Can firms get away with questionable content marketing?

An explanatory research about questionable content marketing on social media and its relationship with brand image.

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Abstract

The development of social media has increased the usage and prevalence of content marketing. This has enhanced the pressures on marketers to manage and leverage this tool. Also, consumers interaction with valuable content leads to a stronger relationship with the brand which further might enhance the brand image. Hence, this paper carries out a quantitative research with the purpose to explain if questionable content marketing on social media have a negative impact on brand image.

The researchers used questionnaires as their method for collection of empirical data. The respondents were gathered based on a convenience sampling. The questionnaires were out sent out to 204 participants, were the aim was to investigate if the respondents view of a brand changes negatively, after being exposed to scenarios that were constituted by questionable content marketing. It was analyzed through an ANOVA test.

The overall conclusions after gathering and analyzing the data, implicate that questionable content marketing have a negative effect on brand image. Therefore, it becomes important for managers to carefully evaluate their content marketing strategy on social media in order to avoid questionable content marketing.

Keywords: questionable content marketing, content marketing, brand image, brand associations, favorability of associations, strength of associations, uniqueness of associations, social media
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Berthon, Pitt, Plangger & Shapiro (2012) explain that during the 21st century, social media have taken up a large part of individuals and organizations everyday life. The concept of social media can be defined as “the product of Internet-based applications that build on the technological foundations of Web 2.0” (Berthon et al., 2012, p. 263). Tuten & Solomon (2014) further explain that the utilization of social media enables individuals to share their ideas and express their feelings regarding certain topics, through Web 2.0 technologies. Web 2.0 is a term that became popularized in relation to the evolution of communication and is characterized by enabling users to create and distribute content, that goes within social media. The term is also characterized by emphasizing user generated content on the virtual platforms on the Internet. Crowston & Fagnot (2018) further explain user generated content as the process where unpaid contributors create and publish any type of content on the virtual community, which could include blog posts, videos and pictures. Furthermore, user-generated content is an approach, that could be found in the context of content marketing.

Content marketing is a widely used concept in today’s business society (Gattis, 2014). Pulizzi (2014) explains that this particular concept is quite new, but still possess a rather distinct and clear definition. Pulizzi (2014, p. 5) defines content marketing as “the marketing and business process for creating and distributing valuable and compelling content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience - with the objective of driving profitable customer action”. Furthermore, Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) explain that content marketing could be found in the context of social media environments.

Additionally, Gattis (2014) and Järvinen & Taiminen (2016) explain that there are several advantages for organizations when using content marketing on social media. Since this approach concerns content being created and published, organizations use this approach to target and attract their audience by posting content that is aimed towards them. Crowston & Fagnot (2018) state that it is important to note that consumers also could be involved in the creation of content, which concerns the process of user generated content. Additionally, Wijaya
& Putri (2013) state that organizations can gather information about consumers in order to sort out the ones that are considered to be potential consumers for that particular business. Tuten & Solomon (2014) further explain that social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, enable individuals and organizations from all around the world to view, publish and communicate with each other in relation to the published content. Based on this, organizations are able to publish content that seek to draw consumers attention towards their brand and the brand image. Keller (1993) explains that the concept of brand image, concerns the consumers feelings and perceptions towards a particular brand.

1.2 Problem discussion

The development of social media has increased the usage and prevalence of content marketing. This have enhanced the pressures on marketers to manage and leverage this tool (Pophal, 2017). Furthermore, consumers interaction with valuable content leads to a stronger relationship with the brand which further might enhance the brand image (Wijaya & Putri, 2013; Dholakiya, 2015; Vernuccio, 2014; Murphy, Laczniak & Prothero, 2012). Chakraborty & Bhat (2018) even state that online content is significantly more effective than oral communication when firms seek to enhance their brand image. Thus, content on social media increase the usage experience and consumers engagement.

It is important for organizations that their customers possess a strong image towards their brand (Keller, 1993; Keller, 2008; Hoeffler & Keller, 2003). Keller (2008) explains that a strong brand image will induce the customer to be loyal towards the brand, enhance the customer’s ability to easier recognize the brand, which will make the brand competitive and enhance the organizational growth. Although, Keller (1993) states that brands difficulties of possessing a strong brand image, could be a result of the brand being perceived as diffused among consumers. Keller, Heckler & Houston (1998) explain that the consumers could possess a confused association with a brand which will induce them to not understand the intended meaning that the brand is displaying. Therefore, the confused association with a particular brand, will affect the consumer to having a reduced amount of shared meaning with a brand. Aaker (1996) further explains that the consumers diffused association with a certain brand, could enhance the consumer to feel that the particular brand does not meet the expectations, which could make the consumer more willing to choose goods from competing brands.
Keller (1993) argues that in order to measure how the consumer perceives a certain brand, it becomes vital to break down the concept of brand image into four components. These are, namely; types of associations, favorability of brand associations, strength of brand associations and uniqueness of brand associations. Keller (1993) and James (2005) further explain that types of associations are more concerned about examining what consumers think of a firm’s actual goods. On the other hand, Schnittka, Sattler and Zenker (2012) explain that favorability, strength and uniqueness of associations are more concerned with how the consumer perceives the overall brand, and in regard to competing brands. Therefore, types of associations will not be relevant for this particular research, since this research will mainly focus on how the consumer perceives an overall brand, and not specifically the goods (Park, Jaworski & MacInnis 1986; Keller, 1993). Hence, this study will be built on the components of favorability, strength and uniqueness of associations.

Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström & Freundt (2014), Gattis (2014) & Harad (2016) argues that companies have difficulties to create valuable content and achieve success within content marketing. This is due to the fact that firms tend to perform content marketing on social media platforms without an appropriate preparation or strategy. Murphy et al. (2012) and Javalgi (2018) state that brand managers should develop and practice content marketing in coherence to moral and legislation on the internet along with a clear delivery of the companies’ objectives. If brand managers do not pay attention to this, the content marketing might be questioned by consumers. Murphy et al. (2012) define questionable content marketing as a criticized and unethical way too affect and shape the consumers wants, which might cause harm to the consumers. Examples of questionable content marketing activities concern; misleading content marketing (Xie, 2016), content marketing aimed towards children (Calvert, 2008), and misuse of user generated content (Martens, 2011). These particular activities will be further discussed in this paper.

Today, literature could be found that explain the positive impact of successful content marketing on brand image (Wijaya & Putri, 2013; Dholakiya, 2015; Vernuccio, 2014; Murphy et al., 2012). Murphy et al. (2012) and Javalgi (2018) state that firms content marketing practices are likely to be criticized and questioned as a result of poor content marketing strategy. Research concerning the negative relationship between questionable content marketing on social media and brand image is today limited. This have led to a research gap that have to be filed with new research. Hence, it becomes vital to conduct research that clearer explain if there
is a negative relationship between the variables questionable content marketing on social media and brand image, and additionally, how strong the relationship between the variables are.

The contribution of this study will aim to provide a suggestion for brand managers. If questionable content marketing on social media evidently have a negative impact on brand image, brand managers will understand how important it is to carefully evaluate their content marketing strategies in order to avoid questionable content marketing.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to explain if questionable content marketing on social media have a negative impact on brand image.
2. Theoretical framework

The following theoretical framework will start with theory regarding brand image and the multiple brand associations. The brand associations favorable, strength and uniqueness will be in focus, since these will be used as important variables throughout the research. The chapter will continue with presenting theory about questionable content marketing. The three questionable content marketing activities that could be identified are, namely, misleading content marketing, misuse of user generated content and content marketing aimed towards children.

2.1 Brand image

Keller (1993, p. 3) defines brand image “as perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory”, hence, it can be either negative or positive depending on the perception that the consumer has (Elangeswaran & Ragel, 2014). As many authors, to name a few (Van Reijmersdal, Neijens & Smit, 2007; Elangeswaran & Ragel, 2014; Kim, Chun & Ko, 2017) tend to use Keller (1993) when explaining brand image, and therefore, it is seen as an established definition. Further, Keller (1993) explains that brand associations constitute brand image and concern the consumers thoughts, beliefs, perceptions and feelings toward previous experience and general knowledge about a brand. There are four kinds of associations; types, favorability, strength and uniqueness.

2.1.1 Favorability of brand associations

The favorability of brand associations concerns a brand and its goods ability to satisfy consumers wants and needs, which later form an overall brand attitude (MacKenzie, 1986). Consumers association of the goods are based on the consumers perception and evaluation of the goods attributes. Furthermore, consumers are unlikely to evaluate an attribute or benefit in a particular good, if they do not consider it to be important. Moreover, the consumers have to consider the attributes and benefits as important in order to evaluate them (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Consumers can have association in memory from the brand, the product and even package color. However, it is important that the brand reflect the favorable product attributes. Thus, favorable brand associations are important when convincing
consumers that the brand possess relevant attributes and benefits that satisfy their needs and wants (Keller, 1993).

2.1.2 Strength of brand associations

The strength of associations is referred to how often and how the brand has entered the mind of the consumers. Additionally, it is about how long the brand is stored in the consumers memory and in which manner the consumer thinks about the brand. Which manner refers to whether the brand have a positive or negative association in the consumers mind (Keller, 1993). The level of strength is measured through how actively and often the consumer thinks and seeks information regarding a particular brand. Higher activity leads to stronger associations in the consumer’s mind and a higher probability that the information will be accessible and recalled when facing the brand (Lockhart, Craik & Jacoby, 1976). Severi & Ling (2013) further explain that this could enhance the consumer to choose from that particular brand. The information might not always be accessible, although, strongly associated cues and reminders might trigger the retrieval of information (Tulving & Psotka, 1971). Furthermore, Keller (1993) explains that the retrieval of information is also highly dependent on which context the brand is associated.

2.1.3 Uniqueness of brand associations

The uniqueness of associations is basically how a brand association is differentiated towards competing brands (Keller, 1993). The brand associations might or might not be differentiated from other competing brands. Aaker (1982) talks about the importance of brand positioning and the brand’s unique selling propositions that convince consumers to choose the particular brand over the competitors. The differentiation between brands might be identified by doing a direct comparison between the competitors. The comparison could be based on product-related or non-product-related attributes, as well as functional, experiential or image benefits.
2.2 Questionable content marketing

2.2.1 Misleading content marketing

Mitra, Raymond, Hopkins, Taylor & Lee (2008) and Lahav & Zimand-Sheiner (2016) explain that misleading content marketing can often be found on digital channels and particularly on social media platforms. Jeong & Yun Yoo (2011) explain that misleading content marketing refers to false or deceptive information that most likely will make a consumer act according to the misleading marketing without realizing that he or she is being deceived. Jeong & Yun Yoo (2011) and Xie (2016) state that misleading marketing is illegal according to Federal Trade Commission. FTC is an American commission that protects consumers from unfair business practices. The law is mandating that companies make truthful and accurate statements in their marketing. They are further encouraged, when possible, to cover the statements with scientific evidence.

Lahav & Zimand-Sheiner (2016) discuss an issue which originated from misleading content marketing in their article. The authors present a relatively new phenomenon of embedded paid digital content in information channels. The paid content engages the consumers without transparency or full disclosure online. As a result of hiding subtle commercial messages, the reader becomes confused and cannot separate between what is editorial or informative, and paid content on behalf of marketers. Lahav & Zimand-Sheiner (2016) further state that subtle 
marketing will help companies to achieve better marketing results. Campbell & Marks (2015) and Murphy (2017) also discuss this phenomenon and refer it as native marketing.

Kariyawasam & Wigley (2017) explain that despite the efforts from FTC, the existing legal protections for online consumers are still under development and have not fully captured the various aspects of misleading advertising online. Inadequate regulations of online misleading advertisement have opened up for companies to make use of misleading content marketing. Furthermore, Jeong & Yun Yoo (2011) and Xie (2016) further explain that companies using content marketing on social media today tend to exaggerate certain features along with diminishing and downplaying other companies’ products in order to make their own products more attractive on the market. These actions are put in a grey zone, where they stretch on the line between what is legal and illegal. Therefore, these actions are questionable since they by exaggeration and diminishing of competitors’ alternatives mislead the consumers. Mitra et al. (2008) explain that misleading content marketing could also be referred to as intentionally leaving out information that is highly important for the consumers purchase decision.

Khamis, Ang & Welling (2017) explain that companies have in the last decade started to use content marketing through celebrity endorsement on social media. Freberg, Graham, Mcgaughey & Freberg (2011) refer celebrity endorsers as social media influencers. Social media influencers are endorsers in form of an independent third party, whose task is to shape and affect the social media audiences’ attitudes and behavior. This is done by sharing branded content through channels like blogs, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms. Khamis et al. (2017) explain that today, hundreds of brands have captured the opportunities of influencers, in order to create brand awareness and increase sales. Additionally, Bowen (2013) states that influencer marketing has had an explosive growth in the marketing world, which have induced brands and businesses to work more with influencers than the past. However, along with the rising opportunities there are also plenty of downsides.

The growth of social media influencers has aroused the interest of FTC. FTC have stated that bloggers and social media influencers will be held liable for any false or misleading statements that they make about a product they are promoting, along with the company behind the promotion campaign (Walden, Bortree & Distaso, 2015). Already in 2008, Brown & Hayes (2008) identified some guidelines and ethical dilemmas that the new influencer wave should
follow and consider when publishing digital content online. The authors summarize the guidelines in three major steps, which is about being transparent about commercial relationships, do not post or publish misleading reviews and do not omit or edit negative reviews. Bowen (2013) further states that the three guidelines are constantly being broken. Brown & Hayes (2008), Bowen (2013) and Walden et al. (2015) especially enlighten the first step that concerns the authenticity and transparency of the content the influencers are publishing content.

Walden et al. (2015) further explain it is important since many users perceive influencers as ordinary people and not marketing tools. The boundaries between what is private and authentic content, opinions and what is sponsored by brands and companies are somehow blurry. Bowen (2013) gives one example when an influencer was not transparent enough. The example concerned the model Kim Kardashian’s who promoted products from the fast food company Carl’s Jr. Kim Kardashian received 10 000 dollars per tweet and made fans believe that she, as a thin model, ate unhealthy hamburgers on a daily basis.

2.2.2 Content marketing aimed towards children

Today, younger people are using different types of social media platforms in order to search for information that will help them in their purchase decisions. Younger people have become an important audience for companies (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011). Companies have created various strategies which are directly aimed towards children and adolescents on online. The strategies include placing appealing content on particular social media platforms where they know that children are active. The promotional content is often designed in an entertaining way in order capture children’s attention and engage them, for instance, online games (Calvert 2008; Tufte & Rasmunssen, 2010). However, the online practices of targeting children have raised critics and concerns regarding the effects on children (Moore & Rideout, 2007).

Nairn & Fine (2008) state that children have a harder time to distinguish advertisement from entertainment and information content. Mas‐Tur, Tur‐Porcar & Llorca (2016) further state that children do not only have good access to information on social medias, but they also consider the information provided to be more reliable than the information provided by companies channeled through traditional media. Additionally, Mas-Tur et al. (2016) and Shin, Huh & Faber (2012) address children’s use of mobile phones as an issue. Their constantly connection
online make them an easier target for firms. Thus, all this makes children very vulnerable consumers on social media.

Walden et al. (2015) state that celebrity endorsements, also referred as social media influencers, and their involvement in content marketing is another factor to take into consideration. According to Chia & Poo (2009) social media influencers have a big impact on younger people. The authors further state that younger people who compare themselves to celebrities develops a greater desire for material things than those who does not compare themselves with celebrities. As younger people frequently seem to misinterpret celebrity content online and contact with celebrities on social media as a real relationship which is more or less one sided (Chia & Poo, 2009; Chung & Cho, 2017).

2.2.3 Misuse of user generated content

Social media platforms empower consumers ability to share opinions and views and exert their individual and collective influence on other consumers and brands. Today, consumers are no longer passive users and recipients of product and brand information, instead they are interactive and have the ability to form and create such information (Kim & Johnson, 2016). Companies have through discussions, conversations and feedback seen the potential of interaction with consumers. The editorial content has turned out to be highly valuable for companies in their product and service development and is referred as user generated content (UGC) (Halliday, 2016). Albuquerque, Pavlidis, Chatow, Chen & Jamal (2012) describe UGC as a tool to further integrate consumer into brands’ and push brands’ content forward. Kennedy (2017) even states that engaging consumers in the process of creating and shaping their brand, is a marketing key for success. Zwick, Bonsu & Darmody (2008) explain that as a result of internet becoming a keystone of people’s everyday lives, companies have found new and more innovative ways to engage the consumers in user generated content.

However, Banks & Humphreys (2008), Terranova (2004), Martens (2011) and Zwick et al. (2008) are critical towards user generated content and state that companies extract and exploit free labor from loyal consumers. The authors present a perspective in which the consumers are producers that are constantly being unwaged, used and exploited by companies that are looking for free labor. Martens (2011) discusses the subject further and focuses on a particular case. The case refers to the Amanda Project where a company offered teens online to collaborate on
a book-in-progress by writing suggestions for the storyline or even writing parts of the book. The author discusses if the project is a way to empower teenage girls to get engaged in a cultural project, or if it is a way for publishers to exploit the girls to get free labor and content, and later sell the book back to the girls. Although UGC is not a bad thing in itself, which Sarikakis, Krug & Rodriguez-Amat (2017) talk about. The authors discuss members of a specific forum that do not see themselves as creators even though they created and shared their own interpretation of the specific media, and do not feel used because they do it for entertaining purposes.
3. Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between the questionable content marketing activities and brand image, found in the theoretical framework. The relationship is illustrated by three hypotheses that are drawn from each independent variable within questionable content marketing. The dependent variable is represented by brand image.

Anderson, Burnham & Thompson (2000) explain that there are two types of hypotheses, namely, a null hypothesis and an alternative hypothesis. Bryman & Bell (2011) state that the null hypothesis is concerned with testing a hypothesis where the variables are not stated to have any statistical significance with each other. Anderson et al. (2000) argue that the opposite to null hypothesis is alternative hypothesis, where variables have a statistical significance with each other. Thus, the three hypotheses for this study will be of the alternative type. Furthermore, Levine, Weber, Hullett, Park & Lindsey (2008) explain that when a researcher believes that the findings of his/her study is true and coherent with the initial hypothesis, it should lead to accept a hypothesis. However, Popper (1992) argues that a researcher never can assure that a certain theory is true, which implicates that nothing can be fully proven to be true. On the contrary, Popper (1992) further explains that a researcher can reject a hypothesis when the initial statements from the hypothesis are false in relation to the findings of a study.

As presented in the previous chapter, misleading content marketing exist to a large extent on social media platforms today (Mitra et al., 2008; Lahav & Zimand-Sheiner, 2016). Additionally, misleading content marketing have an effect on consumers whether they want it or not (Jeong & Yun Yoo, 2011). As Lahav & Zimand-Sheiner (2016), Campbell & Marks (2015) and Murphy (2017) discuss the lack of transparency when a firm is hiding subtle commercial messages in editorial content, which is referred as native marketing. This is similar to what Brown & Hayes (2008), Bowen (2013) and Walden et al. (2015) explain about the lack of transparency when using influencers in content marketing. Further on, Kariyawasam & Wigley (2017) and Xie (2016) explain that companies exaggerate their products and features in order to gain attention and attract consumers. However, there is no direct evidence that show that the presented information has a negative impact on brand image. Although, there are some cues that indicate that these actions have negative
consequences, therefore, the following hypothesis will examine whether there is a negative relationship between misleading content marketing on social media and brand image.

**H1: Misleading content marketing on social media have a negative impact on brand image.**

As mentioned previously, Hanna et al. (2011) state how children have become an important audience for companies. Additionally, Mas-Tur et al. (2016) & Nairn & Fine (2008) state that children are vulnerable consumers, since they are easier to influence which induce brands to take this as their advantage, especially on social media (Shin et al., 2012; Mas-Tur et al., 2016). Companies have created various strategies which are directly aimed towards children and adolescents online. Firms tend to create entertainment content that should appeal and attract children online (Tuft & Rasmunssen, 2010). Firms have also used social media influencers to easier target children online since they have a big impact on younger people (Chia & Poo, 2009). There is no evidence that show that the presented information has a negative impact on brand image. However, there are some cues that indicate that content marketing towards children have negative consequences, therefore, the following hypothesis will examine whether there is a negative relationship between content marketing on social media towards children and brand image.

**H2: Content marketing on social media towards children have a negative impact on brand image.**

Halliday (2016), Kennedy, (2017) and Albuquerque et al. (2012) state that engaging consumers in the process of creating and shaping their brand, will push the brand forward and is a key to success and highly valuable for companies. In contrast, Banks & Humphreys (2008), Terranova (2004), Martens (2011) and Zwick et al. (2008) are critical towards companies’ way of exploiting free labor from consumers, which is the basis for the following hypothesis. The following hypothesis will examine whether there is a negative relationship between misuse of user generated content on social media and brand image.

**H3: Misuse of user generated content on social media have a negative impact on brand image.**
Figure 2. (own) questionable content marketing on social media and its relationship with brand image

Figure 2 shows the hypotheses and their suggested relationship with brand image. They are stated neutral in their boxes, but the hypotheses have a negative sign which indicate that they affect brand image negatively.
4. Methodology

The following methodology chapter initially presents and justifies the research approach and research design that will be used for this particular research. Secondly, the chapter presents information about the data collection and data sources used in the research. Further on, an operationalization is presented that display and justifies the dependent and independent variables along with the scenarios that is used in the questionnaires. Additionally, theory and concepts concerning the data analysis and how the data will be measured is provided. Furthermore, quality criteria such as, validity, reliability and replication will be described further followed by a subchapter about the ethical principles that should be considered in business researches.

4.1 Research approach

4.1.1 Deductive vs. Inductive

Bryman & Bell (2011) explain that deductivism and inductivism are two separate approaches when researchers seek to combine theory and research in order to create an understanding concerning a certain phenomenon. Adams, Khan, Raeside & White (2007) explain that a deductive research is characterized by theory being the foundation of research. In the deductive approach, the aim is to form a single or several testable hypotheses, to then later test them in order to accept or reject the hypotheses.

Further on, Bryman & Bell (2011) state that the process cycle for deductive research begins with the researchers’ way of searching and gathering theory about a certain topic. Continuing to form hypotheses, and start collecting data. With the help from the gathered results, the researchers can then confirm or reject the hypotheses. In the end of the process, the theory becomes revised. Additionally, Adams et al. (2007) explain that the deductive approach is considered to move the research from something general to a case specific topic. Bryman & Bell (2011) further state that the deductive research follows a clear, linear and logical approach, while having an explanatory purpose. Later on, the purpose seeks to test the hypothesis and explain a certain phenomenon.
When talking about the inductive approach, Ghauri & Grønhaug (2005) explain that this research approach is built on logic. It is further characterized by the researchers’ enforcement of drawing general conclusions based on the data the researchers collect. The theory in the inductive approach is the result of research. Bryman & Bell (2011) explain that the process cycle starts with the researchers’ way of observing a particular phenomenon, to then later on find patterns of association in order to build tentative hypotheses upon. From this, the theory for a particular research becomes carried out. Furthermore, Ghauri & Grønhaug (2005) mention that research in the inductive approach goes from case specific to general conclusions. Bryman & Bell (2011) explain that inductive studies have an exploratory approach, which refers to the researchers’ way to gain a deeper understanding, by considering several perspectives when investigating in a certain topic. Furthermore, the deductive approach gives the possibility to explain causal relationships between concepts and variables. Additionally, deductive approach makes it possible to generalize research findings to a certain extent (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

This research will be built on a deductive approach. The authors of this paper first started by searching for existing theory for questionable content marketing. Based upon the existing theory, the authors will formulate hypotheses which will be tested. The hypotheses will be tested through a quantitative data analysis method, which will then help the authors of this paper to either confirm or reject the formulated hypotheses from the conceptual framework chapter. Furthermore, it can be argued that this research is of deductive approach, because it seeks to explain the relationship between questionable content marketing and brand image.

4.1.2 Quantitative vs. Qualitative

According to Adams et al. (2007) there are two main business research strategies that can be used, which is either quantitative or qualitative and as their names suggest, one is about quantity and the other about quality. Quantitative research is built upon previous knowledge, which qualitative is as well but to a lesser degree. The knowledge is in form of theories and from these theories, hypotheses are extracted (Bryman & Bell, 2011). To be able to test the hypotheses, a large amount of primary data is collected which then can be analyzed and the hypotheses will be either accepted or rejected. Quantitative research is not so much about how things are but more why things are in a certain way, and that is usually why it has an explanatory purpose. Another aspect of this strategy is that it should be generalizable, and also that the validity and reliability of the study must be strong (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005).
Now to qualitative research, which is more or less the opposite to quantitative. The focus is to try to understand why things are the way they are, thus meaning that the purpose is to explore a specific area and by doing so, creating an initial theory based on the outcomes of the research, which can then be further used in a quantitative study to determine its relevance (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Another difference between the two is that in quantitative research, something is always being measured and is assigned with numerical values, which is avoided in qualitative which instead uses words to explore and gain deeper insights (Malhotra & Birks, 2003).

For this research, the quantitative approach is used. The reason for this is based on what prior research that was available and how it then could be used which then was determined that a quantitative was fitting. Quantitative research is also suitable for this research since it is appropriate when explaining relationship between two or more variables. In this case, an explanation between the relationship of brand image and questionable content marketing on social media. Also, it can be argued that this research possesses a quantitative approach, because the research will concern numerical values, more specifically, when analyzing the gathered data.

4.2 Research design

Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 40) define a research design as “a framework for the collection and analysis of data. A choice of research design reflects decisions about the priority being given to a range of dimensions of the research process”. The authors further state that there are five types of designs, namely; experiment, longitudinal, case study, comparative and cross-sectional. Experiment uses two groups and there is a difference of one variable that the two groups are exposed to. The change that the variable creates is what is interesting in a experiment. (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Malhotra, 2010) A longitudinal design has the time as focus and for example if a questionnaire is the method it is done at least two times to the same participants. The case study has a single case in focus which can be a organization, location, person or event which is analyzed thoroughly. The fourth design, comparative, is using methods which is very similar to two or more cases with the aim to compare them (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Lastly is cross-sectional, which will be used for this research.

Cross-sectional design involves using more than one case and looking for variations between variables. Furthermore, it is important that there is a systematic approach to be able to measure
it correctly. The cases’ in this research is each individual that answer the questionnaire. The variables can be found in the questions of the questionnaire, which enables the possibility to verify or falsify the hypothesis (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Adams et al., 2007). Bryman & Bell (2011) explain that the cross-sectional design is a common approach to use when conducting questionnaires. Ghauri & Grønhaug (2005) state that one of the greatest advantages of cross-sectional research is that it is simple and cheap to perform. Neuman (2003) strengthens this and describes the cross-sectional design as the simplest method to use for the lowest cost.

Further on, Neuman (2003) states that the cross-sectional design is used when researchers seek to detect patterns of associations between variables. When it comes to this particular study, the researchers will seek to investigate in the relationship between questionable content marketing and how it affects brand image. Further on, the researchers of this paper will collect their data more or less at the same time. This is coherent with the statements from Bryman & Bell (2011) & Adams et al. (2007), regarding the characteristics that a cross-sectional study needs to possess.

Hence, this also goes in line with this particular study, and the way the data is collected more or less simultaneously. Although, this study might be considered as a classic experimental design, because it aims to detect differences between variables on different events (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, this research cannot be classified as an experimental because it does not possess a control group, and also because there is no random assignment to the groups for the research. These characteristics are considered for the classic experiment design (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Hence, this study will be based on a cross-sectional research design.

4.3 Data sources

In order for a research to be able to answer a question, understand a specific issue or test a hypothesis, data and information are needed. Additionally, the data needs be to current and reliable, and the researchers need to analyze the data in a critical way to understand the possible errors and limitations (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005). There are two types of different data, primary and secondary. Primary data is defined as information that researchers collect in the first hand. The data is collected by interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, observations, and so on. This is done in order to gather useful data for a specific research case. In contrast, secondary data orientate from previous research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Secondary data on the
other hand is data that the researcher have not collected himself, and is used for something else than its original purpose. For example, it could be a research that have collected data which another research then uses but for another reason (Cowton, 1998).

Each data type has its own advantage and disadvantage. Primary data is often more expensive and time consuming than secondary that are in general very cost effective and easy to utilize. Although, the time and cost consuming aspect of the primary data might go hand in hand with the complexity of the particular research (Sontakki, 2010). Additionally, primary data is often considered to be more reliable since it is collected through researchers first hand. Secondary data on the other hand, need to be carefully evaluated by researchers in order to identify unreliability, subjectivity and errors in the data (Krishnaswamy & Satyaprasad, 2010).

The data that will be collected for the analysis will be primary data. Primary data was chosen since the desired data was not available through secondary data because of the specification and complexity of the research. The research method will be questionnaires, that will be shared online to reach out to the particular target group, this makes primary data highly important and excludes the idea of using secondary data.

4.4 Data collection method

4.4.1 Questionnaires

Bryman & Bell (2011) explain that questionnaires is a common tool for organizations and researchers to gather data about a certain topic. Roberts (2012) explains that questionnaires can be send out through the web or in printed form. Bryman & Bell (2011) state that questionnaires are considered as a valuable research method, when it comes to collecting and measuring data in regard to attitudes, beliefs and opinions about a certain topic. Further on, this provides the researcher the ability to investigate in possible similarities and differences in attitudes and beliefs towards a topic when it comes to a large group of people. However, Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011) explain that questionnaires are dependent on the participants willingness to participate in the research, and therefore, researchers try to encourage the respondents to participate in the research.

Additionally, Ghauri & Grønhaug (2005) state that one type of questionnaire is the self-completion questionnaire, which concerns the way participants respond and fill out the
questionnaire. The self-completion questionnaires original form is labelled as a mail/postal questionnaire. This particular form of questionnaire concerns the researchers’ way to send the questionnaire to respondents through mail. However, Cohen et al. (2011) explain that today it is more common to distribute it through online channels. Thus, respondents are invited to a website where they can answer the questionnaire. There are some advantages with online questionnaires. Firstly, the researchers have the ability to design the questionnaire so that the respondent will answer questions depending on their previous answer. Secondly, the researchers can hide questions from the respondents and regulate how many questions that should appear at once. Roberts (2012) further states that whatever distribution channels that are used, the self-completion questionnaires are filled by the respondents alone, without any help from the researcher. The advantages with this is that it has a lower risk of bias since the research would not affect the respondent since the questionnaire is done in the absence of the researcher. Secondly, self-completion questionnaires facilitate the respondents to be anonymous.

Questionnaire is suitable for this research since it can through numerical values detect the relationship between variables. In this case, the relationship between questionable content marketing on social media and brand image. Furthermore, as Robert (2012) states, questionnaires provide the researcher the ability to investigate in possible similarities and differences in attitudes and beliefs towards a topic. This is highly valuable for this research since the researchers are looking for possible changes in brand image as a result of questionable content marketing. Furthermore, self-completion will be used because the respondents can answer the questionnaires by themselves without the researchers affecting them, and also because it is time efficient for researchers when collecting the data.

4.4.2 Questionnaire design

Ghauri & Grønhaug (2005) explain that researchers need to consider some vital aspects when forming the questionnaire. The questions need to be constructed in a clear and logical way, in order to avoid misinterpretation of the content. Furthermore, the questionnaire should not be too long and contain too many questions, in order to maintain the focus and interest among the respondents that execute the questionnaire. Bryman & Bell (2011) argue for a simple design and layout of the questionnaire, in order to maximize the number of participants that finish the questionnaire and thus having a higher response rate. Additionally, Bryman & Bell (2011) suggest that researchers should follow some guidelines in order to make the questionnaire more
appealing for the respondents. The first step is to provide a clear information about the research and also how the respondents should relate to the questionnaire when answering the questions.

Ghauri & Grønhaug (2005) further explain that the questions of the questionnaire also are essential parts. Close ended questions are preferable in this approach, due to the fact that these questions tend to be easier to answer, in relation to open ended questions. Another advantage with close ended questions, concerns the researchers’ ability to easier process the data from the questionnaire, compared to open ended questions. Although, the open-ended questions could offer richer and deeper data for the researcher to examine.

4.4.2.1 Vignette technique (Scenario)

Bryman & Bell (2011) explain that vignette technique is a technique that is based on closed questions and scenarios that are constructed by the researchers. Finch (1987) defines scenarios as short narrative stories of hypothetical nature that paints up a picture of a particular situation and circumstances that the interviewee has to respond too. The response is often measured in changes of attitude, opinions or belief. Bryman & Bell (2011) state that the advantage of scenarios is that the respondent will have a greater possibility to reflect upon and understand the particular situation and trigger deeper feelings that might not be processed when facing ordinary questions. Furthermore, Bryman & Bell (2011) further state how important it is to construct scenarios that are believable and relatable in and represent credible situations.

Ramirez, Mukherjee, Vezzoli, & Kramer (2015) explain that using vignette technique in questionnaires have numerous advantages. Firstly, the vignette technique in questionnaires increases the ability to collect information from large numbers of people. Secondly, it can in questionnaires facilitate the process to examine multiple number of variables at once.

This particular research will conduct a questionnaire based on the vignette technique where each scenario is based on theory about questionable content marketing. Six scenarios were created in order to capture all of the theory found. Finch (1987) states that vignette technique suitable measuring the respondents change in attitude, opinions or belief after facing a scenario. This research questionnaire will focus on the same principle, however, the focus is on measuring the change in brand image after facing scenarios regarding the questionable content marketing. Scenarios are vital for this research, as Bryman & Bell (2011) using scenarios will facilitate the respondents’ ability to deeper reflect and analyze upon the particular questionable
content marketing activity. In this way, the respondents of this research can easier determine what they feel regarding the questionable content marketing activity. Furthermore, Ramirez et al. (2015) state that vignette technique enables the researchers to examine a multiple number of variables at once. This is valuable for this research since the questionnaire will measure several variables at the same time. Hence, the brand associations of brand image, favorability, strength and uniqueness.

Furthermore, the scenarios were constructed according to Bryman & Bell (2011) encouragement of making believable and relatable scenarios. The six scenarios will be sent out to respondents through three different questionnaires in order to avoid having a too long questionnaire. In each questionnaire, two scenarios will be presented.

4.4.3 Questionnaire execution

The data collection will consist of three questionnaires. The questionnaires will consist of close ended questions, in order to easier process the data. Furthermore, the questions will be formulated in a clear and logical way, in order to avoid misinterpretation of the content, which goes in line with the statements from Bryman & Bell (2011). The questions will be based on the Likert scale. It is usually in a scale from 1 to 5 which stands for strongly disagree to strongly agree and it is commonly used to measure attitudes (Malhotra, 2010; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016). The questionnaires will be conducted on Google Formula and each one will consist of 28 questions, whereof one is a control question.

The questionnaires for this particular research will be send out to active social media users through the social media platform Facebook. The respondents will initially be introduced to information about the questionnaire. The text will provide basic information about the questionnaire and guide the respondents on how they should answer the questionnaire. Secondly, information about the researchers are presented. Furthermore, in order to only obtain answers from active social media users, the first question of the questionnaire will include whether the respondent browse social media sites daily or not. If the respondent answer “no”, the individual will be sent to the end of the questionnaire and no further questions will be answered. Participants who answer “yes” will be sent forward to continue with the questionnaire.
Further on, the respondents will initially be introduced to a predisposition. The predisposition will state the following “When answering the questions in this part, try to think of an actual brand that is a part of your everyday life. This will represent the "Brand X".” This is done in order to facilitate the respondents ability to visualize a brand that they can put in the scenario context. This will make it easier for the respondents to relate to the scenarios which is strengthened by Bryman & Bell (2011) theory about vignette technique. Secondly, the respondents are presented to a set of questions regarding brand X which they should answer. The questions have been created from brand image theory, more specifically, the questions are based on the brand associations namely, favorability of associations, strength of associations and uniqueness of associations. The three associations are included in order to capture the wide and depth of the brand image theory. Thirdly, the respondents will be presented with a scenario. Then they are supposed to answer the same questions but asked again, with the scenario as a context. By doing so, the research will be able to see the effects of questionable content marketing on social media have on brand image. Thereafter, the same procedure will be repeated but with another scenario. Lastly, the respondents will be thanked for their participation and will be encouraged to answer the other questionnaires of the research. The questionnaires are available in Appendix A.

4.5 Data collection instrument

4.5.1 Operationalization and measurement of variables

The purpose of operationalizations is to simplify, clarify and formulate concepts that are used in the particular research. Operationalizations is also used to describe the chosen theory and further explain how it is going to be applied. Operationalization further illustrates a connection between the indicators used in the questionnaire along with a measurement for these indicators and concepts. Operationalization is a basic and required step in the process of making a questionnaire and its questions (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The operationalization below will combine the theoretical concepts and aspects for this research in order to form and present questions that will be used in the upcoming questionnaires. The questions in the following questionnaires will be formulated as statements. Each formulated statement will be clarified by a brief reasoning why it is relevant and used in the questionnaire along with a connection to the theory. The second operationalization will display the scenarios
that will be used in the questionnaire. There are six scenarios that are based on the questionable content marketing activities which were found in the literature. The table 4.5.3 also display the reasoning behind each scenario in relationship to the theory and hypothesis. Hypothesis 1 (H1) presents three marketing activities, namely, misleading marketing (native marketing), misleading marketing (through influencers) and misleading marketing (exaggerating and leaving out information). Hypothesis 2 (H2) includes two activities, which are content marketing towards children and content marketing towards children through influencers. Hypothesis 3 (H3) presents one activity, which is misuse of user generated content.

4.5.2 Operationalization (Questions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Sub-concept</th>
<th>Conceptual definition</th>
<th>Reasoning</th>
<th>Statements (Indicator)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Brand Image  | The favorability of associations      | The favorability of brand associations concerns a brand and its product’s abilities to satisfy consumers wants and needs which later forms an overall brand attitude (MacKenzie, 1986). | If questionable content marketing would affect the favorability of the brands products. | 1. I like brand X's products/services.  
2. I think brand X can serve my wants and needs.  
3. I have a positive overall attitude towards brand X. |
|              | The strength of associations          | The strength of association refers to how often and how the brand have entered the mind of the consumers. Additionally, how long it is stored and maintained in consumers memory and the manner in which a person thinks about the brand (Keller, 1993). | If the information regarding a brand’s questionable marketing activities would affect a consumer. | 1. I have a positive association with brand X.  
2. I actively seek information from brand X.  
3. I frequently choose to purchase from brand X. |
The uniqueness of associations is basically how a brand association is differentiated towards competing brands (Keller, 1993).

If the questionable content marketing would affect the associations of the brand compared to competitors.

1. I think positively about brand X in relationship to competitors.
2. I am loyal to brand X.
3. I think brand X has a higher value compared to the competitors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Theoretical definition</th>
<th>Scenario</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>H1</strong></td>
<td>Misleading content marketing (Native marketing)</td>
<td>Embedded paid digital content in information channels. The paid content engaging the consumers without transparency or full disclosure online (Lahav &amp; Zimand-Sheiner, 2016; Campbell &amp; Marks, 2015; Murphy, 2017)</td>
<td>In this scenario, imagine that you notice that brand X has commercial content in a feed that you thought was of informative/editorial nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H1</strong></td>
<td>Misleading content marketing (Through influencers)</td>
<td>Brown &amp; Hayes (2008), Bowen (2013) and Walden, Bortree &amp; Distaso (2015) state that lack of authenticity and transparency might lead to misleading marketing through social media influencers.</td>
<td>In this scenario, imagine that a well-known Instagram-influencer (defined as an individual that influence users on Instagram by his/her online presence) suddenly starts to post pictures of products from brand X. After a while you suspect that the content displaying the products are a paid collaboration with brand X.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 - Operationalization for questionnaire (Questions)

4.5.3 Operationalization (Scenarios)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>H1</th>
<th>Misleading content marketing (Exaggerating and leaving out information)</th>
<th>Companies intentionally leave out important information that are highly important for the regular consumers purchase decision. Social media marketing today tends to exaggerate certain features along with diminish and downplay other companies products (Mitra et al. 2008; Kariyawasam &amp; Wigley, 2017; Xie, 2016)</th>
<th>In this scenario, imagine that you come across brand X’s sponsored content on Facebook. The add is promoting their new products by high praises of how good the products features are. By doing a quick research, you understand that the add is obviously exaggerating the products features and also that the promotion add is leaving out some important information.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Content marketing towards children</td>
<td>Companies have created various of strategies to directly aimed towards children online (Calvert 2008; Tufte &amp; Rasmunsson 2010).</td>
<td>In this scenario, imagine that you come across advertisement content from brand X on Facebook. The content is promoting new products and it is obvious that the advertisement is aimed towards children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Content marketing towards children (Through influencers)</td>
<td>Social media influencers have a big impact on younger people. As younger people frequently seems to misinterpret celebrity content online or contact with celebrities on social media as a real relationship which is more or less one sided. (Chia &amp; Poo 2009; Chung &amp; Cho, 2017).</td>
<td>In this scenario, imagine that an influencer on Twitter (defined as the individuals that influence users on Twitter by their online presence) Tweets sponsored content that are clearly published to gain children’s interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>Misuse of user generated content</td>
<td>Banks &amp; Humphreys (2008), Terranova (2004), Zwick et al. (2008) and Martens, M.</td>
<td>In this scenario, imagine that brand X encourages consumers to participate in a designer competition that they</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(2011) state that companies extract free labor from consumers by user generated content. have arranged on a social media platform. Later on, a winner is announced and the winner is rewarded with a symbolic price. After a couple of weeks you see that the company actually used the winning design for the new launch of products without giving the original designer any further credit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2 - Operationalization for questionnaire (Scenarios)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4.5.4 Pre-test

Bryman & Bell (2011) explain that if researchers want to maximize the quality and structure of a questionnaire, a pre-test should be done. Pre-tests are used in order to minimize potential errors and since a questionnaire is answered and processed by the respondent alone, it is highly important that it is not causing any confusion at the participant. Bryman (2016) explain that for a pre-test to be valuable, it should be applied tested on people that are similar to what the sample will be. Ghauri & Grønhaug (2005) state that the pre-test should be formulated as an interview rather than an actual questionnaire. The interview’s purpose is to focus on the potential respondents’ reactions, thoughts and attitudes towards the actual questionnaire in order to identify errors. However, the pre-test does not only examine the procedure of the method, the pre-test provides an overall evaluation of the constructed questionnaire. Everything from formulated sentences, chosen words and basic instructions.

This particular research will collect data through questionnaires. A pre-test in form of a interview will be constructed and examined before sharing the final questionnaires. The method will be examined accordingly to Ghauri & Grønhaug (2005) method presented above. This will be done in order to get a final understanding of what needs to be corrected before sharing the questionnaires.

4.5.4.1 Result pre-test

After running a couple of pre-tests, the researchers of this paper were forced to make some adjustments in order to make the questionnaires more understandable for the future respondents. The predispositions of the questionnaires needed to be reformulated, in order to better cover
the topic of research. The predisposition encouraged the participants to have a neutral opinion towards any brand of their choice which would work as a base for the scenarios and questions. This particular information confused the majority of the participants from the pre-tests, because there were some difficulties with imagining a brand they held a neutral opinion towards. Due to this, the researchers changed the information in the predisposition, so the respondent has to think of an actual brand that is a part of their everyday life. This choice was made in order to make it easier for the participant to associate with a brand, and to then later on, better understand the questions and the six different scenarios. Further on, the participants could understand the questions but had some difficulties with understanding one scenario due to difficulties in the wording. Hence, the researchers rephrased the information and used more general words in order to make it more apprehensive.

4.6 Sampling

Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin (2010) describe sampling as the process of choosing who, when, where and what, in relationship to the data collection. It is more important in quantitative than qualitative, since quantitative studies focus lies on generalizing the results. Saunders et al. (2016) explain a sample as the final selection of a population that will be used for a particular research process. Population however, consist of all of the individuals that the researchers can draw a sample from. A population could exist in form of different contexts and limitations, for instance, nations, cities or a company. The context depends on the relevance for the research. For this research, the population is all the active users of social media. As it would be unrealistic for every active user to participate in this study, therefore, a sampling is required.

Malhotra & Birks (2003) state that in order to do a sampling, a sample frame is needed. The authors further describe sampling frame as the full collection of units in a population from which a sample will be drawn from. Bryman & Bell (2011) present some required elements of the sample that have to be considered in order to get an accurate result. Accordingly, the sample frame need to be comprehensive and representative for the whole population in order to avoid sampling frame errors. Malhotra & Birks (2003) further explain that sampling frame errors occurs when there is a variation between the implied sampling frame by the researchers and the original population.
Wilson (2014) explains that there are two main methods that are commonly used when sampling for a research, probability and non-probability sampling. The probability method means that each individual in a population have the same probability to be chosen for a research. Additionally, probability sampling is often used in quantitative research since it strives for generalizable results. Zikmund et al. (2010) explain that non-probability sampling on the other hand, is not based on the equal chance of individuals being chosen which opens up for the researchers to choose more freely. Non-probability sampling is commonly used for qualitative research since the research type strives for more analytical and in-depth information which are more possible to get since the researchers can choose who should participate. Bryman & Bell (2011) describe another major difference between the two sampling methods, which is that the probability method requires a larger sample because of its generalizable nature.

Although, non-probability sampling is usually not applied for a quantitative study because of the researchers’ possibility to choose the sample (Bryman & Bell, 2011). However, this research will use non-probability sampling, even if the research is of a quantitative nature. Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad (2010) present some advantages with non-probability sampling. The major advantage is that the time requirement and the relatively cost are small in comparison to probability sampling. This enables the researchers to reach the desired sample size faster and in a less expensive way.

Bryman & Bell (2011) further explain that non-probability sampling consists of three different techniques: quota, snowball and convenience. The convenience technique is concerned by using a non-probability method to choose the participants. In this particular technique, the participants are picked by convenience by the researcher. Hence, it is their accessibility that is the key in this technique. They are in some way easy to access by the researcher and is thus picked for the research. Obviously, they have some information which makes them relevant for the research.

This research will use the convenience technique to determine the participants. Since this research concerns users on social media, which means that the sample frame would be extremely large and thus doing some sort of probability sampling on it would be very time consuming and most likely expensive, which is something that this research does not have, neither the first nor last. Therefore, convenience sampling is highly appropriate because it enables the researchers to contact people which are relevant to the study. To make sure that they actually are relevant to the research, a control question is asked in the beginning of the
questionnaire which concerns the matter of the participant using social media on a daily basis or not. If a participant answer that they are not active, they will not be able to continue with the questionnaire. As the researchers contacted the respondents themselves, they estimate that most participants were between 20-25 years old.

Findlay, Hofmeyr & Louw (2014) explain that it is essential to collect a considerable amount of data. It is important to find a balance, as measuring too much data is unnecessary and may harm the richness of the data. To little data might make the result insufficient. Bryman & Bell (2011) explain that in order to gather the right amount of data, it becomes necessary to know the right sample size. The authors further argue the importance for the researcher to carefully evaluate and compromise between cost and time of the research, in order to determine a suitable sample size. Green (1991) discusses the matter of number of participants in the sample that is required to make it sufficient. The minimum is supposed to be at least 50 but increases with each individual variable. Each individual variable increases the number of required response with eight. As this paper has three questionnaires with two individual variables in each, thus, a total of six. Therefore, there the number of participants should be at least 3(50+8x2) =192. This particular research received 204 respondents. Respectively, 66 on the first questionnaire, 73 on the second and 65 on the third one.

4.7 Data analysis method

4.7.1 Data coding and cleaning

Malhotra (2010) states that questions for questionnaires need to be coded and depending on the nature of the questions, they are either coded before or after the questionnaire is carried out. If it is structured questions, it is usually done before and unstructured questions, afterwards. Coding is referred to the process of giving questions and answers a meaning. The meaning facilitates the process of analyzing.

To analyze the data, it was entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) which is a statistical program which facilitates analyzing of the data. It could also be done through the program Microsoft Excel but that would require that the researchers put in the formulas themselves, and as they had experience with SPSS it was deemed appropriate. As there were
three questions per association, they were therefore coded thereafter. Questions concerning favorability were coded as Fav1-3, strength as Str1-3 and uniqueness as Uni1-3.

In SPSS the scenarios that concerned the same hypothesis were put into the same dataset and as there are three hypotheses, three datasets were created. To compare the means of the pre and post scenarios participants were coded as group 1 and 2 accordingly. Furthermore, as H1 had scenarios in both questionnaire one and two, group 1 in this dataset is smaller due to that pre-scenario is answered once in each questionnaire, which results in 66+73 answers for group 1. While group 2 contain post scenario answers and as there are in total three scenarios which means that there are 66+66+73 answers for group 2.

The only cleaning that was conducted in this research was that a very few number of respondents answered no on the control questions and thus only leaving a “no” in the questionnaire. Therefore, their answers were removed completely from the data collection.

4.7.2 ANOVA

As the three questionnaires all have the same structure, firstly, questions regarding brand image of a brand by the participants choice is answered. Then the same questions are answered, but with context of a specific scenario in mind, which is then repeated again but with another scenario. From all the collected answers, the means is what is of interest for this study. As the questions are the same before and after the scenarios, which enables an analysis of the possible change in means between questions.

Therefore, the ANOVA was chosen as the method of analysis. ANOVA is an analysis of variance and it is “used as a test of means for two or more populations” (Malhotra, 2010, p. 499). According to Malhotra (2010), the basis for an ANOVA contains one dependent variable, which should be metric (measured using an interval or ratio scale) and one or more independent variable which should be categorical (nonmetric). In this research the brand image is the dependent and the questionable content marketing actions are the independent variables. There are different types of ANOVA test and this research will use a one-way analysis of variance. With this specific way of analysis, the three hypotheses will be analyzed separately, and a comparison of means is possible.
Further on, depending on what kind of hypothesis the research has, the significant value will be interpreted accordingly. A significant can be between 0-1 and 0 represents perfect significance and 1 no significance. For a null hypothesis to be accepted the significant should be as high as possible while for a alternative hypothesis it should be as low as possible to be accepted (Malhotra, 2010; Bryman & Bell, 2011). As this research have alternative hypotheses, the significant’s are expected to be 0.0 thus meaning that the hypotheses are accepted and then analyzed further depending on what the numbers of the means between the participants pre and post exposure to the scenarios.

4.8 Quality criteria

4.8.1 Validity

Saunders et al. (2016) explain that one important and basic quality criterion in a research is validity. Validity is defined as the integrity of the result that is produced from a business research. It is important for the researchers to be aware that there are many types of validities depending on what type of research that is made. Wilson (2014) states that researchers should distinguish between the validity for quantitative and qualitative research. For instance, quantitative validity is focusing more on the measurement quality than qualitative validity. Wilson & MacLean (2011) define quantitative validity as to which degree a measurement is measuring what it is supposed to be measuring. Additionally, to what the extent the findings are generalizable to a larger population than the selected sample. Bryman & Bell (2011) further explain that quantitative validity refers to whether an indicator or a set of indicators capture the whole research and concept. Furthermore, there are several ways to apply quantitative validity.

4.8.1.1 Face validity

Bryman & Bell (2011) argue that face validity needs to be established when developing a new measurement. The validity’s focus lies on letting other people comment on your measurement and operationalization, which could be whether it seems to cover the whole concept, losing focus or missing anything. Malhotra (2010) discusses the same kind of validity but calls it content validity instead. Researchers should seek for feedback from people with experience or expertise within the focused area. This is an intuitive and basic step since it should be done
before finishing and applying the measurement in the particular research (Saunders et al., 2016; Malhotra; 2010; Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Face validity was implemented initially through two senior lecturers at the Linnaeus University of the marketing department that have expert competence within the area. The researchers asked for evaluation, opinions and critical response regarding the operationalization. In this way could the researcher easier ensure that the whole concept was captured and increase the measurement quality. Furthermore, a pre-test was done by asking students of the sample frame evaluate and comment the questionnaires to validate the understanding of the questions/statements of the questionnaire.

4.8.1.2 Criterion Validity

Criterion is concerned with testing of the validity of a certain study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Kumar (2014) explains that the validity of a research can be increased when researchers compare their results of their study with previous ones that are similar, which could later on determine if the study possess the criterion validity. Bryman & Bell (2011) explain that the criterion validity is commonly divided into concurrent and predictive validity. Although, the two criteria are very similar in many ways. However, concurrent validity compares the outcomes and measures in questions assessed at the same time. In contrast, predictive validity compares the measures and outcomes of the questions at a later point.

In this particular research, the criterion validity was implemented when developing the hypotheses and questionnaires. The hypotheses were conceptualized as a model, based on previous research. Previous research that provided credible findings regarding the questionable content marketing activities, worked as a base for this research and the hypotheses. The questions/statements used in the questionnaire were also developed accordingly to previous literature that were concerned with brand image and the brand associations. This was done in order to ensure criterion validity.

4.8.2 Reliability

Bryman & Bell (2011) define reliability as the degree of consistency of a measurement and whether the result of a research is repeatable or not. Reliability is often related to quantitative
researchers since it revolves around measurement. In quantitative research, the reliability particularly refers to if the measurement is stable or not.

Reliability is a broad concept and it is important for researchers to distinguish between internal and external reliability (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Saunders et al. (2016) explain that internal reliability is focusing on consistency within the data collection process. One way to ensure consistency is that more than one researcher carefully evaluate the data. External reliability also revolves around consistency, however, Saunders et al. (2016) particularly refer whether the data collection is dependent on a specific researcher. Hence, the data collection production would be the same if other researchers would collect it at another point of time.

For this research, the reliability has been assessed through consideration of internal and external reliability. Collected data have been processed by the all of the researchers in order to maximize the stability of the interpretation. Cronbach’s alpha method was used in order to test the internal reliability of this particular study. Schutte, Toppinnen, Kalimo & Schaufeli (2000) explain that the method calculates the possible split-half coefficients. The score will be an alpha, which will have a value between 0-1. Bryman & Bell (2011) further explain that if the alpha score is 0, it will represent no internal reliability of a particular research, but if the alpha score is 1, the internal reliability of a research is considered to be perfect.

Bryman & Bell (2011) further state that there is a disagreement about what alpha score is considered to be acceptable when measuring the internal reliability of a certain study. Schutte et al. (2000) state that an alpha of 0.7 and above, is considered to be acceptable when measuring the internal reliability of a study. This is further supported by Saunders et al. (2016) and Nunnaly (1987). Additionally, Pallant (2011) argues that it is acceptable for the internal reliability of a particular study when the alpha is 0.7 and above. However, Malhotra (2010) argue that an alpha score of 0.6 and above is enough in order to state that the study has an acceptable internal reliability. Furthermore, Saleem & Bobak (2005) use an alpha score of 0.6 and above in order to confirm the internal reliability of their study. Hence, this particular study will measure the internal reliability of three questionnaires by using an acceptance level where alpha is 0.6 and above.

4.8.3 Replication
Shanahan (2017) describes replication as a similar criterion to reliability. The author further states that a fundamental aspect of scientific research is that studies and results must be replicable. Replication refers to when researchers choose to replicate the findings of others. Replication simply means that someone else should be able to repeat the same steps as a specific researcher have made for a study and still achieve the same result. Saunders et al. (2016) even state that, if a research cannot be replicable, the results of the study is not trustworthy and should be ignored.

Shanahan (2017) further explains that in order for a study to be replicable, every part of the study must be detailed and provide full disclosure. If some parts are unclear or undetailed, a replication would not be possible to make. Bryman & Bell (2011) explain that replication could be needed when researchers are doubting the reliability of study and its result. The primary researcher can encourage other researchers to do replication of their study. Thus, the primary researchers can see if their results match the original result and, in this way, get a deeper understanding of the reliability of the study.

No replication will be done for this particular research. However, the researcher aims to be as detailed in their study as possible, in order to enable others to do a replication. To assure that the research is possible to replicate and easy to follow, a detailed description of the conduction was added. The results of this study will be published online and possible to read and replicate by anyone.

4.9 Ethical considerations

Lund (2000) states that it is the researchers’ obligation that none of the participants in a research study comes to harm. Furthermore, the risk that participants comes to harm are relatively low in a business research, still, there are occasions, actions and aspects that might be considered as unethical and might do harm to participants. Bryman & Bell (2011) breaks down the ethical issues into four main principles that researchers should follow during a business research. These are, namely, harm to participant, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception.

The first principle, harm to participants resembles the actual harm to the participant in form of physical harm, harm to the participant's self-esteem, stress triggers, more or less everything that could affect a participant negatively (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The second principle refers to the researchers’ way to apply disguised or covert observation. That is, the researchers do not
disclose themselves and may execute a business research without the participants knowledge or accordance. The ethical principle advocates that the researchers should always reveal their identity, be clear with the research and offer the participants as much information as they may want (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Malhotra, 2010).

The third principle, invasion of privacy, addresses to which degree the researcher can enter the participant personal and private sphere. The researcher need to respect the participants privacy, hence, invasion of privacy might cause harm to the participant. A careful evaluation of the questions asked towards the participants might avoid this issue. Lastly, Bryman & Bell (2011) explain that the fourth principle, deception, occurs when the researchers present misleading information when seeking to present their research as something other than it is. Smith (2004) gives an example when a researcher was executing an ethnographic study at small companies. In this case, the researcher presented himself as a student that was studying the companies’ products and worked for the competitors.

The principles will be applied followingly: firstly, the questionnaire will be conducted in a way, so no harm comes to the participants. No questions that might invade on privacy will be asked. A pre-test of the questionnaire will also enable the researcher to correct potential ethical errors and triggers. Furthermore, since the questionnaire will be shared online, no individuals will be forced to participate, and everyone will have the choice to decline. The questionnaire will be designed in a way, so participants get an understanding what the research is about, in order to inform what the respondents will participate in, and also to avoid deception.

Additionally, Bryman & Bell (2011) state that researchers have societal obligations when conducting a research. Bryman (2016) explains that a research always should be done in regard to the benefit for the society, and the groups and individuals within it. Furthermore, researchers have to conduct their research with respect for the moral and legal orders for the particular society, in which they practice. Moral and legislation are values that protect the individuals in society and therefore it is highly important for researchers to operate according to these values. Researchers also have a responsibility to constantly strive to retain and maintain objectivity along with high standard performance of research methods, in order to achieve scientific and credible findings. The Social Research Association (2003) further explains that it is of high value to collect data correctly in a honest and transparent way in order to avoid misleading and incredible results. Thus, misleading results might have negative consequences on the society.
This particular research will be conducted in respect for the society and will not send out any misleading results that might cause harm to the individuals in the society.

4.10 Chapter summary

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Replication</td>
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| Ethical considerations |

5. Results
The information presented in the following chapter is the collected data from three different Google form questionnaires. The data was later processed and interpreted in the data analysis program SPSS. Further, reliability is tested through Cronbach’s Alpha and thereafter, an ANOVA analysis is presented.

5.1 Reliability

The numbers that are displayed in Table 3 show the internal reliability of this particular study. The numbers are generated through the use of Cronbach’s alpha method. The three different associations within brand image; favorability, strength and uniqueness, all have an accepted alpha score in relation to the hypotheses. Favorability and uniqueness of association in relation to the first, second and third hypothesis all have an alpha score above 0.7. Also, strength of association in relation content marketing towards children (H2) and misuse of user generated content (H3) have an alpha score above 0.7.

Strength of association in relation to the first hypothesis, is the only one that have an alpha score below 0.7, more specifically Str2 is the Item that drags the alpha down the most since without it, the alpha would increase slightly and if Str1 or Str3 would be deleted instead it would be significantly lower. Although, authors such as, Malhotra (2010) and Saleem & Bobak (2005) argue that the internal reliability of a study can be accepted if the alpha score is 0.6 and above. Therefore, the researchers of this paper will accept it and the study is deemed internally reliable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>H1 Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>H1 Cronbach’s Alpha If Item Deleted</th>
<th>H2 Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>H2 Cronbach’s Alpha If Item Deleted</th>
<th>H3 Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>H3 Cronbach’s Alpha If Item Deleted</th>
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<td>0.844</td>
<td>0.825</td>
<td>0.906</td>
<td>0.775</td>
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<td>Fav2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fav3</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.877</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.864</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.641</td>
<td>0.787</td>
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<td>0.834</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uri2</td>
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<td>0.903</td>
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<td>Uri3</td>
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*Table 3 - Correlation for each association for the three hypotheses*
5.2 Hypothesis testing

What can be seen in Table 4, 5 and 6 is the means for the three associations with the addition of brand image, which is the mean between the three. They further show that favorability is always the highest in all hypotheses and are relatively close to each other in all three. As explained earlier, group 1 refers to participants before being exposed to a scenario and group 2 is after the scenario. The means between these two groups decide whether it affects brand image positively or negatively, although the significant has to be below 0.05 otherwise a hypothesis will be rejected immediately.

5.2.1 Hypothesis 1, ANOVA

The first hypothesis (H1), which is accepted, is composed by three scenarios, whereof all concerned misleading content marketing in different ways. They are namely “Native Marketing”, “Exaggerating and leaving out information” and “Through Influencers”. Since the hypothesis was stated in a direction (negative), it was not enough that the significant (Sig.) was below the 0.05, group 2 had to have a lower brand image mean than group 1. The decrease between the means was not by much but it was significant, which was important. As seen in Table 4, the mean for brand image before was 3,9768 and after 3,5458, which is a decrease of 0.431.

H1: Misleading content marketing on social media have a negative impact on brand image.

Accepted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANOVA (H1)</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Means</th>
<th>Sig. (Between Groups)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favorability</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>4.1894</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>3.6829</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>3.8106</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>3.4504</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniqueness</td>
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<td>139</td>
<td>3.9305</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>3.5041</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>3.9768</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>3.5458</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 - ANOVA table for hypothesis 1
5.2.2 Hypothesis 2, ANOVA

The second hypothesis (H2), which is also significant, and can be seen in Table 5, had a much larger difference in the brand image mean between the two groups compared to H1. The hypothesis which concerned content marketing on social media aimed towards children and where based on two major content marketing activities: “content marketing towards children” and “content marketing towards children through influencers”. Table 5 shows that the mean before were 3,8390 and after 2,5958. That is a difference of 1,2432 and thus accepted, but not specifically because the high number but because it decreased.

H2: Content marketing on social media towards children have a negative impact on brand image.

Accepted

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Sig. (Between Groups)</th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
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<td>138</td>
<td>3,6377</td>
<td>0,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>2,5072</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniqueness</td>
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<td>138</td>
<td>3,8068</td>
<td>0,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>2,5580</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>3,8390</td>
<td>0,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>2,5958</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 - ANOVA table for hypothesis 2
5.2.3 Hypothesis 3, ANOVA

The last hypothesis, H3, which concerns a misuse of user generated content on social media, is also accepted which means that all three hypotheses are accepted. Table 6 shows that it is significant and that the mean of brand image have decrease from 3,6137 to 2,5778, which is a decrease of 1,0357. The brand image means’ is lower than H2 but the difference between the two groups are bigger in H2. That means that participants for H3 had chosen a brand which they had a worse brand image from the start compared with H2.

H3: Misuse of user generated content on social media have a negative impact on brand image.

Accepted

<table>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>2,4359</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand Image</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>3,6137</td>
<td>0,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>2,5778</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 - ANOVA table for hypothesis 3
6. Discussion

In the following chapter the researchers will discuss the findings from the collected data and the outcomes of the tested hypotheses in this study. The discussion will present each hypothesis result and strive to connect it to theory.

As presented in Figure 3, all three hypotheses are accepted because the significant is below the 0.05 level and the mean decreases after the exposure to the scenarios, which is what the hypotheses proposed. The first hypothesis (H1) which was composed by three scenarios which all concerned misleading content marketing in different ways, namely “Native Marketing”, “Exaggerating and leaving out information” and “Through Influencers”. Since misleading content marketing has the lowest decrease in the mean for brand image amongst the other questionable marketing activities, as presented in Table 4 when comparing it to Table 5 and Table 6, it could be argued that if a brand was forced to perform any type of questionable content marketing, the misleading content marketing would have the smallest effect on the brand image. Although, it becomes vital for firms to consider the statements by Jeong & Yun Yoo (2011) and Xie (2016), concerning the fact that organizations perform activities that stretch on the line between what is legal and not. Hence, firms should also consider that misleading content marketing is illegal to some extent, and therefore, it becomes vital that they avoid it in order to not be perceived illegal in their actions.

![Figure 3](Image)

*Figure 3. (own) questionable content marketing on social media and its relationship with brand image with accepted hypotheses.*
Lahav & Zimand-Sheiner (2016) explain the advantage for firms to achieve better marketing results by performing subtle marketing. However, since native marketing apparently have a negative impact on brand image, it becomes important for firms to start considering other approaches in their marketing, when seeking to attain better marketing results. Brand managers should also consider that misleading content marketing through influencers have a negative impact on brand image. Furthermore, Brown & Hayes (2008), Bowen (2013) and Walden et al. (2015) discuss the guidelines concerning the authenticity and transparency of the content the influencers are publishing, and that it should be followed in order to avoid the negative effects on the brand image. The last activity included in the first hypothesis, concerned about exaggerating of certain features and leaving out important information. As Jeong & Yun Yoo (2011) and Xie (2016) state that these actions are put in a grey zone, however, in this research, the results show that this particular activity apparently has a negative impact on the brand image. Hence, firms should avoid this in their marketing. Furthermore, it becomes important to provide the consumers with full information and without any exaggeration.

The second hypothesis on the other hand had a much larger difference between the means compared to the first and third hypotheses. H2 concerned content marketing on social media aimed towards children and were based on two major content marketing activities, “content marketing towards children” and “content marketing towards children through influencers”. As the population of this study mostly consist of people in their early twenties, H2 does not directly affect them which on the contrary H1 most likely does. So, by comparing the change of means in brand image in Table 4 and 5, an interpretation could be done which means that people, according to the findings here, think that it is worse to perform content marketing towards children than to be exposed to misleading content marketing themselves. As stated earlier, Nairn & Fine (2008) state that children are the most vulnerable consumers whereas Mas-Tur et al. (2016) continue by explaining that younger people have a higher trust in content that is being publish online.

Considering the fact that children are more vulnerable, the respondents from this study might think that content marketing towards children is more unethical than misleading content marketing and misuse of user generated content. Furthermore, as authors Moore & Rideout (2007) talk about the effects and concerns content marketing have towards children and considering that the participants from the questionnaires regard content marketing towards
children as worse in relation to the effects on the brand image, the researchers of this paper can deem that firms need to avoid content marketing towards children.

The last hypothesis, H3, concerns misuse of user generated content on social media. Just as the case of H2, there is a quite large change in mean. This number, just as in H1 and H2, indicates that if a brand misuse user generated content, their brand image will move towards the more negative view in the mind of the people. This is coherent with the statements from Banks & Humphreys (2008), Terranova (2004), Martens (2011) and Zwick et al. (2008) who are critical towards companies use and exploitation of consumers in order to generate valuable user generated content. Furthermore, as authors Albuquerque et al. (2012) and Kennedy (2017) explain that user generated content plays a vital role in engaging consumers and the process of creating and forming a brand, it becomes important for firms to consider using this approach in a proper way and not make misuse of it, in order to not derive a negative change in how the consumer views the brand. Also, as user generated content plays an important role in the key for success (Kennedy, 2017), organizations should carefully evaluate how the user generated content is used, in order to be one step closer to achieve success through their marketing.

To summarize, based on the results from the questionnaires, organizations that perform content marketing towards children would have the most negative effect on the brand image. Hence, firms need to surely avoid this approach since children are vulnerable on social media, as Mas-Tur et al. (2016) and Shin et al. (2012) state. Misuse of user generated content and misleading content marketing do not affect brand image as much as misleading content marketing does, but still, firms need to avoid these questionable content marketing activities as well, in order to not affect the brand image negatively.
7. Conclusion

This chapter will consist of a conclusion that will be addressed to answer the purpose. Secondly, there will be a chapter regarding the academic implications that present the academic contribution of this particular study. Finally, a managerial implications chapter which consist of suggestions to managers in the business community.

Since all three hypotheses for this particular research were confirmed, it becomes manageable to answer the purpose with this paper. It can be concluded that the results indicate that questionable content marketing on social media have a negative impact on brand image. Content marketing on social media towards children have the most negative impact on brand image, when comparing it to misleading content marketing on social media and misuse of user generated content on social media. This conclusion can be drawn based on the respondents’ opinions from the questionnaires, where the results show that content marketing towards children have the largest difference between the means when referring to Table 4, 5 and 6, when comparing to misleading content marketing and misuse of content marketing on social media. Although, it becomes vital for firms to avoid the questionable content marketing activities, in order to minimize the damage, the activities can entail the brand image.

7.1 Academic implications

Previous research and literature explain there is a positive relationship between successful content marketing and brand image (Wijaya & Putri, 2013; Dholakiya, 2015; Vernuccio, 2014; Murphy et al., 2012). Today, there is limited research that explain that questionable content marketing on social media have a negative impact on brand image. Furthermore, this opened up for further research within the area. The findings of this research indicate that there is a clear negative relationship between questionable content marketing on social media and brand image. The three questionable content marketing activities that were tested were namely, misleading content marketing, content marketing towards children and misuse of user generated content.
7.2 Managerial implications

Questionable content marketing on social media are proven to have a negative relationship with brand image. This indicates the importance, for organizations and brand managers to carefully evaluate their content marketing strategy on social media in order to avoid questionable content marketing. As suggested by Murphy et al. (2012) and Javalgi (2018), brand managers should consider developing and practice content marketing in coherence to moral and legislation on the internet along with a clear delivery of the companies’ objectives. The results from this particular research indicates that if brand managers do not follow the suggestions made by Murphy et al. (2012) and Javalgi (2018), their content marketing on social media might be questioned and criticized which later will negatively affect the brand image.
8. Limitations and future research

This final chapter will present some limitations for the research which might have affected the study. Furthermore, suggestions for future research regarding questionable content marketing will be presented.

As for this research a non-probability sampling was used to decide the participants which is frequently more used in qualitative research. This research concerns active users on social media, meaning that the sample frame would be extremely large and thus doing some sort of probability sampling on it would be very time consuming and most likely expensive. Additionally, the researchers received 204 responses from the questionnaire. It becomes important to state that a larger number of respondents would increase the generalizability of the research. Furthermore, the researchers choose to use the non-probability convenience technique in order to determine the participants. This was a limitation since convenience technique is based on the researchers’ choice of participants which does not give the sample a fair representation and further disables the researchers to generalize the research.

Furthermore, this research only includes the questionable content marketing activities, namely, misuse of user generated content, content marketing on social media towards children and misleading content marketing on social media which is of importance for brand managers to reflect upon. Hence, conclusions cannot be drawn that all questionable content marketing activities have a negative impact on brand image.

Another potential error in this research is that the respondents got encouraged to think of an actual brand that is a part of their everyday life. The actual brand they chose worked as a base for the whole questionnaire. Since no further instructions was made, the brand of choice could differ a lot depending on the participant. Some participant might have chosen a brand which they held positive opinions toward and some might have chosen a brand that thought negative of. This means that it could be a major difference in the respondent's choice of brand and the attitude towards its, which could affect the results. This potential error opens up for further research within the area where the focus could be from one particular brand instead for the respondents to choose the brand. This could maybe decrease the difference in how the respondent view the brand, which later on could affect the results.
Reference list


Content Marketing and Brand Image (1)

Please read through the following information before answering the questionnaire.

Hi, we are three marketing students from Linnaeus University, writing our bachelor thesis about advertising within social media and what relationship it has with brand image.

The questionnaire will take approximately 5 minutes. Your answers are only going to be used for this study and are treated anonymously. There are two other questionnaires that belong to this research but they are all independent from each other and can be taken in any order. The links are at the end of the questionnaire.

If you have any questions feel free to contact us.
Henrik Svensson - hs222an@student.linu.se
Sam Gharakhani - sg222ce@student.linu.se
Vincent Larsson - vl222ao@student.linu.se

Thanks in advance! Your answer is highly valuable to us.

*Obligatorisk

1. Are you active on social media? (browsing social media sites daily) *
   Markera endast en gång.
   
   Yes
   No  Sluta fylla i det här formuläret.

Predisposition

When answering the questions in this part, try to think of an actual brand that is a part of your everyday life. This will represent the "brand X".

2. I like brand X's products/services. *
   Markera endast en gång.
   
   1  2  3  4  5  Strongly Agree

3. I think brand X can serve my wants and needs. *
   Markera endast en gång.
   
   1  2  3  4  5  Strongly Agree

4. I have a positive overall attitude towards brand X. *
   Markera endast en gång.
   
   1  2  3  4  5  Strongly Agree
5. I have a positive association with brand X. *
   *Markera endast en oval.*

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6. I actively seek information from brand X. *
   *Markera endast en oval.*

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7. I frequently choose to purchase from brand X. *
   *Markera endast en oval.*

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8. I think positively about brand X in relationship to competitors. *
   *Markera endast en oval.*

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9. I am loyal to brand X. *
   *Markera endast en oval.*

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10. I think brand X has a higher value compared to the competitors. *
    *Markera endast en oval.*

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**Presumption**

Firms are able to take advantage of the presence of social media by content marketing. The idea of content marketing is to attract and retain customers by creating and curating relevant and valuable content. How the consumer views the brand’s image, could be affected depending on the content they are being displayed to.

Now you will be presented with two scenarios describing two different content marketing activities. When answering the questions for the scenarios you should have the same brand in consideration as earlier.

**Scenario 1**

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1g3hnrqP7io3fl52L5C9eOeo6LXFMgNz5qAFMrYK2Ms/edit
In this scenario, imagine that you notice that brand X has commercial content in a feed that you thought was of informative/editorial nature.

11. I like brand X's products/services. *
   *Markera endast en oval.*

   1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
   ---|---|---|---|---
   Strongly Disagree  |  |  |  | | Strongly Agree

12. I think brand X will serve my wants and needs. *
   *Markera endast en oval.*

   1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
   ---|---|---|---|---
   Strongly Disagree  |  |  |  | | Strongly Agree

13. I have a positive overall attitude towards brand X. *
   *Markera endast en oval.*

   1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
   ---|---|---|---|---
   Strongly Disagree  |  |  |  | | Strongly Agree

14. I have a positive association with brand X. *
   *Markera endast en oval.*

   1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
   ---|---|---|---|---
   Strongly Disagree  |  |  |  | | Strongly Agree

15. I actively seek information from brand X. *
   *Markera endast en oval.*

   1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
   ---|---|---|---|---
   Strongly Disagree  |  |  |  | | Strongly Agree

16. I frequently choose to purchase from brand X. *
   *Markera endast en oval.*

   1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
   ---|---|---|---|---
   Strongly Disagree  |  |  |  | | Strongly Agree

17. I think positively about brand X in relationship to competitors. *
   *Markera endast en oval.*

   1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
   ---|---|---|---|---
   Strongly Disagree  |  |  |  | | Strongly Agree
18. I am loyal to brand X. *
Markera endast en oval.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

19. I think brand X has a higher value compared to the competitors. *
Markera endast en oval.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Scenario 2
Disregard the information presented in scenario one, when answering the questions in scenario two.

In this scenario, imagine that a well known Instagram-influencer (defined as a individual that influence users on Instagram by his/her online presence) suddenly starts to post pictures of products from brand X. After a while you suspect that the content displaying the products are a paid collaboration with brand X.

20. I like brand X’s products/services. *
Markera endast en oval.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

21. I think brand X will serve my wants and needs. *
Markera endast en oval.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

22. I have a positive overall attitude towards brand X. *
Markera endast en oval.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

23. I have a positive association with brand X. *
Markera endast en oval.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1g3f2rzP7i0f3oI2L3eOo6LXFmGcN0q4oAFmuYK2Ms/edit
24. I actively seek information from brand X. *
   Markera endast en oval.

   1 2 3 4 5

   Strongly Disagree  Strongly Agree

25. I frequently choose to purchase from brand X. *
   Markera endast en oval.

   1 2 3 4 5

   Strongly Disagree  Strongly Agree

26. I think positively about brand X in relationship to competitors. *
   Markera endast en oval.

   1 2 3 4 5

   Strongly Disagree  Strongly Agree

27. I am loyal to brand X. *
   Markera endast en oval.

   1 2 3 4 5

   Strongly Disagree  Strongly Agree

28. I think brand X has a higher value compared to the competitors. *
   Markera endast en oval.

   1 2 3 4 5

   Strongly Disagree

Thank you for your participation!

Feel free to participate in our two other surveys:
https://goo.gl/forms/CovQz3tb8FAEWrjFT1
https://goo.gl/forms/8aDn34sWohnunDa83

Tillhandahållts av
Google Forms
Content Marketing and Brand Image (2)

Please read through the following information before answering the questionnaire.

Hi, we are three marketing students from Linnaeus University, writing our bachelor thesis about advertising within social media and what relationship it has with brand image. The questionnaire will take approximately 5 minutes. Your answers are only going to be used for this study and are treated anonymously. There are two other questionnaires that belong to this research but they are all independent from each other and can be taken in any order. The links are at the end of the questionnaire.

If you have any questions feel free to contact us.
Henrik Svensson - hs222sr@student.lnu.se
Sam Gharakhani - sg222np@student.lnu.se
Vincent Larsson - vl222ep@student.lnu.se

Thanks in advance! Your answer is highly valuable to us.

*Obligatorisk

1. Are you active on social media? (browsing social media sites daily) *
   Markerä endast en oval.
   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No  Sluta fylla i det här formuläret.

Predisposition
When answering the questions in this part, try to think of an actual brand that is a part of your everyday life. This will represent the "brand X".

2. I like brand X's products/services. *
   Markerä endast en oval.
   1 2 3 4 5
   Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

3. I think brand X can serve my wants and needs. *
   Markerä endast en oval.
   1 2 3 4 5
   Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

4. I have a positive overall attitude towards brand X. *
   Markerä endast en oval.
   1 2 3 4 5
   Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree
5. I have a positive association with brand X. *
   Markera endast en oval.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

6. I actively seek information from brand X. *
   Markera endast en oval.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

7. I frequently choose to purchase from brand X. *
   Markera endast en oval.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

8. I think positively about brand X in relationship to competitors. *
   Markera endast en oval.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

9. I am loyal to brand X. *
   Markera endast en oval.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

10. I think brand X has a higher value compared to the competitors. *
    Markera endast en oval.
    1  2  3  4  5

Presumption
Firms are able to take advantage of the presence of social media by content marketing. The idea of content marketing is to attract and retain customers by creating and curating relevant and valuable content. How the consumer views the brand’s image, could be affected depending on the content they are being displayed to.

Now you will be presented with two scenarios describing two different content marketing activities. When answering the questions for the scenarios you should have the same brand in consideration as earlier.

Scenario 1
In this scenario, imagine that you come across brand X’s sponsored content on Facebook. The ad is promoting their new products by high praises of how good the products features are. By doing a quick research, you understand that the ad is obviously exaggerating the products features and also that the promotion add is leaving out some important information.

11. I like brand X’s products/services. *

Markera endast en oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree □ □ □ □ □ Strongly Agree

12. I think brand X will serve my wants and needs. *

Markera endast en oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree □ □ □ □ □ Strongly Agree

13. I have a positive overall attitude towards brand X. *

Markera endast en oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree □ □ □ □ □ Strongly Agree

14. I have a positive association with brand X. *

Markera endast en oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree □ □ □ □ □ Strongly Agree

15. I actively seek information from brand X. *

Markera endast en oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree □ □ □ □ □ Strongly Agree

16. I frequently choose to purchase from brand X. *

Markera endast en oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree □ □ □ □ □ Strongly Agree

17. I think positively about brand X in relationship to competitors. *

Markera endast en oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree □ □ □ □ □ Strongly Agree
18. I am loyal to brand X.*
Markera endast en ovan.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

19. I think brand X has a higher value compared to the competitors.*
Markera endast en ovan.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

Scenario 2
Disregard the information presented in scenario one, when answering the questions in scenario two.

In this scenario, imagine that you come across advertisement content from brand X on Facebook. The content is promoting new products and it is obvious that the advertisement is aimed towards children.

20. I like brand X’s products/services.*
Markera endast en ovan.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

21. I think brand X will serve my wants and needs.*
Markera endast en ovan.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

22. I have a positive overall attitude towards brand X.*
Markera endast en ovan.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

23. I have a positive association with brand X.*
Markera endast en ovan.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree

24. I actively seek information from brand X.*
Markera endast en ovan.

1 2 3 4 5
Strongly Disagree ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Strongly Agree
25. I frequently choose to purchase from brand X. *
Markera endast en oval.

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Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

26. I think positively about brand X in relationship to competitors. *
Markera endast en oval.

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Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

27. I am loyal to brand X. *
Markera endast en oval.

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Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

28. I think brand X has a higher value compared to the competitors. *
Markera endast en oval.

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Thank you for your participation!
Feel free to participate in our two other surveys:
https://goo.gl/forms/W4COAOpEmH5IUjy3A6C2
https://goo.gl/forms/8aDn34dWohnrDn98
Content Marketing and Brand Image (3)

Please read through the following information before answering the questionnaire.

Hi, we are three marketing students from Linnæus University, writing our bachelor thesis about advertising within social media and what relationship it has with brand image.

The questionnaire will take approximately 5 minutes. Your answers are only going to be used for this study and are treated anonymously. There are two other questionnaires that belong to this research but they are all independent from each other and can be taken in any order. The links are at the end of the questionnaire.

If you have any questions feel free to contact us.
Henrik Svensson - hs222sr@student.lnu.se
Sam Gharakhani - sg222sp@student.lnu.se
Vincent Larsson - vl222op@student.lnu.se

Thanks in advance! Your answer is highly valuable to us.

*Obligatorisk

1. Are you active on social media? (browsing social media sites daily) *

   Markera endast en oval.
   
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

   Sluta fylla i det här formuläret.

Predisposition

When answering the questions in this part, try to think of an actual brand that is a part of your everyday life. This will represent the "brand X".

2. I like brand X's products/services. *

   Markera endast en oval.

   1 2 3 4 5

   Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

3. I think brand X can serve my wants and needs. *

   Markera endast en oval.

   1 2 3 4 5

   Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree

4. I have a positive overall attitude towards brand X. *

   Markera endast en oval.

   1 2 3 4 5

   Strongly Disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly Agree
5. I have a positive association with brand X. *
   *Mark my endest en oval.*
   
   1 2 3 4 5
   Strongly Disagree   0   0   0   0   0   Strongly Agree

6. I actively seek information from brand X. *
   *Mark endest en oval.*
   
   1 2 3 4 5
   Strongly Disagree   0   0   0   0   0   Strongly Agree

7. I frequently choose to purchase from brand X. *
   *Mark endest en oval.*
   
   1 2 3 4 5
   Strongly Disagree   0   0   0   0   0   Strongly Agree

8. I think positively about brand X in relationship to competitors. *
   *Mark endest en oval.*
   
   1 2 3 4 5
   Strongly Disagree   0   0   0   0   0   Strongly Agree

9. I am loyal to brand X. *
   *Mark endest en oval.*
   
   1 2 3 4 5
   Strongly Disagree   0   0   0   0   0   Strongly Agree

10. I think brand X has a higher value compared to the competitors. *
    *Mark endest en oval.*
    
    1 2 3 4 5
    Strongly Disagree   0   0   0   0   0   Strongly Agree

**Presumption**
Firms are able to take advantage of the presence of social media by content marketing. The idea of content marketing is to attract and retain customers by creating and curating relevant and valuable content. How the consumer views the brand's image, could be affected depending on the content they are being displayed to.

Now you will be presented with two scenarios describing two different content marketing activities. When answering the questions for the scenarios you should have the same brand in consideration as earlier.

**Scenario 1**
In this scenario, imagine that brand X encourages consumers to participate in a designer competition that they have arranged on a social media platform. Later on, a winner is announced and the winner is rewarded with a symbolic price. After a couple of weeks you see that the company actually used the winning design for the new launch of products without giving the original designer any further credit.

11. I like brand X’s products/services. *
   Markera endast en oval.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly Disagree □ □ □ □ □ Strongly Agree

12. I think brand X will serve my wants and needs. *
   Markera endast en oval.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly Disagree □ □ □ □ □ Strongly Agree

13. I have a positive overall attitude towards brand X. *
   Markera endast en oval.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly Disagree □ □ □ □ □ Strongly Agree

14. I have a positive association with brand X. *
   Markera endast en oval.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly Disagree □ □ □ □ □ Strongly Agree

15. I actively seek information from brand X. *
   Markera endast en oval.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly Disagree □ □ □ □ □ Strongly Agree

16. I frequently choose to purchase from brand X. *
   Markera endast en oval.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly Disagree □ □ □ □ □ Strongly Agree

17. I think positively about brand X in relationship to competitors. *
   Markera endast en oval.
   1  2  3  4  5
   Strongly Disagree □ □ □ □ □ Strongly Agree
18. I am loyal to brand X. *
Markera endast en oval.

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   Strongly Disagree   |   |   |   |   |

   Strongly Agree

19. I think brand X has a higher value compared to the competitors. *
Markera endast en oval.

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   Strongly Disagree   |   |   |   |   |

   Strongly Agree

Scenario 2
Disregard the information presented in scenario one, when answering the questions in scenario two.

In this scenario, imagine that a influencer on Twitter (defined as an individual that influences users on Twitter by his/her online presence). Tweets sponsored content that is clearly published to gain children's interest.

20. I like brand X's products/services. *
Markera endast en oval.

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   Strongly Disagree   |   |   |   |   |

   Strongly Agree

21. I think brand X will serve my wants and needs. *
Markera endast en oval.

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   Strongly Disagree   |   |   |   |   |

   Strongly Agree

22. I have a positive overall attitude towards brand X. *
Markera endast en oval.

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   Strongly Disagree   |   |   |   |   |

   Strongly Agree

23. I have a positive association with brand X. *
Markera endast en oval.

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   Strongly Disagree   |   |   |   |   |

   Strongly Agree
24. I actively seek information from brand X. *  
Markera endast en oval.  

1 2 3 4 5  
Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree  

25. I frequently choose to purchase from brand X. *  
Markera endast en oval.  

1 2 3 4 5  
Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree  

26. I think positively about brand X in relationship to competitors. *  
Markera endast en oval.  

1 2 3 4 5  
Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree  

27. I am loyal to brand X. *  
Markera endast en oval.  

1 2 3 4 5  
Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree  

28. I think brand X has a higher value compared to the competitors. *  
Markera endast en oval.  

1 2 3 4 5  
Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree  

Thank you for your participation!
Feel free to participate in our two other surveys:  
https://goo.gl/forms/W4oQcE5ILyqGAC2  
https://goo.gl/forms/Cov31b8FAEWrFFf1

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