Prosumer Generated Stories

A Way to Aspire Brand Credibility in a Digitally Accelerated Time

SOFIA BORGSTRÖM & ANTONIA CRAFOORD

Lund University
Institution of Strategic Communication
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Abstract

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Social media usage is undeniably popular, which has escalated the amount of content existing online, resulting in a state of content overload. The overload of content has made it harder for organisations to reach out with their message, and it is therefore more important than ever to prioritize efforts to develop trustworthy relationships with consumers, and thereby aspire brand credibility. The importance of aspiring brand credibility has evolved new marketing strategies, where the use of prosumer generated stories is suggested to be one.

This study seeks to investigate how organisations in today's digital world can aspire brand credibility through prosumer generated stories, on one of the leading social media platforms – Instagram. With previous research and theories, an analysis model was created in order to establish criterias for the analysis.

The research is a case study, built on the Swedish watch company Daniel Wellington, which have over 4 million followers on their Instagram account. Further, the study was conducted using a qualitative conventional content analysis, with a collected empirical material consisting of 50 Instagram posts from Daniel Wellington's Instagram account.

The results concluded that using prosumer generated stories as a marketing strategy is a valuable tool in order to aspire brand credibility, which is necessary in the social media climate of today. It also resulted in the importance of letting the story of a brand shine greater than the product or service itself, which can be achieved with lifestyle branding.

Keyword: Strategic communication, brand credibility, storytelling, prosumer generated stories, social media, digital marketing, marketing communication

Number of characters including spaces: 93 367

Sammanfattning

Prosumer Generated Stories:

Ett sätt att sträva efter varumärkestrovärdighet i en digitalt accelererande tid.

Användningen av sociala medier har fortsättningsvis ökat markant. I takt med den eskalerande användningen har mängden publicerat innehåll blivit större, vilket resulterat i ett överflöd av innehåll som i sin tur gjort det ännu svårare för organisationer att nå ut med sina budskap. Överflödet av innehåll har lett till ett ökat behov av att skapa pålitliga relationer med konsumenter, för att i sin tur skapa varumärkestrovärdighet. Vikten av att sträva efter varumärkestrovärdighet har bidragit till att nya marknadsföringsstrategier har etablerats, varav användandet av prosumer generated stories är ett exempel.

Vi ämnar att undersöka hur en organisation i dagens digitala värld kan eftersträva varumärkestrovärdighet genom prosumer generated stories, på en av de ledande sociala medie-plattformarna – Instagram. Med hjälp av tidigare studier och teorier har vi utvecklat en analysmodell för att skapa kriterier för genomförandet av analysen.

Studien är en fallstudie, baserad på det svenska klockföretaget Daniel Wellington. Vidare har en kvalitativ innehållsanalys genomförts för att samla in det empiriska materialet.

Sammanfattningsvis resulterade studien i att användandet av prosumer generated stories är ett värdefullt marknadsföringsverktyg för att eftersträva varumärkestrovärdighet vilket är nödvändigt inom dagens sociala medieklimat. Avslutningsvis, påvisade resultaten även vikten av att låta berättelsen skina starkare än produkten själv, vilket kan genomföras med hjälp av livsstilsmarknadsföring.

Nyckelord: Strategisk kommunikation, varumärkestrovärdighet, berättelser, prosumer generated stories, sociala medier, digital marknadsföring, marknadskommunikation

Acknowledgements

List of Definitions and Abbreviations

Definitions:

The following definitions are created for this thesis, by the authors, and are subjective to its nature.

Social Media: This is a phenomenon describing the collected digital platforms where forums for community building takes place. This includes the act of creating, sharing, responding, collaborating and reacting to various content uploaded by the user.

Hashtag: A hashtag is a function used to find and categorize content on social media, which is currently overloaded with information. By using the symbol "#" before the name of a category, one can find content published within that particular theme.

Regram: This is a term that will be used throughout the thesis, and describes the action of publishing someone else's content on your own account. Regram will be used to describe the repetition of an already published image.

Post: A post is defined as the content one uploads on a social media account. This refers to the entire content of the specific post, and often includes an image with an accompanying text.

Abbreviations:

Daniel Wellington: DW

Qualitative Conventional Content Analysis: QCCA

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1. Introduction

The introductory chapter provides a general view of the research area and explains the most prominent readings and discussions within the field of study, as well as deeper explanations of the factors connected to the subject. The case of the study is explained, which is followed by the purpose of the study and the research questions. The chapter ends with a presentation of the study's limitations and a clarification of the thesis structure.

1.1   Background

In only eight years, social media usage has increased from 0.97 billion users in 2010, to an estimate of 2.62 billion in 2018 (eMarketer, 2018). This has, naturally, increased the amount of content existing online, and made it harder for organisations to reach out with their message. Along with Rosa's (2013) studies on our accelerated society, we currently exist in a production spiral where the public demands more and more, and the market in turn supply us with more and more, which has led to an overload of content. The content overload has made it ever more important for organisations to prioritize efforts to develop trustworthy relationships with their consumers, and thereby aspire brand credibility. The importance of endeavor brand credibility has evolved new marketing strategies, where the use of prosumer generated stories is one of them. Prosumption is a phenomenon that has got it's revive with the rise of social media, and is described as people with an ability to influence others (Buzzetto, 2013). Prosumers have blurred the gap between producers and consumers, and are now considered to be a combination of both - hence the name prosumers (du Plessis, 2018). They operate on digital platforms where they create prosumer generated stories, which is content that is produced for organisations, by consumers, for free, and is proven to be an effective tool for building relations (Buzzetto, 2013).

Along with content overload, the creators behind the social media platforms

continuously change the algorithms, making it even harder to reach out. On Instagram today, an organisation´s posts needs to receive a high engagement rate in order to reach as many people from their target audience as possible (Carbone, 2018). This heightens the demands on the quality of the content, and is an area where prosumer generated stories can be effective. Elliott and Percy (2007) states that stories are a fundamental way to create relations with internal and external stakeholders, in which social media platforms have enabled endless possibilities to reach a large amount of people. Social media have also catalyst a change in stories, where the line between storytelling and story-making have become immensely blurred (du Plessis, 2018). Prosumers express their creativity and storytelling abilities by building upon a brand's core values, and thereby creates content that is true to the masses. This has given the consumer even more power, which in turn has proven to be a successful strategy to aspire brand credibility (du Plessis, 2018).

Prosumer generated stories has led to a shift in power, which has challenged traditional marketing strategies and demands organisations to embrace strategies of being transparent and engaging with their consumers. Organisations today needs to be aware of the shift in power, and acknowledge that the digital environment is run by non-professionals, and not marketing specialists (du Plessis, 2018). This means that credibility is no longer something an organisation can assign to themselves, but something they have to earn by establishing valuable relations with their consumers. Therefore, the use of prosumer generated stories is arguably important for reaching through the noise of content overload, and being termed a credible brand.

1.1.1 Case Description

To investigate the phenomenon of how internet based corporations can create brand credibility, the study will be based on a case firm. The Swedish watch and jewellery maker, Daniel Wellington AB, was founded in 2011 and is the case firm this study will be based upon. With over 6000 stores worldwide, and a global e-commerce, the company has since its launch generated great financial results and was in 2017 awarded first place for being Europe's fastest growing company of that year (Inc, 2017).

Daniel Wellington encourage their customers to publish and tag their images on Instagram with the hashtag #DanielWellington. When Daniel Wellington

identify a post from the hashtag that is worth a regram, they comment with a standardized message as follows: *"We love this photo and want to share it! Please respond with "YesDW" after reviewing the terms and conditions here: danielwellington.com/yesdw and e-mail the image with your handle to yesdw@danielwellington.com"*. The terms and conditions states that Daniel Wellington have the rights to publish and use the image for all marketing and advertising purposes, and that the license is transferable to third party collaborators. It also states that Daniel Wellington is not obliged to refer to the creator, and by responding with #YesDW the prosumer confirm that Daniel Wellington own and control the rights to the content.

With Daniel Wellington's recurring and persistent way of regramming prosumer generated stories, which stands for the majority of the posts on the account, along with their follower base of 4,1 million, Daniel Wellington is a suitable case for this thesis study. From here on, Daniel Wellington will be referred to as DW.

1.2   Problem Definition

It has previously been stated that the difficulties of getting a message through to the target audience is harder than ever, and thereby harder to aspire brand credibility. As companies increase their online presence the content and information that is being published online continues to increase. According to an eMarketer (2018) report on global social media usage, it has been forecasted that the usage will continue to increase in 2018. The report also shows that the development of technology and the availability of smart devices, have been a catalyst to social media platforms becoming bigger than ever. As people have come to spend hours on social media, companies have realised the possibility to market their products and services on these social platforms. Due to the rise of the social media platforms, it could be seen as an easy way to reach out to a great amount of people. However, today ever more companies have come to fight for their online presence. Since content is not only being created by the organisations who aim to brand their products, but also by the public who have been given the opportunity to, individually and privately, produce and publish content within the online sphere. This along with changes in the Instagram algorithms, where only 10% of the followers of an account can see their post in the feed, makes it even harder to reach out (Carbone, 2018). The algorithm is built on

a reward system, where the more engagement a post receives, the greater the reach gets (Carbone, 2018). This development has led to an increase in complexity of online marketing.

Along with the increased complexity, companies are developing organisations with a strong digital foundation and internet is evolving into an arena filled with actors who all aim to reach out with their content. One might therefore ask how digital based organisations will be able to aspire credibility and stand out on these platforms in a world of content overload.

Previous research on the field of social media marketing, valid for the study, address the prevalence of community digital storytelling where a method called *Storytelling Cycle of Trust Model* is proposed (Copeland & de Moor, 2018). We can also see previous studies in the field of prosumerism in social media, where a quantitative study shows that people tend to rely more on peer recommendations than information communicated from an organisation (Buzzetto, 2013). It is also concluded that using prosumers as a marketing tool is a strategic option for digital marketing (Buzzetto, 2013).

All in all, we believe that brand credibility is the foremost achievement a brand can attain. Although, various research has been conducted regarding the seperated fields of prosumers, storytelling and brand credibility, yet they have not been studied intertwined. Our contribution to the field of strategic communication will therefore be to look further into DW's marketing communication on Instagram, and investigate how organisations can enable the strategy of using prosumer generated stories in order to aspire brand credibility.

1.3 Purpose and Research Questions

The aim of this study is to contribute with further knowledge to the field of strategic communication and provide greater insights to the phenomenon of brand credibility. The purpose of this study is to investigate how an organisation in today's digital world can aspire brand credibility through prosumer generated stories, on one of the leading social media networking platforms, Instagram.

This thesis research questions are the following:

RQ1: *How can organisations use prosumer generated stories on their Instagram account, in order to aspire brand credibility?*

RQ2: *How can organisations use brand symbols in order to aspire brand credibility?*

RQ3: *How can narratives create a lifestyle brand in order to aspire brand credibility?*

1.4   Limitations of the Study

This study aims to investigate how organisations can achieve brand credibility through prosumer generated stories. Due to the chosen data collection method, qualitative conventional content analysis, we will be unable to fully conclude whether DW have achieved brand credibility or not. This is not considered to be a flaw in the research, only a recommendation for further research. This study therefore has the perspective of investigating certain criterias for aspiring brand credibility, not to measure whether or not DW have reached the status of being a credible brand.

1.5   Research Outline

This thesis is constituted of six chapters, including introduction, and is structured in the following way:

Literature Review:

Within this chapter, previous research in the field of strategic communication, precisely marketing communication, have been conducted. Studies on prosumption in social media and community digital storytelling provides insight to the field and an overview of important studies within digital media.

Theoretical Framework:

This chapter aims to provide valuable knowledge, that later will come to serve as a framework for the analysis and discussion of the empirical findings. The chosen theories are prosumption, digital storytelling, brand credibility and lifestyle branding.

Methodology:

The methodological approach is outlined in this chapter. The collection of the empirical findings is presented, along with the various techniques that have been applied when analysing the collected data.

Analysis:

Within the analysis, the empirical findings are presented and analysed. The theoretical framework is applied in order to discuss and compare the collected material. Our developed analysis model, the Brand Credibility Model, is applied in order to analyse the empirical material and to answer the thesis research questions.

Discussion and Conclusion:

Lastly, the thesis' main findings are highlighted and summarised within this chapter. The research questions are clearly answered and suggestions for further research topics and methods are presented.

2. Literature Review

The literature review provides the reader with an overview of the field in general, and is presented with three previous studies within marketing communication. These studies are not a foundation for our analysis, but function as an umbrella perspective to give an understanding of our digital world and what is trending in 2018.

2.1 Prosumerism in Social Media

Buzzetto (2013) conducted a nationwide survey with 1000 business practitioners, to investigate the impact prosumers on social media have on sales and customer relations. The study presented a new consumer with the traits of being self-propelled and highly open to the influence of others. This has led to a social media prosumerism that have the ability to affect others and act as influencers for the sake of a corporation.

The quantitative survey (Buzzetto, 2013) illustrated that 79% have made a purchase based on a recommendation on social media, which showed an increase from a similar study conducted in 2008, and has arguably increased even more today. Moreover, 73% stated that they have become a follower of a brand or company they appreciate on social media, and 62% stated that they further recommend products on social media to their own followers and friends.

Furthermore, the study (Buzzetto, 2013) showed that social media have a great impact on customer relationship, and that 81% of the participants had a corporate presence on social media. In spite of the high percentage of online presence, the study also presented that organisations generally fail at offering social media training to staff, and that most corporate executives are not fully informed with strategies on social media marketing. Further, 81% reported that they find social media being an effective tool for building relations with customers.

The participants of the study (Buzzetto, 2013) were also asked to rate the foremost marketing message conveyed via social media. The available messages were Standard

Homepage Ads, Social Impressions and Organic Impressions, where the one with the highest rate was Organic Impressions. Organic Impressions stands for word-of-mouth and unpaid media coverage, that is often spread by consumers to consumers .

This study (Buzzetto, 2013) concluded that consumers value their peer's opinion the highest, which has resulted in organisations giving more power to the masses. The actions of prosumers showed high abilities in influencing consumer purchase, and the marketing professionals who partook in the study reported that the use of social media is valuable in boosting sales, staying up-to-date and to increase customer relations.

2.2   Online Brand Communities

The concept of brand community can be defined as a specialized community with no geographical boundaries. That is, commercial social communities that are centered around a certain brand, which are not active in commercial spaces (Muniz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001). Further, one can find the admirers of the brand exerting a set of structural relations within the community. Altogether, three different markers prevalent to brand communities has been defined. That is, Shared Consciousness, Rituals and Traditions, and Moral Responsibility (Muniz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001). The Shared Consciousness becomes a triangular relationship between consumers, the other consumer and producer (brand), which increases the consumer's special connection to the brand (Elliott & Percy, 2007). Rituals and Traditions refers both to the shared experiences with other consumers and brands, but also to the way the meaning of the community is shared (Muniz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001). The Moral Responsibility manifests in the way community members feel responsible for the individual members and the community as a whole (Muniz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001). Further, the Moral Responsibility has been defined as an act of integrating new members by spreading a proper image of the brand (Elliott & Percy, 2007).

Moreover, three positive aspects with brand communities has been defined by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001). Firstly, the collective voices within the communities have a strong voice from a consumer perspective. Secondly, the brand communities form important information sources for prospective consumers, and have extensive knowledge on the brand and product in question. Lastly, the brand communities' offers added value to consumers and managers can build long-term relationships to their consumers by using brand communities as a primary marketing strategy (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001).

Further, du Plessis (2018) describes online communities as a forum for prosumers to participate in, and a platform where prosumers can motivate each other, get involved in the works of an organisation, and contribute to the value creating process of the organisation.

2.3   Social Acceleration

Rosa's (2013) theories on social acceleration gives a foundation on the current social state, and how it may affect branding and organisations relations with consumers. Rosa's primary aim with her research is to clarify the following paradox: *"We don't have any time although we've gained far more than we needed before"* (Rosa & Trejo-Mathys, 2013, p.xxxv). Social acceleration is preferably to be seen as a cycle, with three components all dependent on each other. These components are technical acceleration, acceleration of social change and the acceleration of pace of life.

Firstly technical acceleration is the driving force of the cycle and covers, among other factors, the acceleration within communication, where information transmission has evolved from e.g. posting a letter to sending an e-mail. This has created a production spiral, where the public demands more and more, and the market supply us with more and more. (Rosa & Trejo-Mathys, 2013). The second component of social acceleration is the acceleration of social change. This component depends upon the technical acceleration, since the faster technology we demand leads to changes in our social patterns. The acceleration of social change is built upon the theory that the world around you never stays the same, the rate of change increases. This can easily leave us feel alienated since we have a hard time keeping up with the constant changes in fashion, people, technology etc. This constant change around us also leads to the feeling of standing on slippery slopes and always have to keep up (Rosa & Trejo-Mathys, 2013). The third component is a result of technical acceleration and the acceleration of social change, and is called the acceleration of pace of life. The social changes as a result of the technical acceleration, leads to a feeling that we have to speed up to match the pace of life. We try to get more episodes of action done per unit of time (Rosa & Trejo-Mathys, 2013).

This cycle of social acceleration is a self-propelling system, because when you feel you need more time, you want faster technology, and faster technology leads to social changes that you yet again have to keep up with (Rosa & Trejo-Mathys, 2013). Rosa

(2013) argues that the acceleration is something people will have to learn to live with, and those who does not are flawed. The social acceleration also demands a lot from every individual, and affects their sense of self, which in turn has effects on relations between companies and their consumers. This sets a higher demand on companies to understand their target audience, and the social sphere we all operate in, in order to successfully market a brand.

3. Theoretical Framework

This section provides a deeper understanding of the main theories that outline the framework for this thesis. Firstly, the phenomenon of prosumers are presented and discussed, which further leads into storytelling and how it can effectively be combined with prosumers. Thereafter, brand credibility is addressed, which is an aspirational value for any organisation. Lastly, the theory of lifestyle branding will be presented. These theories have functioned as a framework for conducting an analysis model for this study, the Brand Credibility Model, which is briefly presented at the end of this section.

3.1   Prosumers and Prosumer Generated Content

The traditional consumer and producer relation was challenged with the rise of web 2.0. The phrase prosumer indicates consumers who more often nowadays function as both consumer and producer. Toffler (1980) first presented the phenomenon in his book *The Third Wave*, and describes prosumers as something highly prevalent before the industrial revolution, when people produced the goods they later consumed themselves. The industrial revolution revolutionized consumerism, and divided the people into producers versus consumers, where the majority of goods were produced for sales. That initial description of prosumers is fundamentally applicable on today's mediated version, but it overlooks an important factor that Fuchs (2014) has thoroughly noted. Fuchs (2014) states that prosumption today is used by companies to outsource labour to consumers without payment, and thereby destroys jobs and exploit consumers. It is here important to note that Fuchs (2014) takes a very critical standpoint to his research on social media. Although, Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010) states an opposing view on exploitation, and argues that prosumers are not exploited: *"The idea that the prosumer is exploited is contradicted by, among other things, the fact that prosumer seem to enjoy, even love, what they are doing and are willing to devote long hours to it for no pay"* (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010), p.21-

22). Prosumption has further developed with the growth of social media, and has flourished along with online communities and is now seen as consumers who create value for an organisation by being active in creating and sharing the organisation's work.

Moreover, Ritzer and Jurgen (2010) goes in line with Fuchs (2014) and states that web 2.0 did not invent prosumers, but it catalyst a new form of prosumption, and that web 2.0 is the platform where prosumption today is the most prevalent. We find that the social media platforms used today, are mostly built upon prosumer-based relations, where organisations market their products through prosumers. The organisations use the content created by the prosumers as marketing material, making prosumers highly prevalent in the digital world.

One can find prosumers having a different relationship to an organisation, since they are more involved in the creation of a brand's story, than a normal customer (du Plessis, 2018). It is also evident that social media have opened up the world of consumerism when it enabled sharing and recommending (Hermida, Fletcher, Korell, & Logan, 2012). This act of sharing is proved to be a valuable reason to use social media, and is a way to partake through the eyes of someone else. Social sharing illustrates a way to bypass professionals and instead receive recommendations from people we trust (Hermida et al., 2012).

3.1.1 Prosumer Strategy

In order to establish a market share in the digital world, certain strategies needs to be developed that are suitable to the digital social acceleration. Seran and Izvercian (2014) have proposed four strategies for organisational use, that builds upon the foundational idea of *The Open Innovation Approach*, which advocates transparent organisations to open up for a collaborative ground. The model offers an approach on how to involve prosumers based on the aims of a specific organisation. These four strategies are illustrated in

Figure 1.
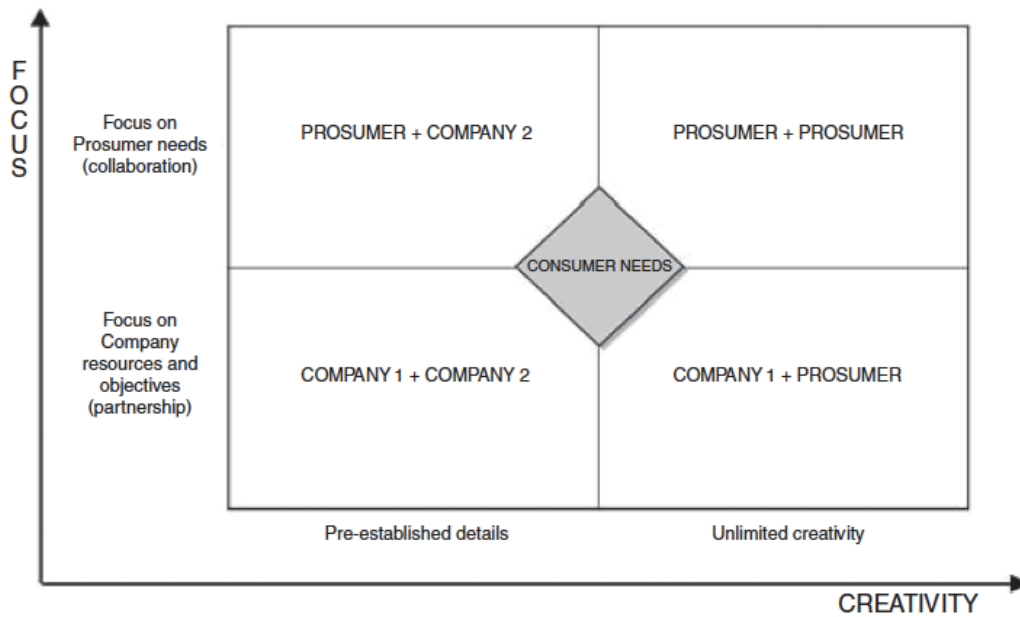
Figure 1.

The Prosumer Creativity and Focus Model.

(Seran (Potra) & Izvercian, 2014)

The model presents the degree of prosumer involvement, and to what degree the organi-sation is able to be open and transparent. The vertical axis defines the prosumer's partic-ipation degree, and the horizontal axis defines the degree of creativity allowed for prosumer collaboration. The model is further divided into a top category and a basis cat-egory, depending on if the organisation has their own objectives in center or the prosum-ers'.

1. Company + Company (partnership between company and supplier)

2. Company + Prosumer (partnership between company and prosumer)

The top categories outline a new business system where the power has shifted from or-ganisation to prosumer, but is still a partnership initiated and owned by the organisation.

3. Prosumer + Company (collaboration between prosumer and company)

4. Prosumer + Prosumer (collaboration between prosumers)

The base categories illustrate a collaboration where the prosumers are fully in charge, and have all ownership to their created content (Seran (Potra) & Izvercian, 2014).

Organisations that uses prosumer generated content to spread messages about their brand, usually falls under the second category listed above. It is a partnership that

relies on specific responsibilities or duties, where the organisation in the end have ownership to the content. This is a strategy where the organisation can outsource certain activities to prosumers, and take advantage of the positive aspects of prosumer marketing. The content created by the prosumer is submitted to the organisation, and the prosumer thereby lose its ownership. By doing so, the organisations are lowering themselves to the consumer level, inviting them to participate and then rewarding them by using the content they find suitable (Seran & Izvercian, 2014).

3.2   Digital Storytelling in Prosumer Generated Stories

Telling stories has always been part of mankind, and is most often an understated tool for marketing communication (Fill, 2013). However, one might question what truly defines a story. Generally, it can be described as anything with a beginning, a middle and an end (Alexander, 2011). A story is therefore a highly abstract definition, which has different meaning to different individuals. The way people for generations have used stories, is similar to how Elliott and Percy (2007) describe organisations use of this sense making tool. The authors state that organisations are storytelling systems, where stories are the fundamental way to create relations with internal and external stakeholders (Elliott & Percy, 2007).

Storytelling as a marketing strategy can be used both for corporate enhancement, but also for building relations with external stakeholders, in which digital tools have enabled a greater reach for organisations. These stories have the ability to encourage individuals to be part of the story and connect with the brand and the product or service, and creates relations on a deeper level (Fill, 2013).

Digital storytelling has evolved along with the rise of web 2.0, and is briefly described as storytelling with digital technology (Alexander, 2011). This can be illustrated with the use of prosumers, where their power on social media have led to the ability to create and share stories. Alexander (2011), mentions blogs, Twitter, Wikipedia and Facebook as platforms for storytelling. Instagram was founded in 2010, which might be the reason for not including that platform. Although, with a section on social images, it's research can be applied on Instagram. Because one can find images having the power to influence viewers, and therefore strong storytelling capabilities (Alexander, 2011). It can therefore be concluded that images along with a small caption, which is often prevalent

on Instagram, can be a very powerful storytelling tool to create strong relations to a brand. We would like to state that prosumers use of storytelling is highly effective, since they are not bound by an organisation's regulations, but speaks without inhibitions. The way that organisations use the prosumer generated stories is therefore a way to create authentic relations to their consumers.

As previously stated, prosumers can have a deeper relation to an organisation, since they, to a high extent, are actively involved in the creation of the brand's story (du Plessis, 2018). As prosumers take part in the story creation of an organisation, they become involved in the storytelling that shapes the identity of the organisation (du Plessis, 2018). Furthermore, it has been stated that prosumer generated stories can positively impact a brand, since the prosumers interpret their specific experiences with the brand, which in turn is credited as trustworthy content. In this case, the organisation merely facilitates the stories that prosumers have created, rather than telling the story themselves. The strategy of using prosumers for storytelling is therefore a vital step for reaching through the constant noise online (du Plessis, 2018). Further, it is argued that the delegated power of prosumer generated stories shows positive benefits for a brand's trustworthiness. Moreover, prosumer generated stories have become vital in Rosa's (2013) social accelerated digital environment we live in today, greatly due to the sincerity and trustworthiness often purveyed through collaborating with prosumers (du Plessis, 2018).

3.2.1 Community Digital Storytelling

Copeland and de Moor (2018) have elaborated on a theory called the Community Digital Storytelling method and proposed a new model called Storytelling Cycle of Trust model, which adds four dimensions of trust to the Community Digital Storytelling method (Copeland & de Moor, 2018). The four dimensions of trust are Legitimacy, Authenticity, Synergy and Commons. Legitimacy refers to the importance of creating legitimate stories, which indicates that the storytellers needs to fully represent the stakeholders they tell the stories about. Authenticity refers to the importance of the story being as authentic as possible, needing to have some form of personal affection from the storyteller. Synergy stands for the ability to weave in authentic and legitimate voices to the story, which can be achieved by allowing a mass community taking part. Lastly commons refers to the stories need to be spread to the audience, and in that way become open for participation. The dimension of commons sparks questions on permission and consent to spread, but

the authors see this aspect as inevitable for enabling trust. These four dimensions are cyclical, and if applied correct, will enable trust relations, since the stories are shared in a synergetic commons, and rely on an important outcome – of being re-told (Copeland & de Moor, 2018).

This particular model have become successful for creating narratives that speak to the masses of today, and is arguably a model that curates authentic voices that communicates directly to the stakeholders of society, and can establish trust and relations deeper than the organisations can themselves (Copeland & de Moor, 2018).

3.3   Brand Credibility

Previous research on brand credibility have stated that it is a form of signal that provides credibility to a brand, and it is described as a brands ability to deliver what it has promised (Erdem, Swait, & Valenzuela, 2006). Brand credibility is constituted by two main components, trustworthiness and expertise, where trustworthiness refers to a brands *willingness*, and expertise refers to a brands *ability* to deliver what has been promised (Erdem et al., 2006). It can therefore be concluded that brand credibility is the believability of a product or service that is provided. Furthermore, an even clearer statement have been made, which argues that brand credibility is the believability of the information sent out by a brand, which in turn demands that the consumers find the brand willing and able to deliver what has been promised (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). Thus, one can wonder how a brand can aspire credibility. Increased consistency, clarity and brand investment over time, in aspects of marketing communication such as advertising, sponsorship and sales promotion, are all tools that can help to achieve band credibility (Jeng, 2016). Another tool is celebrity endorsement, which can be translated to a spokesperson, who promotes the brand and gives it credibility (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). The person needs to meet the requirements of being attractive, trustworthy, have expertise and a global appeal. This strategy can be applied on influencer marketing, where people with a great amount of followers use their trustworthiness, expertise and, in many cases, their attractiveness to give credibility to a brand. Further ways to achieve trust and credibility is by removing the brand from the story (Pulizzi, 2012). This refers to excluding all sales related communication and logotypes, and simply focus on the story depicted, which will significantly increase the speed by which the story is being spread (Pulizzi, 2012).

Moreover, brand credibility is a term often prevalent along with discussions of risk, since the credibility a brand is signaling has an impact on increasing consumer perceived quality and decreasing consumer perceived risk (Shams, Brown, & Alpert, 2017). Further, Shams et al. (2017) argues that brands can achieve credibility when applying marketing activities that are clear and consistent, from past to present, and also states that brand credibility is interrelated with brand innovativeness. Brand innovativeness is described as a consumers view on product innovation and degree of creativity, where innovative brands can create brand credibility, and brands with credibility can use the trust to become more innovative (Shams et al., 2017).

We would like to state that brand credibility is a theory that becomes even more relevant with the rise of social media, where prosumers use storytelling to spread the word about brands they like, or in some cases even dislike. With the high extent of trustworthiness of prosumer generated stories, the strategy can be an effective tool for achieving brand credibility.

3.4   Lifestyle Branding

In order to discuss branding, one must thoroughly understand the definition of a brand. It is a term first coined by the American Marketing Association in 1960, and was described as a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that defined a product or service in contrast to its competitors (Saviolo & Marazza, 2012). Today's definition of a brand is more vague, and can be described as all tangible and intangible efforts that makes the brand unique (Saviolo & Marazza, 2012). This definition is followed by a strong emphasis on the intangible aspects such as symbols and other immaterial parts of a brand, which adds additional value to a product or a service.

Through the consumption of brands, people are able to communicate who they are and what they stand for. Brands that inspires, guides and motivates customers beyond product benefits could be referred to as lifestyle brands (Saviolo & Marazza, 2012). Since many individuals have a need to feel connected and a need to represent themselves in relation to a brands value, they are ever more tolerant, accepting and forgiving towards the brand. A lifestyle brand, therefore, tends to be considered more important by their consumers, compared to a non-lifestyle brand, as the value of a brand often increases when its benefits are of emotional, experiential or social nature. Brands can be able to

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stimulate emotional responses in various ways. It can either fulfill a personal need by generating a way of *feeling* among the consumer, or it can fulfill a personal need that aims to be reached, through social implications and a way of *being* is instead experienced among the consumer. The latter can be found being a common sort of benefit amongst luxury brands, such as jewellery and watchmakers. Further on, social benefits can be reached if the customer can express a membership to a certain lifestyle, by feeling part of a community or group who share common attitudes and interests. All in all, one can find lifestyle brands providing great benefits and value to a brand as a whole (Saviolo & Marazza, 2012).

In order to establish a lifestyle brand, a minimum of three components must be included. That is, Background, Manifesto and Expression. Further, one can argue that the human factor could be defined as the fourth and most vital component when establishing a lifestyle brand over time (Saviolo & Marazza, 2012).

Background

The first component, background, includes credo and stories. Credo refers to a brands ability to supply their consumers with aspirational values, which are precise enough to guide attitudes and behaviours. Furthermore, the second component of background is stories, which have the power to engage the audience and fuel the mythology of the brand. The stories that are told often tends to evolve around the company's history, consumers and products in various ways. However, the stories cannot simply be a historical reconstruction. They must be memorable and be able to evoke emotional attributes in order to make people want to pass them forward. (Saviolo & Marazza, 2012).

Manifesto

Secondly, manifesto concern the brands lifestyle proposition and codes. That is, if the brand propose a clear set of intentions, topics and way of living that the audience can identify with and have certain codes, such as logotypes, patterns, colours or materials that make the manifesto immediately recognisable, the second criteria of a lifestyle brand could be found completed (Saviolo & Marazza, 2012).

Expression

Thirdly, expression is determined by a brands communication, interaction and product. In order to establish a lifestyle brand, the brand manifesto must become tangible, which can be accomplished through products, communication and direct interaction with the customer. Communication for a lifestyle brand tends to involve image aesthetics that is often complemented with only a limited written text piece. The communication should comprise a dynamic combination of characters, events and environments in order to have the power to affect and increase the authenticity of the brand. Through communication and interaction, an emotional bond with the consumer can be established, which in turn can generate a passion for the brand among the recipients. Without passionate and involved consumers, a lifestyle brand cannot exist. Therefore, one must communicate with its recipients in order to create an emotional attachment to the brand. All in all, if the brand contain the three criterias it can be categorised as a lifestyle brand. However, the fourth component, the human factor, should not be forgotten. Because it is the presence of charismatic leaders, the ability to grow a community of followers who are willing to share and develop the brand principles and the telling of memorable stories that are the common characteristic among brands that have succeeded to create extraordinary symbolic value. Therefore, the human act is the component which will determine the success or decline of a lifestyle brand over time (Saviolo & Marazza, 2012).

3.5   The Brand Credibility Model

All in all, the theoretical framework constitute the foundation for the analytical model that has been created by us, the authors of this thesis, in order to analyse the collected material and to answer the research questions of the study. The model will be presented in greater detail within the following chapter, methodology.
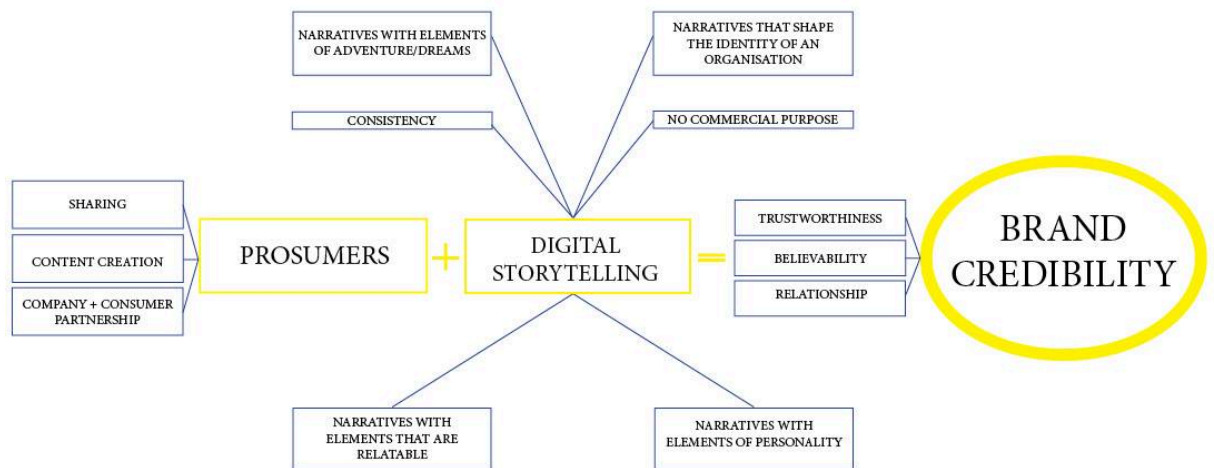
The Brand Credibility Model
(Borgström & Crafoord, 2018)

4. Methodology

This chapter aims to explain the thesis research process and the methods that has been used to reach the final result. The methods that have been applied will be described and justified in order to give a clear view of how the data collection process and analysis have been conducted. Lastly, the methodology chapter will reflect upon the quality of the thesis and the overall methodological approach.

4.1   Research Strategy and Design

The focus of this bachelor thesis was to investigate how an organisation in today's digital world can create brand credibility through prosumer generated stories. In order to successfully answer the thesis research question, a qualitative research strategy was applied. When aiming to research and answer a question of *how* a phenomenon functions one can find a qualitative research strategy being highly suitable (Bryman, 2016). Given the decision to conduct a qualitative research, we determined to base the study on a case, in order to provide an opportunity to deepen the understanding of the research phenomenon. Further, an abductive approach was applied, as it can be found being the most advised research approach when conducting a qualitative research (Bryman, 2016). Abductive reasoning can be described as a method of seeing through the eyes of the people that are being studied, and has its foundation in interpretivism and social constructivism. This reasoning believes that people are complex and socially constructed, and cannot be studied through fixed hypotheses, only through observation and interaction. Qualitative studies have often been credited as having inductive reasoning, as quantitative studies have deductive reasoning. However, various studies are neither, and can therefore relate more to the strategies of having an abductive perspective. This is where the researchers sees the reality through the eyes of the studied, and immerses themselves in their worldview (Bryman, 2016), which was the case for this thesis.

Aside from reasoning, every researcher has an epistemological foundation that is concerned with the different methods of gaining knowledge (Bryman, 2016). Given the qualitative research position of this study, the epistemological view takes an interpretivistic standpoint. As interpretivism stress the understanding of the social world through an examination of the participants' interpretation, it can be found to be aligned with the foundation of qualitative research. Interpretivism was founded as a contrasting reaction to positivism, where positivism seeks to merely *explain* human behaviour, in contrast to interpretivism which seeks to *understand* human behaviour (Bryman, 2016). Aside from epistemological views, one also takes ontological standpoints. An ontological view is concerned with what is true or real, and seeks to unveil the nature of reality. In line with the qualitative approach, the ontological perspective of this study takes a constructivistic standpoint, which believes in an emergent reality that is in a continuous state of construction and reconstruction, where the world around us is a product of social construction, not a fixed entity by external forces (Bryman, 2016).

Firstly, a literature review of the research area, marketing communication, was conducted, which was followed by the creation and development of the theoretical framework. However, throughout the research process, deeper understandings and insights were developed which demanded the theoretical framework to continuously be revised in order to suit the thesis research question. The thesis main focus, brand credibility, prosumer marketing and storytelling was taken into consideration throughout the collection of data. This enabled a greater understanding of the concepts and how they are connected.

4.2   Choice of Data Collection Method

The chosen data collection method for this bachelor thesis was a qualitative content analysis. According to Bryman (2016) a qualitative content analysis could be described as a search for underlying themes among the collected material. A content analysis is normally applied in quantitative studies, but Mayring (2000) developed the method for usage within qualitative research, where he aimed at preserving the advantages, transfer and modify them to suite a qualitative and interpretative anal-

ysis. Qualitative content analysis involves all sorts of communication such as transcripts of interviews, discourses, protocols of observation, video tapes, documents etc. Further, quantitative content analysis is interested in numbers and quantification, whereas qualitative content analysis goes beyond as it both classifies and categorizes the empirical data in order to identify underlying themes that represent similar meanings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) presented three approaches to qualitative content analysis, the first being Conventional Content Analysis. This approach is generally used when a study seeks to describe a phenomenon. The second approach is Directed Content Analysis, which rather use already existing research to either validate or extend prior theories. Lastly, the third approach is Summative Content Analysis, which seeks to explore usage, rather than meaning in the collected empirical material (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This particular study would fall under the classification of Qualitative Conventional Content Analysis, which will further on be addressed with the abbreviation QCCA.

4.2.1 Qualitative Conventional Content Analysis

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) describes QCCA as a study used when prior literature and research on a phenomenon is limited. The researchers then avoid using predetermined categories, and instead allows the categories evolve along with continuously revising the collected empirical data. The data is the foundation for the researchers to immerse themselves in, to develop new insights and thereby contribute to the field of research. The process of developing the codes are similar to Bryman's (2016) twelve step model, which includes reviewing the material on various occasions to let the codes naturally arise. Furthermore, the codes are sorted into categories, which cluster the data into meaningful material ready to be analyzed. This process is suitable to combine with an abductive reasoning, since the codes are developed in the meantime while seeing the world through the eyes of those who are being studied, as opposed to having preconceived codes that have predetermined what the studied might think or feel.

Through moving back and forth between the data collection, analysis and interpretation, a QCCA is the appropriate term for the used method. This iterative process is what characterizes this sort of analysis (Bryman, 2016). Further, the analysis that was made for this thesis followed the twelve steps of Bryman´s (2016)

model for conducting a qualitative content analysis. The twelve steps concerned actions such as generating categories to guide the collection of data, to test and revise the protocol, to establish a sampling strategy, to collect the material and to analyze the data. Moreover, extreme cases within the material was advised to be distinguished in order for the findings to be brought together. The various steps was conducted throughout this thesis data collection, with the aim of generating the required data to answer the thesis research question. The process was anything but linear, and the conducted protocol was revised numerous times. This iterative process proved successful in finding themes and categories that outlined the foundation of the analysis.

4.2.2 Data Sources

The thesis consists of both primary and secondary data sources. While primary data entails new data for the purpose of the specific research and secondary data is data which exist prior to the conduction of the thesis (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Therefore both primary as well as secondary data sources was collected.

Various studies consists of both primary and secondary data. Primary data refers to a researcher who both collected and analysed the data (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Since the aim of this thesis is to contribute with further knowledge to the field of strategic communication and provide greater insights to the phenomenon of brand credibility, primary data in the form of a QCCA was conducted. It enabled us to focus on the subject to generate insightful information in a field where the three phenomenon of prosumers, storytelling and brand credibility has not been combined and researched before.

In addition to the primary data collection, secondary data was used as a complement to broaden the perspective. Secondary data is data collected by someone else, but analysed by the researcher of the study, and is often considered to be positive in terms of time management and financial aspects (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Secondary data is also argued to be a starting point for researchers, as a way to scan the field to see what already exists (Bryman & Bell, 2015). For this thesis, the use of resources such as scientific papers, articles and literature, a valid and complete result was generated. Given the various sources used for this study, a combination of old and new research was gathered, creating an accurate theoretical framework,

including both previous research and present findings of the field of marketing communication.

4.3 Selection of Research Unit

As previously presented, the unit of analysis is the watch and jewellery company Daniel Wellington. Due to DW's great financial results, and fast growing rate, it is an interesting corporation to analyse. Their marketing strategies on social media, Instagram particularly, have various interesting aspects to look further into. This along with a large follower base of 4.1 million.

DW publish, on average, three posts a day which equals around 20 posts per week. The majority of the posts are prosumer generated stories, and only a limited number of posts per month is produced by the company themselves. These numbers alone makes DW a case highly suitable for a study on prosumer generated stories.

Instagram was chosen as the analysis object, not only due to its prevalence of prosumer generated stories, but also because of DW's great amount of followers. The focus of this thesis is concentrated on the company's Instagram account and the content that DW has regrammed from the hashtag #DanielWellington. A QCCA was conducted, with the aim of providing a complete overview of DW´s Instagram content. The choices that have been made within this thesis have generated the sample selection, which have led to certain implications for the outcome of the study. For example, one could argue that a different time period for the data collection could have generated a slightly different result. However, considering the relatively vast amount of gathered posts to study, which were published during a three month time frame, the selected content could be seen acting as a valid representation of DW´s content, and the sample frame enabled recurring themes to be disguised and analysed.

The collected empirical data was conducted chronologically from DW's Instagram account, during one day. The collection was conducted on the 6th of April 2018, where every fifth post was selected, unless a post with another hashtag occurred. If so, that post was omitted and the post thereafter was chosen instead. The posts we chose not to include either had a different hashtag than the one we were studying, or was content that DW themselves had produced. The company produced

content was not of interest due to the focus on prosumers, but also because of the very low prevalence relative to the prosumer generated stories. In total, 50 posts where gathered and compiled into a protocol in Excel, which outlined the coding method material.

4.4   Coding Method

Based on the chosen data collection method, QCCA, a thematic analysis was selected to function as the thesis coding method. As both methods, QCCA and thematic analysis seek to find underlying themes they could be found suitable to combine. When aiming to distinguish a theme, Bryman (2016) describes that there are different views of what could be defined as a theme. Within this thesis, a theme transcends any code and is built upon a number of codes from the categories. Further, what is recommended to search for when distinguishing themes is whether there are topics that recur, share similarities or differences, or if there is any data that cannot be found represented within the collected material (Bryman, 2016). This thesis therefore chose to follow these directions when conducting the codes, in order to generate a correct coding of the material.

When conducting codes, it is advised to start your coding early in the process, to read through your initial documents various times in order to generate your codes and to review them. Therefore, we began to collect the empirical material as quickly as possible. Further, it is important to remember that any item or piece of data can be coded in more than one way (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, within this thesis sets of data was applied to various codes when needed.

4.5   Description of Investigation Process

During the collection of empirical data, recurring themes were detected. These themes were later turned into codes that outlined the entire foundation of the analysis and compiled into a protocol. Furthermore, the detected themes were divided into primary themes, that represent the categories with a dark blue colour, and secondary themes that represents the categories with a lighter blue colour. The primary

themes were the three most recurring themes, and the secondary were most often detected in combination with the primary as sub-themes.

The themes are described in the coding protocol below, but it is, however, important to note that the definitions of the themes are based on the subjective thoughts and knowledge of the authors of this study, and are described to suit this particular thesis.

Adventure	Entails elements of extraordinary outdoor surroundings often associated with traveling, or anything beyond everyday life.
Lifestyle	Entails elements of everyday life, with day to day activities, or anything opposite to extraordinary.
Nature	Entails elements of nature, often situated outdoors.
Love	Entails elements of family, friendship and relationships.
Happiness	Entails elements of people smiling and an underlying feeling of joy.
Food	Entails elements of cooking, food and beverages.
Animal	Entails animals, either real life animals or pictures that symbolize various animals.
Luxury	Entails elements of money and wealth.
Business	Entails elements related to worklife.

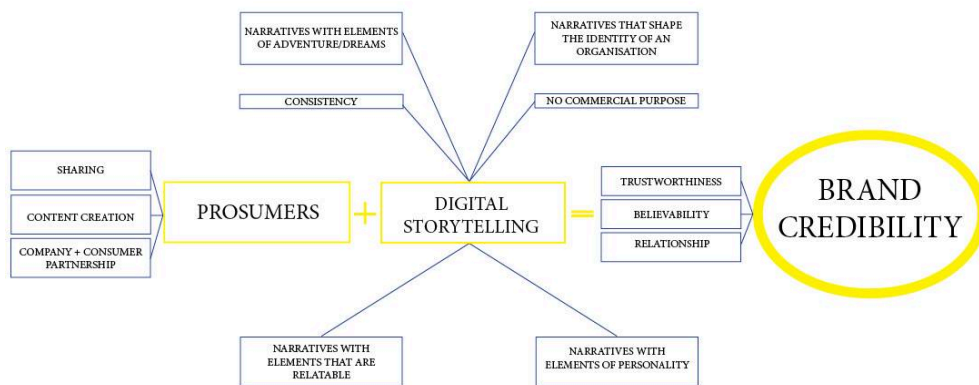## 4.6   Analysis Method: The Brand Credibility Model

To analyse the empirical findings, we created our own analysis model based on criterias from the theoretical framework, called the Brand Credibility Model.

In order to establish a framework for achieving brand credibility, it was important to understand how prosumer marketing function and how DW use storytelling to generate content. The model is based upon previous studies within prosumer marketing, digital storytelling and brand credibility, and describes the criterias for being termed a prosumer, the criterias for what defines a digital story and lastly the criterias to achieve brand credibility.

Prosumers are defined in various ways, depending on the field. However, within this study, prosumers are referred to as a partnership between a company and a prosumer, where the company outsource certain activities for prosumers to create on behalf of the brand (Seran (Potra) & Izvercian, 2014). This leads us into the second criteria for prosumers, which is the creation of content. After having created the content, the third criteria is evident - which states that the prosumers should share their created work with others to partake in. The prosumers are then rewarded by having their produced content re-published by the company, giving them rights to the content, but without any specific obligations.

The story that is being created have a few guidelines, based on what has been observed, in order to be seen as interesting enough to be regrammed by an organisation. The narrative should be aimed at help shaping the identity of an organisation, meaning that it builds upon the core values of the organisation (du Plessis, 2018). This derives from theories on lifestyle branding, which fills an important function in the aspiration of brand credibility. With those core values as a foundation, the narratives should entail elements of personality, be relatable and/or have elements of the extraordinary, such as adventures and dreams. Furthermore, the stories should be published in a consistent manner in order to assure the follower quality (Jeng, 2016; Shams et al., 2017), and be presented in a way that has no commercial purpose, only the aim of telling a story (Pulizzi, 2012).

If taken note of the criterias above, the stories will lead to deeper relations between the organisation and its customers (Buzzetto, 2013; Elliott & Percy, 2007), it will credit the company believability (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018) and to long term establish a deep sense of trust (Copeland & de Moor, 2018; du Plessis, 2018; Fill, 2013; Muniz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001; Pulizzi, 2012; Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). We would therefore like to argue that these three criterias leads to organisations achieving brand credibility. (See Appendix for model in full size).

The Brand Credibility Model
(Borgström & Crafoord, 2018)

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4.7   Method Reflection

The data collection as well as the coding and analytical method of this thesis was chosen in order to answer the research questions. Researchers have long been debating whether the terms of reliability and validity can be applied on qualitative studies, along with quantitative. They are normally used within positivistic and quantitative studies, but assumes that the reality is quantifiable, which goes against the fundamental aspects of an interpretivistic qualitative study. Heide and Simonsson (2014) have presented four alternative criterias to measure quality in qualitative studies, and we have therefore chosen to validate our study with those.

4.7.1 Quality of the Study

Heide and Simonsson's (2014) criterias used to measure quality are Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability. The foremost way to achieve credibility is to collect a vast amount empirical material, preferably during an extensive period of time in order to assure that the assumptions one has made is as accurate for the situation as possible. Transferability is similar to replicability in quantitative studies, and refers to the ability to replicate the study. In this case, in a qualitative study, replicability is impossible since there is never simply one truth, and transferability therefore urges the researchers to give a dense description of the case, so other researchers can clearly see what can be applicable on other studies or not. Dependability can be achieved by allowing the studied to read through the analysis and conclusions, and have them evaluate whether the material is dependent or not. The final criteria, Confirmability, can be attained through the same method as for Dependability, and lets the studied assess the material to confirm.

To apply the criterias to our study, Credibility can be met due to our rich sample of empirical material. We have collected 50 Instagram posts, with accompanied description, text, coding, number of followers, number of likes, number of comments, analysed whether the product is in focus or not and analysed whether there are people in the image or not. Even though some of the collected material has not been used in the following analysis, it has contributed to both create an overview of the case but also to assure that our assumptions fits the bigger picture. To meet the criteria of transferability, we have included a short, but dense, case description in order for other researchers to more easily transfer the knowledge and

apply on further studies. Dependability and confirmability have not been met, due to a lack of interest from the case company, DW, when asked to participate in the study. The analysis of the collected material, therefore, will be affected by our own subjective reasoning.

5. Analysis

This chapter presents an analysis of the empirical findings, in relation to the analysis model, the Brand Credibility Model, that was created for this research. The analysis is outlined and analyzed in chronological order as the Brand Credibility Model follows. That is, beginning with an analysis of the component prosumers, which is followed by the analysis of DW´s digital storytelling. Lastly, the chapter is tied together with the analysis of the models final component, brand credibility, in order to answer the research questions of the study.

5.1   Prosumers

The following section presents the findings collected when analysing DW's use of prosumers. The analysis is conducted with the Brand Credibility Model as a framework, with subheadings that relates to the criterias of being termed a prosumer. The reader is provided with necessary information in order to continue to the second part of the Brand Credibility Model, storytelling.

5.1.1 Company + Consumer Partnership

Results from our empirical data indicates that DW has succeeded to establish a community of people who are willing to share and publish photographs of themselves when wearing DW´s products. Through encouraging their followers to photograph and publish their pictures when wearing DW's products, and to use the hashtag #DanielWellington, DW has succeeded to encourage their consumers to take part in the creation and development of the brand and therefore become prosumers. Today (26-04-18) the #DanielWellington hashtag consists of 1,8 million posts, and continuously increases. As DW´s consumers continues to create and publish photographs of themselves, when wearing DW products, DW are able to use this material to communicate their brand image.

The regram process was found in the collected material to be highly structured. Because when DW finds a photograph that goes in line with their brand image, a comment on the post is made, including a standardized message about terms and conditions. It is stated in the terms and conditions that upon agreeing to the terms *"You grant Daniel Wellington AB ("DW") and its affiliated companies a royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, worldwide license to edit and use your content (photograph/video/caption/text etc.) posted with the hashtag #YesDW (the "Content") for all marketing and advertising purposes..." (Daniel Wellington, 2016)*. This indicates that the partnership is not a financial transaction, but an outsourced labour built upon trust, which might be rewarded with a regram on DW's Instagram account. The terms and conditions also states that DW have the right to transfer the content to third party collaborators, and that they are not obliged to refer to the prosumer as the creator but are allowed to if so wish. By initiating a partnership with DW, the prosumer thereby fully lose both control and ownership of their content. This proves that DW's use of prosumers is aligned with the category Company + Consumer Partnership within the model The Prosumer Creativity and Focus Model (Seran & Izvercian, 2014). Because, the Company + Consumer Partnership illustrates a collaboration between two parts, where the company have full ownership of the content, and relies on specific responsibilities and duties. Further, it states that when the content is submitted to the company, it loses its ownership. DW's process of using prosumer generated stories is in various ways similar to Seran and Izvercian's (2014) definition of Company + Consumer Partnership.

Continuously, within the collected empirical material, it could be detected that the prosumers whose content DW chose to regram mostly had more than 10.000 followers, which was found to be higher than the followers of an average person's Instagram account. These people can be considered to have the ability to reach out to a large number of people, seeing as they have a great amount of followers. It is here arguable whether DW choose to regram only people with a large follower base, or if it is merely a coincident. However, given the fact that the majority of the regrams where from people who had an average of 10.000 followers, we do argue that their choice of prosumer is highly strategic.

Through the voice of the consumers, the brand image is communicated and strengthened. As Buzzetto (2013) states, a purchase nowadays is more often initiated due to recommendations from peers, and that social media have great impact

on relationships between consumer and company. Also the fact that the most trust-worthy marketing message is considered to be word-of-mouth, in contrast to paid media coverage, indicates the importance of having a social media presence and to use prosumers for conveying reliable messages (Buzzetto, 2013).

5.1.2 Content Creation

After having decided within a company to work with prosumers, they need to find a way to engage their followers to produce content and outsource labour as a part of a marketing strategy (Fuchs, 2014; Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). DW continuously invite their followers to create content by spreading the following message "*Make sure that you tag your photos with #DanielWellington for a chance to get featured…*". In the digital world today, where social media users seeks to increase their own follower base to be able to influence others and maybe even turn their social platforms into a career, being regrammed by DW and featured in their channel with 4,1 million followers is a great reward. The hashtag #DanielWellington now contains, as stated above, of 1,8 million posts and is prosumer generated stories from people all around the world. The hashtag contains images of varied quality, ranging from amateur photography and styling to professionally taken photographs, both by people who work fulltime as influencers, but also interested prosumers seeking to contribute. Allowing the company to use the content is an act that can be argued to destroy work opportunities, exploit customers and promote free labour (Fuchs, 2014). This statement would be true in financial terms, although one could argue that prosumerism is a win-win situation where the company receives content and the prosumers receives attention, assuming they are credited for their work. DW's partnership with consumers are therefore more in line with Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010), where prosumers notably seem to enjoy the process of feeling as if they are a part of the world in which the product in focus operates in, but also due to the fact that DW always credits the prosumer in the post.

5.1.3 Sharing

DW's prosumers takes photographs of themselves wearing the products, share them on their own Instagram accounts and hashtag #DanielWellington. These images then appears under the flow of the certain hashtag, which is where DW select the

photographs that suit their brand image and posts them on their Instagram account crediting the creator. This is when the prosumer generated stories is viewed by millions, and the company's product is spread further on and recommended to peers by peers. DW's prosumers share their viewpoint of the brand, and Hermida et al., (2012) thereby states that this shared prosumer generated content has a higher value of trust than if shared by companies. The process of sharing the created content is therefore an important step in enabling trust and deeper relations.

Further, brand credibility through celebrity endorsement and prosumerism have been presented as an example of how an organisation can act in order to achieve a higher level of trust (Wang and Scheinbaum, 2018). As the regrammed images on DW´s Instagram account, to a high extent, consists of content that has been produced by people who can be defined as both consumers and producers, one can draw the conclusion that DW meet the criterias for terming their partners prosumers. The three criterias for being termed a prosumer are identified in the brand credibility model, and these are Company + Consumer Partnership, content creation and sharing. As discussed in the subheadings above, we can state that DW meet the three criterias and thereby properly use prosumers as a marketing communication strategy.

5.2   Storytelling

The results from our empirical findings shows that DW actively use storytelling to market their products. Through prosumers, stories help shape the identity of the organisation and creates deeper relations with consumers. This section further analyse DW's use of prosumer generated stories, and use the criterias from the Brand Credibility Model to analyse the detected themes in the coding process.

5.2.1 Themes

The coding process, and collection of empirical data, revealed numerous themes that recurred and illustrates the tonality that DW wants to purvey through their Instagram account. These themes are the following (in order of prevalence); Lifestyle, Nature, Adventure, Love, Happiness, Food, Animal, Luxury and Business. Through the coding process, Lifestyle, Nature and Adventure were found to be the most

prevalent themes and were later in the coding process categorized as primary themes. The remaining themes are thereafter classified as secondary themes.

Lifestyle and Adventure were identified as counterparts, where the vast majority of the images contained either elements of lifestyle or adventure, although the two themes were never detected together, since they are seen as opposites. The third most common theme was Nature, and was often prevalent along with Adventure. An image that clearly states this claim is Appendix 1, where the impressive nature is evident in the background of a man being adventurous and taking a photo standing on a cliff. As we can see in the image, the product (watch) is not the primary focus, but the majestic scenery. The image is professionally taken and edited, which can be seen in the lighting and sharp focus.

Appendix 1.

(@danielwellington, 2018)

The opposing theme, Lifestyle, entails elements of everyday life and was often prevalent along with two of the secondary categories Love and Happiness. As seen in Appendix 2, an ordinary everyday activity takes place, where a parent gives its child a bath in the kitchen sink. However, the portrayal of the everyday event, of taking a bath, still attain a high level of inspiration, as it has been professionally photographed and edited, with the product in question not in focus. Further, the text that accompanies the photograph could also be seen as going in line with the theme, Lifestyle and Happiness, as *"Never let anyone burst your bubbles"* strengthens the positivity of the photograph and approach towards life.

Appendix 2.

(@danielwellington, 2018)

As stated above, two of the secondary themes Love and Happiness, were often prevalent along with Lifestyle. Appendix 3 showcase an image where Lifestyle, Love and Happiness were all detected. This particular image could be described as more down to earth, and not as staged and professional as the two previous. The watch is visible, but yet again not in focus.

Appendix 3.

(@danielwellington, 2018)

Along with the previously stated secondary themes Love and Happiness, Food and Animals were equally as visible, often in combination with Lifestyle. The everyday events of drinking coffee at a café, or spending time with your dog, or enjoying a meal with friends and family were highly prevalent. These images were often staged and edited very well, but not always as professionally and majestically photographed as the images in the category Adventure.

Appendix 4.

(@danielwellington, 2017)

The image in Appendix 4 illustrates a dining table, with two people enjoying the food. The table is staged to look presentable for the photograph, with flowers neatly lying at the end, but is not necessarily professionally taken. One is wearing a watch that is not the photographs main focus but merely something very natural to wear.

The two least prevalent categories of the secondary themes were Luxury and Business. When thinking of brands famous for their watches, Rolex, Omega, Patek Philippe etc. is often what comes to mind. These are expensive and luxurious watches, and are at a different price category than DW. Although, these luxury watch companies have set the standard and turned watches into something highly desirable and expensive. It is therefore evident that many watch brands aims to up-hold those standards and have luxurious undertones in their marketing. Only two analysed images were categorized under the theme Luxury, and one is evident in Appendix 5. The woman pictured is lying in her bed facing the skyscrapers of a big city. The reason to label this image under Luxury is due to the expensive appearance of the apartment, with a view that noticeably belongs to an expensive apartment. The low frequency of the theme Luxury is thereby an interesting aspect which concludes that DW does not seem to want to incorporate that particular tone and style, and where our detected theme Lifestyle, which stands for the majority of the analysed posts, portrays down-to-earth everyday lives of normal people all over the world.

Appendix 5.

(@danielwellington, 2018)

This thesis Brand Credibility Model states criterias for storytelling, and what makes a good story for the purpose of achieving brand credibility. In the case of DW, the criterias are met. One such is consistency, where uploading stories in a consistent manner is a way of assuring customer quality and clarity (Jeng, 2016). DW publish various occasions per day, approximately 20 posts per week, and the photographs they publish all have the same tonality, i.e. the detected themes. The consistency in frequent posting along with the clarity in tone keeps the customers constantly updated.

Four of the criterias refers to what the narratives entail, and states the importance of including elements of adventure and dreams, that it should be relatable and personal, and help to shape the identity of the organisation. The elements of dreams and adventure are highly visible in the posts that falls under this particular theme, and the elements of relatability and personality is prevalent in the Lifestyle theme. Since this prosumer generated stories stands for the majority of the content that is posted on their Instagram account, we can conclude that it most certainly helps to shape the identity of the organisation.

The examples showcased above along with all other posts that were analysed, made it clear that displaying the product was not of high importance. The watches were always detected, however mostly not in focus. To exclude brand logos and other signs of sales is an act that many would probably avoid due to a fear of not showcasing the brand enough. But this strategy might be more effective

than most think. Pulizzi (2012) states that removing the obvious brand symbols actually have a great impact on trust and credibility, and can be achieved by allowing the story of a brand shine greater than the product or service itself. This is of course a strategy that can only be applied if there is a story to tell, and if it suits the purpose of the brand itself. DW have made success by letting others tell their stories, and thereby build up a lifestyle around the brand that in the end have a broader meaning than the functional benefit of knowing what time it is. By removing brand symbols, DW have met the criteria for storytelling in the brand credibility model, which states that the posts should not have any commercial purpose.

5.2.3 Lifestyle Brands to Shape the Identity of an Organization

A lifestyle brand consists of the following components; Background, Manifesto, and Expression (Saviolo & Marazza, 2012), and DW will therefore, as follows, be analyzed in correlation to these three components.

Background

Previously, the detected themes and codes within DW´s material have been described and discussed. As we were able to distinguish themes from the collected material it can be stated that DW have, through their cohesive communication and choice of photographs, succeeded to establish clear values of the company, that can be equated with the component of aspirational values (Saviolo & Marazza, 2012). These aspirational values is what guides the prosumers in their story-making, and functions as guidelines for what the stories should entail in order to be regrammed. If DW would not have been clear with communicating their values, we would not have been able to distinguish the themes that have been established throughout this thesis. The following two images, illustrates how DW have been able to incorporate natural and adventurous elements together with their product, the watch, and thereby given the brand the aspirational values they aim to give. *"Reach for the sky and dare to fly"* or *"What is life but one grand adventure?"* is the text that accompanies Appendix 6 and 7. It is the combination of the photograph together with the written text that generates DW´s values in a clear and consistent manner. Saviolo & Marazza (2012) argue that if a brand is precise enough to guide attitudes and behaviours and communicate aspirational values, it can be seen as having attained

credo. Given the previous examples, we would like to state that DW have achieved the first criteria within the background component of a lifestyle brand.
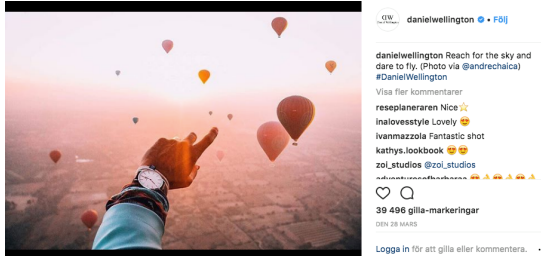
Appendix 6.

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Aside from creating the stories, DW encourage their prosumers to share the created content, which in turn creates a spiral that further engages others to do the same. Saviolo & Marazza (2012) argues that if a brand tell stories and have the power to engage their audience they are fulfilling the criteria of what it means to conduct storytelling.

Moreover, both Appendix 6 and 7 can illustrate how DW recurrently turn focus towards the consumer, rather than towards the company or their products, since the life and story that is depicted in the posts are more prevalent and in focus than the product and brand itself. It is therefore clear that DW have allowed their consumers voices to be heard, and the brand is thereby developed through the eyes of others. This is yet another component in lifestyle brands, although often combined with stories about the product and the company's history. These are two components that DW have, seemingly as a strategic act, chosen to not focus on which in turn helps to fuel the mythology of the "DW lifestyle". This strategic marketing

choice evokes emotional attributes, when seeing magnificent mountain tops, out-standing nature or relatable everyday activities. The emotional aspect is an important component in lifestyle brands, since consumers thereby tend to value a brand higher. Their choice of highlighting the prosumer generated stories instead of the product therefore generates a connection among the users, which makes people want to pass them further along.

The aspects of creating aspirational values, encourage to create memorable stories and choosing a focus in order to fuel the mythology, are all components that have been met within the first criteria of a lifestyle brand, background.

Manifesto

Manifesto as a component for lifestyle brands, is concerned with the aesthetical aspect of patterns, colours and materials, and that it should be presented in a consistent manner. As stated, DW have put focus on certain topics and through their published images we could detect the various themes previously stated. With the use of prosumer generated stories, an illustration of what life the DW consumer should aspire is clearly portrayed. As already mentioned, Appendix 7 is accompanied with the text *"What is life but one grand adventure?"*, and illustrates one of the major detected themes, Adventure. Further, Appendix 8 illustrates how DW´s second way of living revolves around the opposite of traveling, that is Lifestyle. As the copy illustrates in Appendix 8, *"December is for cuddling"*, DW is portraying a day filled with love and relaxation, and is anything but extraordinary and therefore a counterpart to Adventure. As Saviolo and Marazza state (2012), lifestyle proposition and codes are achieved when the company propose a way of living and establish a set of codes that are all relatable to the consumer. What is also important in the component of manifesto, is consistency and recognisability. Since the images analyzed all fall under some of the detected themes, DW thereby manage to regram images that are similar to one another, and present their consumers with posts that are highly consistent and recognisable.
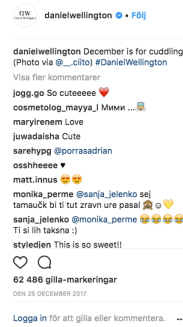
Appendix 8.

(@danielwellington, 2018)

We can therefore argue that DW have, through the use of prosumer generated stories, been able to state what way of living they aspire to mediate to their consumers. This claim can thereby state that DW have met the components within the second criteria of what a lifestyle brand consists of, manifesto.

Expression

Expression is a criteria that explains the importance of a brands communication and interaction with its consumers (Saviolo & Marazza, 2012). DW hereby use prosumer generated stories to communicate with their consumers. Appendix 6 to 8 exemplifies how DW primarily use visual communication to communicate with their consumers, and how the short copy strengthen their message (Saviolo & Marazza, 2012). The appendix further illustrates how DW have succeeded to incorporate a combination of environments and events, which have the power to affect and increase the authenticity (Saviolo & Marazza, 2012). It is therefore argued that DW´s choice of communication has enabled an emotional connection between them and their consumers. Further on, the collected data showed how DW continuously asked questions in the accompanying text to be answered by their consumers. This sort of interaction can generate a passion and create an emotional attachment, which is highly valuable to any given brand (Saviolo & Marazza, 2012). Moreover, DW´s act of commenting on their consumers' photographs shows that they interact with their followers recurrently and thereby maintain the customers engagement. The great amount of images that can be found under the hashtag #DanielWellington can also illustrate that a passion and interest amongst DW´s consumers does exists. This thereby states that DW have met the components for the third criteria of a lifestyle brand, Expression.

As previously mentioned, the fourth component in lifestyle brands, the human factor, should not be overseen. The human factor is visible in charismatic leaders, who

builds up a community of followers that creates and shares memorable stories (Saviolo & Marazza, 2012). This factor is seen both in DW's own account, where the high amount of followers constitutes the community who creates and shares the stories. But it is also visible in the prosumers own accounts, since most of them have a great follower base themselves, where the majority of the analysed images comes from prosumers with more than 10 000 followers. The prosumers, therefore, have their own specific communities, along with DW, which we would like to argue have doubled the impact. Since the analyzed images belongs to people who obtain thousands of followers, they could be described as being charismatic leaders. Further on, DW´s 4.1 million followers represent the community they have accomplished to gather and their use of storytelling have enabled their stories to be shared and spread.

All in all, we claim that DW have achieved the three criterias for being termed a lifestyle brand which, described yet again, is a brand that inspires, guides and motivates consumers beyond product benefits. DW's consumers can thereby be seen as being ever more tolerant, accepting and forgiving towards the brand.

5.3   Brand Credibility

After having stated that prosumers is the right term for DW's partnership, and that they actively work with storytelling, this section will analyse whether the criterias for aspiring brand credibility have been met. It will be analyzed with the final criterias of the Brand Credibility Model, that of Trustworthiness, Believability and Relationship.

5.3.1 Trustworthiness

As Buzzetto's (2013) study showed, people tend to rely on and trust the recommendations from other peers, other equals, as opposed to paid advertisements by companies. DW's use of prosumer generated stories has therefore the ability to successfully build trust relations, since they bridge the hierarchy gap between producer and consumer. This can be illustrated with Copeland and de Moor's (2018) *Storytelling Cycle of Trust model*, where the four dimensions of trust have great abilities to aspire brand credibility. The first dimension, legitimacy, defines the importance of creating legitimate stories, by creators who fully represent the brand. The prosumers that DW choose to regram are all creating stories that have positive messages, where the product is enhanced by the lifestyle of the

creator. The legitimacy of the stories are also enhanced due to the fact that they are created by peers, and not professionally produced by the brand. The second dimension, authenticity, highlights the value of the story being as authentic, real and personal as possible, where the need of personal affection from the creator is of high importance. The majority of the analysed prosumer generated stories have shown a great deal of personality, where, as stated above, the creators invites the viewer into their life and adds surplus value to the watch. Many of the stories, especially the ones categorized under the Lifestyle theme, have a high dosage of authenticity and personality, where the creators illustrate an everyday life that is often more relatable than the posts categorized under the Adventure theme. The third dimension, synergy, is in many ways similar to the criteria of sharing in the Brand Credibility Model, and refers to the ability to weave in authentic and legitimate voices to the story, which can often be achieved by sharing and opening up the story to the masses. This particular dimension is attained when DW's prosumers actively choose to hashtag their produced stories with #DanielWellington, for everyone in that community to partake in. The public can then like and comment and thereby contribute to further legitimize the content. As previously stated, social sharing has the benefits of bypassing professionals, and instead receive recommendations and information from people they trust (Hermida, Fletcher, Korell, & Logan, 2012), and is a valuable way to see through the eyes of someone else whose sole purpose is not to make profit. The fourth and final dimension, commons, states that the stories needs to be spread further on and in that way reach a bigger audience. Another way to reach an audience, and increase the speed by which the story is being spread, is by excluding all sales related communication and logotypes, as mentioned above (Pulizzi, 2012). Pulizzi (2012) states that this is a successful way to achieve trust and, in turn, brand credibility. This is achieved when DW regram the prosumer generated stories, and are thereby further spreading the stories in order to build up a lifestyle around their brand, but also by not focusing on the product and the brand itself.

Copeland and de Moor (2018) concluded that the model is successful for curating stories that speak to the masses of today, in a modern and global world, and communicates directly to the stakeholders. By applying a strategy of using prosumer generated stories in order to aspire trust relations, and thereby brand credibility, DW establish relations deeper than they could have done themselves.

This analysis further proves that DW have met the criterias for being seen as a trustworthy brand.

5.3.2 Believability

The second criteria in the Brand Credibility Model is believability. This term refers to the believability of the information sent out by a brand, which in turn demands that the consumers find the brand willing and able to deliver what has been promised (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). This goes in line with Jeng's (2016) argument that organisations can aspire brand credibility through consistent and clear marketing communication. When observing DW's Instagram account, we have detected a clear common thread through all the analyzed photographs, where they have accomplished to create a visual identity based on content produced by others. This is a common thread that the consumers also have noticed, and therefore knows what is required to be regrammed by DW. The images that is being regrammed have all an underlying theme, alike the ones detected during the conducted analysis, which again proves that DW works in a consistent and clear manner. Aside from the images, the analysis detected a consistent use of certain hashtags and a certain way of writing the corresponding text. Another proof of consistency is DW's act of continuously updating their account with various posts per day. This is a consistent manner that can be traced several months back and enables a believability, which in turn is a way to aspire brand credibility.

5.3.3 Relationship

The final criteria for brand credibility is relationship, and we would like to state that an enabled relationship with a consumer is the result of trustworthiness and believability, which in turn works towards aspiring brand credibility. Fill (2013) stated that storytelling as a marketing strategy can be used both for corporate enhancement, but also for building relations with external stakeholders, where both aspects are evident in the case of DW. Their actions and strategies on Instagram seem to have been developed for building relations with external stakeholders, which in turn has led to corporate enhancement and have helped to shape the identity of what DW is today.

Through this analysis we can state that this process can aspire brand credibility, since the criterias of Trustworthiness, Believability and Relationship have been met according to the Brand Credibility Model.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Within this section, a discussion will be conducted as an extension to the analysis in the previous chapter, which will be followed by a conclusion of the entire study. The study will be tied together and research questions will be addressed.

Based on the previous research, theoretical framework and the Brand Credibility Model, we hereby aim to address the previously stated research questions:

RQ1: *How can organisations use prosumer generated stories on their Instagram account, in order to aspire brand credibility?*

RQ2: *How can organisations use brand symbols in order to aspire brand credibility?*

RQ3: *How can narratives create a lifestyle brand in order to aspire brand credibility?*

DW actively use storytelling to build a lifestyle around a product whose sole purpose is to provide the time. They have added surplus value to their watches by using prosumer generated stories, and have thereby used the collective force of the consumer to create the brand story. This marketing strategy has resulted in a very significative and recognisable visual style that builds upon the detected themes of exciting adventure to aspire, majestic nature to dream about and everyday life to feel recognition. Moreover, the use of prosumer generated stories gives the consumer a deeper attachment to the brand, since it is arguably more real and authentic than staged campaign photos that have been retouched into perfection. Although perfection in many ways appears in regrammed images as well, it is still produced by individuals and not necessarily by professionals, which plays an important role in the attachment to a brand. The images DW regram are all taken from the hashtag #DanielWellington, which has approximately 1,8 million posts. It is therefore concluded that DW choose the posts that they see fit their account and the lifestyle they

want to aspire. Moreover, this demonstrates that various posts are actively not chosen, due to an alignment with the brands visuality.

This section helps to answer RQ1, by stating that organisations can use prosumer generated stories by encouraging and engaging their consumers to actively partake in the creation of the brand. The posts that an organisation choose to regram thereby illustrates what sort of visuality they require, which in turn subconsciously set the standards for what the prosumers should include in their creation. The regrammed prosumer generated stories have proved to enable trust and relationships on a deeper level, which are two of the criterias in the Brand Credibility Model.

Another effective marketing strategy is to exclude brand symbols, and any signs of logotypes and sales. This is one of the criterias in the Brand Credibility Model, which along with the other criterias of e.g. creating personal and adventurous narratives, sets the organisation on the right path to aspire brand credibility. By eliminating all signs of being a brand with a purpose of making a profit, the organisation instead creates a lifestyle that consumers wants to attain which thereby result in sales. This concludes to answer RQ2, by stating that an organisation can strategically eliminate all brand symbols from their posts on Instagram, and thereby establish a deep sense of trust, which in turn is a main component in the aspiration of brand credibility.

Lastly, to answer the thesis RQ3, how narratives can create a lifestyle brand in order to aspire brand credibility, it can be concluded that an organisation can, through the correct implementation of both credo and stories, lifestyle propositions and codes, but also communication and involvement with their customers, be able to establish a brand built on a surrounding lifestyle. We can, therefore, state that an organisation can, through different narratives, create surplus value to their brand and products, and set themselves on a path to aspire brand credibility. Furthermore, the establishment of a lifestyle brand proposes that an organisations' consumers have an enhanced tolerance, acceptance and relation towards the brand. That is, through the use of prosumer generated stories and a consistent and clear set of communication strategies, a relationship between the two parts can be established.

As stated in the introductory chapter, content overload and social acceleration demands new methods for reaching your consumer, and establishing deeper

and more valuable relations, i.e. brand credibility, is more important than ever before. To meet the criterias of the Brand Credibility Model is therefore a suggestion of getting an organisation on the right path of aspiring brand credibility, and thereby surviving as a modern organisation in the digital whirlwind of social media.

6.2 Recommendations for Further Research

A main factor in our thesis addresses our inability to fully conclude whether DW have achieve brand credibility or not, since that would have demanded a different type of study than the one conducted here. We would therefore recommend any further research to conduct a netnographic study and qualitative interviews, where the thoughts and feelings consumers have towards a brand could be analyzed in order to fully claim if a brand have achieved credibility or not.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

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Appendix 2

[@danielwellington]. (2017, March 26). *Never let anyone burst your bubbles.* Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/BgzGHE6A5Q6/?taken-by=danielwel-lington

Appendix 3

[@danielwellington]. (2017, January 29). *Hold them close.* Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/BeihPTbA42g/?taken-by=danielwellington

Appendix 4

[@danielwellington]. (2017, February 3). *Who would you share this with?* Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/BevXXpfguPI/?taken-by=danielwel-lington

Appendix 5

[@danielwellington]. (2018, January 14). *If this photo had a soundtrack, what song would it be?* Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/Bd8bP-_Ak4t/?taken-by=danielwellington

Appendix 6

[@danielwellington]. (2018, March 28). *Reach for the sky and dare to fly.* Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/Bg4QYNKgsq3/?taken-by=danielwel-lington

Appendix 7

[@danielwellington]. (2018, February 12). *What is life but one grand adventure?* Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/p/BfHKS4UgsVf/?taken-by=danielwellington

Appendix 8

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Brand Credibility Model