

Social media provide organisations with an unprecedented opportunity to create experiences for consumers. Organisations and brands are increasingly interested in engaging online brand communities because of their potential to co-create brand value. The exponential growth in social media sites has compelled brands to engage collaboratively, and to develop responsive, interactive relationships with brand communities and stakeholders. However, these relationships can in practice become quite treacherous as brands experience changing communication models that shift power of voice away from the brand towards brand consumers. While collaborative networking can assist in building brand reputations, expressive networking can just as easily destroy it. Brand managers are thus faced with numerous challenges when managing the online brand risks that are created through the dissemination of User Generated Content. It is against this background that this issue of *Communicare* engages with brand experiences, particularly those that are co-created in the digital brand space.

The first article in this edition engages with haptic brand experience, which has become particularly relevant within the context of sensory branding. Sensory branding appeals to all the senses in order to relate to customers on an emotional level, eliciting associations that drive emotional connections with the brand. In their article, Leo, Swinstead, Crous and De Bruin find that incidental exposure to haptic experiences in one domain can affect consumer judgement in another, substantively unrelated, domain. In particular, their results suggest that metaphorical activation of physically grounded mental frameworks is instrumental in the influence of incidental haptic sensations on consumer judgment. Additionally, evidence of increased activation of physically grounded mental frameworks when evaluating an unestablished brand enhances our understanding of the process underlying touch-related embodiment phenomena.

In their article on the strategic implementation of social media messaging within a marketing communication context, Cloete and Holtzhausen argue that while social media provide many opportunities for marketing purposes, theory regarding social media marketing is still relatively undeveloped. They argue that a strategic approach to social media messaging could benefit the practice. In a similar vein, Steenkamp and Rensburg argue that a shift away from content management on SNSs could be beneficial for reputation management, especially if SNSs are re-theorised as platforms where stakeholder responses can be assessed and managed. This could provide a new avenue to guide brand and stakeholder actions, co-create messages, and manage stakeholder sentiment in a manner which could facilitate brand alignment and support.

Makombe & Agbede argue that the advent of digital technology has ushered in new ways by which citizens can challenge power. Traditional methods of speaking truth as a challenge to power such as demonstrations, strikes and petitions are increasingly being replaced, or in some cases complemented, by digital resistance. In their article the authors explore how power is challenged in the social media through a review of selected memes of Robert Mugabe's fall at the airport on 4 February 2015, and conclude that since internet memes represent a piece of the world as perceived by the meme-producer, they are a powerful means by which ordinary people resist oppression. In view of this, memes can be conceptualised as couriers of ordinary people's views and concerns.