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**The review of doctoral dissertation written by Anna Bianchi, M. Sc. entitled
“The influence of Marketing Communication in Social Media on Electronic Word-of-
Mouth”**

**under supervision of dr hab. Mariusz Trojanowski
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The formal basis for the preparation of the review was the decision of the Scientific Council of the Faculty of Management, University of Warsaw, to appoint the reviewers for the doctoral dissertation written by Anna Bianchi, M. Sc. entitled “The influence of Marketing Communication in Social Media on Electronic Word-of-Mouth” – a letter from the dean of the Faculty of Management, University of Warsaw, prof. (24.04.2019).

The requirements set for doctoral dissertation are indicated in legal regulations – The Act on Scientific Degrees and Scientific Titles in the field of arts, 14th of March 2003 (Higher Education Act, Dz. U., 2003, No 65, p. 595), along with later changes.

The basis for the preparation of the review is also the Regulation of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of 30/10/2015 on the detailed procedure and conditions of conducting activities in the doctoral programme, in the habilitation procedure, and in proceedings the granting of the title of professor (Journal of Laws of 2015, item 1842)

According to art. 13 of the said Act, the doctoral dissertation should constitute the original solution to the scientific problem and demonstrate the general theoretical knowledge of the candidate in a given scientific discipline, as well as the ability of the candidate to conduct scientific work independently. The review was prepared considering the aforementioned requirements of the Act.

The review includes:

1. Discussion and evaluation of the research problem of the doctoral dissertation, the research aims, and the applied research methods.
2. The structure and critical discussion of the substantive content of the doctoral dissertation, critical remarks, and discussion issues.
3. Characteristics of the doctoral dissertation on the formal side.
4. Assessment of the dissertation from the point of view of meeting the requirements of the Act as an original solution to the research problem.
5. Final conclusions.

1. Discussion and evaluation of the research problem of the doctoral dissertation, the research aims, and the applied research methods

The reviewed doctoral dissertation examines the problem of the impact of marketing communication in social media on the so-called electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). This issue is extremely current and original and is a part of the field of research on the application of digital marketing, and especially the usage of social media marketing in brand communication. In recent years, plenty of papers on digital marketing from the consumers' perspective has been published. However, there are still only a few publications and empirical studies explaining the mechanisms of marketing communication via social media, and in particular the impact of the form and appeal of marketing communication in social media on the attitudes and behaviour of the audience, and especially customers, including eWOM. I share the opinion of the author of the dissertation that there are still few papers on the use of social media in the marketing of luxury brands, and studies that take into account the context of the brand type (mass-market brands vs luxury brands), and differences between geographic markets (e.g. Poland vs Italy). I agree that new, deeper studies on the impact of the form and appeal of marketing communication in social networks on the eWOM may bring higher value to the management, and especially marketing studies.

The title of the dissertation "The influence of Marketing Communication in Social Media on Electronic Word-of-Mouth" - is in my opinion adequate to the content of this doctoral thesis. The systematic literature review and the empirical study locate these doctoral theses in the field of social sciences, and in in the discipline of management and quality sciences.

The author indicates that the aim of the doctoral thesis is: "[...] to assess the influence of marketing communication in social media on eWOM" (p. 6, 65). The author defines the purpose of the doctoral dissertation too generally, without indicating the main goals and specific

objectives of the doctoral thesis. In my opinion, Author achieved a wider range of goals than are presented in the introduction – e.g. the conceptualization of the phenomenon of the relations between the social media marketing communications and eWOM and developing a model of the relationship between the social media marketing communications and eWOM.

A research problem is defined in the following way and is well-formed: “[...] to understand how marketing communication in social networks influences eWOM while considering the: communication form, communication appeal, brand type and geographic market” (p. 6, 65) / “to understand how marketing communication in social networks influences eWOM while considering: communication form (image, animation, video), communication appeal (rational, emotional) brand type (mass-market, luxury), geographic market (Poland, Italy).

Based on the literature review Author of the dissertation correctly formulates five following research questions that are adequate to the identified research problem:

- 1) How does the form of marketing communication in social networks influence eWOM?
- 2) How marketing communication appeal in social networks influence eWOM?
- 3) How marketing communications of mass-market and luxury brands in social networks influence eWOM?
- 4) What are the differences between the influence of marketing communication appeal in social networks on eWOM for mass-market and luxury brands?
- 5) What are the differences between the influence of marketing communication appeal in social networks on eWOM within the Polish and Italian markets?

The hypotheses are developed and presented in Chapter 2 of the dissertation and are as follows:

H1: *Marketing communication in social networks using videos has the highest while using images the lowest positive influence on eWOM.*

H2: *Emotional appeal of marketing communication in social networks has a higher positive influence on eWOM than rational appeal.*

H3: *Marketing communication in social networks has a higher positive influence on eWOM for luxury brands than for mass-market brands.*

H4: *For luxury brands, emotional appeal of marketing communication in social networks has a higher positive influence on eWOM than rational appeal.*

H5: *The influence of marketing communication in social networks on eWOM varies according to geographic market.*

In my opinion, both research questions and hypotheses are formulated correctly and properly express the research problem and the idea of the empirical study.

In order to answer the formulated research questions and verify research hypotheses, the author applied an adequate research method. I appreciate that the author presents and justifies in detail the choice of the research method. To verify research hypotheses, the quantitative approach was applied using the statistical analysis methods – univariate and multivariate analysis of variance. The author applied the content analysis of brand posts and sentiment analysis of user comments (the examination of eWOM) that are recommended by many researchers in the studies on social media marketing. The author properly describes and justifies the process of brand selection and data collection by referring to the literature. Anna Bianchi decided to select for the study of four mass-market cosmetic brands and four luxury cosmetic brands. She applied the triangulation of data and a systematic random sample of Facebook brand posts. A brand post is a unit of analysis in this study and the form of brand posts, the appeal brand type, and geographic markets were the recording units. The author properly justifies the applied classification of marketing communication appeals.

2. The structure and critical discussion of the substantive content of the doctoral dissertation, critical remarks, and discussion issues

The dissertation written by Anna Bianchi has 208 pages including bibliography (pp.174-200), lists of tables and figures (pp:201-205), and appendix (pp. 206-208). The author of the doctoral dissertation refers to numerous sources of bibliographic sources (about 550 items). The analysis of the references led to the conclusion that considering the research problem, a bibliography is properly collected and analysed by the author. Moreover, the dissertation contains 73 tables and 42 figures.

The reviewed doctoral dissertation has generally a logical structure and composes of introduction, three chapters and conclusions.

In the introduction, the author explains the theoretical foundations, outlines the reasons for taking the topic of the doctoral dissertation, generally defines the objectives of the doctoral thesis, and presents a brief description of the structure of this dissertation together with the outline of the individual chapters. It is a pity that the Author does not separate the general purpose and specific objectives of the dissertation. The research questions and research hypotheses are not presented in the introduction to the dissertation. Moreover, the author does not present in the introduction to the description of the applied research method.

The first chapter of the dissertation is of a theoretical character. In these chapter entitled "Overview of the extant literature on marketing communications, social media and word-of-mouth" the author widely describes the essence and the theoretical background of the marketing communication foundations (the U&G theory, marketing communications models, the elaboration likelihood model – ELM), and the elements of the marketing communication-mix, including the online-marketing communication. Moreover, in this chapter, the author presents the conclusions from the literature review on social media marketing, and especially the studies on the content analysis on Facebook (table 1). The part of the first chapter is also devoted to the characteristics of the phenomenon of the word-of-mouth, the electronic word-of-mouth and word-of-mouth marketing, and studies on this topic. The author presents a review of the definitions of WOM and on this basis formulates the definition used in the dissertation. In addition, a comparison is made between a traditional WOM and an electronic WOM (eWOM). The first chapter is concluded with the identification of the following research gaps: 1) The influence of marketing communication form and appeal on eWOM in social networks, 2) eWOM and marketing communication effects in social networks in different product categories, 3) Marketing communication of luxury brands on social media in an international context, and 4) Differences between countries in social media usage and eWOM. In my opinion, the author correctly identifies and justifies the research gaps.

In the second chapter of the doctoral dissertation, the author presents a research problem, correctly develops the research hypothesis based on the literature, and presents the concept of empirical research, including a characteristics and justification of the chosen research method, including data collection, the coding categories and procedure, and method of statistical analysis.

In the third chapter, the results of the empirical study are described, including the presentation of the descriptive statistics and the hypothesis testing in the aim of their verification.

The reviewed dissertation is summed up with several important conclusions and both the theoretical and practical implications. It reveals that: 1) marketing communications form and appeal in social networks influence e-WOM on both the luxury and mass cosmetic market, 2) different communication appeals entail a different behaviour of users that may be explained by different motivations, 3) users are more likely to comment on the mass-market brand posts than on luxury brand posts, 4) Polish and Italian users differ in terms of their reaction on the brand posts in social networks.

The analysis of the structure of the doctoral dissertation written by Anna Bianchi brings to the conclusion that it is adequate to the scientific paper of that type, although I have a few remarks:

- the introduction is incomplete, because the research questions, hypotheses, and research methods are not presented in it;
- the literature conclusions presented in the "Research settings" section, concerning the marketing of luxury brands in social media, should be presented in the first chapter. However, I would like to emphasize the following strengths of the reviewed dissertation:
 - an extensive presentation of the theoretical foundations of marketing communication, including marketing communication in a hypermedia computer-mediated environment;
 - deep literature study and a comprehensive overview of publications, including empirical research on social media marketing, and especially the use of content analysis in the study of social media marketing;
 - conceptualization of the electronic word-of-mouth phenomenon and relations between marketing communication and e-WOM and systematization of terminology regarding it;
 - taking into account the international context in the study;
 - solid and detailed justification for choosing the research method and research procedure;
 - development of a novel classification of brand post appeals;
 - a critical discussion of conclusions from an empirical study.

I have also a few remarks to the content of the dissertation:

- a conceptual model (p. 73) including the independent variables and dependent variable is too simplified and no hypothesis is indicated; in my opinion, form and appeal are the elements of the "marketing communication in social network" construct, but brand type and geographic market should not be treated as the elements of this construct;
- mass-market brands selected for research are brands of a narrower range of products than selected luxury brands what may influence the company's approach to marketing communication of these brands, as well as consumer involvement;
- descriptive statistics are presented for 1040 selected brand posts although brand posts that received no comments or that had not been shared were excluded from the statistical analysis using MANOVA, ANOVA.

Remarks mentioned above don't have influence n my overall positive opinion about the reviewed dissertation.

3. Characteristics of the doctoral dissertation on the formal side

The presented doctoral dissertation is correct from a formal point of view. Generally speaking, this dissertation is written using the correct language. The author did not, however, avoid mistakes such as, for example, referring to the same thematic threads in various parts of the work. Some of the presented charts are not very legible, often due to the size of the font used (e.g. pp. 125, 129, 132, etc.).

4. Assessment of the dissertation from the point of view of meeting the requirements of the Act as an original solution to the research problem

Summing up the discussion of the content of the doctoral dissertation written by Anna Bianchi, I state that these doctoral dissertation – its form, theoretical background, applied research method, and the conclusions formulated by the Author, are fully in a line with the field of the discipline of management and quality sciences.

This doctoral thesis is an important contribution to the development of studies on the use of social media in marketing and the impact of social media marketing on consumer behaviour and testifies to the significant research maturity of the author who undertook such a difficult challenge. When assessing the reviewed doctoral thesis, it should be pointed out that the author has put the research questions relevant for epistemological and pragmatic reasons and has made conceptualization of the phenomenon of the use of social media marketing and its impact on e-WOM. Dissertation written by Anna Bianchi is the original solution of the research problem and testifies to the author's great knowledge and ability to conduct scientific work independently by designing, conducting and inferring from empirical research.

The manner of verification of research hypotheses is correct. The author of the dissertation conducted a scientific discussion of the obtained results of empirical research and confronted them with the theoretical achievements. The purpose of the dissertation was achieved.

5. Final conclusions

Summing up the review, I conclude that **doctoral dissertation written by Anna Bianchi, M. Sc. entitled "The influence of Marketing Communication in Social Media on Electronic Word-of-Mouth" under supervision of dr hab. Mariusz Trojanowski at the Faculty of Management, University of Warsaw, meets statutory requirements set for doctoral dissertations which are indicated in the Art. 13 of the Act of 14 March 2013 on academic degrees and academic title, and on degrees and title in the field of art (Journal of Laws from 2003 No. 65, item 595, as amended).**

Therefore, I apply for the admission of Mrs. Anna Bianchi to the next stages of the procedure for granting the doctor's degree in the field of social sciences, and in the discipline of management and quality sciences.

*Alhazraue
Wojtek-Hyller*