires), operationalizing variables of a theoretical framework, is determined by Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009) as a deductive research approach. All of the three studies operationalizing the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response made use of a questionnaire, which determines the research strategy approach for this study conductive. The study adopted a quantitative research strategy.

1.9.4. Data Collection

The data collection is an important part in marketing research (Malhotra, 2010). Indeed, the error rates of a questionnaire can be scaled down by providing questions that are easy to overcome. Regarding data preparation, focus is required, since errors in the data preparation can impact the results significantly. Thus, the data collection process is discussed in the following:

With regards to the data collection for all three papers, the reach was limited on Cape Towns’ metropolitan area. The researcher exclusively chose Cape Towns’ metropolitan area, providing due to its huge cultural variety an excellent research ground. The task was complicated due to the pre exposure of a video with Content Marketing character. Accordingly, main research areas were Cape Towns’ city bowl and the upper campus of University of Cape Town. Since the three papers are building on each other, the data collection started with the collection for paper one and ended with the collection for paper three. The timeframe for paper

one, including the pre-test collection, was set from 01 October 2016 until the 30 June 2017. The timeframe for paper two, including the pre-test collection, was set from the 01 July 2017 until the 31 September 2017. The timeframe for paper three, including the pre-test collection, was set from the 31 December 2017 until the 28 February 2018. All three papers were accepted by the ethics committee of the Faculty of Commerce, University of Cape Town. Proof of approval is attached to this study in the Appendix A. After the random selection of a target group, the possible participants were asked if they had 10 minutes time to complete a questionnaire. After this “hooking” process, participants were exposed to a video before they were asked to complete the questionnaire. All three videos originate from the campaign ‘Be More human’ from the sportswear manufacturer Reebok. More specifically, for paper one, participants were exposed to the video named ‘Freak Show’ (Reebok, 2015), for paper two, participants were exposed to the video named ‘Hands’ (Reebok, 2017.a.) and for paper three, participants were exposed to the video named ‘Slide’ (Reebok, 2017.b.). Concerning the video content communicated in all three videos, the campaigns theme (Be More human) is in the foreground and the product/brand is in the background and only gets visualized by product/brand placement. According to Hirschfelder & Human (2015) definition of Content Marketing, all three videos are good examples for Content Marketing and thus, fit excellently as a research object. The next section is discussing the data preparation.

1.9.5. Sampling

Concerning research, design and methodology, sampling focuses on the exploration of characteristics of a statistical population in order to estimate the characteristics of the whole population. When it comes to sampling, it stands to reason to perform an experiment with a target group and then project the results on a corresponding part of the population (Malhotra, 2010). According to Malhotra (2010), the sampling procedure subdivides into the following five steps: 1. Definition of target population; 2. Determination of sample frame; 3. Selection of sampling technique; 4. Determination of sample size; 5. Execution of sampling process. Accordingly, the next sections will discuss how these five steps got applied in this study.

1.9.5.1. Definition of target population

Since this study used a deductive research approach, gathering data with questionnaires, results will give insights into characteristics or circumstances of a population. Malhotra (2010:372) defines a target population as follows: *“the collection of elements of objects that possess the information sought by the researcher and about which inferences are to be made.”*

The aim was to develop and verify the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response. As research objective served a B2C video Content Marketing campaign from the sportswear manufacturer Reebok. Whereas sports brands like Nike or Under Armour providing general sportswear for the daily fitness struggles, Reebok targets *“the tough, challenge-loving one that does Tough Mudders, mixed martial arts, and CrossFit”* (Schlossberg, 2015:01). With regard to the sponsor activities of Reebok as official sponsor of the Cross Fit Games and Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) there is a balanced gender distribution (Schlossberg, 2015; infogram, 2018). That’s why this study broadly defines the target population as male or female between the age of 18 and 65. In order to fulfil ethical requirements, participants had to be of legal age to participate and thus the entry age for participation was 18 years. According to ‘infogram’ (2018) there are still some people participating in the age of 65 in Cross Fit. In order to gather as much insight as possible, the maximum age for participation for this study was set at 65 years. Acknowledging the fact that all three questionnaires were conducted in Cape Town metropolitan area this study results are demographically limited.

1.9.5.2. Sample Frame

In this regard, the sample frame includes, in the spirit of the campaign slogan (Be More human) everyone who practices, or is associated with sport in the ages between 18 years and 65 years. The researcher made sure with the help of filter questions that the participants understood the keynote of the research material and thus fulfil the sampling frame criteria. With regards to the determined target population and the limitation of the survey (Cape Town), the survey process can be described as non-probability selection. In agreement with Malhotra (2010) this process can be defined as convenience sampling.

1.9.5.3. Selection of sampling technique

The collection of data concerning a primary research context can be subdivided into non-probability and probability sampling techniques (Malhotra, 2010; Bruhn, 2012). In contrast to probability sampling, units are selected by chance, non-probability samples are determined by the researcher. Thus, non-probability sampling results are not generalizable results whereas probability sampling results can be generalizable (Malhotra, 2010). Due to operational considerations, this research made use of non-probability sampling more precisely convenience sampling. Since it is up to the researcher which elements should be included in the sample, non-probability sampling allows convenient estimates of population characteristics (Malhotra, 2010). Due to easy availability, convenience sampling makes use of a non-

probability random selection of participants. Thus, participants were randomly approached and selected, more precisely, the participants were at the same time at same place as the researcher. According to Malhotra (2010) convenience sampling includes the following participants: Students, church groups, members of social organizations, mall-intercept interviews without qualifying the participants, tear-out questionnaires included in a magazine and people on the street interviews. As indicated, the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response has not been explored so far and thus convenience sampling is a handy sampling technique to prove a relatively new marketing concept.

1.9.5.4. Determination of Sample Size

When determining the sample size, an important factor which should not be ignored is the minimum requirement of the statistic software of choice (Wong, 2013). This study used structural equation modeling (SEM) and coherent with that the statistic software SmartPLS. According to Wong (2013) Partial least square -SEM (PLS-SEM) allows complex independent construct cause effect analysis on dependent constructs. On the basis of Marcoulides & Saunders (2006), Wong (2013) provides a minimum sample size recommendation for PLS-SEM marketing research. More precisely, if 2 arrows pointing at a latent variable in the theoretical framework, the minimum sample size recommended is 52, for 3 arrows 59 and for 10 arrows 91. According to Wong (2013), minimum sample size for paper one was 84 (8 arrows), minimum sample size for paper two was 96 (11 arrows) and minimum sample size for paper three was 136 (23). Furthermore, Hoyle (1995) stresses that a sample size between 100 and 200 is a good starting point for a PLS-SEM analysis. Taking these recommendations into account, the sample size for paper one was set on 300, the sample size for paper two was set on 150 and the sample size for paper three was set on 300. Due to the pre-exposure to video content, the execution of the surveys is relatively complex. According to Malhotra (2010) and Bruhn (2012) convenience sampling allows collecting data in a classroom atmosphere, which might cut down the number of deficient questionnaires. The following section summarizes the implementation of the sampling design.

1.9.5.5. Execution of Sampling process

- (1) Target Population: Male Female between 18 and 65 years
- (2) Sampling Frame: Non-probability procedure
- (3) Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling

- (4) Sample Size Entire Thesis: 750
- (5) Implementation: Possible participants were firstly asked if they are willing to participate. Then the researcher or the research assistant informed participants that the participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time. After that participants were exposed to a video with Content Marketing character and after that to complete the questionnaire.

1.9.6. Questionnaire Design

A questionnaire is a formalized set of questions inquiring information from participants. Since the questionnaire is the touch point with the target audience it is important that the design of the questionnaire is well thought through (Malhotra, 2010). With regard to the three questionnaires used for the operationalization for the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing, the structure illuminated in the section 1.7.1 Measurement and Scaling was extended with a cover page and an introduction. All three questionnaires are attached to this study (Appendix B). The design of the questionnaires' cover page firstly provided information about the hosting institute in shape of a big logo of University of Cape Town. After that, information was provided about the research concern in shape of a bolt headline describing the research topic. Further information was provided regarding the researcher's department, supervisor and contact details. The second page introduced the researcher and his research concern in more detail. In addition, ethical requirements, informing the participants that they can withdraw every time and that the participation is entirely voluntary, were communicated. The questionnaire of paper one is subdivided into three question parts. The first part, 'Marketing motivation' leads the participant through a little introduction (1 sentence) to the first 6 filter questions. The filter questions making sure that the participants are familiar with the research topic and the promoting firm is recognized. The second part, 'Marketing Message' is operationalizing the constructs FGC, WOM, eWOM, UGC, CGC and Consumer Perception and thus gathering the data for the verification for the first part of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response. The third part, 'Biographic Data' identifies the gender and the age of the participants. In order to fulfil ethical requirements participants also had the option to not answer the question about their gender. Whereas the cover page, the introduction, the filter questions and the biographic data parts stayed the same, the operationalization part change according to the constructs verified in paper two named 'Consumer Perception'. The second part of the second paper is operationalizing the constructs

Content Brand Fit, Brand Status, Trust into the Brand, Perceived Usefulness, Interest, Identification and Intention to Buy, and thus gathering the data for the verification for the second part of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response.

The third paper, operationalizing the entire commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response, excluded due to 100% hit rate in paper one and two and to long processing time the filter question part. Cover page, introduction the fusion of constructs from paper one and two and the biographic data stayed beside of minor changes the same. Beside an easy to apply questionnaire caused by a clean design, the pre-testing stage is an important precaution concerning a smooth data analysis (Malhotra, 2010). Thus, the next section discusses the pre-test considerations made for all three papers.

1.9.7. Measurement and scaling

According to Malhotra (2010) research instruments, also known as measurement tools are designed to acquire information from a research object. Since the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response contains constructs from several subjects and the theoretical framework was exclusively developed in the scope of this study, the evaluation of primary data was needed. Accordingly, three questionnaires encompassing this study requirements, were developed to operationalize the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response. Due to the complexity of the theoretical framework the researcher subdivided the framework into two parts (paper one/two) with the aim to eliminate minor measurement errors before the entire framework was tested (paper three). The questionnaire of paper one and paper two have an introduction part, assuring that the respondents recognized the promoting brand or not. According to Malhotra (2010) questions that assure that the participants understands the main idea of the questionnaire are categorized as filter questions.

Due to a 100% hit rate regarding these filter questions in paper one as well as in paper two (all participants recognized the promoting company), the researcher decided to exclude this part in the third questionnaire operationalizing the entire theoretical framework. Another reason for this decision was the relatively long handling time of the third papers' questionnaire which with the operationalization of 8 main constructs and the pre exposure to a 0:50 seconds video took an average of 10 minutes handling time. Beside the introduction part, all three questionnaires are assembled with a socioeconomic part, assuring that the respondents fulfil ethical requirements and fit into the target group. More precisely participants were asked to identify their gender and age before completion of the questionnaire. Concerning the

operationalization of the 8 main constructs, a Likert-type scale was used in all three questionnaires. According to Malhotra (2010) a Likert-type scale is a popular rating scale to measure personal attitude. A Likert-type scale consists of an individual amount of items that are operationalized through a positive or negative statement concerning the research construct. The participant is asked to share his or her opinion by agreeing or disagreeing to predetermined increments (Malhotra, 2010). The use of a Likert-type scale allows respondents to stay anonymous and thus increases the chance to receive a honest feedback (Armstrong, 1987). In order to determine determinants of sport sponsorship response Speed & Thompson (2000) used a 7-point Likert-type scale. This scale was modified by Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018) to measure Content Marketing response. Taking these insights into account a 7-point Likert-type scale seemed to be a suitable measuring instrument for the three questionnaires used in this thesis. Thus all three papers used a 7 point Likert-type scale. Concerning the implementation, the questionnaire gave participants for every item, operationalizing a construct, the following options to express their opinion by mark with one cross per statement: “entirely disagree” (1), “mostly disagree” (2), “mildly disagree” (3), “neutral” (4), “mildly agree” (5), “mostly agree” (6), “entirely agree” (7). Since the first two papers of this study provide the base for the entire scaling of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response, firstly the scaling of paper one is discussed and secondly the scaling of paper two is discussed. Finally, fusion and minor changes made concerning the scaling of paper three are presented.

1.9.7.1. *Scaling for Paper One*

Regarding the scaling of paper one, five independent constructs and one dependent construct were operationalized with a 7-point Likert-type scale. Since thus far, there is no academic literature regarding the operationalization of the constructs of interest in the Content Marketing context, neighboring literature was used. Accordingly, Kumar *et al.* (2016) provided insights for the operationalization of FGC, Harrison-Walker (2001) Henning-Thurau *et al.* (2004), Chu & Kim (2011) and Berger (2014) helped to operationalize WOM and eWOM, and Berger & Milkman (2012) and Cheung & Lee (2012) provided helpful information concerning UGC and CGC. Concerning the dependent construct, Ha & Perks (2005) provided useful insights for the operationalization of perceived usefulness. Concerning the scaling, FGC was operationalized with a 11 item 7-point Likert-type scale, word-of-mouth was operationalized with a 9 item 7-point Likert-type scale, electronic word-of-mouth was operationalized with 10 item 7-point

Likert-type scale, UGC was operationalized with an 8 item 7-point Likert-type scale, CGC was operationalized with a 9 item 7-point Likert-type scale and consumer perception was operationalized with a 13 item 7-point Likert-type scale. The following section is discussing the scaling used in paper two.

1.9.7.2. Scaling for Paper Two

When it comes to the scaling of paper two, two independent constructs and one depended construct were operationalized with a 7 point Likert-type scale. Due to the complexity of the independent construct -consumer perception-, it was subdivided into Story Fit (Content Brand Fit), Brand Status and Trust into the Brand. The dependent construct Content Marketing response was also subdivided into Interest, Identification and Intention to Buy. Since these constructs have not been explored in the Content Marketing context, neighboring literature was consulted. Thus, the researcher made use of the following literature to operationalize the three main constructs in paper two: Speed & Thompson (2000), Ha & Perks (2005), Lilien (2011), Albers (2012), Berger (2014), Kumar *et al.* (2016), Hirschfelder & Human (2015) and Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018). Story-Fit was operationalized with a 9 item 7-point Likert-type scale, Brand Status was operationalized with a 6 item 7-point Likert-type scale, Trust into the Brand was operationalized with a 7 items 7-point Likert-type scale, perceived usefulness was operationalized with a 9 items 7-point Likert-type scale, Interest was operationalized with a 7 items 7-point Likert-type scale, Identification was operationalized with a 6 items 7-point Likert-type scale and Intention to Buy was operationalized with a 6 items 7-point Likert-type scale. The next section is discussing the fusion of the two questionnaires of paper one and paper two and the changes that were made in order to improve the measurement quality.

1.9.7.3. Scaling for Paper Three

Since the questionnaire operationalizing the entire commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response is a reunion of the questionnaire of paper one and paper two, the literature which it is based on is the same. Due to measurement improvement minor changes were made. Whereas paper one used an 11 items 7-point Likert-type scale to operationalize FGC, paper three used a 15 item 7-point Likert-type scale. Since the Ave for the construct FGC was slightly under 0.5 and thus requirements were not fully given concerning discriminant validity, the researcher added 4 more items operationalizing the construct FGC. These 4 items, in positive statement format, focused on the verification of the possible connection between FGC and the promoting company. The 4 items that were attached additionally are highlighted in the

third questionnaire, attached to this study (Appendix B). The next section discusses the design of all three questionnaires more closely.

1.10. PRE-TESTING

An important step for successful, trouble-free research is an abundant pre-test phase, in order to cut down confusion from participants' side and faulty design regarding measurement and construct configuration (Malhotra, 2010). A pre-test conducts a first troubleshooting on the questionnaire on a small sample of participants, in order to identify and eliminate major mistakes (Malhotra, 2010). Within the scope of this research, two pre-tests for paper one and one pre-test for paper two were conducted. Since the theoretical framework of paper three is a fusion of paper one and two, a pre-test was not needed. Concerning the first pre-test of paper one, 52 participants were interviewed with marketing research expertise. Since this study makes use of the statistical method structural equation modeling (SEM), data was analyzed with the statistic software package SmartPLS3. The software package SmartPLS3 provides a user-friendly graphical interface for variance-based SEM making use of the partial least squares (PLS) path modeling method allowing complex bootstrapping routines (SmartPLS3, 2018). After inclusion of the improvements a second questionnaire was executed and in order to gather as much feedback as possible, the results of the second pre-test with a sample size of 184 participants, was presented at the 47th EMAC conference in Groningen (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2017.a.). Due to frictionless data analysis (measurement as well as structural) and positive feedback after the presentation at EMAC (under top 20 of competitive papers) the questionnaire of the first paper was matured and ready for the main data evaluation.

Concerning the pre-test of paper two, 12 specialists with marketing research background were interviewed regarding the questionnaire and asked for constructive feedback. After minor changes of the wording of a few statements, 61 participants were interviewed and data was analyzed with SmartPLS3. The three pre-tests eliminated understanding problems of the statements and thus supplied a reliable starting base for the main surveys. The next section gives insights about the sampling employed in this study.

1.11. DATA PREPARATION

Regarding data preparation, focus is required, since errors in the data preparation can impact the results significantly. The data preparation process is strongly influenced by the decisions made during the questionnaire design. A considerate questionnaire design simplifies the data

preparation immensely (Malhotra, 2010). According to Malhotra (2010) the following data preparation steps are a good guide for successful data preparation: preparing preliminary plan of data analysis, questionnaire checking, editing, coding, transcribing, data cleaning, statistically adjusting the data, selecting a data analysis strategy. Regarding the first step of this process, the pre-test phase eliminated statements that were understood incorrectly and thus contributed indirectly to a frictionless data preparation process. According to Malhotra (2010) accuracy of the main data collection and reduction of fundamental mistakes can be improved by the conduction of a pre-test. Besides the elimination of incomplete questionnaires and the elimination of noticeable response patterns, the fit of preconditions (filter questions and age) were verified. Since all three questionnaires were pre-coded, all questionnaires could be directly fed into Microsoft Excel after incomplete and not fitting questionnaires were eliminated. After the conversion from the Excel format xlsx to csv, the data was ready for the statistical analysis with the software package SmartPLS.

1.12. DATA ANALYSIS

This studies' statistical analysis part, and that means the statistical analysis of all three papers that are included in this study can be subdivided into descriptive and inferential statistics. Whereas descriptive statistics focus on the simplification of data in tables and figures for better understanding, inferential statistics aim on the verification of predictions about the population by analyzing samples. The following section will discuss descriptive statistic precautions and then inferential statistic precautions are discussed.

1.12.1. Descriptive statistics

Regarding descriptive statistics, the researcher made use of Microsoft Office 365 (Excel) and the software package SPSS to exemplify the data. Concerning the biographic data questions in all three papers, Microsoft Excel was helpful to calculate the male/female distributions as well as the error rate for not completed questionnaires. Furthermore, the software package SPSS was used to conduct a factor analysis in the pre-test phases, to make sure that every single statement was well perceived by the participants. How the researcher made use of the inferential statistics to answer the primary and secondary research question is discussed in the following section.

1.12.2. Inferential statistics

Inferential statistics provide an opportunity to evaluate parameters - which in turn allow the statistical verification of hypotheses. Malhotra (2010) recommends the following 8 steps to follow concerning the formulation and verification of hypotheses. Firstly, the hypotheses have to be formulated on the bases of the research objective, research question and according to the theoretical framework. Then an appropriate testing procedure has to be chosen. After that the level of significance has to be determined. In accordance with testing procedure, the statistics have to be calculated. In agreement with the significance level, hypothesis have to be rejected or supported. Finally, a conclusion has to be drawn. Taking these 8 steps as a basis, the following sections discuss inferential statistic methods applied in all three papers.

1.12.2.1. Visualization

Regarding the determination of a suitable statistical verification technique for the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response the following decisions have been made. Firstly, the theoretical framework was conducted into two parts due to complexity reasons. Accordingly, the first part (Figure 1.4), focused on the constellation of the content communicating and content generating constructs.

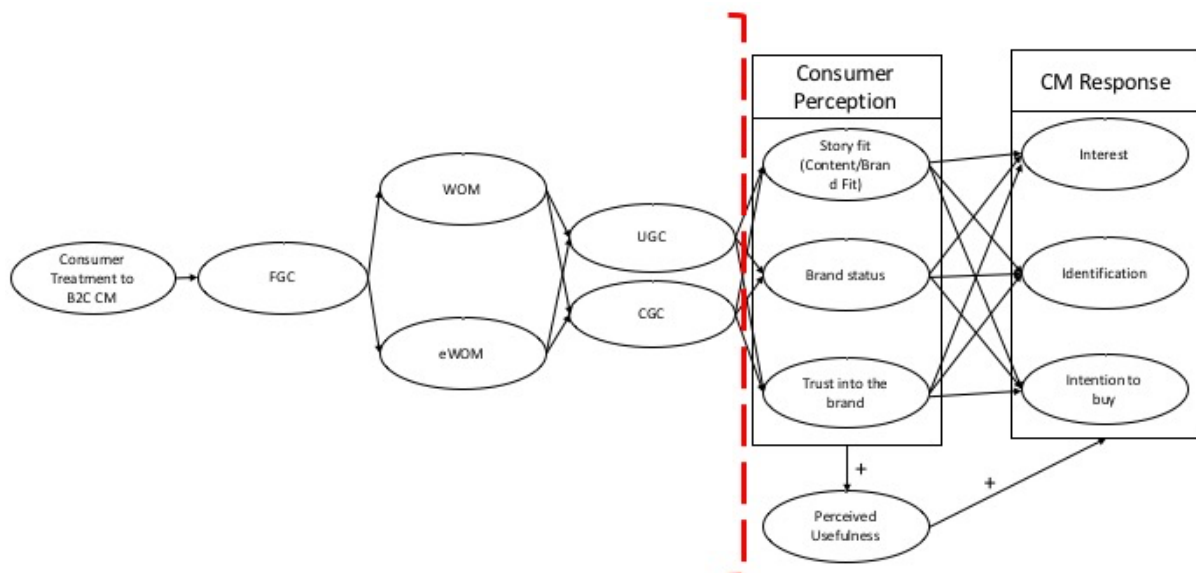


Figure 1.4: Illustration of segmentation of study.

Developed by: Hirschfelder and Chigada (2018)

The second part (Figure 1.4), focused on the constellation of the perception and feedback constructs. The first part, operationalized in paper one, consists of 5 independent variables,

affecting 1 dependent variable resulting in 8 combinations. The second part, operationalized in paper two, consist of 4 independent variables affecting 3 dependent variables resulting in 11 combinations. Accordingly, multiple items (paper one = 49 / paper two = 57 / paper three = 101), operationalizing the 13 constructs were needed. Since this study explores the backgrounds of a relatively new marketing strategy and no research on the concept behind the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response exists, the compliance of scientific research requirements is important. That includes the integration of a balanced interaction between constructs and measures/items concerning the measurement model and a clear cut on significance concerning the structural model (Malhotra, 2010). In agreement with Steenkamp & Baumgartner (2000) these preconditions indicate the application of SEM.

Malhotra (2010:723) defines SEM as a “*procedure for estimating a series of dependence relationships among a set of concepts or constructs represented by multiple measured variables and incorporated into an integrated model.*” Concerning SEM it is to distinguish between covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) and partial least squares SEM (PLS-SEM). CB-SEM helps to verify theories and PLS-SEM helps to develop theories (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2013). With regard to the development and testing of theories PLS-SEM is a reliable application (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 2000). In agreement with Steenkamp & Baumgartner (2000) and Hair *et al.* (2013), this study used the PLS-SEM theory in all three papers. When applying PLS-SEM, according to Malhotra (2010) it is important to illustrate the relationships (hypotheses = arrows) of the model developed. This study made use of a path model (diagram) including indicator variables, factor variables, a measurement model and a structural model. According to Hair *et al.* (2013) indicator variables, also known as items give input, by gathering questions or statements from the participants, for every single factor variable/construct. Factor variables, also known as constructs or latent variables are operationalized through a sum of items and conceptualize rather independent (exogenous latent variables = explain other latent variables) or dependent (endogenous latent variables = being explained variables) variables of interest (Hair *et al.*, 2013). A PLS path model consists of a measurement model also known as outer model and a structural model also known as inner model. The measurement model focuses on the verification of the consistency of the relationship between items and constructs. Since the structural model focuses on the verification of the relationships between the constructs, positive results in the measurement model are a precondition for the verification of the ‘inner model’ (Hair *et al.*, 2013). Before the software operationalization is discussed precautionary measures concerning measurement model and structural model are presented.

1.12.2.2. *Measurement Model*

Wong (2013) subdivides into formative and reflective measurement scales. Formative measurement scales verify constructs that are not interchangeable. Reflective measurement scales, in contrast, verify constructs that are correlated and interchangeable (Wong, 2013). Since all constructs in this study are composed of more than 3 items and are correlated and interchangeable this study focused on the verification of reflective measurement scales. According to Haenlein & Kaplan (2004), Petter, Straub & Rai (2007), Hair *et al.* (2013) and Wong (2013) reliability and validity are indicators that can be used for the verification of reflective measurement scales. In this matter Malhotra (2010) recommends to take a closer look at the internal consistency reliability and on construct validity. In order to verify construct validity, convergent and discriminant validity had to be analyzed. In the following acceptance premise for these measurements used in this study was illuminated. Since all these values are provided by the software package SmartPLS, when running the PLS Algorithm, this software was a suitable analysis tool. Due to the fact that concerning the measurement model all values are probabilities resulting values are always between one and zero. Concerning internal consistency reliability Malhotra (2010) recommends that the coefficient alpha is 0.6 or higher and composite reliability is 0.7 or higher. Wong (2013) verifies these values, specifically if the researcher is making use of the software package SmartPLS. According to Wong (2013), the verification of convergent validity justified with composite validity at 0.7 or higher and the average variance extracted (AVE) 0.5 or higher. When the AVE is lower than 0.5, it indicates that the variance is greater due to measurement errors than the variance due to the construct (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). In order to verify discriminant validity, firstly, the researcher has to make sure that there are no cross loadings existing (Malhotra, 2010). Since cross loadings indicate how every item loads on other constructs, and PLS-SEM only accepts that a group of items explains one specific construct, cross loadings are a good indicator to proof discriminate validity. Furthermore, the Fornell-Lacker criterion, requires that every construct's square root of AVE should have higher values than the constructs' themselves (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Wong, 2013). When all these requirements are given, the structural model can be analyzed.

1.12.2.3. *Structural model*

The structural model focuses on the verification of the predicted relationships between the constructs, operationalizing the theoretical framework (Wong, 2013). Due to the complexity of this studies' theoretical framework, firstly the constellation of the content communicating and

content generating constructs, secondly the constellation of the perception and feedback constructs and thirdly a fusion of the first (paper one) and second (paper two) research approaches were verified. In total, 8 relationships were tested in paper one, 11 relationships were tested in paper two and 23 relationships were tested in paper three. In order to explore a path model diagram (PLS-SEM method), the software package SmartPLS turned out to be suitable to explore this complex cause-effect theoretical framework. According to Weiber & Mühlhaus (2014) the software package SmartPLS has become a popular marketing research tool. Concerning the structural analysis with SmartPLS, important values for the hypothesis verification provided by SmartPLS are the t-test value and p-values (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2012; Wong, 2013). Thus in the following acceptance premise for these measurements are discussed. The actual results are discussed separately in papers one, two, and three and summed up in the last section of this study. With the help of the resampling method bootstrapping, SmartPLS provides t-test and the p-value results, allowing the research to decide if the null hypothesis is supported or not. If the t-test results are lower than 1.96 at a significance level of 0.05 the hypothesis is rejected. Since the p-value is a probability, resulting values vary between zero and one. According to Hair *et al.* (2013) the p-value should not exceed 0.05, otherwise the Hypothesis will be rejected. The following sections focus on the ethical considerations.

1.13. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Since this research involved human subjects, all pre-test and main questionnaires were developed in agreement with the requirements of, and tested by the Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee of the University of Cape Town. Proof for the acceptance of all three research propositions are attached to this study (Appendix A). Most importantly, concerning the ethical considerations, is that participants are not put into danger. This includes to ensure that the entire process does not harm the participant, more precisely hurt his or her feelings. Further it has to be assured that there are no ethical consequences for the supporting institution and the participants are informed that participation is voluntary and thus withdrawal is possible to any time during the participation (Kimmel, 2009). Thus, research conducted in the scope of this study fulfilled all ethical requirements and did not put participants in danger neither resulted in ethical complications.

1.14. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

When it comes to scope and limitations of this study, the novelty of the topic Content Marketing has to be taken into consideration. In agreement with the literature review, there exists research on specific areas regarding Content Marketing, however the commercial value generation process has not been explored so far. Firstly, the scope of this study is discussed in more detail and then the limitations of this study are looked at more closely.

1.14.1. Scope

Whereas this study has clear academic background, it also gives exclusive insights for corporate world. Indeed, the approach to this topic is mainly build on academic literature, however corporate researchers have not been paying attention to commercial content value generation, which makes the results of this study also valuable for corporate world. Regarding the practical application of Content Marketing, the sportswear manufacturer, Reebok, is a good example of providing entertaining, informative and helpful fitness content. After Reebok rebranded in 2014, a content rich marketing strategy under the umbrella term 'Be more human' boosted the firm significantly and placed the brand in the top 10 valuable sport brands (De La Cruz, 2017; Forbes, 2018). Beside the corporate impact, academically parts of this study (paper one and paper two) aroused already interest and got international feedback on the European Marketing Academy (EMAC) conference 2017 and the the Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy (ANZMAC) conference 2017 (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2017.a; 2017.b.). Due to the inclusion of popular marketing tools like eWOM and UGC, and the incorporation in the Content Marketing context the scope of this study is relatively high.

1.14.2. Limitations

Regarding the fact that this study is the first research project focusing on the commercial value generation in the Content Marketing context, the following limitations have to be taken into consideration. Firstly, this study research object was in all three papers a video focusing on the mass content communication with consumers and thus results can only be projected on B2C scenarios. It is therefore questionable, if these results have any impact on B2B scenarios. Secondly this studies' research was limited on the metropolitan area of Cape Town. Indeed, Cape Town provides due to its cultural variety, an individual pick of the population, however for an official verification of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response, further research has to be conducted on other target populations like in Europe and in America.

Beside these all-encompassing limitations, paper specific limitations are discussed in the corresponding sections ‘Limitations and Future research’ in all three papers.

1.15. COMPOSITION OF THE STUDY

This PhD study was developed with the help of the recommended marketing research process steps from Malhotra (2010). In this matter Malhotra (2010) subdivides the following six research steps: Step 1: Problem Definition; Step 2: Development of an Approach to the problem; Step 3: Research Design Formulation; Step 4: Fieldwork or Data Collection; Step 5: Data preparation and Analysis; Step 6: Report preparation and Presentation. Since this study dissertation type is by publication, Step 1 till Step 6 are individually combined by all three papers (Figure 1.5).

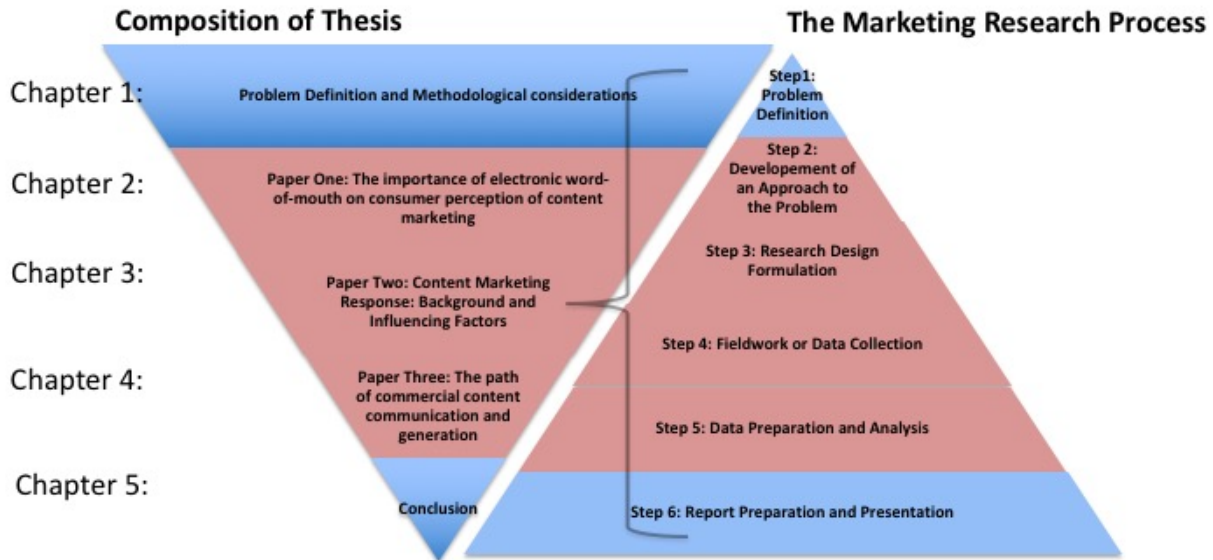


Figure 1.5: Composition of the Thesis.
Adapted and modified from: Malhotra (2010)

As indicated in Figure 1.5, Chapter 1 provides beside an introduction regarding content marketing, the research design and execution, information concerning the methodology arrangements of this thesis. These methodology arrangements include a comprehensive description of research design and methodology discussing in detail; research philosophy, research design, research strategy, data collection, sampling, questionnaire design, measurement and scaling, pre-testing, data preparation and the data analysis. The following three chapters (paper one, two, three) represent the heart of this thesis, unfolding the verification of parts and the whole commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response. With the title: The importance of electronic word-of-mouth on consumer perception of Content Marketing the first paper focused on the composition of content communication and

generation vehicles. The second paper focused on the operationalization of Content Marketing response under the title: Content Marketing Response: Background and Influencing Factors. Under consideration of weak measurement values the third paper combined the theoretical frameworks of paper one and paper two with the title: The commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response. All three papers were individually conducted and built on each other's results. Every single paper also followed the six research steps of Malhotra (2010) and thus is treated as individual research conducted. Thus, the results of all three papers are discussed individually after data preparation and analysis section. Chapter 5 of this study combines the results of all three papers and will give an all-encompassing conclusion concerning this thesis.

1.16. REFERENCING STYLE USED IN THE STUDY

When it comes to academic research work, Malhotra (2010) recommends to stay consistent with the elected referencing style. That is why this study makes exclusive use of Harvard referencing style.

1.17. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter above provided insights to a better understanding of Content Marketing, the lack of research in specific areas regarding Content Marketing and the research matter of this thesis. The elaboration of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response, illuminating the content communication and content generation process contributes to a better understanding of the term Content Marketing in corporate world as well as in academia. With the help of a detailed outline of the structure of this thesis, this chapter contributes to a better understanding of the studies' purpose and the methodology applied. The following three chapters provide significant insights concerning: Paper one: FGC communication and additional generation channels, Paper two: Content Marketing response mechanisms and Paper three: the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response. Then an all-encompassing conclusion will be drawn including: Synopsis of research, summary of findings, discussion of research objectives, managerial and scholarly recommendations and limitations and future research recommendations under consideration of the results.

2. PAPER ONE: THE IMPORTANCE OF ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH ON CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF CONTENT MARKETING

ACCEPTED FOR PUBLICATION IN:
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ELECTRONIC MARKETING AND RETAILING

2.1. PRINCIPLE OF STRUCTURING

As indicated in Chapter 1, this PhD was conducted by publication, meaning three studies in form of academic research papers built the centerpiece of this study. There are distinct concepts that investigated in the three studies with distinct focus and objectives. Therefore, phrases such as value added chain, development, verification, marketing communication are used with a specific aim of describing Content Marketing as a promotion strategy. Accordingly, Chapter 2 presents the first paper completed in the scope of this study, focusing on the illumination of content communication and generation vehicles. Chapter 3 presents the second paper completed in the scope of this thesis, focusing on the exploration and operationalization of Content Marketing response. Finally, Chapter 4 presents the third paper conducted in the scope of this thesis, focusing on the verification of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response. Taking the findings of all three papers into account Chapter 5 elucidates and concludes the insights made in the scope of the three papers.

2.2. ABSTRACT

Content Marketing is a new trend that is highly recognizable in online marketing strategies. The nexus of commercial communication of content is to enable the brand to give something valuable and gain something valuable in return. Indeed, research on firm-generated content (FGC) and user-generated content (UGC) exists, but possible connections are left in the dark. This study explored the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing by focusing on possible coherences of commercially driven content generating constructs and their online communication channels, using Content Marketing as an umbrella term for any commercially generated content. This study provides insights into commercial B2C online content generation. After a data cleaning, elimination of incomplete questionnaires, the data was analyzed with structural equation modelling. The results illustrate Content Marketing's ability to impact UGC commercially and thus provide a solid base for future research.

Keywords: *Content Marketing, Social Media, Electronic Word-of-Mouth*

2.3. INTRODUCTION

This study explores the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing. Acknowledging the user-friendly interface of Web 2.0 and as a consequence thereof the progressive consumers' compulsion to voluntarily participate in advertising through user-generated content (UGC) (Rosengren & Dahlén, 2015; Rosengren, Ljungberg & Palmberg, 2015), this research focuses on the commercially driven manipulation of generated content. Whereas in the corporate world the supply of entertaining, interesting or informative firm-generated content (FGC) has become a popular advertising tool (O'Donohoe 1994; Rosengren & Dahlén 2013), the theory behind the commercial marketing of content is incomplete. In this regard, a consulting industry has specialized in social media marketing, progressively focusing on the communication of manipulative content using primarily the term Content Marketing (Pulizzi, 2013). Indeed, affirmative research of Content Marketing consulting firms, and the budget-friendly generation of online content appears convincing, but Content Marketing practitioners should understand the relationship between the single content-generating construct and its communication channels to market content efficiently. This study provides a concept that verifies possible relations between the content generating construct and its main communication channels by using Content Marketing as an umbrella term.

While Rosengren & Dahlén (2015, p. 1) explored the Content Marketing phenomena from the advertising equity perspective, demonstrating that today's advertising *is able to create attention and interest in its own right by being highly valued and liked by consumers*, corporate as well as academic research, has still not addressed the coherences of content generating channels and accomplished communication tools. Indeed, there is a growing chair of specialized literature (Pulizzi, 2013; Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015; Heinrich, 2016; Rosengren & Dahlén, 2015; Rosengren, Ljungberg & Palmberg, 2015) and academics conduct research on content generation areas like UGC (Daugherty, Eastin & Bright, 2008; Zhang & Sarvary, 2014) and FGC (Swain & Cao, 2014; Kumar *et al.*, 2016), however, the relationship between UGC and FGC should be explored progressively to understand the theory of Content Marketing. By developing and verifying the commercial value-added chain of Content Marketing, this concept contributes to a better understanding of the term Content Marketing and the theory behind it. Through the execution of two pre-paper based tests with a total sample size of 56 and 184 all contradictions concerning the measurement model were minimized. The paper-based main study covered a total sample size of 335. The participants were familiar with the single content generating and content communicating variables in the commercial value added chain of

Content Marketing and thus provide a representative sample of consumers. The results of this study backing the researchers' assumption that there exists a relationship between the diverse content generating constructs. This study aims (1) to review existing content generating literature, (2) outline and verify the commercially-driven, value-added chain of Content Marketing and (3) introduce Content Marketing as an umbrella term. Thus this paper contributes to a better understanding of Content Marketing particularly by elucidating the theory behind the term Content Marketing. Furthermore, the illumination of the single constructs of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing will contribute to a better understanding of the communication channels of Content Marketing and will extend the horizon for future research.

2.4. COMPOSITION OF CONTENT MARKETING

Content Marketing is defined as a promotion strategy which extends the promotional mix, capitalizing on the benefits of providing valuable content to the consumer / customer for free (O'Brien, 2012; Pulizzi, 2013). According to O'Brien (2012) Content Marketing has become an alternative promotion strategy to build up a long-term content exchanging relationship between consumer and supplier. The commercial provision of content in order to strengthen the relationship to the consumer has been around for decades (Pulizzi, 2012). John Deere, the American agricultural machinery manufacturer, launched the first customer magazine 1895. Following the traditional sense of Content Marketing, - distance from the brand, communicate content- John Deere successfully provides to this day (40 countries/12 languages) useful agricultural content instead of promoting their agricultural machinery in their magazine 'The Furrow' (Pulizzi, 2012). Improved through the additional communication options of Web 2.0, FGC can be cost-effectively spread via social media (Kumar *et al.*, 2016). Kumar *et al.* (2016) results illustrate that customers participating in social media will inevitably be confronted by FGC. Because appealing, useful or entertaining FGC divert the consumer from the commercial attention of the content provider, the possibility of additional UGC ideally increases (Pulizzi, 2013).

Rapidly pushed forward by the technological progress in the past 10 years, the communication of commercial content (FGC) or non-commercial content (UGC) through electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication channels has increased massively (Jin & Phua, 2014). Indeed, FGC marketing campaigns enable consumer to rate or comment the communicated content or even participate in corresponding promotion initiatives. In other words, encourage the

production of additional UGC (Kumar *et al.*, 2016). Whereas research on the single generating constructs exist (Daugherty, Eastin & Bright, 2008; Zhang & Sarvary, 2014; Kumar *et al.*, 2016), research of interactions between generated content from different origins is rare. Addressing this lack of research, the researchers developed the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing using Content Marketing as an umbrella term for any content generation. As illustrated in Table 2.1, the basics of Content Marketing are composed of three content-generating constructs and two content communicating constructs.

Table 2.1: Overview of basic Content Marketing constructs

| Construct | Definition | Origin of generated content | Main tasks | Type of communication |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| FGC (Firm-generated content) | Content generated and posted by firms in order to tighten the relationship to the consumer mainly using social medias interactive nature (Kumar <i>et al.</i> , 2016). | Commercial | Trigger further communication around the product/brand. Build up a long-term relationship with consumer/customers by providing valuable content for free. | Commercially-driven communication starting from the seller. |
| UGC (User-generated content) | UGC operationalize any content generated by the general public, mainly communicated through Web 2.0 (Daugherty, Eastin & Bright, 2008) | Private | Individual, consumer driven content provision. | Not commercially driven communication among consumer and customers. |
| CGC (Customer-generated content) | CGC operationalize any content that assess commercial transactions generated by the general public, mainly communicated through Web 2.0. | Commercial | Give the customer the option to assess and share his or her experience with the product/brand. | Commercially assessment driven communication among customer and seller. |
| eWOM (Electronic word-of-mouth) | <i>“Any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet”</i> (Hennig-Thurau <i>et al.</i> 2004, p. 39). | Communication link between content generating constructs. | Online communication channel which mediates content. | Partly commercial, partly non-commercial accumulation of internet communication channel exchange. |
| WOM (Word-of-mouth) | A face-to-face consumer or customer dominated communication channel sharing product, service or company information in which senders are independent of the market (Li, Liu & Suomi, 2012). | Communication link between content generating constructs. | Offline communication channel which mediates content. | Partly commercial, partly non-commercial accumulation of face-to-face communication. |

Due to the simple online accessibility, the protective anonymity and a worldwide purview, the communication of electronic generated content via social media is popular, impacting the consumer / customer crucially. The rapid development of Web 2.0 in the last 10 years and the increased use of Content Marketing tactics like social media content, illustrations / photos and eNewsletters, underlines the vitality of electronic communication options in Content Marketing (Handley & Beets, 2018). However, the constellation and the coherences of content generating constructs and accomplished communications constructs have not been explored so far.

2.5. COMMERCIAL VALUE-ADDED CHAIN OF CONTENT MARKETING

The popularity of Content Marketing use (Handley & Beets, 2018), its affordability and the attractiveness in the target group, reduces doubts on the assumption Content Marketing is a mayfly (Pulizzi, 2013). However, when it comes to the composition of content generating constructs, research is rare (Kumar *et al.*, 2016). Although the generation of commercial content is popular and recommended by Content Marketing consulting agencies, existing qualitative and quantitative research mostly focus on single communication channels or single generating constructs (Handley & Beets, 2018). In this respect Kumar *et al.* (2016) stress that studies in the area of content generation have primarily focused on one single construct, mainly on UGC and FGC. Thus the main aim of this study is to illustrate the connection between the single constructs and their communication medium. The researchers argue that an all-encompassing understanding of Content Marketing will impact today's social media marketing. As indicated in Figure 2.1. FGC is the starting point from the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing. When it comes to FGC, the content need not necessarily be directly connected to the company, however FGC stands out by its commercial root. Eminently improved by online communication opportunities, FGC is experiencing a second heyday (Swain and Cao, 2014). Lea (2012) and Kumar *et al.* (2016) indicate that in contrast to traditional advertising, the communication between firm, consumer and customer has changed, largely influenced by social media. More precisely it is the bilateral communication possibility, leading to additional UGC or CGC around the FGC (Lea, 2012). Whereas in the nineties FGC was commonly classified as a support service, today FGC is classified as a clear marketing communication tool (Pulizzi, 2012). Kumar *et al.* (2016:1) describe FGC as a "*firm-initiated marketing communication in its official social media pages*". Correspondingly FGC fulfils traditional advertisings goals by informing consumers, driving sales and additionally

gives consumers and customers the opportunity to respond to the FGC by generating CGC or UGC.

Due to the complexity and the user-friendly interface of the internet and accomplished with that an almost limitless social media supply, consumer and customer have a huge variety to respond and react to FGC (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). The most common ways to respond to FGC are rating systems allowing the customer to evaluate the content or product through 'likes' or 'stars' and social media platforms, blogs and chatrooms (Chen, Fay & Wang, 2011). Responses triggered by previous commercial transactions resulting in additional content generation are defined for this study as customer-generated content CGC. Furthermore, social media communication channels, for example online video platforms like (e.g. YouTube) or online social media platforms (e.g. Facebook) allow users to generate (not necessarily firm-sourced) individual content (Chen, Fay & Wang, 2011). Non-commercial responses exclusively triggered by FGC, resulting in additional content generation are defined for this study as UGC. Accordingly, it is not uncommon that users or customers generate additional content. Research by Schulze, Schöler & Skiera (2014) illustrate that frequent social media use, sensitize users concerning opinions of people with similar viewpoints. Accordingly, frequent social media users might be sensitized regarding FGC as well, which would indicate an advantage to traditional advertising where the consumer takes in a suspicious role (Ferreira & Barbosa, 2017). In order to verify the connection between FGC and UGC/CGC (Figure 2.1), firstly the communication channels WOM and eWOM and then the difference between UGC and CGC are briefly elucidated.

Marketing literature describes WOM as an independent (consumer-to-consumer) consumer-dominated communication channel by receiving positive as well as negative product, service or company information face-to-face (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008; Li, Liu & Suomi, 2012). Non-commercially driven independence cause credibility and trust into the WOM information. This in turn increases the value of WOM information in comparison to firm-initiated information (Brown, Broderick & Lee, 2007; Li, Liu & Suomi, 2012). Taking the strengths of WOM into account, Li, Liu & Suomi (2012) highlights the influence of WOM on consumers' decision making and purchasing behavior. This research predict that consumer and customer consciously and unconsciously primarily use WOM to react on FGC. According to Pulizzi (2012) it is very likely, concerning face-to-face conversation, which is main WOM communication vehicle (Henricks, 1998), that FGC becomes subject of conversation without specific focus on the actual product, brand or company (Pulizzi, 2012). Thus content without a

commercial background (UGC) might lead to additional content around FGC. That's why the researchers predict:

H1: WOM is taking up a mediating role between FGC and UGC.

Furthermore, interesting, informative or entertaining FGC may become a key point for face-to-face conversations. Thus, content with commercial background (CGC) might lead to additional content around the FGC as well. That's why the researchers predict:

H2: WOM is taking in a mediating role between FGC and CGC.

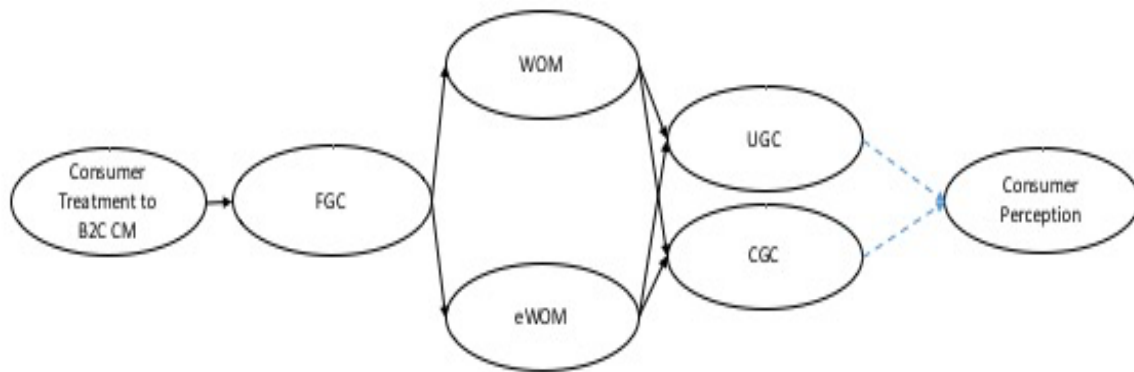


Figure 2.1: Commercial value-added chain of Content Marketing

Adapted: (Hirshfelder & Chigada, 2017.a.)

The electronic form of WOM defined by Henning-Thurau *et al.* (2004, p. 39) as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet” has become doubtless an important communication vehicle in the corporate as well as in the private world (Reimer & Benkenstein, 2016; Sharma & Rehman, 2017). In private as well as in cooperate world online institutions (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube et cetera) are mainly used for communication (Reimer & Benkenstein, 2016; Sharma & Rehman, 2017).

Private users have the opportunity to promote and exchange their opinions, experience and expertise of a product, brand or company, in comparison to WOM in an anonymous environment, resulting in reputable non-commercially driven reviews. The resulting persuasiveness, trustworthiness and the comparable low spending to traditional advertising increases the interest from corporate side (Chen, Fay & Wang, 2011). Indeed, to encourage private user to communicate cooperate content is difficult but possible. By communicating entertaining, informative or useful content (storytelling) the consumer get side-tracked from the

commercial intention and thus is more willing to consume, share or generate additional content (Pulizzi, 2013). In accordance with Aaker & Aaker (2016) a storytelling campaign that outstands from the everyday marketing campaigns and thus is communicated beyond the everyday viral content – “check this cute kid in a Darth Vader costume” – has great potential to become viral globally. The energy drink manufacturer Red Bull made use of this marketing strategy by sponsoring and communicating a parachute jump out of space. Very much in the spirit of the slogan of Red Bull - “Red Bull gives you wings” - this Content Marketing campaign ‘took off’ successfully. Beside a lasting media presence before the actual parachute jump, the jump itself was with 52 million views the most-watched live stream in history (BBC, 2012; Zmuda, 2013). As soon as private users start communicating corporate content (FGC), additional UGC or CGC with commercial roots is generated. Hence the researchers predict that:

H3: *eWOM is taking in a mediating role between FGC and UGC.*

H4: *eWOM is taking in a mediating role between FGC and CGC.*

With reference to the differentiation between UGC and CGC, Table 2.1 indicates that UGC has a non-commercial origin and CGC has a commercial origin. Whereas research on UGC covers a considerable quantity of research literature (Kumar *et al.*, 2016), CGC is a construct exclusively developed for this research. Strictly speaking CGC also known as product reviews are a subcategory of UGC (Goes, Lin, & Au Yeung, 2014), however in order to specialize nature of content a distinction between commercial and non-commercial origin was made. For a marketing strategy build on trust and reputation, with the main aim to build up a long-term relationship with the consumer, the content origin might play an important role. The generation of UGC does not necessarily require a preliminary business transaction as a trigger, while CGC exclusively is generated on the basis of a business transaction (Fader & Winer, 2012). Thus, rather third-party supplier (amazon, Airbnb or Uber), independent institutions (Angie’s List, Trustpilot or Testfreaks) or the company itself provide a possibility to evaluate purchased products or services. UGC is popular due to its credibility and persuasiveness (Ayeh, Au & Law, 2013; Tang, Fang & Wang, 2014). Driven by its altruistic origin, UGC and CGC are trustful information sources regarding pre-purchase inquiries from consumer side (Chari, Christodoulides, Presi, Wenhold & Casaletto, 2016; Sethna, Hazari & Bergiel, 2017). If UGC or CGC triggered by FGC have a positive impact on consumer perception should be verified by the following hypotheses:

H5: *UGC triggered by FGC has a positive impact on consumer perception.*

H6: *CGC triggered by FGC has a positive impact on consumer perception.*

According to Palmatier *et al.* (2006) the level of satisfaction of a brand increase with time and thus a longer relationship binds. In turn, customers that have a closer relationship with the brand mostly have a higher level of engagement with the brand and hence more open for FGC (Ranaweera & Prabhu 2003; Kumar *et al.*, 2016). Additional to that Kumar *et al.* (2016, p. 17) note that “*all the customers who participate in social media will intently read FGC*”. One of the main goals of Content Marketing is to build up a long-term relationship with the consumer/customer (Pulizzi, 2012). Relationships to brands or companies are highly influenced by the first perception of the brand/company (Rampl *et al.*, 2017) and that’s why this study uses consumer perception (CP) as a dependent variable.

2.6. OVERVIEW OVER STUDY

Apart from the popularity of Content Marketing use in the corporate world, the commercial value-added chain of Content Marketing was exclusively developed over the course of this study. That is why 2 pre-test steps led the way to the main research concept. In a first step 52 respondents with marketing research expertise were asked to complete the questionnaire and give constructive feedback on the questionnaire. During the second phase, 184 questionnaires were completed and the results were presented at the 47th EMAC conference, ranked under the top 20 competitive papers (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2017.a.). Building on this sustainable pre-test process, final 335 complete questionnaires served the operationalization and verification of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing. The final sample of 335 collected questionnaires for this study is adequate to represent the sample population because the whole project on the value added chain of Content Marketing response is conducted in 3 phases namely “The importance of electronic word-of-mouth on consumer perception of content marketing”; “Content Marketing Response: Background and Influencing Factors” and “The commercial value added chain of Content Marketing Response”. Since this theoretical framework was exclusively developed over the course of this study, it provides directions for future research in order to consolidate the understanding of the value added chain of Content Marketing response

In order to verify hypothesis 1 – 6 and thus the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing, 335 questionnaires in total (12 uncompleted; 41% female, average age = 20 years; age range: 18 to 65 years) were analyzed with the software package SmartPLS. The

researchers acknowledge that there was a gender disparity in terms of response rates were more male respondents participated in this study compared to their female counter parts. This study was openly conducted without any form of discrimination however respondents' willingness to participate in this study was considered. It would have been unethical to influence female participants to partake in this study without prejudicing the findings.

2.6.1. Procedure

Traditional marketing highlights the value of the product/brand (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010), Content Marketing mainly focuses on the content communicated. With the aim to conceptualize the understanding of Content Marketing the Marketing campaign 'Be more human' from the sportswear manufacturer Reebok was used as a pre-questionnaire treatment. The campaign mainly consists of a video, a dedicated Instagram channel and a real world guerrilla marketing application. The participants were firstly exposed to the online video content, after that the Instagram channel and the guerrilla marketing application were verbally explained and presented with pictures (Reebok, 2015). After being exposed to this treatment, participants were asked to complete a paper-based questionnaire. Since the focus of the 'Be more human' marketing campaign is specifically on the communication and generation of content, it is an appropriate treatment for this study.

2.6.2. Measures

Due to the fact that academic literature and research on Content Marketing is relatively rare, the questionnaire survey was partly based on the following sources: Harrison-Walker (2001), Henning-Thurau *et al.* (2004), Chu & Kim (2011), Berger & Milkman (2012), Cheung & Lee (2012), Berger (2014), Tang, Fang & Wang (2014), Kumar *et al.* (2016) and Chu & Kim (2018). Accordingly, the five independent constructs as well as the dependent construct were operationalized and measured with 7-point Likert-type scale. More precisely FGC was operationalized with a 11 items 7-point Likert-type scale, word-of-mouth was operationalized with a 9 items 7-point Likert-type scale, electronic word-of-mouth was operationalized with 10 items 7-point Likert-type scale, UGC was operationalized with 8 items 7-point Likert-type scale, CGC was operationalized with 9 items 7-point Likert-type scale and consumer perception was operationalized with 13 items 7-point Likert-type scale.

2.7. RESULTS

The main data set collected (335) was analysed using structural equation modelling (SEM) using the software package SmartPLS. The SEM analysis of results is shaped by Figure 2.1. Accordingly, hypothesis 1 – 6, including the hypothesized mediation of WOM and eWOM between FGC and UGC and CGC, were verified with confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), path analysis and partial least squares path modelling (PLS-PM). During the first pre-test 6 of the 74 items in total were excluded after running the first PLS Algorithm due to critical values concerning the average variance extracted (AVE) and heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT). During the second pre-test critical values concerning HTMT disappeared, however 9 of the 68 items were modified for the final data collection. With regard to these nine items the PLS Algorithm exhibited critical values concerning construct reliability and validity. In particular, the constructs FGC, WOM and CP exhibit critical values concerning the AVE. After exclusion of these nine items, internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability), validity (composite reliability, AVE) and discriminant validity (HTMT) were verified. With the exception of the AVE for the construct FGC, which minimal deviated from the norm (0.465) all constructs fulfilled the requirements. Since the measurement scales were compiled in a new conceptual context, deviations were expected.

Including the modification of the nine items, 335 final questionnaires were collected. The results of the 322 complete questionnaires are discussed in the following. In order to fulfil the measurement model requirements, 8 items (4 of FGC; 1 of WOM; 2 of CP) were removed. All Cronbach's alpha values were above 0.6 and all composite reliability values were above 0.7 and thus internal consistency reliability is given (Hair *et al.*, 2013). The AVE values are above 0.5 and thus confirm the statistic requirements for validity (Hair *et al.*, 2013). The diagonal square root of the AVE is greater than the absolute value of any of the inner construct correlations which supporting the Fronell-Larcker criterion. Furthermore, HTMT values are under 0.9 and there are no major cross loadings indicating stable values concerning discriminant validity (Hair *et al.*, 2013). Taking these results into account all measurement model preconditions are fulfilled.

As a result of running the SmartPLS Bootstrap calculation the following results concerning the structural model have to be taken into consideration. It can be inferred from Table 2.2 that FGC has an impact on consumer perception. All six Hypotheses were tested with the help of path analysis and PLS-PM. Hypothesis 1 is supported since the t-values indicate that the relationship between FGC and UGC is mediated by WOM. Regarding Hypothesis 2, the

relationship between FGC and WOM is supported but the relationship between WOM and CGC is not significant and thus Hypothesis 2 is rejected. The relationships between FGC and UGC as well as between FGC and CGC are both significantly mediated by eWOM. Thus Hypothesis 3 and 4 are both supported indicating that the relationship between FGC and UGC/CGC is partially mediated by eWOM. This partial mediation is supported by significant results of the Sobel test (Sobel Test Statistic > 1.96 & Two-Tailed Probability < 0.05) (Hoyle, 1999). Concerning Hypothesis 5, it can be inferred from Table 2.2 that UGC triggered by FGC has a significant impact on CP. In contrast to that CGC triggered by FGC exhibit a t-value smaller than 1.96 and thus Hypothesis 6 is rejected. In the following the results are discussed more closely. The illustration in Table 2.2 below has been published in the International Journal of Electronic Marketing and Retailing in 2018 (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2018).

Table 2.2: Structural Equation Model Results

| | Hypothesized relationship | t-Value | p-value | Hypotheses |
|-----------|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| H1 | FGC => WOM => UGC | 7.795 => 3.231 | 0.000 / 0.001 | Supported |
| H2 | FGC => WOM => CGC | 7.795 => 1.176 | 0.000 / 0.240 | Not Supported |
| H3 | FGC => eWOM => UGC | 6.065 => 10.078 | 0.000 / 0.000 | Supported |
| H4 | FGC => eWOM => CGC | 6.065 => 17.103 | 0.000 / 0.000 | Supported |
| H5 | UGC => CP | 5.923 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H6 | CGC => CP | 1.464 | 0.144 | Not Supported |

2.8. GENERAL DISCUSSION

With reference to the interpretation of the results, this study provides exclusive insights regarding Content Marketing and social media marketing which are emerging promotional domains in marketing. In consideration of the insightful verification of the Commercial value-added chain of Content Marketing the theoretical framework contributes to a better understanding of the combination of content generating concepts. New knowledge, ideas and insights generated in this study contribute significantly to the body of knowledge in the domain of Content Marketing. Notably, this study proved that the single content generating components as well as WOM and eWOM used as mediating communication channels, have an individual impact on CP, but only work in concurrency with each other. In this matter, the two significant paths (FGC => WOM / eWOM => UGC => CP) highlight that the term Content Marketing includes more than just providing useful, informative or entertaining content. Thus it

is important to consider communication channels of the content and possible trigger that motivate the content consumer to produce additional content (UGC). In line with Berger (2014), this study stress that non digital communication channels also have a significant impact on CP. The results indicate that WOM influenced by FGC impact UGC. That means consumer that were exposed to FGC communicate face-to-face their experience, which in turn generates additional UGC. Thus indeed, face-to-face communication plays an important role in the social media environment and has to be taken in consideration in the Content Marketing context. Besides WOM, electronic WOM impacts Content Marketing significantly. This study shows that electronic communication channels like Facebook, Instagram and YouTube to only mention a few, take in a mediating role between FGC and UGC. This is an important vertex since the additional generation of content by the consumer is according to the results of this study the key spreading mechanism of Content Marketing. This result concurs with Mangold & Faulds (2009), highlighting the shift from marketer dominance to consumer dominance. It can be inferred from the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing that marketers can influence UGC commercially by using FGC. Taking these results into account it can be concluded that the term Content Marketing is an umbrella term consisting of commercially driven as well as consumer driven content, connected through electronic and non-electronic communication methods (Figure 2.2).

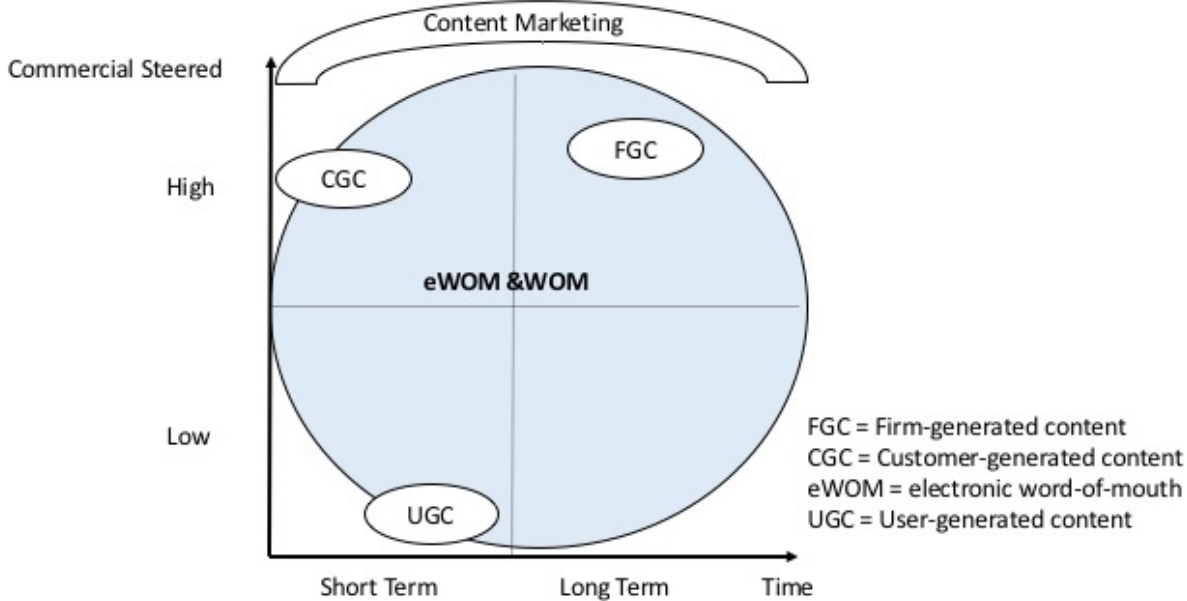


Figure 2.2: Content Marketing’s function as an umbrella term
 Developed by: Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018)

The consideration of the study’s results, corporate research (Handley & Beets, 2018) as well as academic research (Holliman & Rowley, 2014; Aaker & Aaker, 2016) on Content Marketing

allows a comparison with traditional marketing. Accordingly, Table 2.3 illustrates the behavior of traditional marketing and Content Marketing on marketing influencing aspects. Traditional advertising for example in newspapers, radio or TV, requires high planning and developing costs (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). In addition to that most traditional communication channels entail further publishing costs (Huang, Su, Zhou & Liu, 2013). It can be indicated from Table 2.3 that in contrast to traditional marketing the target audience of Content Marketing is specialized on one target group.

Table 2.3: Traditional vs. Content Marketing

| Aspect | Traditional advertising | Content Marketing |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Investment | High | Low |
| Online | Sometimes | Primarily |
| Entertainment score | Low | High |
| Information content | Low/Medium | High |
| Identification | Low | High |
| Reach | Wide | Target group |
| Trustworthiness | Low | High |
| Effectiveness | Medium | High |

2.9. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Apart from a total sample size of 335, the commercial value-added chain of Content Marketing has to be further tested and advanced to grow in importance. Possible research areas in this matter are the extension of the commercial value added chain concerning Content Marketing response and perceived usefulness of the communicated content. Particularly the combination of sponsorship and storytelling is experiencing progressive popularity and requires further research. In this matter Hirschfelder & Human (2015) and Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018) successfully used the theoretical framework from Speed and Thompson (2000) to verify Content Marketing response of sponsorship in the Content Marketing context. Both studies got by with contiguous literature and not least because of lack of academic literature on Content Marketing with literature which is commercially driven. Considering this lack of academic literature on Content Marketing this study provides basic insights but more research has to follow to improve the understanding of Content Marketing. Regarding FGC, Kumar *et al.* (2016) provided important insights, providing a solid base for future research. The results of the current study show that the term Content Marketing is more than only the generation of commercial content, indeed communication channels and UGC play a key role concerning Content Marketing. Thus also more research has to be done regarding the relationships among communication channel and content generator. Finally, this study is clearly limited by its

research objective (Reeboks 'Be more human' marketing campaign) on B2C Content Marketing. Accordingly, an interesting future research approach would be the verification of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing in the B2B context. This study contributed to a better understanding of the term Content Marketing and provides an innovative starting point for commercial content generation.

2.10. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

As indicated in the limitations above, this research explored the commercial value added chain in a B2C context. Accordingly, B2C Content Marketers should be aware of: 1. providing opportunities (Links to share content via social media, provide content directly on social media platforms) to share FGC via eWOM communication channels; 2. Produce content that is appealing to communicate face-to-face by the target audience; 3. Allow the content consumer to produce additional content (comment box, upload additional individual content, evaluate content, product or company), when producing and communicating FGC. It is thereof concluded that Content Marketing has to be treated as an umbrella term, and thus content marketers should be aware of the interaction between communication channels and content generating tools, when producing and communicating FGC.

With regard to academic research Content Marketing is a relatively new term and accordingly unexplored. Whereas the term has become popular in the corporate world, often used in association with social media, the actual intersection of social media and commercial content was unexplored. The results of this study illuminate the complexity of Content Marketing, indicating that beside commercial content generation (FGC), the combination of communication channels and content generating tools is important for a successful Content Marketing campaign.

3. PAPER TWO: CONTENT MARKETING RESPONSE: BACKGROUND AND INFLUENCING FACTORS

UNDER REVIEW AT:
SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCE

3.1. ABSTRACT

Highly influenced by the user-friendly interface of Web 2.0 and the accomplished 24/7 information, entertainment and service access, consumers progressively decide what advertisements they want to get exposed to. Thus, the provision of entertaining, informative or helpful content by companies progressively, without the product/brand in the foreground, has become a popular promotional strategy. This strategy, also known as Content Marketing is, due to its novelty, relatively unexplored. Thus, this paper investigates the impact of consumer perception on content marketing response. Additionally, a possible mediation between consumer perception and Content Marketing response by perceived usefulness was verified in the scope of this study. Focusing on a target group of participants between 18 and 65 years, a pre-tested (N=61) paper based questionnaire was conducted, resulting in a sample size of 155 responses. After data cleaning, measurement and structural results were gathered with the help of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using the software package SmartPLS. Since there is relatively little empirical research focusing on Content Marketing, this study generates new knowledge and ideas that will contribute significantly to literature on upcoming marketing strategies.

Keywords: *Content Marketing Response, Consumer Perception, Perceived Usefulness*

3.2. INTRODUCTION

Highly influenced by the user-friendly interface of Web 2.0 and the accomplished electronic communication opportunities marketing is experiencing a renaissance (Hettler, 2012). In the past, mass media like televisions (TV), newspapers, radio and face-to-face interactions, were the main communication vehicles used to spread commercial content (Armstrong, Adam, Denize & Kotler, 2014). Web 2.0 technologies give marketers and consumers additional communication options. Mangold & Faulds (2009) describe social media as the new hybrid element of the promotion mix. Berger (2014) also asserts that social media communication technologies like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others, have increased the speed and ease of private and commercial content exchange. Companies progressively include a link to social media networks to stay in close contact with their consumers and customers (Zhang *et al.*, 2017). The electronic exchange among consumers has changed the way that consumers look at advertising. Whereas in the past, marketers tried to convince the consumer with unique features or special prices. Today's consumer progressively determines which advertisement they want to get exposed to (Zhang *et al.*, 2017). This shift from marketer dominance (push marketing) to consumer dominance (pull marketing) has changed the way how marketers approach the consumer (Zhang *et al.*, 2017). It should be noted that consumers do not want to get bored by product features, which are 24/7 available on the website of the product provider, where marketers progressively provide additional informative, entertaining or helpful content, mainly communicated via social media (Kumar *et al.*, 2016). Most common terms for the additional provision of commercial content are: Advertising Content (Rosengren & Dahlén, 2013), Branded Content (Palista, 2012; Ashley & Tuten, 2015) and Content Marketing (CMI, 2017). Taking these three generic terms for commercial content into account, Hirschfelder & Human (2015) and Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018:1235) define Content Marketing as:

“A promotional strategy which extends the promotional mix, and makes use of several communication channels, capitalising particularly on the benefits and connectivity of social media. It focuses on offering something valuable to the consumer for free. By taking consumer- / user-generated content (UGC) into account and communicating with the audience with a non-purchase-pushing intention and by using appealing, useful or entertaining content, the strategy aims at building trust and a long-term relationship to the consumer/customer.”

Kumar *et al.* (2016) state that the provision of additional firm-generated content (FGC), communicated through social media, positively impacts customers' behavior. A popular way to communicate commercial content is storytelling (Pulizzi, 2012) also known as signature stories (Aaker & Aaker, 2016). Aaker & Aaker (2016:2) define signature stories as "*an intriguing, authentic, involving story with a strategic message that enhances the brand, the customer relationship, the organization, and/or the business strategy*". In the contemporary business environment, interacting marketing strategies have become popular communication channels (O'Brien, 2012), however due to the novelty, indicators operationalizing Content Marketing response are unexplored (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2018). Whereas in corporate, research on Content Marketing mainly focus on the single social media channels (CMI, 2017). The coherences between these communication channels and content generating tools are rarely explored (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2018). By treating Content Marketing as a generic term for all content generating constructs (commercially- and non-commercially driven) and accomplished communication channels. Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018) explored a significant content value added path, illustrating the positive impact of FGC on consumer perception of the providing product/brand (Appendix C). Taking these findings into account, this study's primary aim is to verify if consumer perception of FGC impacts Content Marketing response. Furthermore, this study verifies in detail which variables, operationalizing consumer perception, impact Content Marketing Response. Accordingly, this study contributes to a better understanding of Content Marketing and specifically the response to it. This paper firstly discusses literature illuminating the constructs used operationalizing Consumer Perception, Perceived Usefulness and Content Marketing response. Furthermore, Hypotheses operationalizing the relationships between these constructs are presented as well. After that an overview of the study is given, providing information regarding procedures and measures. We then present and discuss the results. Finally, limitations are illustrated, and future research suggestions are made.

3.3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research on Content Marketing focused on the Benchmarks, Budgets and Trends of B2B and B2C Content Marketing (Handley & Beets, 2018), the benefits of Content Marketing (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015) and the long-term and cumulative effect of advertising content (Rosengren & Dahlén, 2013). The variables operationalizing how commercial content is perceived and how consumers respond to Content Marketing are unexplored. Regarding the

lack of research on operationalizing variables, the following review of literature explores possible key variables impacting Content Marketing response. Firstly, variables operationalizing Content Marketing response are discussed in the next section. After that, important variables that impact Content Marketing response and operationalize the consumers' perception of consumed content are reviewed.

3.3.1. Content Marketing Response

Lilien (2011) posits that marketing research is an applied discipline and thus, should result in supporting insights improving marketing practitioners' decisions. Albers (2012) also underlines the importance of knowledge contribution and the improvement of the understanding of marketing relationships regarding marketing research, which in turn might support marketing practitioners' decisions. A common practice in marketing research is the operationalization of the effectiveness of marketing instruments. The effectiveness of marketing instruments, however, is commonly measured by response functions, illustrating disaggregated or aggregated market levels (Albers, 2012). That is why the effectiveness of Content Marketing in this study is measured by a response function as well. Due to the lack of research in Content Marketing response the researchers had to adapt a response function from a contiguous area in marketing. Hirschfelder & Human (2015) and Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018) successfully used a theoretical framework exploring the impact of Content Marketing on Sponsorship, thus parts of this framework were used as basics for the development of the theoretical framework for this study. Similar to sponsorship, creating an indirect relationship between athletic performance and the sponsoring brand through product/brand placement, Content Marketing creates a relationship between communicated content and the providing company through product-/brand placement (Cortez, 1992; Speed & Thompson, 2000; O'Brien, 2012).

Apart from the common response on product/brand placement in the form of product/brand awareness sponsorship marketers as well as content marketers anticipate a rub-off effect from the athletic performance or communicated content on the brand/product (Madrigal, 2001; O'Brien, 2012; Matthes & Naderer, 2016). According to Berger & Schwartz (2011) a product, a brand or an advert has to be interesting to be talked about. In line with the idea of Content Marketing, to inform, entertain or help by providing additional content, the possibilities to generate conversation are higher when unusual, outrageous, remarkable and surprising things are communicated. A good example for communicating remarkable commercial content, is the success story of the Dollar Shave Club (DSC, 2012). By criticizing the high prices of shave

gear in a humorous way and providing a 'one dollar' solution, the Dollar Shave Club became a popular shave gear deliver option. Taking this insight into account and in dependence on Speed & Thompson (2000) using the variable interest to operationalize sponsorship response, the researchers selected the variable 'interest' to operationalize Content Marketing response. The importance of UGC in the Content Marketing context has to be taken into consideration setting up the second variable operationalizing Content Marketing response. As indicated in the definition above, Content Marketing makes use of UGC to communicate commercial content in a non-purchase pushing way (Human, Hirschfelder & Nel, 2018). Furthermore, Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018) elucidate the improvement of the purview of Content Marketing by using UGC as a communication vehicle for FGC. According to Ayeh, Au & Law (2013) UGC is specifically favored by consumers' due to its content originating from its own ranks. Driven by the content generators altruistic intention, UGC is a trustful and popular pre-purchase information source (Chari, *et al.*, 2016; Sethna, Hazari & Bergiel, 2017). Due to the non-commercial driven origin of UGC and its importance concerning spreading FGC and the resulting trust into the content, the researchers selected "identification" as a second variable operationalizing Content Marketing response. Whereas the main aim of Content Marketing is to build up trust and a long-term relationship with the consumer/customer, Content Marketing is still a promotion strategy with a commercial background. The researchers selected "intention to buy" as a third variable operationalizing Content Marketing response. It can be indicated from Figure 3.1. that, Content Marketing response will be operationalized with the help of the three depend variables: Interest, Identification and Intention to Buy.

3.3.2. Consumer Perception

Perceived usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PEU) are central constructs concerning technology use (Davis, 1989; Davis 1993; Han *et al.*, 2017). Consistent with that Han *et al.* (2017) introduces PU and PEU as extension constructs of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) triggering the interest into using a technology. Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018), however proved that Content Marketing is significantly influenced by the use of electronically driven communication channels, which is why the acceptance of technology is fundamental. The implementation of PU in the Content Marketing context is discussed in the following section. More closely, the linkage of PEU and the operationalization of Consumer Perception in the Content Marketing context is discussed in this section. With reference to PEU, Han *et al.* (2017) stress that beside less effort to use a product or service also the

perceived simplicity of the service/product application is crucial to receive positive feedback. Since the provision of additional free content is an expansion service the perception or the perceived ease of consumption of the free content might have an impact on the content marketing response (Content Marketing Institute, 2017). From that it could be inferred that consumer perception of the consumed content plays an important role regarding the acceptance of commercial content.

3.3.2.1. *Story Fit*

The first construct operationalizing consumer perception in the Content Marketing context is Story Fit. More precisely Story Fit explores the fit between FGC and product/brand. According to Speed & Thompson (2000) the fit or compliance between conditioned and unconditioned content impacts the conditioned response. For example, the fit between music (conditioned) and retail setting (unconditioned) can positive impact the choice process in the shop. Concerning source effect research, Kamins (1990) and Ohanian (1991) underline that source similarity has a positive impact on consumers' source perception. On top of that sponsorship researchers could exhibit that the fit between sponsor and sponsored event have a positive influence on the sponsoring product/brand (Otker & Hayes, 1987; Crimmins & Horn, 1996; Stipp & Schiavone, 1996). Based on these interdisciplinary insights it is hypothesized:

H1: *Story fit has a positive impact on Content Marketing response*

H1a: *Story fit has a positive impact on Interest*

H1b: *Story fit has a positive impact on Identification*

H1c: *Story fit has a positive impact on Intention to buy*

3.3.2.2. *Brand Status*

Brand status represents the second construct, operationalizing consumer perception in the Content Marketing context. Events like the Olympics or the FIFA World Cup have a higher perceived status than local sport events (Speed & Thompson, 2000). According to Speed & Thompson (2000) has the status of an event a direct impact on the sponsorship response. Built on research conducted by Speed & Thompson (2000), Hirschfelder & Human (2015) and Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (in press) established that the use of sponsorship, as a content producing tool, has a positive impact on Content Marketing response. With reference to Brand Status, Hirschfelder & Human (2015) and Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018) also reveal that

the higher the status of the firms' communicated content, the higher the brand/product reputation boosting response. Taking these findings into account, Brand Status explores if the status of the content that is subliminally perceived, has an impact it on Content Marketing response.

H2: *Brand Status has a positive impact on Content Marketing Response*

H2a: *Brand Status has a positive impact on Interest*

H2b: *Brand Status has a positive impact on Identification*

H2c: *Brand Status has a positive impact on Intention to buy*

3.3.2.3. *Trust into the Brand*

Ha & Perks (2005:443) define Brand Trust as *the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function*. Highly influenced by the internet and globalization, marketers facing a reduced product difference and an enhanced international competition (Porter & Heppelmann, 2015). Thus, trusting the Brand and the willingness to be exposed to advertising has an impact on the consumers' perception of the brand/company (Ha & Perks, 2005). Regarding Content Marketing, the product/brand is only perceived in the background and the communicated content (story) is in the foreground (O'Brien, 2012). Taking this strategic point into account, Trust into the Brand, perceived for example through product/brand placement might have an impact on Content Marketing response. It is hypothesized:

H3: *Trust into the Brand has an impact on Content Marketing response*

H3a: *Trust into the Brand has a positive impact on Interest*

H3b: *Trust into the Brand has a positive impact on Identification*

H3c: *Trust into the Brand has a positive impact on Intention to buy*

3.3.3. **Perceived Usefulness**

Karahanna & Straub (1999:238) define PU as *the degree to which a person believes that use of a system would improve his or her performance*. Despite the contribution of emerging research in Content Marketing, the link between PU and FGC has not been explored. FGC commonly communicates helpful, informative or entertaining content (Kumar *at al.*, 2016). In this regard it is not rare that more than one of these features (helpful, informative or

entertaining) appear in one content source (Pulizzi, 2013). Extreme sport live streams, for example, the Rip Curl Surfing Cup Padang Padang, in Indonesia (Rip Curl, 2018) or the parachute jump out of space project sponsored by Red Bull Stratos (Red Bull Stratos, 2018) provide entertaining and helpful content at the same time. Accordingly, these events provide a reasonable entertaining factor (Red Bull Stratos parachute jump was with 52 million views the most-watched live stream in history (BBC, 2012; Zmuda, 2013)) on the one hand, and on the other hand provide free useful information around the event and the extreme sport for the consumer. Whereas Content Marketing researchers underline that FGC should be helpful, informative or entertaining (Pulizzi, 2013) and thus highlight the importance of PU by the content consumer, the position of PU in the Content Marketing context is not explored so far. As one of the main trigger for acceptance/use of a technology and a logical link to Content Marketing regarding the acceptance/usefulness of the communicated content, the construct PU was included in this theoretical framework.

H4: *Consumer Perception has a positive impact on Perceived Usefulness*

H5: *Perceived Usefulness has a positive impact on Content Marketing response*

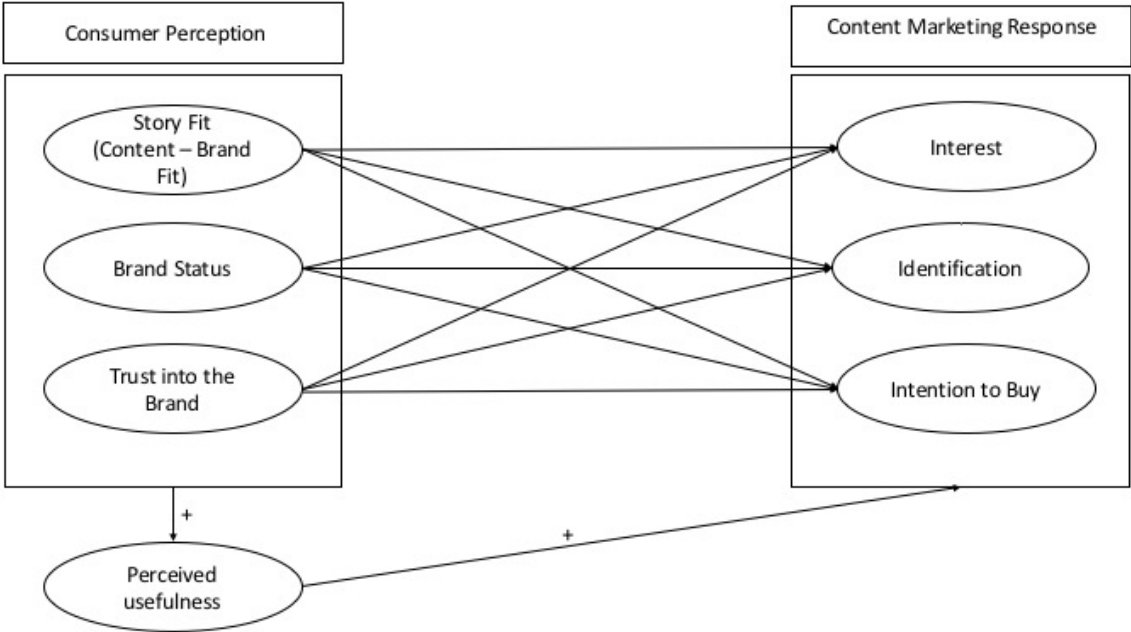


Figure 3.1: Theoretical Framework: Content Marketing Response
 Developed by: Hirschfelder & Chigada (2017.b.)

3.4. OVERVIEW OF STUDY

The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between consumers’ perception triggered by FGC and Content Marketing Response. Since relatively little research has been done

concerning Content Marketing response and to exclude confounding factors in the theoretical framework, firstly the questionnaire was discussed with 12 respondents, who were familiar with academic marketing research techniques. After that, the researchers conducted a pre-test of the questionnaire with a sample size of 61 respondents. The nature of this research was exploratory, thus a non-probability convenience sampling was adopted (Malhotra, 2010). With regard to path modelling a sample size of minimum 100 is required to provide a good starting point for calculations (Hoyle, 1995; Wong, 2013). This study was geographically limited to the Cape Town (South Africa) metropolitan area. With a final sample size of 147 valid responses in total (8 uncompleted; 48% female; average age = 30 years; age range 18-65), hypotheses 1-5 were verified.

3.4.1. Procedure

Whereas traditional marketing focuses on promoting the value of the product/brand (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010), Content marketing focuses on the provision of appealing, helpful or informative content (O'Brien, 2012; Pulizzi, 2013). The research object with FGC character, triggering consumers' perception was visualized in the form of a video. More precisely, the online video campaign 'Be more human – Hands' from the sportswear manufacturer Reebok was used as a pre-questionnaire treatment. First, the participants were exposed to the online video content (Reebok 2017.a.) and then they were asked to complete a paper-based questionnaire. The connection to the brand-Reebok is only made by product placement, meaning some actors in the video are wearing Reebok clothing and through the presentation of the Reebok label at the end of the video. Thus, the communicated message is in the foreground and the promotion in the background, which makes this video highly suitable for Content Marketing research.

3.4.2. Measures

The academic literature on Content Marketing is assessable, hence the questionnaire was partly based on the following sources, which not necessarily are focusing on Content Marketing (Speed & Thompson, 2000; Ha & Perks, 2005; Lilien, 2011; Albers, 2012; Berger, 2014; Hirschfelder & Human, 2015; Kumar *et al.*, 2016; Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2018; Human, Hirschfelder & Nel, 2018). On the basis of that literature, the four independent as well as the dependent constructs were operationalized and measured with a 7-point Likert-type scale. Story-Fit was operationalized with a 9 item 7-point Likert-type scale, Brand Status was operationalized with a 6 item 7-point Likert-type scale, Trust into the Brand was operationalized

with a 7 item 7-point Likert-type scale, perceived usefulness was operationalized with a 9 item 7-point Likert-type scale, Interest was operationalized with a 7 item 7-point Likert-type scale, Identification was operationalized with a 6 item 7-point Likert-type scale and Intention to Buy was operationalized with a 6 item 7-point Likert-type scale. Concerning the operationalization of all single constructs, the questionnaire gave participants the following options to express their opinion by mark with one cross per statement: “entirely disagree” (1), “mostly disagree” (2), “mildly disagree” (3), “neutral” (4), “mildly agree” (5), “mostly agree” (6), “entirely agree” (7). The next section will present the results of this study.

3.5. RESULTS

The results section is subdivided into the presentation of the measurement results, verifying the variables/items leading to latent variables and the presentation of the structural results and verifying the relationships between the latent variables.

3.5.1. Measurement results

The pre-tests exhibited no criticism from the 12 specialists as well as no noteworthy outliers (sample size = 61); thus the actual data collection started without changes on the questionnaire. After a data cleanse (8 incomplete questionnaires) a total sample size of 147 questionnaires was used for the verification of the research questions. Regarding the measurement models, operationalizing the constructs in the theoretical framework, no items were excluded. Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability), validity (composite reliability, AVE) and discriminant validity (HTMT, Fornell Larcker Criterion) were verified. With the exception of the AVE for the construct Consumer Perception verifying the influence of Perceived usefulness on Content Marketing response (Figure 3.2), which deviated from the norm (0.438) all constructs fulfilled the measurement requirements. Concerning the structural results Table 3.1 provides all important values.

Table 3.1: Results

| Hypothesised Relationship | t-Value | p-value | Hypothesis |
|---|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| H0: Consumer Perception => Content Marketing response | 11.268 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H0m: Consumer Perception => Content Marketing response | 2.510 | 0.012 | Supported |
| H1: Story Fit => Content Marketing response | 1.893 | 0.059 | Not Supported |
| H1a: Story Fit => Interest | 1.737 | 0.083 | Not Supported |
| H1b: Story Fit => Identification | 0.385 | 0.701 | Not Supported |
| H1c: Story Fit => Intention to Buy | 2.065 | 0.039 | Supported |
| H2: Brand Status => Content Marketing response | 2.069 | 0.039 | Supported |
| H2a: Brand Status => Interest | 2.069 | 0.037 | Supported |
| H2b: Brand Status => Identification | 1.398 | 0.163 | Not Supported |
| H2c: Brand Status => Intention to Buy | 1.976 | 0.049 | Supported |
| H3: Trust into the Brand => Content Marketing response | 4.540 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H3a: Trust into the Brand => Interest | 3.292 | 0.001 | Supported |
| H3b: Trust into the Brand => Identification | 4.135 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H3c: Trust into the Brand => Intention to Buy | 3.669 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H4: Consumer Perception => Perceived Usefulness | 14.012 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H5: Perceived Usefulness => Content Marketing response | 3.086 | 0.002 | Supported |

3.5.2. Structural Results

All five hypotheses were verified using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), path analysis and partial least squares path modelling (PLS-PM). When applying SEM, it is reasonable to use the software package SmartPLS (Hair *et al.*, 2013). As shown in Table 3.1, Consumer Perceptions significantly influence Content Marketing response. Whereas the predicted relationship between Story Fit and Content Marketing response (*H1*) were rejected, the relationships between Brand Status and Content Marketing response (*H2*) and Trust into the Brand and Content Marketing response (*H3*) were supported. Concerning *H1*, the only relationship that was supported was the relationship between Story Fit and Intention to Buy (*H1c*). The rejection of the relationship between Story Fit and Interest (*H1a*)/Identification (*H1b*) was predictable and will be discussed more closely in the following section. With reference to *H2*, one relationship of the three, was rejected. More precisely the

relationship between Brand Trust and Identification (*H2b*) was rejected. The relationships Brand Trust and Interest (*H2a*)/Attention to Buy (*H2c*) was supported. All three relationships regarding *H3* (a, b and c) were supported. The relationship between Consumer Perception and Perceived Usefulness (*H4*) turned out to be highly significant. In this study, the significant relationship between PU and Content Marketing response underlines the importance of PU in the Content Marketing context. The following section discusses and interprets the results highlighting the importance of this study and giving managerial implications.

3.6. DISCUSSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

With reference to sponsorship activities, the fit between sponsor and sponsored event positively rubs off on the sponsoring product/brand (Otker & Hayes, 1987; Crimmins & Horn, 1996; Stipp & Schiavone, 1996). The results of this study indicate that in the Content Marketing context, the Story Fit has no significant impact on Content Marketing response (*H1*). Regarding the definition provided above, Content Marketing focuses on communicating a valuable story (Hirschfelder & Human, 2015; Human, Hirschfelder & Nel, 2018). This definition is supported by Content Marketing success stories; for example, the energy drink manufacturer, Red Bull, focuses on the communication of extreme sport content. Besides the catchphrase “Red Bull gives you wings” and the “extreme” energy this soft drink is supposed to give the user, there is no story fit with the product/brand (O’Brien, 2012). In agreement with successful real-world examples with no content fit and on the bases of the results of this study, it could be inferred that it is not necessary for a Content Marketing campaign to communicate content, fitting the product. Accordingly, marketing practitioners should not focus on finding fitting content, but rather focus on providing valuable (entertaining, helpful or informative) content. With regards to the perceived status of the brand of the communicated content this research underlines the importance of professional reputation of the brand (*H2*). Thus, the impact of Content Marketing on the consumer/customer improves as higher the perceived status/professional reputation of the brand. Other factors designed to improve status such as, deliver consistent and good quality, good service et cetera, are factors that always be maintained and improved before introducing a Content Marketing strategy. Conversely, Content Marketing strategies improve the professional reputation focusing on the long term relationship with the customer by providing valuable content for free (Hirschfelder & Human, 2015; Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018). As in every relationship in life, trust plays a significant role.

This study indicates that Trust into the brand significantly impacts Content Marketing response (H3). Similar to Brand Status, Trust into the Brand is a variable that has to be achieved and maintained over a long-term period (Alekan, Nik Mat & Md Salleh, 2017). Since Content Marketing focus on the improvement of a long-term relationship with the consumer/customer, Trust into the Brand interacts synthesizing. Meaning that Trust into the Brand improves Content Marketing response and vice versa. According to Hirschfelder & Human (2015) and Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018) consumers/costumers trust into entertaining, helpful or informative content. Thus for marketers it is important to know what type of content appeals to the target audience and which communication channel to use to maintain and build up trust (Hirschfelder & Chigada 2018). Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018) verified that FGC communicated via WOM or eWOM significantly impacts UGC. Further they showed that UGC triggered by FGC impacts positively the Consumer Perception of the Brand/Company. In agreement with this study it can be concluded that FGC that motivates users to generated additional content increases trust and positively leads to Content Marketing response. Indeed, the relationships between Brand Status and Content Marketing response and Trust into the Brand and Content Marketing response are significant, however it is illustrated in Figure 3.2 and Table 3.1 respectively that PU is taking in a partially mediating role between Customer Perception and Content Marketing response. There are three facts emphasizing partial mediation. Firstly, the t-statistic value measuring the relation between Consumer Perception and Content Marketing response drops after adding PU as a third variable ($H_0 > H_{0m}$). Secondly the direct effect between Customer Perception and Content Marketing response is smaller than the indirect effect ($H_0 < H_4 \& H_5$). Thirdly, in order to verify these two statements, the researchers ran the Sobel test (Sobel test statistic: $3.171 > 1.96$; Two-tailed probability: $0.0015 < 0.5$), which exhibited significant results supporting the mediation (Hoyle, 1999).

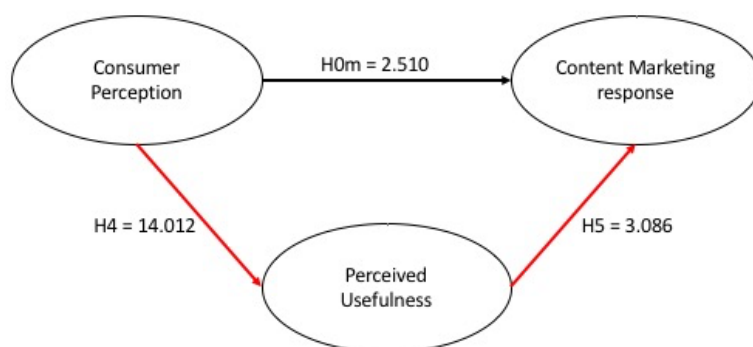


Figure 3.2: Mediation by PU

Developed by: Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018)

In cases of partial mediation, the direct effect (H0m) still has a significant effect on the dependent variable, but the indirect effect (H4 & H5) is stronger and thus, plays a significant role regarding the interpretation (Hoyle, 1999). The practical application of this partial mediation to the real world, shows that it is important to focus on communicating useful content than only focusing on Content Fit, Brand Status or Trust into the Brand. These results significantly backup the definition of Hirschfelder & Human (2015) and Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018) underlining the importance of useful or entertaining content. It can be concluded that marketers should maintain Brand Status and Trust into the brand when running a Content Marketing strategy, but more important focus on communicating entertaining, helpful or informative content. Particularly in a relatively new field like Content Marketing with little research done, these results are pioneering insights for academia as well as for marketing practitioners.

3.7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Apart from a solid quantitative pre-test procedure and significant results in the main research, more research has to be done on Content Marketing response. The variety of today's digital environment is complex and provides many opportunities to supply, share and generate additional content that this research is just providing basic insights into the functionality of Content Marketing response. Whereas in current Content Marketing studies literature was adopted from neighboring fields since there was relatively little academic literature on Content Marketing, this research builds on basics with Content Marketing background (Hirschfelder & Human 2015; Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2018; Human, Hirschfelder & Nel, 2018). By verifying the impact of Consumer Perception on Content Marketing response, this study contributes to a better understanding of the promotion strategy Content Marketing. The illustration of the importance of PU in the Content Marketing context was an important breakthrough particularly backing up the definition from Hirschfelder & Human (2015) and Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018). In order to develop this theoretical framework further, a breakdown of the mediating construct PU, illustrating which specific variables are important in the Content Marketing context, should be taken in closer consideration. This breakdown could also include the verification if PU motivates the generation of additional content. Concerning limitations, indeed this research is limited on a B2C scenario. This theoretical framework has to be verified in the

B2B context. This also includes change of constructs impacting B2B Content Marketing response. Since B2B marketing is more focused on the promotion of the actual product (Gummesson, 2014), the inclusion of the construct Content Fit would be recommended despite the non-significant results in this research. Furthermore, this study focused on entertaining video content. Beside entertaining video content, informative and helpful content are popular strategies to provide additional free content. With reference to the B2C theoretical framework a verification of the functionality of helpful and informative content would be a good future research approach. It can be concluded that this study contributes to a better understanding of Content Marketing response. Besides that, and in agreement with the definition of Hirschfelder & Human (2015) and Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018), this study highlights that the communication of useful commercial content is crucial for a successful Content Marketing strategy.

4. PAPER THREE: THE COMMERCIAL VALUE ADDED CHAIN OF CONTENT MARKETING RESPONSE

WILL BE SUBMITTED TO A JOURNAL OF INTEREST AFTER EXTERNAL EXAMINATION

4.1. ABSTRACT

The communication of free commercial content not necessarily connected to the product/brand has become a popular strategy to: 1. Motivate consumer to generate additional content; 2. Build up a non-commercially driven long-term relationship to the consumer. This strategy progressively known as Content Marketing, is already applied in corporate, but research is needed to fully understand the coherences between content communication channels and content generating channels. This study conceptualizes the impact of Firm-generated content (FGC) on Content Marketing response. Further, it gives managerial implications of how to influence user-generated content (UGC) commercially. This study builds on a sample size of 300 respondents, illuminating the importance of a comprehensive understanding of Content Marketing response. The findings present a significant path of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response.

Keywords: *Content Marketing response, Firm-generated content, User-generated content*

4.2. INTRODUCTION

The impact of digitalization, highly influenced by Web 2.0 and the accomplished access to information, knowledge and online communities, changed consumers', customers' and marketing practitioners' behavior (Moon, Kim, & Armstrong, 2014). Moon, Kim, & Armstrong (2014) highlight the increasing interactivity and the accomplished content creation highly influenced by its altruistic roots. Whereas traditional marketing strategies 'push' advertising to consumer and customer, Web 2.0 progressively allows consumer and customer to 'pull' advertising that the consumer or customer is exclusively interested in (Lieb, 2011; Zhang *et al.*, 2017). This change, from marketer driven dominance to consumer driven dominance of advertising urged marketers to come up with new marketing strategies (Zhang *et al.*, 2017). One popular way to react to this change is to provide entertaining, informative or helpful content (not necessarily connected to the product), in order to build up a non-commercial driven relationship with the consumer or customer (Hirschfelder & Human, 2015; Human, Hirschfelder & Nel, 2018). This strategy, also known as Content Marketing was adopted by 86% B2C businesses and 91% B2B businesses in 2018 according to research executed in North America; indicating the popularity in corporate world (Handley & Beets, 2018). Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018:1235) define Content Marketing as:

“A promotional strategy which extends the promotional mix, and makes use of several communication channels, capitalising particularly on the benefits and connectivity of social media. It focuses on offering something valuable to the consumer for free. By taking consumer- / user-generated content (UGC) into account and communicating with the audience with a non-purchase-pushing intention and by using appealing, useful or entertaining content, the strategy aims at building trust and a long-term relationship to the consumer/customer.”

Whereas the application of Content Marketing has become a popular promotion strategy, literature and research on Content Marketing is comparably little (Hirschfelder & Human, 2015; Human, Hirschfelder & Nel, 2018). Research explored single fields, contributing to the understanding of Content Marketing (Palista, 2012; Rosengren & Dahlén, 2013; Aaker & Aaker, 2016; Kumar *et al.*, 2016) the understanding of Content Marketing as an umbrella term, identifying the relationships between content generating and communication channels, only has been explored recently (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2018). With the aim to illuminate the understanding of Content Marketing as an umbrella term, Hirschfelder and Chigada (2018)

developed the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing and further verified influencing factors on Content Marketing response (Hirschfelder & Chigada 2017.b.). This study merges the two theoretical frameworks from Hirschfelder & Chigada (2017.b; 2018) in order to explore the commercial content creation path. This path verifies if firm-generated content (FGC) impacts Content Marketing response. In this matter, this study: 1. Conceptualize the connections between commercial and non-commercial content generating constructs; 2. Conceptualize the impact of electronic and non-electronic communication channels in the Content Marketing context; 3. Contributes to a better understanding of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing; 3.1 Illuminates which content generating constructs/communication channels are significant implementing a Content Marketing strategy and 3.2 Indicates the importance of Perceived Usefulness (PU) of the communicated commercial content. In order to give as much insight into the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response, this studies main research goal is to verify possible generation and communication paths (Figure 4.1) between firm-generated content (FGC) and Content Marketing response. This study is structured as followed. Firstly, a literature review illuminates the literature used to operationalize the theoretical framework. In addition to that hypotheses, verifying the relationship between the constructs are presented. Secondly methodological basics used are discussed giving insights in execution of this study. After that results and implications illuminating managerial and academic contributions are presented.

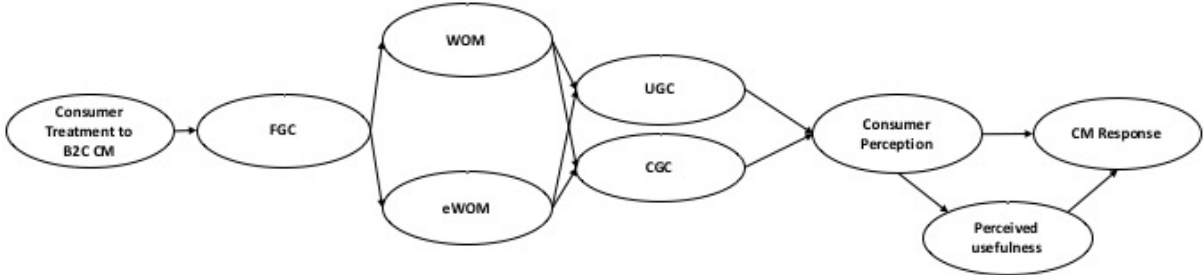


Figure 4.1: Commercial Value added Chain of Content Marketing response
 Adapted and modified from Hirschfelder & Chigada (2017.a; 2017.b.)

4.3. CONSTELLATION OF THE COMMERCIAL VALUE ADDED CHAIN OF CONTENT MARKETING

The access to knowledge 24/7, enabled through the user-friendly interface of Web 2.0, progressively allows consumers' and customers' to decide what advertising they want to get exposed to (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008). Furthermore, customers have, due to access

to a variety of online communication channels, more opportunities to get help regarding possible product or service problems and a wider reach to communicate their opinions about a service or product (Ngai, Tao & Moon, 2015). These relatively new opportunities are the main motive why consumer (decision making) and customers (service, help and supervision) progressively rely, by reason of its altruistic roots, on user-generated content (UGC) instead of traditional marketing (Poch & Martin, 2015; Huang *et al.*, 2018). Taking this complex and strong communication vehicle into account, marketers target UGC and customer-generated content (CGC) with the aim to influence this altruistic content commercially (Goes, Lin & Au Yeung, 2014). Huotari *et al.* (2015) defines content generation as interaction in hypermedia computer-mediated environments and thus underlines that active interactions between social media users encourages content creation. In order to influence these interactions and the accomplished content generation commercially, marketers facing Business-to-Business (B2B) or Business-to-Consumer (B2C) situations.

According to Huotari *et al.* (2015) B2B marketers can influence UGC by directly interacting with the social media users, providing additional informative and helpful information around the product /brand/company. Due to a diversified audience, B2C marketers face a more complex scenario (Etzel, 2014; Swani, Milne, Brown, Assaf, & Donthu, 2017). Indeed, the B2B strategy of providing informative and helpful content around the product, brand or company is also applied in B2C marketing (Swani, *et al.*, 2017). However, due to the diversified user appearance in a B2C scenario, that are not necessarily interested in the product, brand or company, a popular way to build up a long-term relationship to the user is the provision of additional entertaining content (Pulizzi, 2013; Hirschfelder & Human, 2015; Human, Hirschfelder & Nel, 2018). Content generated and posted by firms in order to tighten the relationship to the consumer, making use of social media's interactive nature, is called Firm-generated content (FGC) (Kumar *et al.*, 2016). Kumar *et al.* (2016) verified that FGC has a positive and significant effect on consumer behavior. Building on this basics, the main goal of this research is to verify the impact of FGC on Content marketing response (Figure 4.1). This project concern entails: 1. the identification and detection of communication channels of FGC; 2. the identification and detection of user-/customer content generating tools and their impact on consumer perception; and 3. the verification of indirect effects on Content marketing response. Thus the following three sections illuminate these obstacles in more detail and presents accomplished hypotheses.

4.3.1. Communication Channels

Regarding the communication of FGC, there is to distinguish between online and offline communication. This study will use the two communication terms word-of-mouth (WOM) and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Whereas WOM is exclusively composed of face-to-face offline communication (Li, Liu & Suomi, 2012), eWOM faces due to the user-friendly interface of Web 2.0 a huge variety of online communication opportunities (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). In this matter Berger (2014) underlines the importance of understanding why consumer/customer communicate and share, by presenting the impact of WOM and eWOM on consumer behavior. It seems prudent, when communicating FGC, to focus on an offline as well as online communication to spread the content as far as possible. Ideally, the communicated FGC gets communicated via WOM and eWOM and turns viral (Chu & Kim, 2018). According to Gómez (2014:199) viral marketing is based on the provision of free engaging content and the use of a *peer-to-peer dissemination system*. Gómez (2014) underlines the importance of the transformation from passive content consumer to active additional content generators. This additional UGC improves indirect trust and attention to the product, brand or company (Schulze, Schöler & Skiera, 2014).

Building on this strategy, mainly influenced by the user-friendly interface from Web 2.0 and the accomplished one sided, anonymous convenient content generation, Content Marketing has become a popular promotion strategy (Hirschfelder & Human, 2015; Human, Hirschfelder & Nel, 2018). The communication of commercial content, via WOM and eWOM is a key component in the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2018). Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018) verified that eWOM and WOM partially mediate the relationship between FGC and UGC/CGC (Figure 4.1). Since the communication of FGC leads to additional content generation with commercial background, the verification of a possible mediation is important to proof the impact of FGC on Content Marketing response. That's why it is hypothesized:

H1: *eWOM is taking in a mediating role between FGC and UGC*

H2: *WOM is taking in a mediating role between FGC and UGC*

H3: *eWOM is taking in a mediating role between FGC and CGC*

H4: *WOM is taking in a mediating role between FGC and CGC*

4.3.2. Supplementary content generation

With regard to supplementary content generation, this research distinguishes between UGC and CGC, which are both mainly communicated through Web 2.0. Whereas UGC has no commercial roots and is generated by the general public, CGC comprises any content generated on the basis of a commercial transaction (Daugherty, Eastin & Bright, 2008; Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2018). In the Content Marketing context UGC/CGC plays a significant role by contributing additional content to the communicated FGC (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2018). In agreement with that, Pulizzi (2013) highlights that FGC with informative, useful or entertaining content (storytelling) might side-track the consumer from the commercial intention, and increase the willingness to share and/or generate additional content. This in turn indicates that additional content generation will be triggered and influenced by FGC. Thus Content Marketing gives marketing practitioners the exclusive opportunity to influence UGC commercially (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2018). In contrast to that, Poch & Martin (2015) underline the popularity of UGC not at least due to its altruistic, non-commercially driven roots. It stands to reason to explore how UGC triggered by FGC is perceived by consumer. In this matter Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018) conducted some groundwork. Whereas Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018) verified that FGC has a significant impact on Consumer Perception, the intersection of UGC/CGC and Consumer Perception in the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response context is unexplored. With regard to the main research aim of this study, this intersection takes in a significant role and has to be verified in order to proof the impact of FGC on Content Marketing response. That's why it is hypothesized:

H5: *UGC triggered by FGC has an impact on Consumer Perception*

H6: *CGC triggered by FGC has an impact on Consumer Perception*

4.3.3. Indirect effects

The main focus of mass marketing (television, radio, newspaper et cetera) is to communicate specific information (sale, new releases et cetera) with the consumer (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). This communication is due to the broad target audience one sided, with the only aim to trigger with this specific information a reaction (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). The user-friendly interface of Web 2.0 enables users to access this exact (mass marketing) information and further allows the user to compare prices, products and sales internationally (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008; Ngai, Tao & Moon, 2015). Due to this change of information flow and accessibility, the provision of additional useful, informative or entertaining information not

necessarily connected to the brand has become a popular promotion strategy (Pulizzi, 2013). According to Pulizzi (2013) and Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018) the communication of helpful, informative or entertaining content is an important key factor for successful Content Marketing. In today's marketing environment where the consumer/customer is progressively in charge which commercial content he or she wants to be exposed to, comment on and share (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008; Ngai, Tao & Moon, 2015), the value of the commercial content communicated becomes more important (Hirschfelder & Human, 2015; Human, Hirschfelder & Nel, 2018). In this matter Hirschfelder & Chigada (2017.b.) verified the importance of Perceived Usefulness (PU) by the consumer/customer for the content communicated. More precisely, PU partially mediates the relationship between Consumer Perception and Content Marketing response (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2017.b.). In contrast to traditional marketing where the only interface to PU is the communication of advantageous product specification (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010), Consumer Perception and PU were the two main constructs that directly impacted Content Marketing response in post research (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2017.b.) In agreement with that, Hirschfelder & Human (2015) and Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018) highlight in the definition above that Content Marketing provides valuable content to the consumer for free. Thus it seems reasonable to include PU in this study in order to verify the relationship between FGC and Content Marketing response. That's why it is hypothesized:

***H7:** Perceived Usefulness is taking in a mediation role between Consumer Perception and Content Marketing response.*

4.3.4. Overview over Study

The provision of additional free content from companies, to build up a non-commercially driven long term relationship to the consumer/customer, has become a popular strategy in corporate (Handley & Beets, 2018). However, research in academia is relatively rare (Hirschfelder & Human 2015; Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2017.b; 2018; Human, Hirschfelder & Nel, 2018). Due to the novelty of Content Marketing in academic research Hirschfelder & Chigada (2017.b.; 2018) identified the necessity to understand: 1. The coherences between content generating and content communicating channels; 2. Indicators for Content Marketing response. In order to receive comprehensive feedback, results illuminating the coherences between content generating and content communicating channels were presented at the European Marketing Academy Conference (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2017.a.). The results, identifying the indicators

for Content Marketing response were presented at the Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2017.b.).

On the basis of these two research approaches, with a total sample size of 482 respondents (plus 296 respondents in pre-tests), a pre-test for this study combining the two theoretical frameworks (Figure 4.1) from Hirschfelder & Chigada (2017.a; 2017.b; 2018) was bypassed. However, 300 questionnaires were analyzed in total (15 uncompleted; female 45%, average age = 21 years; age range 18 to 65 years), operationalizing the verification of Hypotheses 1 to 7.

4.3.5. Procedure

Since this study relies on the two interrelated research approaches of Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018) which both used a B2C FGC video trigger, this study continued using a B2C FGC video trigger as a pre-questionnaire treatment. Hirschfelder & Chigada (2017.b; 2018) used for both studies a video with storytelling character, focusing on the story communicated instead of the product/brand. In order to to verify a path between FGC and Content Marketing response illuminating the commercial content creation path, this study continued using a video with storytelling character. A video of the marketing campaign 'Be more human' from the sportswear manufacturer Reebok was used. Videos from the same campaign were used by Hirschfelder & Chigada (2017.b.; 2018) in order to verify parts of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2018) and indicators on Content Marketing response (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2017.b.). Since the content communicates a story about love, life, running and training, instead of illuminating the values of the sportswear manufacturer Reebok this video content is an appropriate treatment for this Content Marketing study. Accordingly, the online video content (Reebok, 2017.b.) were shown to participants before they were asked to fulfil the questionnaire.

4.3.6. Measures

Since this research main goal was to verify the impact of FGC on Content Marketing response by the fusion of two theoretical frameworks from Hirschfelder & Chigada (2017.b; 2018), the questionnaire was mainly based on literature Hirschfelder & Chigada (2017.b; 2018) used for their questionnaires (Speed & Thompson, 2000; Ha & Perks, 2005; Lilien, 2011; Albers, 2012; Berger and Milkman, 2012; Berger, 2014; Hirschfelder & Human, 2015; Kumar *et al.*, 2016; Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2017.b; 2018; Human, Hirschfelder & Nel, 2018). On the basis of that

literature and after minor adjustments, nine independent and three dependent constructs were operationalized and measured with a 7-point Likert-type scale. Whereas Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018) used an 11-point Likert-type scale to operationalize FGC, this study added 4 more questions. The aim of these additional questions was to verify the prominence of FGC in connection with the company. Furthermore, the addition of four questions contributes to an improvement of measuring FGC since it is a relatively new construct. Word-of-Mouth was operationalized with a 9 item 7-point Likert-type scale, electronic Word-of-Mouth was operationalized with 10 item 7-point Likert-type scale, UGC was operationalized with 8 item 7-point Likert-type scale, CGC was operationalized with 9 item 7-point Likert-type scale, Content Brand Fit was operationalized with a 9 item 7-point Likert-type scale, Brand Status was operationalized with a 6 item 7-point Likert-type scale, Trust into the Brand was operationalized with a 7 item 7-point Likert-type scale, Perceived Usefulness was operationalized with a 9 item 7-point Likert-type scale, Interest was operationalized with a 7 item 7-point Likert-type scale, Identification was operationalized with a 6 item 7-point Likert-type scale and Intention to Buy was operationalized with a 6 item 7-point Likert-type scale. Every single construct was operationalized by giving the participants the following options to express their opinion, by mark with one cross per statement: “entirely disagree” (1), “mostly disagree” (2), “mildly disagree” (3), “neutral” (4), “mildly agree” (5), “mostly agree” (6), “entirely agree” (7). In the following the results of this study are presented.

4.3.7. Results

The following results section firstly presents measurement results, focusing on the validation of the relationship between the latent variables and their measures, and secondly presents the structural results, illuminating the relationships between the latent variables. Both result sections were verified with structural equation modelling (SEM) using the software package SmartPLS. The measurement results were verified with a confirmatory factor analysis and the structural results were verified with a path analysis and partial least squares path modelling (PLS-PM).

4.3.8. Measurement Results

After eliminating 15 uncompleted questionnaires, a total sample size of 285 valid responses was used for the main analysis of this study. Concerning measurement results, two items were excluded (item 3 and 15 of the construct FGC), in order to fulfil the measurement model requirements. According to Hair *et al.* (2013) internal consistency reliability is given when all

Cronbach's alpha values are above 0.6 and all composite reliability values are above 0.7. In order to fulfil the statistic requirement for validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) should be above 0.5. Discriminant validity is given when the diagonal square root of the AVE is greater than the absolute value of any of the inner construct correlations which supporting the Fronell-Larcker criterion. Furthermore, HTMT values should be under 0.9 and there are no major cross loadings indicating stable values (Hair *et al.*, 2013). With regard to the measurement results for this study, all values correspond with the requirements except one. The AVE for the latent variable FGC deviated with 0.1 from the norm (0.400) because it was the first time that the construct was evaluated. Considering the fact that all other requirements are fulfilled, this deviation is treated as a known outlier, indicating green light for the structural analysis.

4.3.9. Structural Results

It can be indicated by Figure 4.2 that the main research goal, verifying a positive impact of FGC on Content Marketing response, exhibit a significant path. This noteworthy path implies the significance of H1, H2, H3, H5, H7 (Table 4.1). Accordingly, FGC positively impacts eWOM and WOM (H1a & H1b) to communicate and spread the commercial content. It can be indicated by Table 4.1 that eWOM and WOM partial mediate the relationship between FGC and UGC/CGC. This was verified with the Sobel test (Appendix D) (Hoyle, 1999). This partial mediation impacts UGC, motivating users to produce additional content around the commercial content (H3). According to (Poch & Martin, 2015; Huang *et al.*, 2018) UGC is due to its altruistic roots perceived more trustful by consumers and customers. Underlining this argument, the results indicated a significant impact from UGC (triggered by FGC) on Consumer Perception (H5). With regards to CGC p-value so as t-statistic indicate a non-significant path (H6). Concerning a possible mediation of the relationship between Consumer Perception and Content Marketing response by Perceived Usefulness, a mediation was determined (H7). The execution of a Sobel test supported the mediation between Consumer Perception and Content Marketing response by Perceived Usefulness. The Sobel test statistic is with 17.131 greater than 1.96 and the Two-tailed probability is with 0.000 smaller than 0.5 and thus approves mediation (Hoyle, 1999). Since the path between Consumer Perception and Content Marketing response minimized in absolute size but still differs from zero after introducing Perceived Usefulness partial mediation was diagnosed. Beside this partial mediation the relationship between Consumer Perception and Content Marketing response was examined more closely (Table 4.1). It can be indicated by Table 4.1 that Content/Story Fit

and Trust into the Brand exhibit significant paths whereas concerning Brand Status all three sub-Hypotheses were rejected. In following these results will be discussed.

Table 4.1: Results

| Hypothesised Relationship | t-Value | p-value | Hypothesis |
|--|----------------|----------------|---|
| H1a: FGC => eWOM | 5.815 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H1b: FGC => WOM | 4.543 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H1c: eWOM => UGC | 7.176 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H1d: eWOM => CGC | 12.062 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H1e: WOM => UGC | 2.741 | 0.006 | Supported |
| H1f: WOM => CGC | 0.844 | 0.399 | Not Supported |
| H1: Med: FGC => eWOM => UGC | 10.044 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H2: Med: FGC => WOM => UGC | 11.889 | 0.000 | Supported |
| Plain: FGC => UGC | 14.645 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H3: Med: FGC => eWOM => CGC | 4.331 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H4: Med: FGC => WOM => CGC | 6.355 | 0.000 | Supported (But Not Supported by Sobel Test) |
| Plain: FGC => CGC | 8.201 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H5: UGC => CP | 5.394 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H5a: UGC => SF | 3.646 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H5b: UGC => BS | 5.160 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H5c: UGC => TitB | 4.988 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H6: CGC => CP | 1.868 | 0.062 | Not Supported |
| H6a: CGC => SF | 2.933 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H6b: CGC => BS | 0.644 | 0.243 | Not Supported |
| H6c: CGC => TitB | 1.146 | 0.082 | Not Supported |
| H7: Med: CP => PU => CMR | 3.777 | 0.000 | Supported |
| Plain: Cp => CMR | 18.090 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H7a: SF => IN | 7.605 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H7b: SF => ID | 7.294 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H7c: SF => ItB | 5.722 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H7d: BS => IN | 1.413 | 0.158 | Not Supported |
| H7e: BS => ID | 0.879 | 0.380 | Not Supported |
| H7f: BS => ItB | 1.434 | 0.152 | Not Supported |
| H7g: TitB => IN | 6.457 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H7h: TitB => ID | 5.320 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H7i: TitB => ItB | 8.297 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H8: CP => PU | 18.433 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H9: PU => CMR | 19.221 | 0.000 | Supported |

4.3.10. General Discussion

The main research goal of this research was to verify the impact of FGC on Content Marketing response and accomplished with that visualize significant content development paths. It can be indicated from Figure 4.2, that all green paths indicate a significant connection and all red paths indicate a non-significant connection.

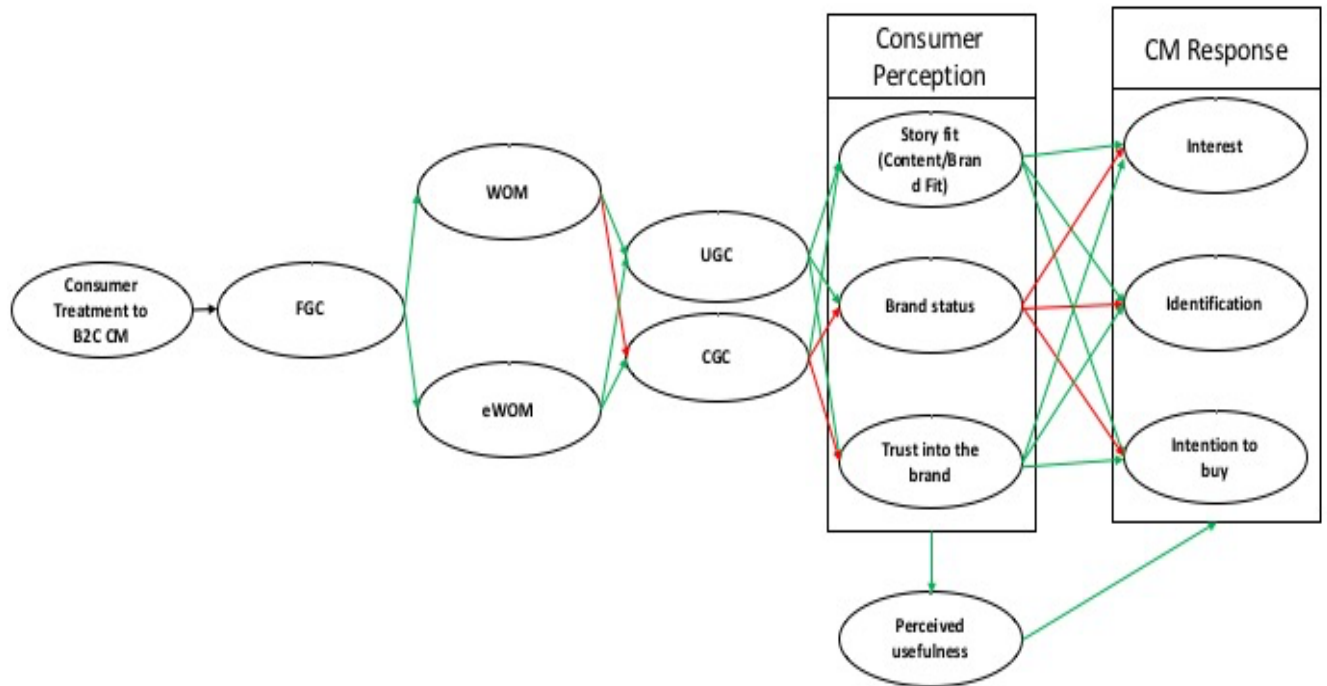


Figure 4.2: Results

Developed by: Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018)

On the basis of research Hirschfelder & Chigada (2017.a; 2017.b; 2018) conducted on commercial value added chain of Content Marketing and on Content Marketing response, this study reinforces the commercial content generation, communication and response. This encourages the consistency of the concept and contributes to the so far poorly academically researched B2C Content Marketing field. Whereas Hirschfelder & Chigada (2017.a; 2017.b; 2018) explored only parts of the content generation path, this theoretical framework exclusively presents a complete B2C commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response. As implied in the introduction this study conceptualizes the connections between commercial and non-commercial content generation constructs. As Figure 4.2 shows, WOM and eWOM partially mediate the relationship between FGC and UGC/CGC. This underlines the importance of the online communication channels (Facebook, Instagram, et cetera) and offline communication channels (face-to-face) concerning spreading commercial content. Thus communication

channels online as well as offline lead to additional content generation by consumers (UGC) or customers (CGC). Whereas WOM and the accomplished face-to-face communication is mostly influenced by the popularity of the communicated FGC, eWOM and the accomplished online communication can additionally be influenced by the provision of sharing opportunities (hyperlink to social media platforms). Encouragement to share FGC through the direct provision of hyperlinks to social media gives online Content Marketing practitioners an advantage over offline strategies. This insight is supported by Berger & Milkman (2012) and Berger (2014) underlining the power of sharing content.

With reference to the relationship between UGC/CGC and Consumer Perception, Figure 4.2 indicates that only UGC impacts Consumer Perception significantly. This outcome supports the definition of Hirschfelder & Human (2015) and Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018), by underlining the importance of communicating valuable content for free. Whereas CGC implies a previous purchase interface, UGC is -because of its altruistic roots- not directly connected with commercial intentions and thus perceived more clean and reliable. Accordingly, UGC triggered by FGC impacts the Story Fit, Brand Status and Trust into the Brand. The additional content creation by the consumer is triggered by FGC, however UGC is and remains the most difficult construct to control from the firm side (Susarla, Oh & Tan, 2012). This partial controllability of UGC from the firm side underlines; on the one hand the bottleneck of this theoretical framework and on the other hand; introduces a new strategy how firms leastwise partially influence UGC commercially. With regard to the relationship between Consumer Perception and Content Marketing response, Figure 4.2 shows that Brand Status has no significant impact on Content Marketing response. Brand Status allows consumers the valuation of a brand (O'Cass & Frost, 2002), however, when it comes to Content Marketing, the content communicated stands in the foreground and the actual brand in the background (Hirschfelder & Human, 2015; Human, Hirschfelder & Nel, 2018). These results support this statement, indicating that Consumer Perception triggered by FGC is driven by Story Fit (Content Brand Fit) and Trust into the Brand. Both of these concepts are perceived by every single consumer individual, which indicates to focus on a definite target audience communicating FGC.

In the corporate world, the majority of all Content Marketing campaigns target a specific niche audience. For example, the energy drink manufacturer Red Bull has provided a variety of extreme sport content on a consistent base for the last 20 years (Red Bull, 2018). This specific focus and the accomplished popularity in the extreme sport scene through niche sponsoring,

built up an 'extreme' Story Fit and Trust into the Brand to deliver consistent extreme sport records (O'Brien, 2012). With this corporate example in mind this study contributes to a better understanding which variables really matter to impact Content Marketing response. On a final note, the partial mediation of Perceived Usefulness between Consumer Perception and Content Marketing response indicates that consumer/customers become progressively picky what commercial content they want to be exposed to (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008; Ngai, Tao & Moon, 2015). Whereas traditional mass marketing mainly focuses on the communication of advantageous product specification, this partial mediation underlines the importance of the value of the content communicated (entertaining, informing, et cetera). This study contributes to a better understanding of Content Marketing by giving insights into the communication channels, the additional content generation and their interfaces. Furthermore, it underlines the importance of the Perceived Usefulness of the communicated content. Finally, this study proved the significance of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response.

4.3.11. Managerial Implications

In the last 10 years Content Marketing has become a popular marketing strategy, building up and maintaining long-term relationships with the consumer/customer (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2017.a; 2017.b; 2018; Hirschfelder & Human, 2015; Human, Hirschfelder & Nel, 2018). Whereas decent research exists on social media communication (Kim & Hastak, 2018), storytelling (Aaker & Aaker, 2016), and FGC (Kumar *et al.*, 2016) the connection between these Content Marketing strategies is untouched. However, on the basis of research conducted by Hirschfelder & Chigada (2017.a; 2017.b; 2018) this study verifies a commercially influenced content generating path, resulting in Content Marketing response. Beside the pioneering results and the accomplished future research opportunities, which are discussed in the last section, this study provides worthwhile insights for marketing practitioners. Firstly, this research highlights a cost effective way how to communicate commercial content and even more importantly gives insights on how to trigger additional user content generation and how to commercially manipulate UGC. Thus, marketing practitioners should choose the content according to the audience they want to appeal to.

Further, marketing practitioners should provide hyperlinks next to the FGC to give the user the option to share it via online communication channels (Facebook, Instagram, et cetera). Regarding Content Marketing the product/brand features stand in the background and the content communicated is in the foreground (Hirschfelder & Human, 2015; Human, Hirschfelder

& Nel, 2018). Marketing practitioners should make sure that the brand name or logo is perceived by the consumer so that a relationship with non-commercial intention can be built up. Additionally, this study highlights the importance of perceived usefulness of the FGC and UGC triggered by FGC. This indicates that marketing practitioners, should research, before communicating FGC, if their target audience prefers to be entertained, informed or helped and then provide additional suitable content accordingly. Considering that consumers and customers can be addressed individually, the provision of entertaining, informative or helpful content for diverse target audiences should always been taken into consideration. It stands to reason that customers might prefer content that helps solving a problem with an already purchased product (awareness of a problem) or improves the understanding of an already purchased product (prevention of problems). While consumers might prefer the plain provision of entertaining content. Particularly, this kind of acquisition can build up a positive pre-purchase opinion to the product, brand or company and desensitizes the consumer with a non-commercially perceived interface with the product, brand or company. The final section addresses the limitations and concomitant future research recommendations.

4.3.12. Limitations and Future research recommendations

Considering the quantitative pre-test arrangements (296 respondents), the main research arrangements (482) from Hirschfelder & Chigada (2017.a; 2017.b; 2018) and the research arrangements of this study (285), it can be concluded that the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response in a B2C environment was verified in an appropriate complexity. However, all three studies focused on a B2C environment, which highlights the first limitation and accomplished with that future research recommendations. Accordingly, the application and verification of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response in a B2B environment would contribute to a better understanding of the differences regarding B2C and B2B Content Marketing. Another limitation of this research and the previous research approaches from Hirschfelder & Chigada (2017.a; 2017.b; 2018) is the exclusive focus on video FGC. Thus, future research should focus on other content communicating media vehicles (online as well as offline) in order to verify the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response. Besides the “macro” limitations and recommendations, attention also has to be paid to the improvement of the video FGC approach of this study. Since this study explored entertaining video FGC, the direct application of this theoretical framework on video FGC with informing or helpful character would be an interesting future

research approach. Furthermore, the measurement results section indicates that the FGC construct requires additional attention concerning the operationalization. Future research could improve the operationalization by excluding indicator items that operationalized FGC poorly in past research (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2018) and exchange these for more potent items. This section shows that there is still very little research on Content Marketing and a lot has to follow to fully illuminate the strategies behind Content Marketing.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the conclusion of the research conducted in the scope of this study. This chapter merges the results of Chapters 2, 3 and 4, while addressing the value added chain of commercial content generation. A conclusion is drawn concerning the utility of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response in the B2C context. With the help of these exclusive insights, and the literature reviewed in the scope of this study, the importance of Content Marketing, benefiting from the online communication channels diversity, as a recognized advertising medium is highlighted. The study was guided by the following primary and secondary research objectives:

Primary:

To determine if FGC triggers the communication and additional generation of commercially influenced content.

To determine if Consumer Perception influenced by FGC impacts Content Marketing response.

Secondary:

To determine if perceived usefulness mediates the relationship between consumer perception and Content Marketing response.

Taking these research objectives into account, this chapter gives exclusive insights for a better understanding of Content Marketing functioning as an umbrella term. The next section – 5.2 Synopsis of the Study – re-examines every single chapter, which helped to operationalize the aspiration of this study. After that section 5.3 takes a closer look on the findings resulting from every single paper, drafted in the scope of this study. More precisely, the results helping to interpret the hypotheses are squared with the research objectives, to spot if goals are met and the developed theoretical framework can be used for future research. Furthermore, recommendations (5.5) unfold implications derived from the results of all three papers. Although the insights resulting of this study concur to a better understanding of the umbrella function of the term Content Marketing, the results of this research are limited on the B2C context. In section 5.6 the limitations of this research are discussed more closely before an all-encompassing conclusion is presented.

5.2. SYNOPSIS OF THE STUDY

This study focused on the exploration of the generic term, Content Marketing, by developing and verifying the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response. Whereas the constellation of the generic term, Content Marketing, is relatively unexplored, the individual constructs used for the development of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response has been explored appropriately (Figure 5.1).

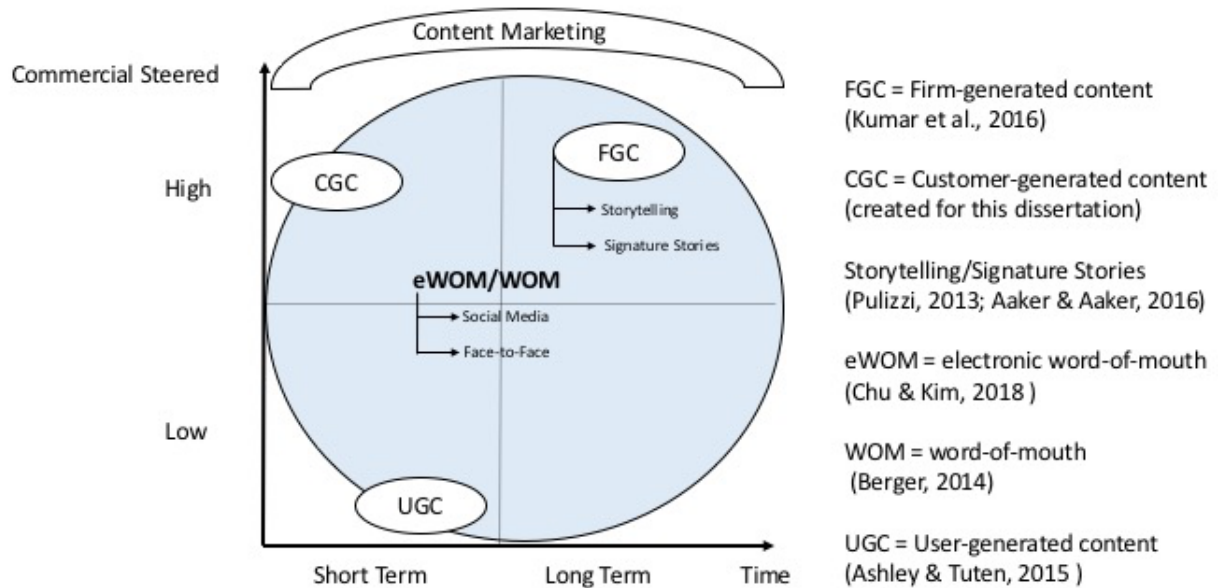


Figure 5.1: Selective Content Marketing research problem

Developed by: Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018)

Furthermore, the sportswear manufacturer Reebok, successfully applying Content Marketing strategies for the last 4 years has provided a powerful, real world application and thus provided suitable research material for the three papers framing this study (De La Cruz, 2017).

Whereas Content Marketing is an old promotion strategy (Pulizzi, 2016), the commercial use of online communication and generation channels, and the response on the commercial content is relatively unexplored. In order to address this lack of knowledge, in the scope of this thesis, three studies were conducted focusing on the illumination and verification of the commercial content generation and the value adding process from consumer side. Thus, Chapter 1 introduced the research aim and purpose, reviewed existing literature and gave insights concerning methodology arrangements. Since the methodology part symbolizes the interface between theory and practice, focus was explicitly set on: Research Philosophy, Research Design, Research Strategy, Data collection, Sampling Questionnaire Design,

Measurement and Scaling, Pre-Testing, Data preparation, Data Analysis. These methodological basics were applied in all three papers, building the backbone of this study.

Chapter 2, Paper one with the title: The importance of electronic word-of-mouth on consumer perception of Content Marketing, developed and verified which communication and generation vehicles impact consumer perception of Content Marketing triggered by FGC. In this matter Pulizzi (2013), Jin & Phua (2014), Hirschfelder & Human (2015) and Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018) underline the popularity of the communication of commercial content (FGC) and/or non-commercial content (UGC) through eWOM and/or WOM. Indeed, FGC enables marketing practitioners to address the consumer on so far not existing, non-purchase pushing, long term relationship improving level (Kumar *et al.*, 2016; Hirschfelder & Human, 2015; Human, Hirschfelder & Nel, 2018). Whereas individual research regarding the single communication and generation constructs exists, the cumulative impact in the Content Marketing context on consumer perception has not been explored yet. Addressing this bottleneck, in the scope of paper one, the commercial value added chain of content generation was developed and explored.

Chapter 3, Paper two with the title: Content Marketing Response: Background and Influencing Factors, developed and verified a framework capturing Content Marketing response in the B2C context. Whereas paper one focused on the additional content value generation process, paper two focused on the operationalization of Content Marketing response. However, the development of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response – was explored in paper to determine the connection between consumer perception triggered by FGC and Content Marketing response. In agreement with Hirschfelder & Human (2015) and Human, Hirschfelder & Nel (2018), underlining the importance of the provision of valuable content, the construct perceived usefulness for the commercial content communicated was included operationalizing Content Marketing response. By developing and verifying this response concept, it contributes to the completion of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response. The next section will give input concerning the development and verification of the complete theoretical framework of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response.

As indicated in the section above, Chapter 4, paper three with the title: The commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response, brings the theoretical framework from paper one and paper two together. Under consideration of pre-tests and main research results of paper

one and paper two, the focus of paper three was the verification of the entire concept, looking for significant paths from the starting point (FGC) to the bottom point (Content Marketing response) of the theoretical framework. In order to provide consistency, the research object origins from the same video campaign source, namely 'Be more human – Slide' from the sportswear manufacturer Reebok. With the aim to provide a comprising answer concerning the research objectives, paper three conceptualizes the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response. This includes the interface between the consumer content generation channels (UGC, CGC) and consumer perception triggered by FGC, which is the interface between the content covered in paper one and the content covered in paper two. This all-encompassing verification of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response provides exclusive findings and insights to a better understanding of the generic term Content Marketing. The following sections discuss the findings of all three papers more closely.

5.2.1. Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to develop and verify the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response in order to improve the understanding of Content Marketing as a generic term. With the aim to fulfil the defined research objectives above, firstly the research questions and hypothesis are recapitulated before the findings of every single paper are discussed.

5.2.1.1. Primary research question:

1. What content generating and communicating connections between FGC and Content Marketing response result in a significant path?

5.2.1.2. Secondary research questions:

- 1.1. Is eWOM taking in a mediating role between FGC and UGC?
- 1.2. Is WOM taking in a mediating role between FGC and UGC?
- 1.3. Is eWOM taking in a mediating role between FGC and CGC?
- 1.4. Is WOM is taking in a mediating role between FGC and CGC?
- 1.5. UGC triggered by FGC has a significant impact on Consumer Perception?

1.6. Does CGC triggered by FGC has a significant impact on Consumer Perception?

1.7. Does Perceived Usefulness is taking in a mediation role between Consumer Perception and Content Marketing response?

On the basis of the research objectives and research questions above, the following hypotheses were developed:

Hypothesis 1: *There is a positive connection between FGC and WOM.*

Hypothesis 2: *There is a positive connection between FGC and eWOM.*

Hypothesis 3: *There is a positive connection between WOM and UGC.*

Hypothesis 4: *There is a positive connection between WOM and CGC.*

Hypothesis 5: *There is a positive connection between eWOM and UGC.*

Hypothesis 6: *There is a positive connection between eWOM and CGC.*

Hypothesis 7: *There is a positive connection between UCC and Consumer Perception (Story Fit => H7a; Brand Status => H7b; Trust into the Brand => H7c).*

Hypothesis 8: *There is a positive connection between CCC and Consumer Perception (Story Fit => H8a; Brand Status => H8b; Trust into the Brand => H8c).*

Hypothesis 9: *There is a positive connection between Story Fit and Content Marketing response (Interest => H9a; Identification => H9b; Intention to Buy => H9c).*

Hypothesis 10: *There is a positive connection between Brand Status and Content Marketing response (Interest => H10a; Identification => H10b; Intention to Buy => H10c).*

Hypothesis 11: *There is a positive connection between Trust into the Brand and Content Marketing response (Interest => H11a; Identification => H11b; Intention to Buy => H11c).*

Hypothesis 12: *There is a positive connection between Consumer Perception and Perceived Usefulness.*

Hypothesis 13: *There is a positive connection between Perceived Usefulness and Content Marketing response.*

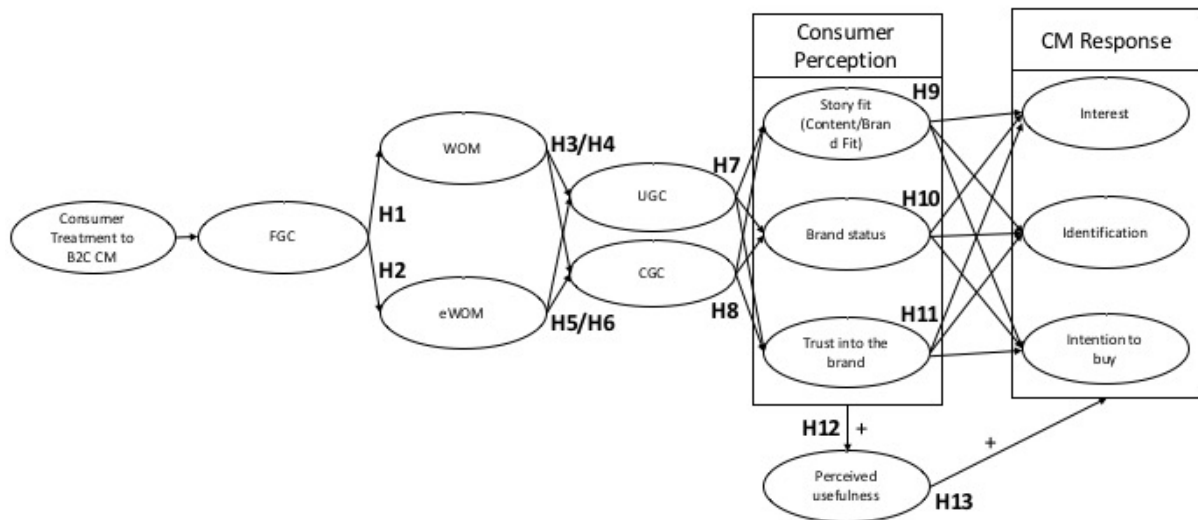


Figure 5.2: Visualization of Hypotheses
Developed by: Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018)

5.2.1.3. Study 1: Proof of additional content generation triggered by FGC

Regarding the findings of paper one, Figure 5.3 indicates that FGC significantly impacts consumer perception.

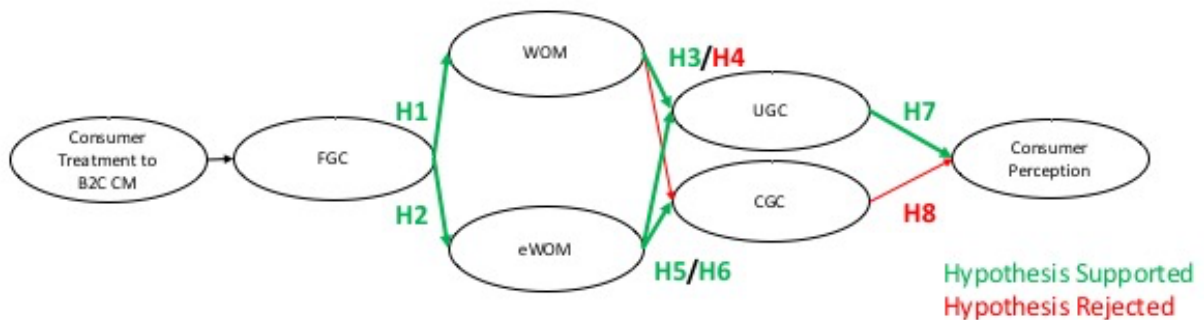


Figure 5.3: Commercial content value added chain process (Results Paper One)
Developed by: Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018)

The findings of paper one contribute to a better understanding of Content Marketing as a generic term. The findings above highlight that the marketing strategy also known as the umbrella term Content Marketing, requires a specific combination of content communicating and additional content generating variables for impacting the consumer successfully. It can be indicated from Figure 5.3 that UGC, indirectly triggered by FGC, takes in a bottle-neck function. In this regard the user that generates additional content (UGC) concerning the topic communicated from the firm (FGC), starts an indirect commercial content refinery. This commercial content refinery can be explained as follows: Whereas FGC might be perceived

as helpful, informative or entertaining, the root is still commercially driven and thus not as trustful. Additional content generated by consumers, triggered by FGC has a different root and thus a different power of persuasion (altruistic). Indeed, UGC related to FGC can occur with positive as well as with negative characteristics, however the opportunity for firms to slightly direct additional free content generation by the consumer makes the use of Content Marketing a powerful marketing strategy. Thus this first research approach contributes to a better understanding of the commercial content value added chain process and the understanding of Content Marketing as a generic term. How consumer perception and perceived usefulness for FGC impacts Content Marketing response is discussed in the next section.

5.2.1.4. Study 2: Operationalization of Content Marketing response

It can be indicated from Figure 5.4 that consumer perception and perceived usefulness of the content communicated are directly and indirectly impacting Content Marketing response.

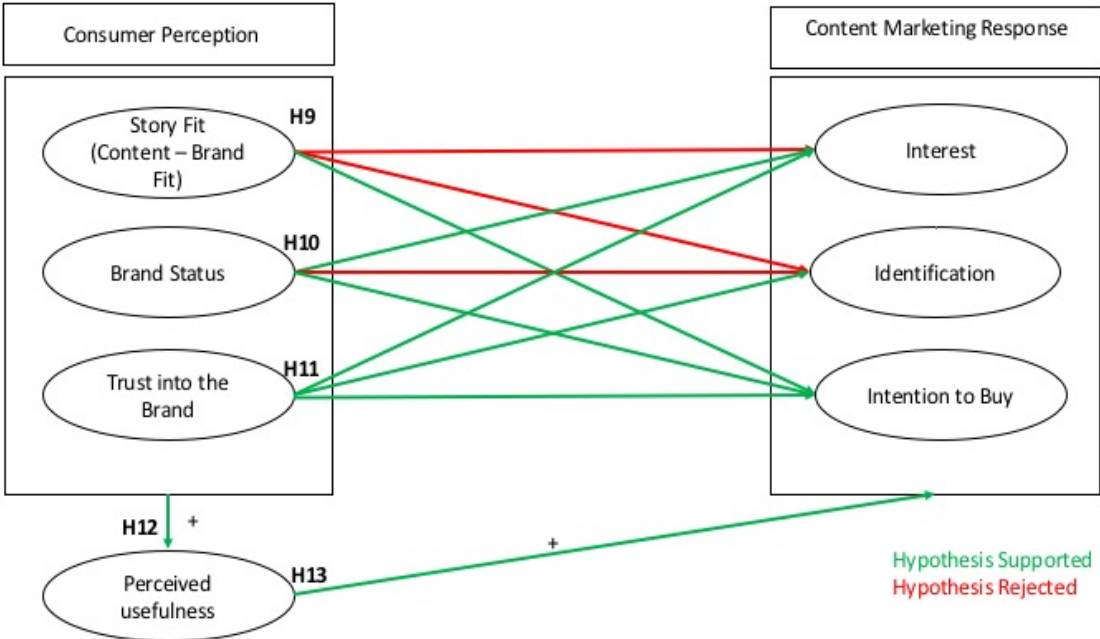


Figure 5.4: Influencing factors of Content Marketing response (Results Paper Two)
 Developed by: Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018)

Through the operationalization of Content Marketing response, two important Content Marketing insights vindicate. Accordingly, the rejection of Hypothesis 9 and the supported mediation between consumer perception and Content Marketing response by perceived usefulness are important insights to look at closer. Concerning the rejection of Hypothesis 9, Aaker & Aaker (2016) recommend that the content of Signature Stories should in some form

be linked to the brand, but product/brand characteristics do not have to fit necessarily the content communicated. A good example for no content band/product fit is the energy drink manufacturer Red Bull. Red Bull has run 20 years of successful Content Marketing strategies, focusing on the content communication of high end extreme sport sponsoring (Red Bull, 2018). The findings above exclusively consolidate these recommendations and real world example. Accordingly, the brand/product content fit has no significant impact on Content Marketing response and thus can be ignored as long the content communicated catches the consumers' interest. In union with the change from marketer dominance to consumer dominance, which makes the consumer progressively picky to what content they want to be exposed to, the second insight highlights the importance of the communication of useful content. The significant mediation of the relationship between consumer perception and Content Marketing response by perceived usefulness indicates the importance of the communication of content that is in the eyes of the consumer useful. In contrast to traditional advertising, following a push-strategy (Zhang *et al.*, 2017), these findings indicated that Content Marketing is rather following a pull-strategy. In the Content Marketing context this requires to communicate useful, informative or entertaining content, which is actively consumed and responded to by interested users. In order to verify the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response, the next section illuminates the findings of the fusion of the two theoretical frameworks above.

5.2.1.5. Study 3: Verifying the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response

The verification of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response (Figure 5.6) contains the consolidation of the theoretical frameworks of paper one and paper two. It can be indicated from Figure 5.6 that the fusion of these two theoretical frameworks was successful, providing exclusive insights into the additional value generation and content adoption process.

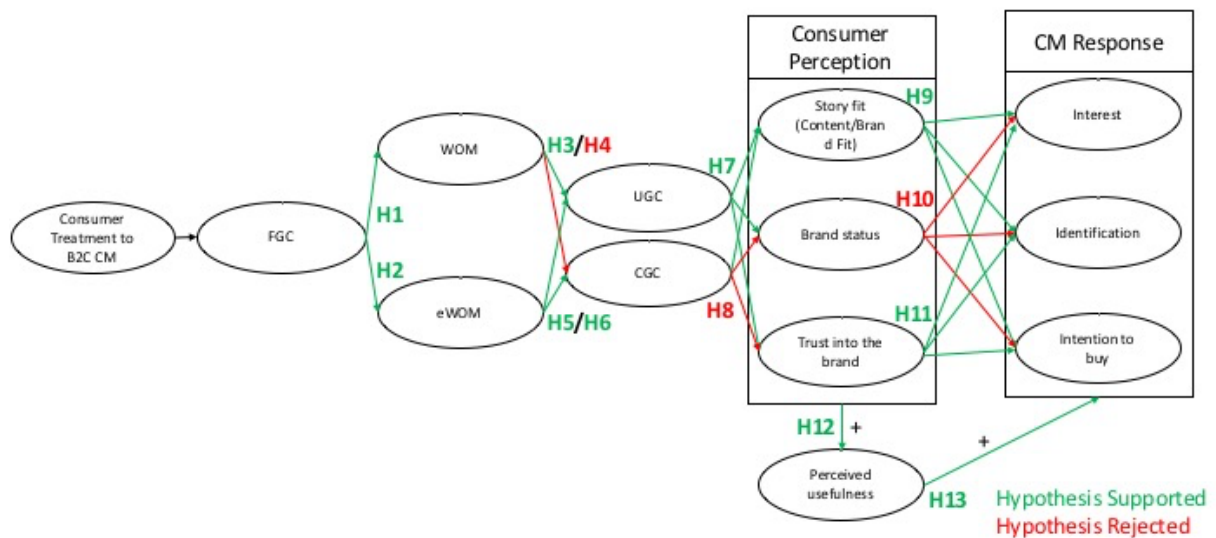


Figure 5.6: The commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response (Results Paper Three)
 Developed by: Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018)

Firstly, findings are reconciled with the findings from paper one and paper two and secondly, the contribution of this fusion to a better understanding of Content Marketing response are discussed more closely. It can be indicated from Figure 5.6 that the results from the first part of the theoretical framework are identical. Regarding the second part, the following changes have to be taken into consideration: Whereas paper two rejected Hypothesis 9, in paper three Hypothesis 9 was supported. Thus, the content brand-fit had a significant impact on Content Marketing response. As discussed above, and in agreement with Aaker & Aaker (2016) the content brand-fit is no precondition for a successful Content Marketing campaign and varies with the perception of the audience. The two various results show the unpredictability of the content brand-fit perception of consumers. Since, in both cases perceived usefulness takes in a partial mediating role between consumer perception and Content Marketing response this path is more consistent than the direct path between content brand-fit and Content Marketing response. In contrast to paper two, Hypothesis 10 is not supported in paper three, which underpins the argument, to focus on the mediation path and thus on the provision of valuable content. When it comes to the findings of paper three, it can be indicated from Figure 5.6 that the commercial value added chain impacts Content Marketing response.

More precisely FGC gets communicated via WOM or eWOM and leads to the generation of UGC or CGC. Whereas CGC has no impact on consumer perception, UGC impacts all three constructs, which are operationalizing consumer perception. Thus, the connection point of the fusion of paper one and paper two is verified and provides a significant path between additional content generated triggered by FGC and consumer perception. Further, consumer perception

has a significant direct impact on Content Marketing responses as well as an indirect impact through the mediator perceived usefulness. Considering the fact that this is the first research that sheds light on the content value added chain - triggered by FGC under the cover of the generic functioning term Content Marketing, these results are exclusive. If these findings achieving the research objectives is discussed in the next sections.

5.2.2. Addressing the Research Objectives

The research objectives symbolize a first all-encompassing description of the research goals to achieve. Further, research objectives build the frame for the verbalization of the research questions and the visualization of the theoretical framework (Malhotra, 2010). Taking the findings above into account, the following three sections verify if the research objectives of this study are fulfilled.

5.2.2.1. Primary research Objective 1

With regard to the first primary research objective, the aim was to determine if FGC triggers the communication and additional generation of commercially influenced content. This research objective was addressed with research conducted in the scope of paper one and paper three. The findings concerning the content value added chain of paper one and paper three are identical. The findings clearly show a significant connection between FGC and the communication vehicles WOM and eWOM. Accordingly, FGC rather gets communicated via online communication channels like social media and/or email, or via offline face-to-face communication. Whereas the additional content generation requires the consumer/customer to actively participate and generate content, the communication of FGC only focuses on the sharing and mentioning of FGC. At first sight, this insight seems to be reasonable, but considering the fact that FGC is still commercially driven content, the sharing/mentioning alone is the first win for marketing practitioners indicating the value of the content. The findings indicate that, consumers are willing to generate additional content rather than it be communicated via WOM or eWOM. When it comes to customers, the findings indicate that content communicated via WOM does not lead to additional CGC, whereas content communicated via eWOM does lead to additional CGC. This might be reasoned in the flow of communication. In the WOM scenario the customer has no direct opportunity to generate additional content, thus the communication flow is interrupted and requires a change to an online communication vehicle to generate additional content. The reputation of CGC lacks on authenticity since companies massively embellish/modify customer reviews (Resnick &

Zeckhauser, 2002). That is probably one of the reasons why CGC has no impact on consumer perception. In contrast to that, UGC with its altruistic roots significantly impacts consumer perception. In this regard the first primary research object is fulfilled providing a significant path from FGC to consumer perception. These findings are an important contribution to a better understanding of Content Marketing as a generic term, by providing a logical order of communication and generation channels. The next section focuses on how the findings of paper two and paper three effect the second primary research objective.

5.2.2.2. Primary research Objective 2

The second primary research objective was to determine if consumer perception influenced by FGC impacts Content Marketing response. In order to address this objective, research paper two and paper three were conducted. Whereas the results of paper 2 and paper 3 are not 100% identical, all findings have a clear tendency in one direction. Both studies, conducted in the scope of paper two and paper three exhibit significant results between consumer perception and Content Marketing response. More precisely, consumer perception was operationalized with the following three constructs: Story Fit, Brand Status and Trust into the Brand and Content Marketing response was operationalized with these three constructs: Interest, Identification and Intention to Buy. The findings of paper two exhibit that Brand Status and Trust into the Brand have a significant impact on Content Marketing response whereas the impact of Story Fit was rejected. Regarding the two supported constructs, it is integral to stress that both constructs rely on the reputation of the brand/product. This shows that concerning the communication of commercial content, the reputation of the brand/product plays an important role. Taking these findings into account it can be concluded that the higher the reputation of the brand/product, the better perceived the communicated commercial content and as better is the Content Marketing response. The findings of paper three exhibit that Story Fit and Trust into the Brand have a significant impact on Content Marketing response and the construct Status of the Brand is rejected. These results are not 100% equal with the results of paper two, but consumer perception is still impacting Content Marketing response. Regarding the discussion of the two primary research objectives, it can be concluded that the commercial value added chain developed in the scope of this study has been verified. As discussed above (5.3.2) the partial mediation between consumer perception and Content Marketing response by perceived usefulness takes in an important mainstay operationalizing Content Marketing response. Indeed, the reputation of the brand/product plays an important

role impacting the operationalization of consumer perception, however the findings of paper two and paper three also underline the importance of perceived usefulness in the Content Marketing response context. Exactly addressing this topic, the secondary research objective will be discussed in the following:

5.2.2.3. Secondary research Objective

The secondary research objective, focused on the exploration of whether the perceived usefulness mediates the relationship between consumer perception and Content Marketing response. The verification of the secondary objective was enabled through the conduction of paper two and paper three. The findings of paper two and paper three could prove that perceived usefulness partial mediates the relationship between consumer perception and Content Marketing response. Whereas the provision of useful commercial content was regarded as perfectly natural, it was barely verified (Hirschfelder & Human 2015; Aaker & Aaker, 2016; Human, Hirschfelder & Nel, 2018). In the scope of this study, specifically the findings of paper two and paper three, illuminate the importance of perceived usefulness for the content.

Indeed, consumer perception, with a significant direct effect on Content Marketing response is not to underestimate, however the verification of the indirect impact of perceived usefulness is an important milestone in Content Marketing research. These findings indicate the importance of the value perceived during and after consumption of the commercial content. In agreement with O'Brien (2012), highlighting that commercial content has to provide something valuable to receive something valuable back, this study confirms the significant impact of perceived usefulness on Content Marketing response. Recommendations for corporate, as well as for future research can be drawn on the basis of the findings discussed in the next sections.

5.2.3. Recommendations

This research provides insights for marketing practitioners in the corporate world as well as additional thought provoking impulses for future research in academia. The next section focuses on the implications derived from the findings concerning corporate world and after that, future research recommendations are provided.

5.2.3.1. Managerial Implications

Regarding the interpretation of the findings of this study in a corporate context, firstly, parts of the theoretical framework are reviewed and connected to real world applications. Secondly,

insights deriving from the findings are discussed and finally, recommendations are given. The exploration of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response comes along with exclusive insights concerning the commercial application of Content Marketing. The commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response framework can be subdivided into direct and indirect real world application factors. More precisely, the first section of the theoretical framework operationalizes the constructs marketing practitioners have direct influence on (Figure 5.7).

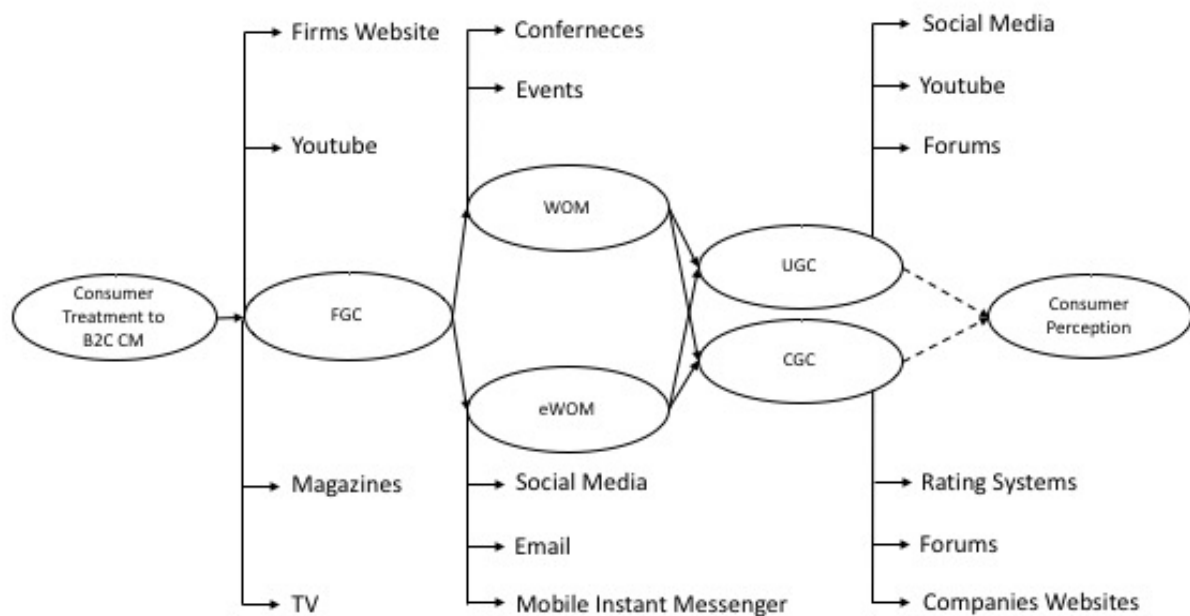


Figure 5.7: Real world applications

Developed by: Hirschfelder & Chigada (2018)

It can be indicated from Figure 5.7, that FGC can be shared on a few on- and offline platforms. Regarding the communication of FGC, marketing practitioners should make sure to have direct on- and offline communication opportunities provided. For example, the provision of a FGC video on the company's website, should allow consumers to share and generate additional content. Regarding online sharing, the integration of online social media links directing to social media platforms (Facebook et cetera), which allow to share the consumed FGC and generate additional content, is one online opportunity to spread commercial content. When it comes to the commercial content communication offline, the provision of communication opportunities is more challenging but not impossible. For example, a communication interface to heat up face-to-face communication concerning offline content (in form of a journal article et cetera)

could be a conference or event, where a lot of people with the same interests meet and share their opinions.

According to the findings above, FGC gets communicated via WOM and eWOM. These three constructs are the starting points for a successful Content Marketing strategy. That is why marketing practitioners should firstly decide what FGC (informative, helpful or entertaining) should be shared where (on-/offline). Further, the provision for content communication opportunities should be provided in order to increase the diffusion of the content on different platforms. When it comes to the additional content generation by the consumer, the marketing practitioner loses the direct control and hands over to the consumer. According to the findings, consumers are willing to generate content triggered by FGC. Thus, instead of speaking of a tailspin from marketing practitioners' side, in the Content Marketing context the non-purchase pushing hand over process to the consumer, generates trust, makes the consumer feel important and might build up a long-term relationship to the brand. This process can be intensified by inviting the consumer to generate additional brand/product related content (customer experience reports (CGC), best picture/video challenge (UGC) et cetera). What insights the second half of the theoretical framework provides for marketing practitioners is discussed in the following:

As mentioned, the second half of the theoretical framework are constructs that can only be influenced by the marketing practitioners indirectly. The findings indicate that Brand Status and Trust into the Brand, significantly impact Content Marketing response. These results indicate that a well perceived reputation of the brand/product influence how consumers respond to the content communicated. Thus marketing practitioners should make sure that before the start of a Content Marketing campaign the reputation of the brand/product is on a healthy level so that consumers positively respond to the commercial content communicated. Further, the findings of paper two and paper three indicate that perceived usefulness partial mediate significantly the relationship between consumer perception and Content Marketing response. For marketing practitioners, this underlines the importance to communicate valuable content. In this matter, the findings of paper two and paper three showed that the story fit is not as important as the perceived usability. Thus, instead of spending time to adjust story fit with the brand, the identification of what kind of content (helpful, informative or entertaining) appeals to the target group should be spend time on. For example, the energy drink manufacturer Red Bull provides free online videos of almost every sponsoring activity Red Bull is involved in (O'Brien, 2012). The sponsoring activities mainly focus on extreme sports, thus the story fit is

neglected and the focus is on the entertainment of a niche target audience (O'Brien, 2012). In sum, this studies findings improve marketing practitioners' understanding of the commercial content value added chain. Accordingly marketing practitioners should focus on the constructs they can directly influence (FGC, WOM and eWOM), influence (UGC, CGC) and make arrangements to fulfil pre-conditions (reputation) improving Content Marketing response. Future research recommendations derived in the scope of this study are discussed in the next section.

5.2.3.2. Future Research

Apart from the popularity of Content Marketing in corporate world, highly influenced by the technological progress and the accompanying user-friendly interface of Web 2.0, the strategy behind the term Content Marketing is relatively unexplored. Indeed, this study contributes to a better understanding of the umbrella term Content Marketing, however it is limited on an online video scenario in the B2C context. Thus a revision of an offline scenarios in a B2C context would provide interesting research findings and contribute to a better understanding of the term Content Marketing in B2C context. When it comes to the verification of the theoretical framework in the B2B context, pre-research has to be conducted, adjusting the theoretical framework on a B2B scenario. Beside additional research on the basis of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response, Content Marketing future research should focus on the illumination and exploration of the interaction between FGC and social media. Since social media is a vehicle driven by individuals, the commercial influence is only indirectly steerable (Hajli, 2014). In this context 'influencer' have become a popular tool to indirectly provide consumers with commercially driven product/brand touch points (Gillin, 2009; Lim, Cheah & Wong, 2017). Considering the fact that 'influencers' get sponsored to share content with product/brand touch points, this relatively new social media promotion strategy can be categorized under the umbrella term Content Marketing. The next section focus on the provision of the limitations of this thesis.

5.2.4. Limitations

In the scope of this thesis, all three papers operationalizing the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response exhibit a limitation section. In order to provide an all-encompassing view, this section provides a synopsis of limitations for this study. This section is subdivided into the limitations that impact the quality of the findings and into the limitations that impacted the interpretation of the findings. Regarding limitations affecting the quality of

the findings, the methodological arrangements have to be taken into closer consideration. Since the data was collected in Cape Town metropolitan area (South Africa), this study is geographically limited. Furthermore, this study focused on a target population of males and females with the age between 18 and 65. Indeed, the inclusion of participants younger than 18 was taken into consideration, however due to ethical requirements, the research was limited to full aged research participants. Indeed, this limitation has to be taken in consideration. The use of the internet on a daily base has become a popular communication and entertainment platform in today's teenagers lives (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith & Zickuhr, 2010). According to the google Connected Consumer Survey 2017 (CCS), 60% of South Africans with access to the internet fall in the age bracket between 16 and 34 (CCS, 2017). These numbers underline that the exclusion of the underage is a clear limitation for this thesis.

A further limitation deriving from the methodological arrangements is the use of non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling does not include a random selection procedure of respondents and thus does not allow generalizations from the sample on the population. However, the conduction of three independent studies, resulting in a total sample size of 750 valid responses gives meaningful insights into the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response. With reference to the limitations that impact the interpretation of the results, a closer look has to be taken on the research objects. All three research studies originate from the Content Marketing campaign 'Be more human' from the sportswear manufacturer Reebok. Since all three research objects communicated B2C online video content, the results of this study are only applicable in a B2C context. Thus additional research in the B2B context has to be conducted before the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response can be generalized.

5.2.5. Conclusion

The current chapter reviewed the findings of studies 1, 2 and 3 gathering that that the development of the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response contributes significantly to a better understanding of the umbrella function of the term Content Marketing. After that, the research objectives were discussed on the basis of the findings made in the scope of this thesis. Relevant findings were discussed and interpreted and it turned out that this research provides exclusive insights for marketing practitioners and academia. On the bases of that, recommendations provided managerial implications and future research

implications. After that, the limitations of this study were discussed with the aim to avoid vague assumptions.

With the aim to illuminate the understanding of the umbrella function of the term Content Marketing, the purpose of this study was to explore the chronology of content communicating and content generating constructs impacting Content Marketing response. The development of a theoretical framework, operationalizing the commercial value added chain of Content Marketing response enabled the verification of an unexplored content generation process contributing to a better understanding of Content Marketing. Three separately conducted research approaches provided significant results for the three main research objectives. These results clearly state that the term Content Marketing has to be treated as a generic term, hosting communication and generation vehicles that only through the right combination among each other impact Content Marketing response effectively.

Taking these insights into account, this study contributes to a better understanding of the term Content Marketing by illuminating the relationship between content communicating and content generating vehicles in the Content Marketing context. Further this study provides a first approach how to operationalize Content Marketing response in a B2C scenario. Thus, it can be concluded that this study provides theoretical as well as managerial insights, building a solid base for future research on Content Marketing.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Ethical Clearance: Paper One



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UCT Commerce Faculty Office

Date: 12th September 2016

Mr Benedict Hirschfeld
School of Management Studies
University of Cape Town

REF: REC2017/012/009

Dear Benedict Hirschfeld

Project : The importance of electronic word-of-mouth on consumer perception of Content Marketing

Thank you for submitting your study to the Faculty of Commerce Ethics in Research Committee.

It is a pleasure to inform you that the EiRC has **formally approved** the above-mentioned study.

Approval is granted for the period of 12 months. Should you require an extension or make any substantial changes to the research methodology which could affect the experiences of participants, you must submit a revised protocol to the Committee for approval.

Please note that the ongoing ethical conduct of the study remains the responsibility of the principal investigator.

Your sincerely



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Ethical Clearance: Paper Two



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UCT Commerce Faculty Office

Date: 27TH June 2017

Mr Benedict Hirschfeld
School of Management Studies
University of Cape Town

REF: REC2017/012/009

Dear Benedict Hirschfeld

Project : THE IMPACT OF CONSUMER PERCEPTION ON CONTENT MARKETING RESPONSE.

Thank you for submitting your study to the Faculty of Commerce Ethics in Research Committee.

It is a pleasure to inform you that the EiRC has **formally approved** the above-mentioned study.

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“Our Mission is to be an outstanding teaching and research university, educating for life and addressing the challenges facing our society.”

Ethical Clearance: Paper Three



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UCT Commerce Faculty Office

07/12/2017

Mr Benedikt Hirschfelder
School of Management Studies
University of Cape Town

REF: REC2017/012/009

Dear Benedikt Hirschfelder

Project THE IMPACT OF FIRM GENERATED CONTENT ON CONTENT MARKETING RESPONSE.

It is a pleasure to inform you that the EiRC has **formally approved** the above-mentioned study.

Approval is granted for the period of 12 months. Should you require an extension or make any substantial changes to the research methodology which could affect the experiences of participants, you must submit a revised protocol to the Committee for approval.

Please note that the ongoing ethical conduct of the study remains the responsibility of the principal investigator.

Your sincerely

Litha Tyulu
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"Our Mission is to be an outstanding teaching and research university, educating for life and addressing the challenges facing our society."

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRES

Questionnaire: Paper one



Questionnaire

A Quantitative analysis of Business-to-Consumer Content Marketing Response Determinants

Department:

Marketing

Researcher:

Benedikt Hirschfelder

Email: benedikt.hirschfelder@uct.ac.za

Cell: 081/8890568

Supervisor:

Joel Chigada (PhD)

Research on Content Marketing Response

Dear Respondent,

My name is Benedikt Hirschfelder, a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Commerce at University of Cape Town. Currently I am conducting a study on consumer response to content marketing. You are invited to participate in this research and your participation is voluntary.

Your answers will be helpful to illustrate how consumers experience content marketing strategies. Your response will only be used for the purposes of this study and are completely confidential.

This research has been approved by the Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee. To ensure anonymity of your responses, you will not be requested to supply any identifiable information. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the research at any time. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

By completing this questionnaire, you implicitly give consent to take part in the research study. Should you have any questions regarding the research please feel free to contact the researcher: Benedikt Hirschfelder

Email: benedikt.hirschfelder@uct.ac.za/ Cell: 081/8890568

Part 1: Marketing Motivation

This research is concerned with your attitude towards the content marketing treatment. The questionnaire asks you about your opinions of a certain video, your opinion about the company that might sponsor this event, how you would communicate this content and if you would generate additional content to this topic. We are interested in your attitudes and there are no right or wrong answers to these questions.

Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by marking your choice with a "X":

| | Entirely Disagree | Mostly Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Neutral | Mildly Agree | Mostly Agree | Entirely Agree |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| I like sports. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The company which commissioned this video is a reputable firm. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I respect the athletes in this video. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This marketing message is motivating. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| After being exposed to this marketing message I am motivated to do sports. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The mix of content and advertising appeals to me. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |

Part 2: Marketing Message

Please answer these questions by telling us how much you agree or disagree with the statements regarding the treatment.

| | Entirely Disagree | Mostly Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Neutral | Mildly Agree | Mostly Agree | Entirely Agree |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| Firm generated content | | | | | | | |
| There is a logical connection between the communicated story and the brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The image of the communicated story and the image of the brand are similar. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| There is a link between brand and activities promoted in the video. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The company and the marketing message stand for similar things. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This company communicates their message very clearly. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Sharing Firm generated content makes me feel part of the product/service design strategy. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Sharing Firm generated content improves the identification with the brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Sharing Firm generated content improves the identification with the communicated content | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I share Firm generated content because it might entertain others. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I like to share Firm generated content which gives me a sense of personal achievement. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Sharing Firm generated content via social media might help others. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Word-of-mouth | | | | | | | |
| I listen to recommendations by others. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I communicate my experience about the product I purchase face-to-face. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Face-to-face product recommendations might help others. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Product/service experiences shared face-to-face are more trustful than advertising. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I try to get a face-to-face product recommendations before I purchase a product. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I believe face-to-face recommendations are a credible information source. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I like to get product information face-to-face. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I trust face-to-face product recommendations. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Face-to-face product recommendations affect my purchase decision. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Electronic word-of-mouth | | | | | | | |
| I read online reviews written by others. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I write down an online review about the product I purchased. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I read online consumer reviews before I purchase a product. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I believe an online review is a credible information source. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |

| | Entirely Disagree | Mostly Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Neutral | Mildly Agree | Mostly Agree | Entirely Agree |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| If online reviews of a product of interest are positive, I purchase it. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I rely on online reviews when I purchase a product. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Before I buy a product I review customer ratings online. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Without reading product/service reviews online I won't purchase a product. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I like listening to advice before shopping. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| There is a responsible writing for online reviews. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| User generated content | | | | | | | |
| Sharing my knowledge via social media can attract others' buying intentions. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Sharing my knowledge via social media can help others. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I like to share knowledge which gives me a sense of personal achievement. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I try to share my expertise via social media in an effective way. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I share content online because it is less personal and progressively focusing on the actual content quality. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I share my product/service experience via social media in an effective way. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I generate content because its personally benefitting me. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I generate content because it might help others. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Customer generated content | | | | | | | |
| I rate products online after buying them. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I rate products that I buy because it might help others buying intentions. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I rate products online because its personally benefitting me. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I rate products online to improve product/service ratings. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Rating a product online makes me feel important. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I rate products online because it is less personal and progressively focusing on the actual product quality. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The opportunity to rate products makes me feel part of the product design strategy. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I share my experience concerning a product via social media to benefit others. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Sharing expertise concerning product experience via social media is important. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Consumer Perception | | | | | | | |
| This video makes an important statement. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This video strengthens my relationship with the brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This video improves the identification with the communicated content. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The communicative content motivates me to do sports. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I have a favorable feeling about this company. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This video is motivating and encouraging. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I have a favorable feeling about the communicated content. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This company's sponsorship is clearly focused on certain sports. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This advertisement improves the perception of the sponsor. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| It is very common to see this company sponsoring sports events. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |

| | Entirely Disagree | Mostly Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Neutral | Mildly Agree | Mostly Agree | Entirely Agree |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| This company has a good public image. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The sport benefits from the advertised brand sponsorship. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This is a significant sporting event. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |

Part 3: Biographic Data

I identify my gender as...

Male Female Prefer not to answer

I am _____ years old.

Strictly confidential

Thank you for your participation.

Questionnaire: Paper Two



Questionnaire

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF CONSUMER PERCEPTION ON CONTENT MARKETING RESPONSE

Department:
Marketing

Researcher:
Benedikt Hirschfelder
Email: benedikt.hirschfelder@uct.ac.za
Cell: 081/8890568

Supervisor:
Joel Chigada (PhD)

Research on Content Marketing Response

Dear Respondent,

My name is Benedikt Hirschfelder, a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Commerce at University of Cape Town. Currently I am conducting a study on consumer response to content marketing. This study explores the connections between consumer's perception of video firm-generated content (FGC) and content marketing response. You are invited to participate in this research and your participation is voluntary.

Your answers will be helpful to illustrate how consumers experience content marketing strategies. Your response will only be used for the purposes of this study and are completely confidential. This research has been approved by the Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee. To ensure anonymity of your responses, you will not be requested to supply any identifiable information. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the research at any time. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

By completing this questionnaire, you implicitly give consent to take part in the research study. Should you have any questions regarding the research please feel free to contact the researcher: Benedikt Hirschfelder

Email: benedikt.hirschfelder@uct.ac.za / Cell: 081/8890568

Part 1: Marketing Motivation

This research is concerned with your attitude towards the marketing treatment. The questionnaire asks you about your opinions of a certain video, your opinion about the company that might sponsor this event, how you would communicate this content and if you would generate additional content to this topic. We are interested in your attitudes and there are no right or wrong answers to these questions.

Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements by marking your choice with a "X":

| | Entirely Disagree | Mostly Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Neutral | Mildly Agree | Mostly Agree | Entirely Agree |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| I like the communicated sports. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This campaign improves my intention to do sports. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I respect the athletes in this video. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This marketing message is motivating. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| After being exposed to this marketing message I am motivated to do sports. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The mix of content and advertising appeals to me. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |

Part 2: Consumer Perception

Please answer these questions by telling us how much you agree or disagree with the statements regarding the treatment.

| | Entirely Disagree | Mostly Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Neutral | Mildly Agree | Mostly Agree | Entirely Agree |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| Content brand Fit | | | | | | | |
| There is a logical connection between the communicated story and the brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The image of the communicated story and the image of the brand/company are similar. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| There is a link between brand/company and activities promoted in the video. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The companies communicated content and the marketing message stand for similar things. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This company communicates their message very clearly. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The communicated content improves the identification with the brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This company is well known for providing entertaining content. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The communicated content is consistent with the image of the brand/company. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| It makes sense to me that this company/brand communicates this story. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Brand Status | | | | | | | |
| This company/brand is international reputable. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This company/brand stand for quality. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This company/brand is well known. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The company/brand influences significantly their target market. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This company/brand is a global player. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This is a well-known sport. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Trust into the Brand | | | | | | | |
| The advertised brand meets my expectations. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This brand guarantees satisfaction. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| When I wear this brand I feel confident. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The quality of the brand won't disappoint me. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The reputation of this brand is good. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The products of this brand last long. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The products of this brand help to fulfil my exercise goals. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Perceived usefulness | | | | | | | |
| This campaign makes an important statement. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The campaign is informative. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The campaign is entertaining. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The campaign is inspiring. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The communicated content makes me happy | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This campaign motivates me to do more sport. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The campaign might improve my training habits. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The brands products quality fulfils my needs. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Using the brands products makes me train harder. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| | Entirely Disagree | Mostly Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Neutral | Mildly Agree | Mostly Agree | Entirely Agree |

| Interest | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| This campaign peaks my interest. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This campaign would make me more likely to pay attention to this brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This campaign would make me more likely to remember the brand's promotion. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This campaign would make me more likely to notice the name on other occasions. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This campaign arouses my interest in the products of this brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The communicated content motivates me to gather more information about the brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The communicated content motivates me to gather more information about the product. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Identification | | | | | | | |
| I respect the athletes and actors in this campaign. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| After being exposed to this campaign I identify more with the advertised brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I identify with the athletes and actors. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I identify with the communicated message. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This campaign improves my relationship to the brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I understand the message communicated and like it. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Intention to Buy | | | | | | | |
| After being exposed to this campaign I am willing to buy products from this specific brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The performing athletes / actors motivate me to buy the brands products. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The content communicated in the campaign makes me want to buy their products. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The products quality that I was exposed to makes me want to buy their products. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The communicated message makes me want to buy the brands products. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I have money to buy the brands product. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |

Part 3: Biographic Data

I identify my gender as...

Male Female Prefer not to answer

I am _____ years old.

Strictly confidential

Thank you for your participation.

QUESTIONNAIRE: PAPER THREE:



Questionnaire

A Quantitative analysis of Business-to-Consumer Content Marketing Response Determinants

Department:
Marketing

Researcher:
Benedikt Hirschfelder
Email: benedikt.hirschfelder@uct.ac.za
Cell: 081/8890568

Supervisor:
Joel Chigada (PhD)

Research on Content Marketing Response

Dear Respondent,

My name is Benedikt Hirschfelder, a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Commerce at University of Cape Town. Currently I am conducting a study on consumer response to content marketing. You are invited to participate in this research and your participation is voluntary.

Your answers will be helpful to illustrate how consumers experience content marketing strategies. Your response will only be used for the purposes of this study and are completely confidential.

This research has been approved by the Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee. To ensure anonymity of your responses, you will not be requested to supply any identifiable information. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the research at any time. The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

By completing this questionnaire, you implicitly give consent to take part in the research study. Should you have any questions regarding the research please feel free to contact the researcher: Benedikt Hirschfelder

Email: benedikt.hirschfelder@uct.ac.za/ Cell: 081/8890568

Part 2: Marketing Message

Please answer these questions by telling us how much you agree or disagree with the statements regarding the treatment.

| | Entirely Disagree | Mostly Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Neutral | Mildly Agree | Mostly Agree | Entirely Agree |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| Firm generated content | | | | | | | |
| There is a logical connection between the communicated story and the brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The image of the communicated story and the image of the brand are similar. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| There is a link between brand and activities promoted in the video. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The company and the marketing message stand for similar things. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This company communicates their message very clearly. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The communicated content improves my identification with the brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This company is well known for providing entertaining content. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The communicated content is consistent with the image of the brand/company. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |

| | Entirely Disagree | Mostly Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Neutral | Mildly Agree | Mostly Agree | Entirely Agree |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| It makes sense to me that this company/brand communicates this story. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Sharing Firm generated content makes me feel part of the product/service design strategy. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Sharing Firm generated content improves the identification with the brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Sharing Firm generated content improves the identification with the communicated content | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I share Firm generated content because it might entertain others. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I like to share Firm generated content which gives me a sense of personal achievement. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Sharing Firm generated content via social media might help others. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Word-of-mouth | | | | | | | |
| I listen to recommendations by others. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I communicate my experience about the product I purchase face-to-face. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Face-to-face product recommendations might help others. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Product/service experiences shared face-to-face are more trustful than advertising. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I try to get a face-to-face product recommendations before I purchase a product. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I believe face-to-face recommendations are a credible information source. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I like to get product information face-to-face. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I trust face-to-face product recommendations. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Face-to-face product recommendations affect my purchase decision. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Electronic word-of-mouth | | | | | | | |
| I read online reviews written by others. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I write down an online review about the product I purchased. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I read online consumer reviews before I purchase a product. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I believe an online review is a credible information source. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| If online reviews of a product of interest are positive, I purchase it. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I rely on online reviews when I purchase a product. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Before I buy a product I review customer ratings online. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Without reading product/service reviews online I won't purchase a product. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I like listening to advice before shopping. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| There is a responsible writing for online reviews. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| User generated content | | | | | | | |
| Sharing my knowledge via social media can attract others' buying intentions. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Sharing my knowledge via social media can help others. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I like to share knowledge which gives me a sense of personal achievement. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I try to share my expertise via social media in an effective way. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I share content online because it is less personal and progressively focusing on the actual content quality. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |

| | Entirely Disagree | Mostly Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Neutral | Mildly Agree | Mostly Agree | Entirely Agree |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| I share my product/service experience via social media in an effective way. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I generate content because its personally benefitting me. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I generate content because it might help others. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Customer generated content | | | | | | | |
| I rate products online after buying them. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I rate products that I buy because it might help others buying intentions. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I rate products online because its personally benefitting me. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I rate products online to improve product/service ratings. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Rating a product online makes me feel important. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I rate products online because it is less personal and progressively focusing on the actual product quality. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The opportunity to rate products makes me feel part of the product design strategy. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I share my experience concerning a product via social media to benefit others. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Sharing expertise concerning product experience via social media is important. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |

Part 2: Consumer Perception

Please answer these questions by telling us how much you agree or disagree with the statements regarding the treatment.

| | Entirely Disagree | Mostly Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Neutral | Mildly Agree | Mostly Agree | Entirely Agree |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| Content brand Fit | | | | | | | |
| There is a logical connection between the communicated story and the brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The image of the communicated story and the image of the brand/company are similar. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| There is a link between brand/company and activities promoted in the video. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The companies communicated content and the marketing message stand for similar things. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This company communicates their message very clearly. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The communicated content improves the identification with the brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This company is well known for providing entertaining content. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The communicated content is consistent with the image of the brand/company. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| It makes sense to me that this company/brand communicates this story. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Brand Status | | | | | | | |
| This company/brand is international reputable. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This company/brand stand for quality. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This company/brand is well known. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The company/brand influences significantly their target market. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |

| | Entirely Disagree | Mostly Disagree | Mildly Disagree | Neutral | Mildly Agree | Mostly Agree | Entirely Agree |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| This company/brand is a global player. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This is a well-known sport. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Trust into the Brand | | | | | | | |
| The advertised brand meets my expectations. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This brand guarantees satisfaction. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| When I wear this brand I feel confident. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The quality of the brand won't disappoint me. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The reputation of this brand is good. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The products of this brand last long. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The products of this brand help to fulfil my exercise goals. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Perceived usefulness | | | | | | | |
| This campaign makes an important statement. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The campaign is informative. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The campaign is entertaining. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The campaign is inspiring. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The communicated content makes me happy | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This campaign motivates me to do more sport. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The campaign might improve my training habits. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The brands products quality fulfils my needs. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Using the brands products makes me train harder. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Interest | | | | | | | |
| This campaign peaks my interest. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This campaign would make me more likely to pay attention to this brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This campaign would make me more likely to remember the brand's promotion. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This campaign would make me more likely to notice the name on other occasions. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This campaign arouses my interest in the products of this brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The communicated content motivates me to gather more information about the brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The communicated content motivates me to gather more information about the product. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Identification | | | | | | | |
| I respect the athletes and actors in this campaign. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| After being exposed to this campaign I identify more with the advertised brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I identify with the athletes and actors. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I identify with the communicated message. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| This campaign improves my relationship to the brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I understand the message communicated and like it. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| Intention to Buy | | | | | | | |
| After being exposed to this campaign I am willing to buy products from this specific brand. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The performing athletes / actors motivate me to buy the brands products. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The content communicated in the campaign makes me want to buy their products. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The products quality that I was exposed to makes me want to buy their products. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| The communicated message makes me want to buy the brands products. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |
| I have money to buy the brands product. | <u>1</u> | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>6</u> | <u>7</u> |

Part 3: Biographic Data

I identify my gender as...

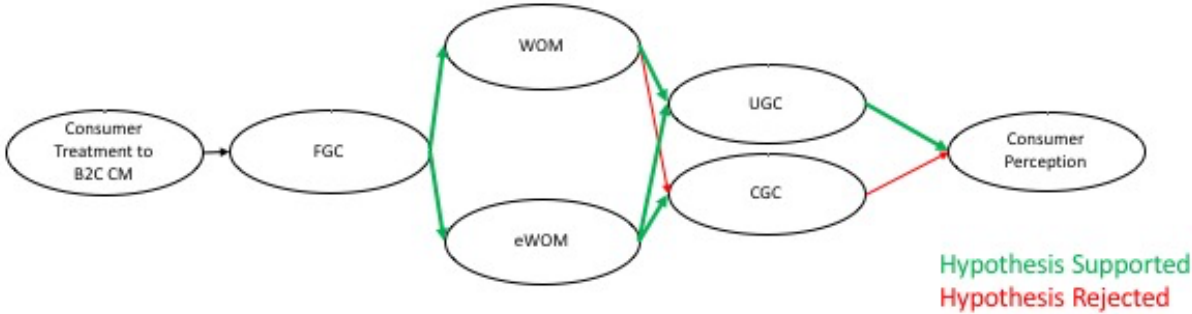
Male Female Prefer not to answer

I am _____ years old.

Strictly confidential

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX C: COMMERCIAL VALUE-ADDED CHAIN PROCESS



Developed and verified by: Hirshfelder & Chigada (2018)

APPENDIX D: SOBEL TEST RESULTS

| Relationship | Sobel Test Statistic | Two-Tailed Probability |
|--------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| FGC => eWOM => UGC | 4.386 | 0.000 |
| FGC => WOM => UGC | 2.128 | 0.033 |
| FGC => eWOM => CGC | 5.067 | 0.000 |
| FGC => WOM => CGC | 0.417 | 0.676 |
| CP => PU => CMR | 17.131 | 0.000 |