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Introduction

Welcome to the ninth edition of contemporary dissertation research in Irish Marketing from students of the M Sc Marketing class of 2020. While the tradition of great marketing insights and research continues apace, this year marks a significant body of output from students, now graduates, who experienced a level of disruption educationally, personally and professionally never seen before. Yet this cohort produced a great body of research, uncovering unique insights and demonstrating their excellence and capabilities despite the challenges.

What is also unique is the backgrounds of these top marketing graduates. All the graduates are originally from non-business disciplines such as arts, engineering, media and science and developed their capabilities to become excellent marketers in the past twelve months.

The dissertation task, a central feature of learning and research at the School of Marketing, allows the students to define, shape and research a marketing issue in great depth, using leading-edge theory to formulate a research question. This question is examined 'out there' in the world of marketing industry practice and consumer reality through the use of appropriate research methodologies.

Each student has provided a summary or abstract of his or her work in their own words. Their academic supervisor is also listed. If you are interested in any particular work you should contact myself or the staff member concerned. Details can be found on <https://tudublin.ie/connect/staff-directory/>

I hope you find the students' work stimulating and interesting.



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The Perceived Fit Between Brands and Female Empowerment: An Exploration of Male Consumers perceptions of 'Femvertising'

Author: Robyn Burke

Supervisor: Dr. Rosie Hand

Abstract

The primary aim of this research was to examine how perceived fit influences male consumers' perceptions of 'femvertising'. Femvertising is a growing market phenomenon that aims to celebrate women and girls through female empowerment advertising. It was once a marketing strategy used mainly by female-orientated brands but since its increasing success among female consumers, gender-neutral and male-dominated brands have jumped on the female empowerment bandwagon. The rise in brands employing femvertising campaigns has brought attention to the concept of company-cause fit which is loosely defined as to how a brand and a social cause can pair together conceptually (Champlin, Sterbenk, Windels, & Poteet, 2019). The notion of company-cause fit is of great interest to academic scholars but not fully understood due to inconsistent findings. Therefore, this study aims to provide clarity to the cause-fit literature in relation to femvertising. This study also solely explores the perceptions of male consumers as previous studies tend to examine only women or men and women combined.

Four focus groups with an overall sample size of sixteen male consumers living in Ireland were conducted to generate findings from this research. The results from the primary research show that company-cause fit greatly influences male perceptions of femvertising, with femvertisements that consumers perceived to have a high level of company-cause fit receiving positive ad and brand attitudes. In contrast, low fit initiatives received much scepticism from male consumers, resulting in negative ad attitudes and no change in brand attitudes. In the context of femvertising, high fit was classed as having a functional or image-based match present, suggesting that traditional 'high' and 'low' fit categorisations need to be abandoned and examined from consumer perspectives.

Influencer Marketing Of Hotel Experiences On Instagram

Author: Oana R. Emerich

Supervisor: Dr. Valerie Gannon

Abstract

The use of social media influencers as a marketing tool to advertise brands is a growing trend in the business world. Some of the reasons behind this practice have to do with marketers' wish of increasing brand awareness and creating an image in the eyes of their target audience to gain competitive advantage. Studies about influencers as well as statistics regarding influencer marketing specifically, demonstrated these individuals' power in increasing brand awareness and as a result, influencing consumer behaviour.

In this study, the focus is on female millennials' perceptions regarding influencers and their opinions concerning influencers' way of advertising hotels in their Instagram 'Stories'. Although previous research was conducted to evaluate the scalability of influencer marketing, their characteristics, and their power to influence, there is more to be learned regarding what drives influencers' persuasive power.

Consequently, this study offers a window into the influencer-follower relationship to understand more about SMI's power to change behaviour, and to assess how this influence is manifested in followers' wish of imitating experiences.

A Study of Consumer Behaviour towards Food Waste in Ireland: Attitudes, Quantities and Global Warming Potentials

Author: Angela Flanagan

Supervisor: Dr. Anushree Priyadarshini

Abstract

Even with increasing discussions about environmental problems and sustainability, the issue of food waste is often neglected. In Ireland, it is incredibly unclear how consumers perceive the topic of food waste and how aware they are of their wasteful actions which can result in a plethora of environmental and ethical issues. Thus, this study aimed to investigate consumer behaviour towards food waste in Ireland by analysing their attitudes, quantities of food waste and the global warming potentials of this.

By utilising a quantitative research approach, an online survey was created, and 2,062 usable responses were obtained. By employing both factor analysis and cluster analysis, two clusters of consumers were formed based off of their attitudes towards food waste, and it was found that 62.56% of the sample were uncaring consumers and 37.44% were caring consumers. The uncaring consumers consisted of more young males and were relatively unphased by food waste and take minimal precautions to reduce food waste at all stages of consumption. In contrast, caring consumers consisted of more older and female consumers and were deeply disturbed by food waste, taking all precautions to reduce food waste at every stage of consumption. Uncaring consumers produced, on average, 0.74 kg of food waste weekly accounting for 2.74 kg of CO₂ in global warming potential, whereas caring consumers produced only half this amount.

Thus it can be suggested that consumers attitudes towards food waste are directly correlated to their food waste quantities and consequently global warming effects. Although these results are disturbing, they provide hope that if uncaring consumers attitudes were to change, they could potentially turn into caring consumers. This could be done by designing an integrated campaign, at either governmental or organisational level, which re-educates consumers about food waste and, as suggested by previous authors, appeals to consumers wants and needs. This would have multiple benefits for Ireland, including reduced food waste, lower CO₂ emissions and overall more sustainable living nationally.

A Thematic Analysis of Corporate Wellbeing Programmes Adapting to the Changing Needs of Employees During the COVID-19 Pandemic 2020.

Author: Conor Fitzpatrick

Supervisor: Adrienne Czerwin-Abbott

Abstract

Wellbeing is a state of physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease (World Health Organisation, 2020). The worldwide spread of COVID-19 in 2020, has caused significant disruption around the world. Some organisations have identified the need to support employees in difficult times through corporate wellbeing programmes (CWP). These programmes provide physical, mental and emotional health supports as well as professional development supports (Kim, Woo, Uysal, and Kwon, 2018). Effective communication from management contributes to a positive workplace environment and improves employee performance while reducing absenteeism, presenteeism and staff turnover rates. A review of the literature was conducted which provided an overview of corporate wellbeing and corporate wellbeing programmes in a crisis. Semi-structured interviews were used to answer the research question: “How were corporate wellbeing programmes adapted to the changing needs of employees during the COVID-19 pandemic 2020?”. The research was conducted as a cross-sectional qualitative exploration using an inductive interpretivist approach. A narrative inquiry, using thematic analysis, was used to analyse the findings and create themes as a guideline for wellbeing managers in a future crisis. The themes identified were: provide corporate wellbeing programmes; staff training and development; online communication of wellbeing programmes; establish a two-way feedback system and measure and evaluate wellbeing programmes.

It Will Strike at any Moment and it Has the Power to Ruin Your Day: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Women’s Discourses of Menstruation

Author: Jennifer Harrington

Supervisor: Dr. Olivia Freeman

Abstract

Menstruation is a pivotal biological process which women experience on average once a month (Moffat & Pickering, 2019). For some women it is a natural process and signifier of their continued health and fertility (Gunson, 2016), for others it is an inconvenience which interrupts their daily life (Luke, 1997). The purpose of this research is to analyse discussions of menstruation held by women to determine how menstruation is discursively produced. Podcasts were chosen as the data to be studied as they allow an intimate setting for menstruation to be discussed and for the discussions to be listened to, which is important given the sensitive nature of the subject matter (Simes & Berg, 2001). Additionally, the podcasts provided a ready source of rich data for studying.

The methodology used was critical discourse analysis, Fairclough’s (2013) three-phase analytical framework was used. This framework provided opportunity to study the relationships between the language used in the creation of the discourses, the discourses themselves as well as the social context in which the discourses were produced. Several episodes from two separate podcast series were studied in an effort to gain as varied data as possible. Five discourses were found to be produced in the podcasts, some having been identified in previous studies while others, such as mystery and toxic appeared to be newer or as yet largely unestablished discourses. The research allows for a deeper understanding of how menstruation is discursively produced by contemporary women. This research provides a foundation on which further research can be built regarding discourses of menstruation and altering how menstruation is currently framed.

How Do Luxury Brands Respond To Online Firestorms On Social Media Effectively And How Do These Situations Effect Brand Performance?

Author: Calin Harris

Supervisor: Dr. Rosie Hand

Abstract

The primary goal of this study is to examine the effect of online firestorms on luxury brand marketing and brand to customer engagement. This focus has led to the following research question: How do luxury brands respond to online firestorms on social media effectively and how do these situations effect brand performance? The goal of the suggested research is to gain an understating of the most effective strategies for the company to respond to these waves of online negative brand publicity. The rise of social media and transition of marketing from traditional forms of media to digital has enabled consumers to engage in the sharing of negative opinions about a company with thousands of others in an incredibly short space of time. This phenomenon has been referred to as “online firestorms” by Pfeffer, Zorbach, & Carley (2014) and they pose a significant threat to companies who do not implement effective response strategies. The research of this study is based on data collected from gaining insight into online firestorms and change in consumer perception of Dolce& Gabbana. The responses made by the company after these situations will be analysed in depth in effort to gain greater insight into which strategies were the most effective and which brought the most negative implications for the company. This study follows the netnographic methods of Kozinets (2019) to gather data on the sentiment of users in online environments. This study finds that the firestorm which hit D&G in late 2018 effected the company’s performance in the Asian and international market. It also reflects the arguments of Pfeffer et al (2014) and Benoit (2018) on the dangers and consequences for brands which attempt several response strategies or attempt to deny their actions or wrongdoings.

The Influence Of Customer Satisfaction And Loyalty Programs On Customer Loyalty In The Mom And Baby Retail Industry In Vietnam

Author: Thi Thu Huong Pham

Supervisor: Dr. Christina Ryan

Abstract

The expanding landscape of supermarkets, chain stores, e-commerce platforms as well as foreign retailers provides Vietnamese parents with various avenues to purchase different types of mom and baby products and services. Thus, the mom and baby retail market in Vietnam has become highly competitive. The Vietnamese-owned mom and baby store chains, such as Con Cung, Bibomart, KidsPlaza, Shoptretho and Tuticare, have been looking for more effective approaches to retain customer loyalty. They have worked to increase customer satisfaction levels in relation to the products and services they provide, as well as offering increased benefits to their customers. This research study aimed to investigate the influence of satisfaction and loyalty programs among Vietnamese parents towards those Vietnamese-owned mom and baby store chains in Vietnam. The specific target population of the research was selected to be Vietnamese parents who had children in the 0-7-year age range. The findings revealed that, in general, customer satisfaction and loyalty programs had a positive significant influence on customer loyalty among Vietnamese parents toward Vietnamese-owned mom and baby store chains in Vietnam. However, each dimension of customer satisfaction and loyalty programs showed different and, sometimes, contrary influences on each dimension of customer loyalty. The research findings may provide managers in Vietnamese retailers with useful insights into their customers' consumer behaviors and preferences, in order to help create and sustain customer loyalty towards their store chains.

Exploring the Constructions of Female Reality Television Stars on the Daily Mail's Website; A Discourse Analysis of Public Comments

Author: Saoirse McLaughlin

Supervisor: Dr. Brendan O' Rourke

Abstract

Problematic constructions of females are prevalent in contemporary media formats. The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the constructional discourses that arise in a social networking medium concerning female reality stars. Literature from topics that concern reality television, the media and social networking was collected and critically analysed to establish an overview of the key factors that surround ways in which women in reality television are constructed, and the effects that these constructions have on society. Critical discourse analysis was utilised when analysing the comments section of three different MailOnline articles; MailOnline is the Daily Mail's online equivalent. The articles that were chosen concern three separate female reality stars, while they were competing in their respective shows. It should be noted that the articles chosen were based on a scene from each show, where the women in question were interacting with men whom they were romantically involved.

The project undertook a mixed-method approach, whereby the number of comments surrounding the female and their male counterparts was first counted and compared. It was discovered that the female star suffered far more abuse than their male counterparts. The data was then qualitatively analysed and uncovered that harmful discourse, regarding the interpretation of females, occurs consistently and in numerous ways in the MailOnline's comment section. The most common discursive themes found were the construction of women on the shows as "slags", unintelligent, manipulative, and false. Furthermore, the commenters would compare the women to other women, including themselves, in order to translate what they believe to be the right way for women to behave.

How is the Music Industry utilizing Instagram for the facilitation of Co-Creation?

Author: Katie Mc Parland

Supervisor: Dr. Joseph Fitzgerald

Abstract

The purpose of the research is to explore how the music industry is how is the Music Industry utilising Instagram for the facilitation of co-creation? As the music industry is one of the quickest adopters of digital technology, the paper explores how it is using the social media site, Instagram to not only market and promote artists but also using an online platform to create content with other members of the music community. The objective of the research is to investigate how the platform is being used to facilitate co-creation. It evaluates the sites impact on the industry and whether or not the industry is engaging in social media for collaborative purposes.

The study uses netnography to observe 50 music related Instagram accounts. Evidence of co-creational related activities were collected and thematically analysed. The analysis shows a strong correlation between the music industry using Instagram for co-creational purposes. Results found that the platform is being used to facilitate physical content creation amongst the community, provide a medium to market and promote co-created content, act a space for artists to network and connect to collaborate and to consult the music community for input to creative works resulting in co-creation. From the findings it can be concluded that the music industry is utilizing Instagram to facilitate cocreation in the form of co-creation of content, marketing of said content, networking to create content and engaging with online music communities.

An Exploration of the Sustainable Fashion Consumption Practices of Generation Z in Ireland.

Author: Jennifer Murphy

Supervisor: Dr Alan McCormack

Abstract

Modern consumers have increased knowledge of the environmental and social impacts of fashion production and consumption (Capstick, Whitmarsh, Poortinga, Pidgeon, & Upham, 2015; Henninger, Alevizou, & Oates, 2016) yet, many have not changed their fashion consumption behaviours resulting in a knowledge-to-action gap (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; Mcneill & Moore, 2015; Niinimäki, 2010). Businesses who wish to base their operations on sustainable forms of fashion consumption need to understand the motivations of sustainable consumers. Although research has established that different generational cohorts experience different motivations for sustainable consumption, little research has been carried out into the motivations of Generation Z. The purpose of this research was therefore to discover how Generation Z consume fashion sustainably, and to explore what motivates this group to consume in this way. A wardrobe study methodology (Klepp & Bjerck, 2014), drawing on Warde's (2005) account of practice theory and involving thematic analysis of interviews along with visual content analysis of native photography provided a flexible approach to answering these questions.

The results showed that Generation Z consumers engage in *circular* fashion consumption practices motivated by respect for the environment, respect for human work, perceived consumer effectiveness, and several psychosocial motivations. Additionally, the research showed that there are external social forces which either enable or block motivated consumers from engaging in sustainable fashion consumption practices which helps to explain the knowledge-to-action gap observed in the fashion industry.

These results have implications for how fashion businesses market to sustainable Generation Z consumers. This study was successfully adapted to an online setting and future wardrobe studies may also take place online giving more freedom in terms of sample size and location. However, the online nature of this research may have led to the over-reporting of sustainable practices by participants given that the researcher was not physically present during interviews.

When Size Does Matter: Fuller Bust Consumption, Identity & Self-Esteem

Author: Marisa Yunker

Supervisor: Dr Valerie Gannon

Abstract

The following research study explored the topic of fuller bust consumers (bra cup sizes of DD+). Its aim was to uncover the relationships between fuller bust consumption, identity, and self-esteem. A theoretical framework was generated using relevant literature, encompassing topics such as consumption and identity, fit/size concerns, accessibility, and body image/self-esteem. Though previous work has addressed the concerns of another marginalized size identity, the plus size woman, few have explored the fuller bust woman, specifically within a consumption context. This study instead focuses exclusively on the fuller bust woman's consumption practices, and how these habits and desires correlate with issues of self-esteem and identity.

Using this theoretical framework, in-depth interviews with fuller bust participants were designed. Findings revealed that fuller bust consumers encounter difficulties along the consumption process, especially as bras in their sizes are limited, expensive, or unavailable. Such limitations force them to shop infrequently and often not enjoy the process, even relating to clothing. This in turn can have impact on their self-esteem, which is often boosted by attractive lingerie or well-fitting garments.

Additionally, while the fuller bust identity may not be vocalised by all, it serves as a way to simplify the purchasing process. Such findings were expanded through the data analysis process, which included themes from the literature review, as well as new themes relating to envy, compassion, social commentary, and a connection with the plus size identity.

This discussion revealed that while fuller bust consumers encounter disparaging messages related to their breasts, their main concerns are the consumption limitations placed upon them when compared to their smaller chested peers. Ultimately, the fuller bust identity is one that is often at odds with other identities, while severely impacting daily consumption choices, feelings towards their breasts, and overall body confidence.