Turn the Other Cheek or an Eye for Eye: Exploring Brand-to-Brand Dialogue on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

While popular press articles frequently highlight humorous, snarky exchanges between brands on social media, academically, this behavior is relatively unexplored. As consumers’ perceptions of the use of humor in brand-to-brand dialogue may have meaningful managerial and theoretical implications, this research examines consumers’ perceptions of brands that engage in dialogue with one another on social media. To understand the dyadic relationship between two brands who engage with one another on social media, we explore two different types of humorous comments (low aggression and high aggression) and how the type of humor employed affects consumers’ perceptions of both the brand initiating the dialogue and the brand who responds. Interestingly, we find that the safest strategy for brands who elect to initiate with another brand on social media is to avoid either type of humor; thus, avoiding perceptions of manipulative intent. However, for brands that elect to respond to another brand, their use of humor can vary based upon the tone of the initiating brand’s comment.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Veronica L. Thomas (PhD, Kent State University) is an associate professor, Department of Marketing, College of Business and Economics, Towson University. Her expertise is in the area of marketing research methods and consumer psychology, and her research focuses on how variables such as social influence, advertising, and consumer self-concept impact the relationships that consumers form with brands.

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