B   Theoretical basis for the development of a UGB reference framework

In this chapter the theoretical concepts which provide a basis for the definition and application of user generated branding (UGB) are introduced. Since UGB is understood as the management of brand related user generated content (UGC), the notion of UGC as the subject of UGB is discussed first. Second, the identity-based brand management approach is introduced.[1] This approach is widely regarded as the state of the art of brand management research and serves as the theoretical framework of this thesis. Furthermore, UGB is integrated into relationship marketing as practical reference and related to the context factors of Web2.0 and the digital world. Based on these underlying concepts, a preliminary definition of UGB is formulated which serves as a reference point for the critical literature review in the following section.

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[1]   See NITSCHKE (2006), p. 44; WELLING (2006), p. 44; DE CHERNATONY (2006), pp. 45 et seq.

1 User generated content (UGC) as the subject of this study

UGB deals with the subject of brand related UGC which constitutes a special form of content. Based on the notion of content the basic principles of UGC are introduced and transferred into the branding context.

1.1 Notion of content

In academia there is no common agreement on the meaning of the term.[2] Starting point for a definition builds the notion of **information** which can be understood as coherence of signs, data and knowledge from a technical and communication science perspective[3] and in the context of knowledge from an epistemological perspective.[4] In the field of business administration SCHWARZE defines information as "...*purposeful and goal oriented knowledge.*"[5]

From a semiotic perspective, content can be regarded as a special value of information which is displayed by means of representation such as text, audio and video, editorial styles and formats.[6] That implies that the same piece of information could be condensed to content in a different way based on the individual compilation of data and signs. The semantic is considered independent from representation and thus understood as implicit information. Since purpose orientation is achieved by using implicit information, generated content is regarded ex ante purposeful. According to ANDING/HESS content is thus defined as *"...the purposeful and individually protectable representation of implicit information condensed by editorial means based on human intelligence".*[7] As examples for content books, databases, web pages, magazines, movies, and music are quoted.[8]

According to ANDING/HESS content can be clustered into three interdependent dimensions: the economic dimension as the primary level and the technical and legal dimensions as additional conditions[9] (see Figure 4). Since content as product was

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[2] For an overview of existing definitions of content see ANDING/HESS (2003), pp. 2 et seqq.

[3] In the semiotic point of view information is represented by signs and data; based on that information is concluded as purposeful knowledge (see BIETHAHN/MUCKSCH/RUF (2004), p. 3).

[4] For an overview of existing definitions of information see ANDING/HESS (2003), pp. 5 et seqq.

[5] SCHWARZE (2000), p. 39 (translated from German).

[6] See also in the following ANDING/HESS (2003), pp. 9 et seqq.

[7] See ibid., p. 14 (translated from German).

[8] See SHAPIRO/VARIAN (1998), p. 3; BRANDTWEINER (2000), p. 33. To describe content SHAPIRO/VARIAN refer to information which take form; BRANDTWEINER uses the term information goods.

[9] See also in the following ANDING/HESS (2003), pp. 16 et seqq.

generally generated for third-party usage the dimensions were considered from the perspective of creation and usage purposes. From a creation point of view, the economic dimension comprised the attributes creation purpose and cost; from a usage point of view it was characterized by the purpose of use, the combinability of contents (flexibility as regards content), the revenue potential as well as the revenue potential's time distribution (speed of validation). The technical dimension was determined by the sensory and technical form of representation and the data volume on the creation side as well as the technical combinability of contents (flexibility as regards technique)[10] and interactive opportunities for recipients on the usage side. The legal dimension distinguished content according to legal protectability of the creator's work (e.g. intellectual property right) and possible infringements of the right of disposal by users.

Other content categorization approaches include a distribution-oriented differentiation of buyer, seller and delivery-process related dimensions[11]. With regard to online delivered content LOEBBECKE differs between product (physical versus digital), process (online versus offline) and value (bundled versus unbundled).[12]

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[10] In particular, flexibility as regards technique stated to what extent a specific content might be technically combined with other content elements into a product bundle. This technical flexibility depended strongly on the applied medium (e.g. image file type) (see ibid., p. 17).

[11] See KOPPIUS (1999).

[12] See LOEBBECKE ibid..

	Creation	Usage
Economic dimension	Creation purpose Creation costs	Flexibility as regards content Purpose of use Revenue potential Speed of validation
Technical dimension	Form of representation (sensory; technical) Data volume	Flexibility as regards technique Interactivity
Legal dimension	Legal protectability	Possible infringement of right of disposal

Primary level

Additional conditions

Figure 4   Categorisation of content
Source: Adapted from ANDING/HESS (2003), p. 19.

1.2   Definition of UGC

Given the early stage of research[13] there is currently no widely accepted definition for UGC.[14] Terms such as user created content (UCC)[15] and consumer generated media (CGM)[16] are used to a large extent interchangeably. With regard to the introduced content classifications UGC is focused on the buyer dimension.[17] STÖCKL/ROHRMEIER/HESS and colleagues define UGC as special form of content which is produced independently by a user with the help of the internet for an unde-

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[13] See STÖCKL/ROHRMEIER/HESS (2008), pp. 272 et seq.

[14] See WUNSCH-VINCENT/VICKERY (2007), p. 17.

[15] See ibid., p. 17; the UCC definition by OECD is provided in the paragraph below.

[16] CGM is used by Nielsen BuzzMetrics and understood as "…consumer-generated comments, opinions and personal experiences posted in publicly available online sources on a wide range of issues, topics, products and brands" (see NIELSENBUZZMETRICS (2008)) In a narrower sense it is also referred to as Online Consumer word of mouth or online consumer buzz (see ibid.).

[17] DAUGHERTY/EASTIN/BRIGHT refer in this context to the shift of the online information market to a user-centric model, away fro the conventional publisher-centric model (see DAUGHERTY/EASTIN/BRIGHT (2008), p. 2).

termined audience without a direct profit orientation.[18] DAUGHERTY/EASTIN/BRIGHT refer to UGC as media content created by the general public rather than by paid professionals and primarily distributed on the internet.[19] A similar, but more comprehensive definition is proposed by the OECD defining UGC as "*...i) content made publicly available over the Internet, ii) which reflects a certain amount of creative effort, and iii) which is created outside of professional routines and practices.*"[20]

Although it cannot be fully accepted (see criticism below), this definition serves as cornerstone of this thesis. As indicated the OECD definition contains three constitutive features[21]: First, UGC should be publicly accessible (**publication requirement**). The OECD thereby explicitly refers to the internet as publication medium understanding UGC as one of the main features of the participative web[22] and mode of expression in the new media era.[23] Platforms of UGC distribution included internet forums, feedback and review sites as forms of the first UGC wave as well as blogs, wikis, social networking sites, online video sites, social content aggregator, bookmarking sites, podcast sites, and virtual worlds as venues of the second UGC wave[24] (for definitions see Appendix I). According to the OECD the publication requirement excludes non-publicly accessible forms of two-way communication such as email and instant messages.[25]

The linkage between UGC and the internet seems to be widely shared.[26] In the understanding of this thesis, however, linking UGC with the internet as only publication medium limits its range without cause. Indeed, UGC could be understood in a broader sense as multimedia-driven including emerging mobile devices and converging media (for a definition of new media platforms see Appendix IV). It has been stated that mobile services, video platforms (IPTV) and game consoles will give additional impetuses to UGC in future.[27] Nevertheless UGC can be basically allocated to

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[18] See STÖCKL/ROHRMEIER/HESS (2008), p. 273; STÖCKL/GRAU/HESS (2006), p. 4.

[19] See DAUGHERTY/EASTIN/BRIGHT (2008), p. 2.

[20] See WUNSCH-VINCENT/VICKERY (2007), p. 9; the authors use the term user created content (UCC) synonymous to UGC.

[21] See also in the following Ibid., p. 18.

[22] Participative web is understood as an internet of "...intelligent web services that empower users to contribute to developing, rating, collaborating and distributing internet content and customize internet applications" (see ibid., pp. 9; 17). The term is used synonymously to Web 2.0.

[23] See ibid., pp. 9; 15.

[24] See ibid. and NIELSENBUZZMETRICS (2008).

[25] See WUNSCH-VINCENT/VICKERY (2007), p. 18.

[26] Nielsen BuzzMetrics stated that the internet, far more than any other medium, had given consumers 'a voice' serving as publishing platform and forum (see NIELSENBUZZMETRICS (2008)). Some UGC definitions directly refer to the internet (see DAUGHERTY/EASTIN/BRIGHT (2008), p. 2); STÖCKL/ROHRMEIER/HESS (2008), p. 273).

[27] See WUNSCH-VINCENT/VICKERY (2007), pp. 27 et seqq.; SMITH (2008).

the online delivered content classification by LOEBBECKE which is characterized by the attributes digital, online and unbundled.[28]

Second, UGC needs to add own value by applying a certain amount of creative effort to either adapt existing works or construct new ones **(creative efforts requirement)**.[29] Such creative efforts included the sharing of comments and other forms of opinion expression such as advice, review, peer-to-peer discussions or personal experience and referred to a wide range of topics and issues not limited to products and brands[30]. UGC might appear as visual (text, photograph, image), acoustic (music, audio) and olfactory (video and film) representation form (for definitions see Appendix II).[31] The required amount of creative work could thereby range from purely homemade content (e.g. home videos, home recordings, own poems) to remixes of pre-existing work (e.g. re-cut film trailers, remixed songs) as well as hybrid forms combining self-made work with pre-existing content (e.g. lip synching). According to the OECD merely copying and posting of third party-produced content is excluded.[32] However, creative effort might be also collaborative.

The creative effort requirement is considered debatable. On the one hand the criterion of creative effort is not considered selective and has been shown only exemplarily so far. Therefore, the minimum amount of creative effort needed to qualify for UGC remains indistinct. On the other hand, defined UGC platforms do not always include UGC content only. For instance, the video sharing site YouTube displays also sponsored professional material (e.g. movie previews, TV series cuts). Overall, the creative effort requirement can be described by the content attributes flexibility as regards content, flexibility as regards technique and interactivity.

Third, UGC is conceptually separated from content created by traditional media producers **(creation outside professional routines requirement)**[33]. While professional writers, publishers, journalists, licensed broadcasters, etc. created and distributed content for commercial purposes, UGC was originally understood as non-

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[28] See LOEBBECKE (1999); SMITH (2008).

[29] See also in the following WUNSCH-VINCENT/VICKERY (2007), p. 18.

[30] See NIELSENBUZZMETRICS (2008).

[31] For details on UGC content types see WUNSCH-VINCENT/VICKERY (2007), pp. 34 et seqq. Content types could be also differentiated by purpose (e.g. educational content, citizen journalism) or medium (e.g. mobile content).

[32] See ibid., p. 18.

[33] See also in the following ibid., p. 18.

professional grassroots movement outside institutional context and without expectation of remuneration or profit.[34]

In today's practice, however, the boundaries have become blurred[35]. On the one hand, content might be created by users who are more than just hobbyists, for example, professionals outside their primary employment[36] or new entrepreneurs who become professionals after a non-commercial start-up phase[37]. On the other hand, users might be also remunerated for their content creation if they participated in contests. Overall, a commercialization of UGC can be observed: Established media and (internet) businesses increasingly invest and acquire UGC platforms for commercial purposes what is evidenced by the growing amount of financing and venture capital available for UGC-related sites and services.[38] Therefore, the creation purpose of UGC is shifting from non-profit to profit. Figure 5 summarizes the discussed UGC definition by applying the introduced content classification scheme of ANDING/HESS.[39]

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[34] STÖCKL/ROHRMEIER/HESS also argued that most UGC creators were amateurs without profit orientation (see STÖCKL/ROHRMEIER/HESS (2008), pp. 272 et seq.).
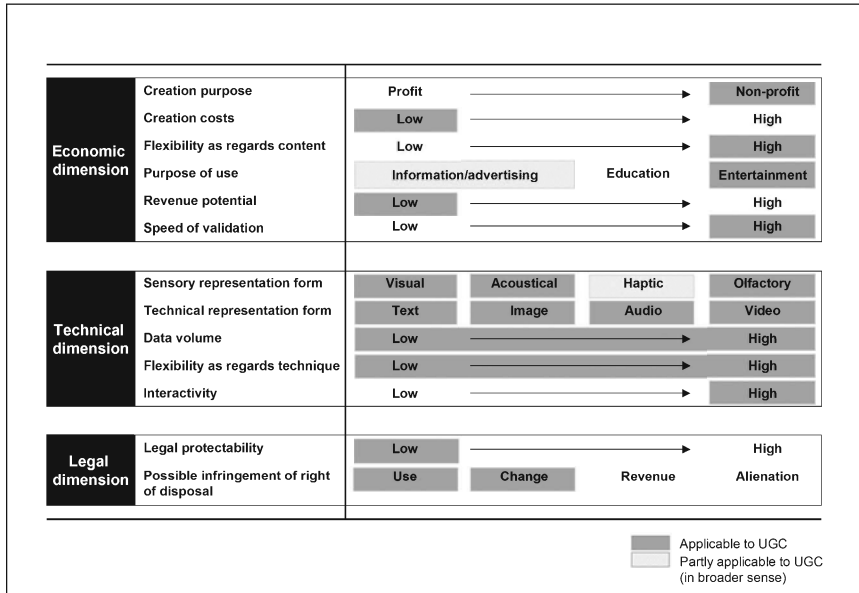
[35] WUNSCH-VINCENT/VICKERY admitted that especially the third requirement of creation outside professional routines was hard to maintain (see also in the following WUNSCH-VINCENT/VICKERY (2007), p. 18).

[36] For example, a user could be a journalist who writes something about his hobby in his spare time (see STÖCKL/ROHRMEIER/HESS (2008), p. 273).

[37] For example, freelancers may publish content in order to draw attention to themselves and their work (see ibid., p. 273).

[38] For example, in the US total investment in information services companies - including IT-based services and Web 2.0 internet companies running social networks, blogs and wikis – reached nearly $1bn in the 2nd quarter of 2007 which was 52% more than in the same period in 2006 and the highest amount since the dotcom bust (see WATERS (2007).

[39] See ANDING/HESS (2003), p. 19.

Dimension	Attribute				
Economic dimension	Creation purpose	Profit			Non-profit
	Creation costs	Low			High
	Flexibility as regards content	Low			High
	Purpose of use	Information/advertising	Education		Entertainment
	Revenue potential	Low			High
	Speed of validation	Low			High
Technical dimension	Sensory representation form	Visual	Acoustical	Haptic	Olfactory
	Technical representation form	Text	Image	Audio	Video
	Data volume	Low			High
	Flexibility as regards technique	Low			High
	Interactivity	Low			High
Legal dimension	Legal protectability	Low			High
	Possible infringement of right of disposal	Use	Change	Revenue	Alienation

Applicable to UGC
Partly applicable to UGC (in broader sense)

Figure 5   Categorisation of user generated content
Source: Own illustration based on ANDING/HESS (2003), p. 19.

1.3   Definition of brand related UGC

While UGC in general relates to a wide range of issues and topics beyond brand meaning, only brand related UGC is of relevance within the context of UGB. For instance, posting holiday pictures or poems online or maintaining a personal home-page with non-brand related content can be considered UGC but not UGB. So the subject of UGB is limited to user generated brand messages as subset of UGC which are referred to in the following as brand related UGC.

In order to elaborate a definition of brand related UGC, the general UGC principles of publication requirement, creative effort, and creation outside routines are adopted. Applying the UGC principle of creation outside professional routines, authors of brand related UGC are defined as **users in contrast to the marketer**. That implies as least common denominator that the brand-related UGC author is not the professional marketer or assigned agency of the respective brand but an individual or group outside this branding routine. The notion of user cannot be limited to non-professional grassroots contributors since quasi-professional authors engaging outside their primary employment have been observed. Furthermore, the user definition

is not restricted to a customer of the respective brand since a customer experience is not considered a necessary prerequisite for brand related UGC.

Moreover, brand related UGC is understood as a user's **personal interpretation of brand meaning** which is visualized in a certain way.[40] Brand related UGC may thereby appear in all UGC content types from text via images and photographs to audio and music and video and film. Brand related UGC may refer to the brand activities and the brand personality of corporate, product or service brands addressing both their functional and symbolic benefit components. It includes parodies on brand communications (e.g. alienated claims, logos, and commercials) whereby the brand is not explicitly named but implicitly recognisable. Brand related UGC comprises brand-related expressions of all qualities from single dilettante efforts[41] to comprehensive brand building approaches in a community mimicking professional styles.

With regard to the UGC principle of creative efforts, brand related UGC thereby requires a certain degree of **creativity** by either adapting brand-related content or constructing a new one. Thus, it might appear as original writing or shot, as montage, recut or remix, as review, feedback or rating. The definition excludes, however, merely copying and distributing original brand content, e.g. posting a recorded clip from a public TV show on YouTube or publishing a print magazine article on a personal web site. Furthermore, brand related UGC does neither include unbundling understood as disaggregating content, e.g. ad skipping in broadcast TV or cherry picking one article from a magazine, nor mass customization referring to a co-design process which allows consumers to adapt certain product or service features in a fixed solution space. So corporate web sites such as the Nike ID web site where customers can personalize every aspect of their product[42] out of range of pre-defined options do not meet the creative efforts requirement although the process is flexible and responsive and the customer compiles an individual product in the end. In fact, brand related UGC is understood as a free customization in the sense of creating an own version of original third-party brand-related content or re-aggregating it into personal bundles.

As UGC in general brand related UGC requires **public distribution**. Main channels are considered common Web 2.0 platforms such as blogs, feedback and review sites as well as social networking and video-sharing sites which provide a hub function. Public distribution is not limited to the internet as sole channel. Platforms for brand

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[40] This understanding is based on the brand image construct of the identity-based brand management approach (see chapter B 2.1.2).
[41] Examples are brand-related home-made videos on the video-sharing platform YouTube (see URL: www.youtube.com).
[42] See NIKE (2008).

related UGC may also include mobile and other electronic devices. While new media are considered as first distribution channel further distribution by traditional media is not excluded. Given the variety of channels and content forms brand related UGC is considered against the background of a **multimedia environment.** Taking these principles into account, brand related UGC is defined as follows:

> *"Brand related user generated content (UGC) is the representation of the volun-tary creation and public distribution of personal brand meaning undertaken by non-marketers outside the branding routines and enabled by multimedia technology."*

Figure 6 illustrates the definition of brand related UGC as the UGB relevant subset of user generated content as a whole.
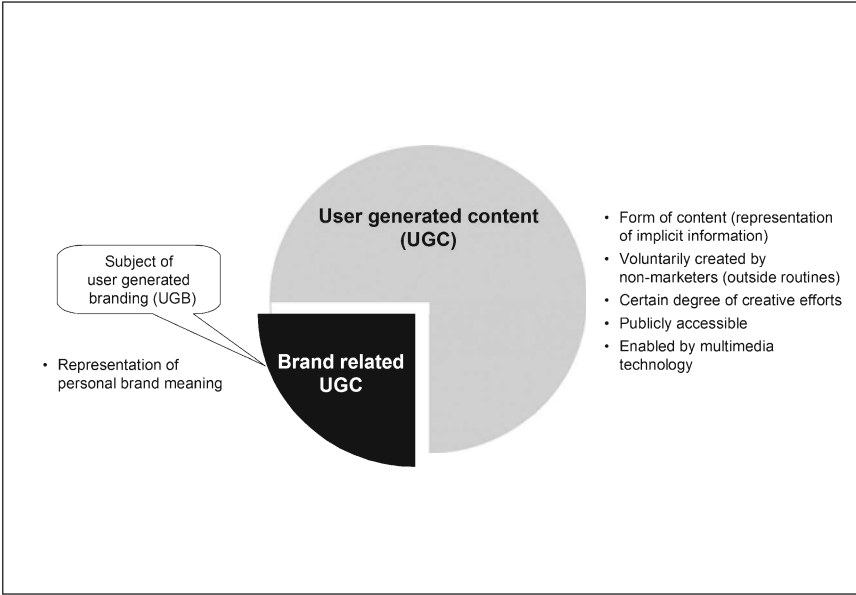
Figure 6   Differentiation of brand related UGC
Source: Own illustration.

2 Identity-based brand management approach as the theoretical framework of this study

After having discussed brand related UGC as subject of UGB, the theoretical framework for UGB is introduced. This thesis is based on the theoretical concept of the identity-based brand management approach according to which a brand – just like a person – needs to have a consistent and continuous identity in order to be trusted.[43] This approach was developed in the 1990s in parallel in France by KAPFERER[44], in the USA by AAKER[45] and in the German-speaking region by MEFFERT/ BURMANN[46] and has been elaborated until now[47] by adapting insights from human psychology research to brand management.[48] It represents an advanced stage in the evolution of brand management approach and is widely regarded as state of the art of research.[49] At this point, only selected parts of the approach are discussed. For an in-depth consideration of the evolution, benefits and objectives and model components of the identity-based brand management approach it is referred to BURMANN/ARNHOLD[50] and the relevant literature.[51]

With regard to UGB the brand benefit consideration from a provider's perspective forms the basis for the discussion of potential applications of UGB through brand management. On the contrary, the brand benefit associations from a consumer per-

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[43] See also in the following MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008) and the conceptual works in BURMANN/ZEPLIN/RILEY (2008); BURMANN/MEFFERT (2005a); BURMANN/ZEPLIN (2005a); BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003).

[44] See KAPFERER (1992).

[45] See AAKER (1996).

[46] See MEFFERT/BURMANN (1996a).

[47] In the course of conceptual finetuning the theory was renamed from originally identity-oriented to identity-based brand management approach. For the latest developments see BURMANN/STOLLE (2007); BURMANN/WENSKE (2007); BURMANN/MEFFERT/FEDDERSEN (2007); BURMANN/ZEPLIN/RILEY (2008).

[48] For details on the underlying socio-psychological identity concept see MEFFERT/BURMANN (2005), pp. 27 et seqq.; BURMANN/SCHALLEHN (2008), pp. 5 et seqq.

[49] See NITSCHKE (2006), p. 44; WELLING (2006), p. 44; DE CHERNATONY (2006), p. 45 et seq.

[50] See BURMANN/ARNHOLD (2009), pp. 41 et seqq. This book is regarded as preparatory work of this thesis.

[51] For further reference regarding brand management evolution see MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), pp. 355 et seqq., pp. 814 et seqq.; MEFFERT/BURMANN (2005), pp. 20 et seqq.; KELLER (2003), pp. 52 et seqq.; DOMIZLAFF (1982); ALEWELL (1974), pp. 1218 et seq.; BEREKOVEN (1978), p. 43; for further reference regarding benefits and objectives see MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), pp. 358 et seqq.; BURMANN/MEFFERT/KOERS (2005), pp. 3 et seqq.; WELLING (2006), pp. 21 et seqq.; KOTLER/KELLER/BLIEMEL (2007), pp. 509 et seqq.; DE CHERNATONY/MCDONALD (2003), pp. 12 et seqq.; BURMANN/STOLLE (2007), pp. 71 et seqq.; TROMMSDORFF (2004), pp. 126 et seqq.; MCENALLY/DE CHERNATONY (1999), pp. 9 et seqq.; KILIAN (2007), pp. 350 et seqq.; KOTLER/KELLER (2006), p. 321; BURMANN/ZEPLIN/RILEY (2008), p. 3.

spective are essential to understand the motivations of consumers who engage in UGB.

2.1 Basic model of the identity-based brand management approach

The identity-based brand management approach postulates a comprehensive brand management understanding which takes into account both the brand perception by external stakeholders (e.g. customers, users, community) and the self-reflection of a brand by internal stakeholders (e.g. employees, executives, intermediaries).[52] The view of considering the inside-out perspective as equally relevant to the outside-in perspective differed fundamentally from the preceding one-sided image-oriented approach and led to an enhanced integrated brand management understanding which combined the sales market perspective with internal resources and competences.[53] According to the idea of 'identity preceding image'[54] the purchase behaviour relevancy of a brand is thereby traced back to the brand identity[55] which gives the brand the necessary authenticity and trust and thereby the foundation for competitive differentiation.[56] The components of the basic model are briefly described in the following. Special attention is paid to consumer-brand relationship as reference point of this study.

2.1.1 Brand identity

Within the basic model of the identity-based brand management approach the self-image and actual substance of a brand is called **brand identity**.[57] It is defined as "*...those sustainable cross-spatiotemporal attributes of a brand which determine the brand's essence from the perspective of the internal target group*"[58].

Brand identity dimensions refer to organizational values, capabilities and behaviour.[59] Considering that the proponents of the identity-based brand management ap-

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[52] See also the following MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), pp. 358 et seqq.; BURMANN/MEFFERT (2005a), pp. 51 et seqq.

[53] See MEFFERT/BURMANN (2005), p. 31; for competence-based view see FREILING (2004), pp. 5 et seqq.

[54] See KAPFERER (2004), p. 99.

[55] See MEFFERT/BURMANN (1996b), pp. 1 et seqq.; KAPFERER (1992). 39 et seqq.

[56] For an in-depth elaboration of the notion of brand authenticity see BURMANN/SCHALLEHN (2008).

[57] See MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), pp. 359 et seqq. and BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003), p. 5.

[58] MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), p. 361 with reference to MEFFERT/BURMANN (1996b), p. 31 (translated from German); also see BURMANN/ZEPLIN (2005a), pp. 43 et seqq.; p. 280; MEFFERT/BURMANN (1996c); BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003), pp. 15; 23;

[59] See BURMANN/ZEPLIN (2005a), p. 280.

proach categorized and labelled those dimensions differently[60] this thesis follows the classification by MEFFERT and BURMANN naming six interdependent brand identity components[61] (see Figure 7): Brand heritage represents the brand basement related to geographic, cultural and organisational influences and brand history.[62] Brand management competences[63] stand for an organization's capabilities to generate efficient brand performance.[64] Brand values reflect the principal conviction of management and employees and are regarded an emotional identity component.[65] Brand personality is considered an applicable set of human personality traits used for brand communication.[66] Brand performance refers to the total of activities displaying functional and symbolic consumer benefits in order to position the brand.[67] The brand vision finally comprises the long term direction of brand development (5 to 10 years) for internal motivation.[68] The more consistent the six components the smaller the gap between the desired and actual brand identity and the brand image and thus the higher the strength of the brand.[69]

With regard to UGB the notion of **brand personality** is of special relevance. According to the proponents of the identity-based brand management approach brand personality is understood as major tool to emotionally tighten the consumer-brand relationship.[70] Its verbal and non-verbal communication style could be determined by the brand heritage as well as typical brand representatives.[71] Latter included not only internal target groups, but also explicitly external stakeholders. From this it follows that also customers and consumers in general might shape a brand's personality after

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[60] See BURMANN/ZEPLIN/RILEY (2008), p. 2. For example, AAKER suggested the four aspects of a brand as product, organisation, person and symbol (see AAKER (1996)) while KAPFERER's brand identity prism comprised the dimensions physique, personality, culture, self-image, reflection and relationship (see KAPFERER (2004), p. 107).

[61] See MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), pp. 362 et seqq.; BURMANN/MEFFERT (2005a), pp. 56 et seqq. The brand identity concept also constitutes a foundation for the purposes of examining the role of internal branding (see BURMANN/ZEPLIN/RILEY (2008), p. 2).

[62] For details on brand heritage see BLINDA (2003), p. 39.

[63] This component was also called organisational capabilities (see BURMANN/ZEPLIN (2005a), p. 280).

[64] For a definition of brand management competences see BLINDA (2007), p. 174.

[65] For details on brand values see BURMANN/MEFFERT (2005a), pp. 62 et seq.; BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003), pp. 22 et seq.

[66] For details on brand personality see BURMANN/MEFFERT (2005a), pp. 63 et seqq.; BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003), pp. 23 et seq.; AZOULAY/KAPFERER (2003), p. 151; MCENALLY/DE CHERNATONY (1999), pp. 10 et seqq.; FOURNIER (1998), pp. 343 et seqq.

[67] For details on brand performance see BURMANN/MEFFERT (2005a), pp. 61 et seq.; BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003), pp. 22 et seq.

[68] For details on brand vision see BURMANN/MEFFERT (2005a), p. 61; BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003), p. 22; KAPFERER (1992), pp. 110 et seq

[69] See BURMANN/ZEPLIN (2005c), p. 280; the strength of the brand was measured by how often consumers buy and recommend the brand.

[70] See also for the following BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003), p. 23.

[71] See AAKER (1997), p. 348.

market entry.[72] Example are the motorcycle brand Harley-Davidson and the car brand Opel Manta whose perception was strongly shaped by a distinctive allegedly typical buyer group of 'rockers' and 'easy riders' and 'retarded drivers' respectively.[73]

The brand thereby represented brand identity features first inwards and later outwards.[74] In this sense, brand identity is understood as a **management concept** which is constituted by both the interactions among internal stakeholders and with external target groups. Brand identity as management tool pursues two objectives: first the consistent outwards communication of the brand promise in the sense of a target positioning at all brand touch points[75] and second the inwards implementation and honouring of the value proposition through adequate employee behaviour. Since consumer brand experience is driven by all consumer touch points which were often determined by the words and actions of employees, an institutionalised internal brand management is regarded essential in order to achieve a strong brand identity.[76]

2.1.2 Brand image

According to the identity-based brand management approach, brand image is a multidimensional attitude construct[77] which represents the brand information processing and association network in the consumer's mind.[78] In contrast to the brand identity concept **brand image** is understood as the exterior view on a brand.[79] It is defined as *"...condense and judgemental perceptions about a brand fixed in the psyche of relevant external target groups."[80]* It is the result of a consumer's individual subjective perception and decryption of all brand signals sent via various brand touch points.[81] In this sense, the brand image represents a **market response model** with two distinctive components: customer expectations regarding the brand's aptitude to meet

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[72] See MOSER (2003), pp. 67 et seqq.

[73] For an in-depth analysis of the Harley Davidson community see SCHOUTEN/MCALEXANDER (1995); FOURNIER/SENSIPER/MCALEXANDER et al. (2000).

[74] See also in the following MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), pp. 359 et seqq.; BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003), p. 5.

[75] Brand touch points comprise all points of contact between a consumer and a brand (see MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), p. 360). Besides major media also public relations and sponsorships, point of sale and customer relationship activities are included. For an overview of brand communication vehicles see MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), pp. 649 et seqq.; for examples for a strong brand's touch points see BURMANN (2007), p. 4.

[76] See BURMANN/ZEPLIN (2005a), p. 281

[77] See KROEBER-RIEL/WEINBERG (2003), pp. 168 et seqq.; TROMMSDORFF (2004), p. 159.

[78] See BURMANN/STOLLE (2007), p. 68.

[79] See BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003), p. 3.

[80] MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), p. 364 with reference to BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003), p. 6 (translated from German).

[81] See also in the following MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), pp. 364 et seqq.

individual needs on the one hand and the created brand experience on the other hand.

Prerequisite for brand image building is brand awareness understood as the consumers' ability to recall a brand spontaneously or recognize it after a visually or acoustically aided recall and allocate it to a product category.[82] Given brand awareness as base, brand image is made up from three components [83] (see Figure 7). Brand attributes represent the lowest processing stage of brand information comprising only descriptive elements associated with the brand.[84] They include all product (e.g. price), origin (e.g. country of origin, history, industry, and corporation) and user related brand characteristics perceived by the consumer and served as basis for the brand personality formation by the consumer.[85] Brand personality is called – as in the context of brand identity – the set of human traits associated with the brand by the consumer (e.g. truth, competence, and stimulation but also social class, age group, gender, etc.).[86] Brand attributes and personality resulted in condensed form in functional and symbolic brand benefit associations as highest brand information processing stage with relevancy for purchase behaviour. Brand benefit associations are regarded a review a brand's inherent bundle of benefits in order to meet individually appreciated benefits and achieve a target stage.[87]

With regard to UGB the **symbolic benefit associations** and the granted user influence on brand image are of relevance. The proponents of the identity-based brand management approach argue that the brand image might be strongly shaped by a brand's allegedly typical customers and users. Those peers did not only generate associations on the brand attribute level[88], but also influenced the perceived brand personality as well as the symbolic brand benefit associations of other consumers.[89] Especially the effects concept of the identity-based brand management concept has been criticised.[90] WELLING points out an ambiguity problem regarding the understand-

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[82] See BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003), p 6; AAKER (1991), p. 61.

[83] The components are understood as perceived partial images of a brand from a consumer perspective. These partial images resulted in the global attitude towards the brand (see BURMANN/STOLLE (2007), pp. 68; 82)

[84] See also for the following ibid., pp. 68; 82.

[85] For a derivation and description of brand attribute dimensions see ibid., pp. 80 et seqq.

[86] For details on brand personality dimensions according to the brand personality scale, effects models and relationships to brand benefit levels see ibid., pp. 78 et seqq.; for the relation between brand personality and consumer's lifestyle see BECKER/SCHNETZER (2006), pp. 121 et seq.

[87] For a description of the benefit dimensions, levels and categories see BURMANN/STOLLE (2007), pp. 71 et seqq.; BURMANN/MEFFERT (2005a), pp. 55 et seq. and explanations later in this section.

[88] For details on the brand attribute dimension see BURMANN/STOLLE (2007), pp. 80 et seqq.

[89] See MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), p. 365.

[90] See also in the following WELLING (2006), pp. 44 et seqq.

ing of a brand as an image in consumers' minds since perception processes varied intersubjectively and even intrasubjectively and thus resulted in different images despite of identical perception catalysts. Thus, he proposed to refrain from defining a brand as an image construct and rather regard it as a signal evoking an image in perception.[91]
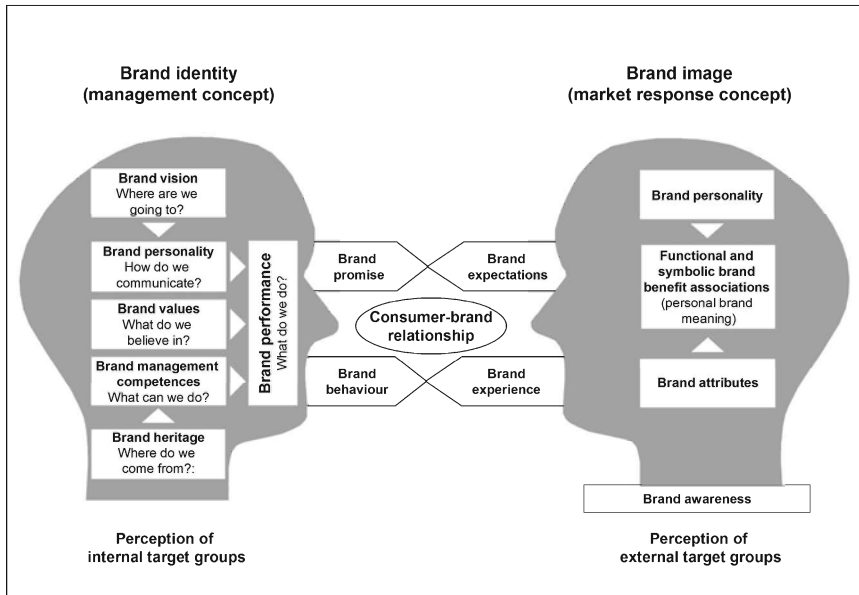
Figure 7   Basic model of the identity-based brand management approach
Source: Own illustration based on MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), pp. 359; 361; 364.

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[91] Welling differs between a brand as material signal (e.g. logo), brand effects (e.g. brand knowledge) and brand sales objects (e.g. branded product) (see ibid., pp. 52; 222).

2.1.3 Consumer-brand relationship as the reference point of this study

According to the model the two contrasting constructs of brand identity and brand image are linked by the **consumer-brand relationship**.[92] As preliminary stage of a customer-brand relationship[93] it is defined as *"...the degree of the subjectively perceived cognitive and affective relatedness of a consumer to a brand."*[94]

In other words: Based on the understanding of a brand as a bundle of benefits the brand identity formulates a relevant benefit and the brand image expresses the potential buyers' judgement of the degree to what the brand is able to meet their needs.[95] Since all brand management activities result in the consumer-brand relationship, it represents a highly relevant target for brand management and the foundation of a brand's overall economic value.[96]

Transferring the relationship definition from social psychology to brand management the proponents of the identity-based brand management approach consider – in metaphoric form – three constitutive features of a consumer-brand relationship: coherent interactions in respect of content, subjectivity and affective and cognitive motives of relatedness.[97] While affective motives resulted from a consumer's psychological brand benefit associations, cognitive motives corresponded to functional brand benefit associations. From this two contrasting relationship qualities followed[98]: On the one hand, relationships from cognitive motives were established and maintained because the consumer was not able to change it due to functional reasons (e.g. contracts, economic loss, techno-functional rational).[99] On the other hand, relationships from affective motives were established and maintained because the con-

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[92] See also in the following MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), p. 367. The term refers to the notion of consumers understood as the total of potential buyers. Thus, it exceeds the notion of customers understood as actual buyers of the brand.

[93] For an in-depth elaboration of the notion of customer-brand relationship (referring to customers as actual buyers of the brand) see BURMANN/WENSKE (2007).

[94] MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), p. 367 with reference to BURMANN/MEFFERT (2005b), p. 101 (translated from German). Cognitive relatedness refers to rational aspects of the relationship; affective relatedness corresponds to an emotional attitude towards the brand. For further explanation see BURMANN/WENSKE (2007), p. 37.

[95] See MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), p. 360.

[96] See BURMANN/MEFFERT (2005b), p. 75; WENSKE (2008b), p. 89.

[97] For details on the socio-psychological relationship construct and the derivation of the consumer-brand relationship see WENSKE (2008b), pp. 73 et seqq.; BURMANN/WENSKE (2007), pp. 36 et seqq. Taking the criticm into account that brands could not be treated like human beings the reference to interpersonal relationships should be understood as metaphor in the sense of a comparison.

[98] See also in the following WENSKE (2008b), pp. 75 et seq.; BURMANN/WENSKE (2007), p. 37.

[99] For examples for cognitive relatedness from customer loyalty research see WEINBERG/DIEHL (2001), p. 29.

sumer did not want to change it because of emotional attitudes towards the brand (e.g. brand community).[100]

Based on the cognitive or affective relatedness various subtypes of consumer-brand relationships can be distinguished. FOURNIER – the pioneer of brand relationship research – identified 15 types of consumer-brand relationships along seven dimensions,[101] ranging from friendship (e.g. childhood buddies) via marriage (e.g. marriages of convenience) to the dark side (e.g. 'enslavements', 'secret affairs').[102]

With regard to UGB the subjectively perceived **affective relatedness** of a consumer to a brand is of relevance. Brand related UGC corresponds to 'volunteer' relationships from affective motives since users who engage in the creation of personal brand meaning tend to be mostly driven by emotional attitudes and symbolic brand benefit associations such as peer recognition and self-actualisation rather than functional brand benefit associations. In the understanding of this thesis, brand related UGC is based on the consumer's desire to voluntarily establish and maintain the brand relationship; they are basically able to discontinue it, but may not want to.

Given its reference to the external target group the consumer-brand relationship is regarded an important driver of the external brand strength which is represented by the brand's actual purchase behaviour relevancy.[103] Provided that a consumer-brand relationship resulted in a customer-brand relationship[104] its strength might be expressed by the degree of customer loyalty[105] and reflected by the purchase behaviour and recommendation intention.[106] These effects of customer-brand relationships can be classified as consumer-related pre-economic effects referring to behaviour and attitudes in contrast to branded company-related economic effects (e.g. sales increase).[107] Within the scope of consumer-related pre-economic effects WENSKE allocates the perception of brand image to the attitude-related effects and **communica-**

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[100] For examples for affective relatedness see ibid., p. 29.

[101] Dimensions of consumer-brand relationships include voluntary versus imposed, positive versus negative, intense versus superficial, enduring versus short-term, public versus private, formal versus informal and symmetric versus assymetric (see FOURNIER (1998), p. 361).

[102] See ibid., p. 362.

[103] See WENSKE (2008a), pp. 87 et seq.; also see WENSKE (2008b) (book version of original PhD thesis).

[104] The customer-brand relationship is defined as coherent interactions in the sense of an exchange between brands and their existing buyers who evaluate this relationship subjectively. The relationship is thereby based on the existing buyers' cognitive and affective motives resulting from functional and symbolic brand benefit associations (see WENSKE (2008a), p. 97); BURMANN/WENSKE (2007), p. 40).

[105] See MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), p. 368

[106] For empiric evidence see ZEPLIN (2006), pp. 187 et seqq.

[107] See HADWICH (2003), pp. 44 et seqq.; WENSKE (2008a), p. 124.

tion behaviour and purchase behaviour to behaviour-related effects.[108] Communication behaviour thereby included supportive consumer reactions such as the willingness to recommend the brand and serve as testimonial[109] as well as spread positive word of mouth[110]. In an empiric analysis STICHNOTH validated this communication behaviour effect of customer-brand relationships in the context of customer participation in internet based communication platforms.[111] In this sense, brand related UGC may be interpreted as communication behaviour as effect of the consumer-brand relationship.

Customer-brand relationships correspond to the customer life cycle which consists of three phases[112]: In the first phase of customer acquisition the relationship to the consumer was initiated and socialized by means of high investments (e.g. advertising, promotions). In the second phase of customer penetration the customer potential was exploited in the sense of maximizing the share of wallet[113] and expanded to other fields in terms of the so-called cross selling. In this phase the customer-brand relationship achieved its maximum value and had the highest profitability.[114] In the final phase of customer retention the achieved customer potential level was attempted to stabilize by retention measures or to recover in case of customer migration.[115]

As shown in chapter 1.2, the creation of personal brand meaning may be driven by customer experiences and direct contact to the brand (e.g. complaints handling), but this is not considered a prerequisite for brand related UGC. Provided that there is a sufficient brand awareness consumers – understood as the total of potential buyers – could also engage in brand related UGC without being an actual buyer of the brand.

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[108] See also in the following WENSKE (2008a), pp. 129 et seq. For an overview of academic studies about the effects of customer-brand relationships see WENSKE (2008a), pp. 124 et seqq.

[109] See FOURNIER (1994), pp. 160 et seq.

[110] See BRUHN/EICHEN (2007), pp. 3; 247.

[111] STICHNOTH analysed attitude and behaviour related effects of the customer-brand relationship of members of official and grassroots virtual brand communities and virtual customer clubs for the brands Nokia, SonyEricsson, Nintendo and PlayStation by means of an online survey (N=2,121) in summer 2008 (see STICHNOTH (2008), pp. 52 et seqq.; 94 et seqq.). The study results are discussed in detail in the chapter D 3.1.2.2.

[112] See also in the following MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), pp. 368 et seq.; BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003), p. 45.

[113] For the impact of brand-customer-relationship on the share of wallet see BURMANN/WENSKE (2007), p. 17.

[114] Reasons for higher profitability compared to the customer acquisition and retention phase include higher purchase frequency, reduced administrative costs, higher customer recommendation rates and lower price sensitivity (see ibid., pp. 18 et seq.).

[115] See BLINDA (2007), pp. 90 et seq.; BRUHN/EICHEN (2007), pp. 223 et seqq.

Overall, a strong consumer-brand relationship has advantages for both the branded company and the consumer.[116] From a company perspective the profitability of the customer-brand relationship increased the longer the relationship lasted[117] and the more satisfied customers recommended the brand[118]. From a consumer perspective a strong customer-brand relationship provided confidence benefits in terms of perceived reduced risk of purchase decisions, social benefits with regard to affiliations to brand representatives and co-customers[119] as well as special treatment benefits such as discounts, upgrades and time savings or within the scope of loyalty programmes. Generally speaking: The deeper the customer-brand relationship, the higher is a customer's brand habit and emotional barrier to switch to competitive offers.[120]

Evidence was provided that the consumer-brand relationship building was pushed by the perception of brands as interactive partners.[121] Customer interaction could be especially enhanced by pro-active complaints handling, brand experience opportunities (e.g. brand shops, brand contests) and the humanisation of brands (e.g. celebrity testimonials, artificial characters, regular users). Furthermore, STICHNOTH provided evidence that a customer's participation in interactive internet based communication platforms such as virtual brand communities and virtual customer clubs had a positive influence on the strength of the customer-brand relationship.[122]

Thus, it can be concluded that also UGB might be considered as special value of **brand-consumer interaction**. As stated by the proponents of the identity-based brand management approach interactivity is regarded as a constitutive feature of a relationship and the perception of brands as interactive partners are seen as advantageous for consumer-brand relationship building. Brand related UGC can thereby be an expression of customer complaint, but also of the desire to experience the brand (e.g. participation in a brand contest) or to exchange with co-consumers (e.g. participation in a brand community).

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[116] See also in the following BURMANN/WENSKE (2007), pp. 17 et seqq.

[117] For industry examples of profit gains over time see ibid., pp. 19 et seq.

[118] For an in-depth elaboration of the customer recommendation problem see REICHHELD (2003).

[119] Studies showed that co-customers provided not only additional support and brand information but also the feeling of social integration and acceptance (see KLINGENBERG (2000), pp. 67 et seqq.).

[120] For details on benefit categories and industry-specific differences in relationship quality see BURMANN/WENSKE (2007), pp. 21 et seqq.

[121] See also in the following ibid., pp. 28 et seqq.

[122] See STICHNOTH (2008), pp. 87 et seqq.

2.2 Identity-based brand management process

As mentioned in the chapter above the brand identity construct is understood as a management concept. The objective is the integration of all brand management related measures – towards internal and external target groups – to establish a stable and sustainable brand-consumer-relationship.[123] The management process thereby comprises three separated sub processes as regards content and timing: strategic and operative brand management as well as brand controlling[124] (see Figure 8).
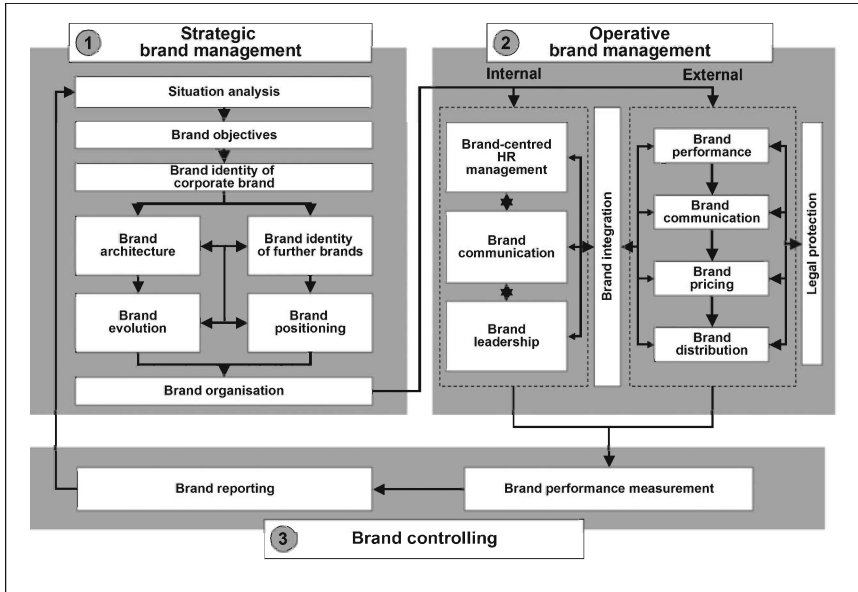
Figure 8   **Identity-based brand management process**
Source: Adapted from BURMANN/MEFFERT/FEDDERSEN (2007), p. 12.

Strategic brand management covers general decisions on objectives and identity of a company's brands.[125] Starting point is a situation analysis including internal and ex-

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[123] See BURMANN/MEFFERT (2005b), p. 75; BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003), pp. 10 et seqq.; BURMANN/MEFFERT/KOERS (2005), p. 9.

[124] See BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003), p. 10. All three process steps are considered iterative; they occur rather in parallel than in chronology.

[125] See also in the following ibid., pp. 10 et seqq. and BURMANN/MEFFERT (2005b), pp. 77 et seqq.

ternal context factors.[126] Second, **brand objectives** are determined which can be separated into psychographic and economic goals according to the psychographic and economic brand value distinction.[127] Psychographic values include brand awareness, brand loyalty, satisfaction, recommendation rate and brand commitment of employees). Economic values comprise customer equity[128], price premium, customer acquisition and retention costs and operating margin. Third, based on the brand objectives the brand identity of the corporate brand is designed according to the six introduced identity components. The portfolio of divisional, product and service brands may be then adjusted accordingly by coordinating the comprehensive portfolio within the scope of brand architecture decisions and by defining the individual brand identities.[129]

Within the following **brand positioning** process the brand identities are condensed and translated into purchase behaviour relevant brand promises and communicated to consumers in order to achieve a dominant position in consumer's minds and an adequate differentiation compared to competitive offers.[130] This brand identity translation into a brand promise and corresponding brand behaviour of all brand-related employees is regarded one of the major tasks of identity-based brand management.[131] The static perspective is complemented by a dynamic view: By means of the so-called brand evolution plan the development of a brand within the upcoming 2 to 5 years is fixed.[132] Finally the brand organisation is determined by defining leadership structures, processes and incentive systems. In order to achieve these strategic goals the management decisions are converted into behaviour plans.

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[126] Components of a situation analysis include information about consumer demands, brand touch points, competitive environment, legal and distribution system, and social trends. In particular the potential gap between target identity and status quo perception of brand identity and image are of interest. For details see BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003), p. 11.

[127] See also in the MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), pp. 354 et seq. In contrast to brand vision as brand identity component brand objectives refer to a shorter time horizont of 1 to 5 years and have a more operational nature.

[128] Customer equity is a market-based asset deriving from a company's total customer-brand relationships (see ibid., pp. 802 et seqq.). For details on customer equity models see BURMANN/BREUSCH (2007).

[129] For details and examples on brand architecture see AAKER/JOACHIMSTHALER (2000), pp. 95 et seqq.; AAKER (1996), pp. 239 et seqq.; BURMANN/MEFFERT (2005c), pp. 163 et seqq.

[130] For an in-depth consideration of positioning strategies see KOTLER/KELLER/BLIEMEL (2007), pp. 422 et seqq.; KELLER (2005), pp. 87 et seqq.; KELLER (2003), pp. 131 et seqq.

[131] See MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), p. 372.

[132] For details on brand evolution including the alternative strategies of brand expansion and brand consolidation see BURMANN/MEFFERT/BLINDA (2005), pp. 183 et seqq.

Operative brand management aims at implementing the strategic goals by translating the target brand identity into operative measures.[133] With regard to **internal target groups** the goal is to achieve an employee behaviour which is consistent with the brand identity.[134] This so-called brand citizenship behaviour[135] is driven by high brand commitment[136] which can be generated by three levers: brand focused HR, internal brand communication and brand focused leadership.[137]

With regard to **external target groups** brand identity is translated into the four known instruments of the marketing mix: product, communication, price, and distribution politics.[138] Brand performance corresponds to product politics and comprises the technical-qualitative product and service design including a brand's innovation capacity, packaging design and corporate identity.[139] Brand communication aims at transmitting consistent brand messages throughout all marketing communication politics channels such as classical advertising, sponsoring, events, promotion, direct mail, Public relations, fairs and exhibitions and online communication. The brand identity is also reflected in brand pricing implying exclusiveness versus mass market orientation. Brand distribution deals with the transmission of tangible and intangible offers to the consumer aiming at a systematic penetration of the target market and a consistent appearance through selection and control of sales channels. In order to ensure exclusivity in applying brand icons such as brand name, logo, claims, jingles, etc. the legal protection of the trademark is of high relevance. Whatever target group is addressed or marketing instrument applied – essential is the integration of all tools as regards content, form and timing.

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[133] See also in the following BURMANN/MEFFERT (2005b), pp. 86 et seqq.; BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003), pp. 34 et seqq.

[134] For details on institutionalised internal brand management see BURMANN/ZEPLIN/RILEY (2008); ZEPLIN (2006).

[135] Brand citizenship behaviour is defined within the scope of internal branding as "...the intention of each employee to voluntarily exhibit certain generic (brand- and sector-independent) behavioural characteristics outside of the formally defined role expectation system, which strengthen the identity of the brand" (BURMANN/ZEPLIN/RILEY (2008), p. 3).

[136] Brand commitment is defined as "...extent of psychological attachment of employees to the brand, which influences their willingness to exert extra effort towards reaching the brand goals..." (BURMANN/ZEPLIN (2005a), p. 284, also see BURMANN/MEFFERT/KOERS (2005), p. 10; BURMANN/ZEPLIN/RILEY (2008), p. 3).

[137] The levers were identified through expert interviews (see BURMANN/ZEPLIN (2005a), p. 286; BURMANN/ZEPLIN (2005), p. 124) and empirically validated (see BURMANN/ZEPLIN/RILEY (2008), pp. 13 et seq.; 18; ZEPLIN (2005), pp. 235 et seq.).

[138] For details on product politics see MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), pp. 397 et seqq.; on communication politics see MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), pp. 632 et seqq.; on price politics see MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), pp. 478 et seqq.; on distribution politics see MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), pp. 560 et seqq.

[139] See also in the following MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), pp. 379 et seqq.

Brand controlling represents the third sub process of the identity-based brand management process. It deals with the information provision, consultancy and coordination of all brand management related departments in order to ensure rationality, effectiveness, efficiency and profit orientation of brand management.[140] Brand controlling can be divided into brand performance measurement[141] evaluating the results of brand management and brand reporting structuring and condensing data and communicating the results to leaders to enable strategic decisions. Given the controlling task of target-performance comparison brand controlling can be considered at the same time as completion of the identity-based brand management process and starting point of a situation analysis within the scope of a new process cycle.

2.3 Integration of UGB and brand related UGC into the identity-based brand management approach

When integrating UGB into the identity-based brand management framework it is essential to distinguish between the subject brand related UGC and the management approach UGB. With regard to the subject brand related UGC both causes and effects can be considered. The cause perspective focuses on the question of how brand related UGC is emerging. In this sense, brand related UGC may be regarded as effect of the consumer-brand relationship. Brand related UGC is thereby understood as a creative form of recommending or advising against a brand; both positive and negative word of mouth is included. The idea of **brand related UGC as a kind of communication behaviour** evoked by the consumer-brand relationship is backed by comprehensive empiric analyses conducted by WENSKE and STICHNOTH. Both provided evidence that brand recommendation intentions were an effect of a strong customer-brand relationship.[142]

In contrast to the cause perspective, the effects perspective describes the impact of brand related UGC. It is considered the visualised result of a consumer's individual subjective perception and decryption of all brand signals sent by various – mostly

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[140] See also in the following ibid., pp. 387 et seq.; BURMANN/BLINDA/NITSCHKE (2003), pp. 34 et seqq.; BURMANN/MEFFERT (2005b), p. 101; for marketing controlling in general see KOTLER/KELLER/BLIEMEL (2007), pp. 1181 et seqq.

[141] For an in-depth consideration of brand performance measuring see KELLER (2005), pp. 92 et seqq.

[142] For details see WENSKE (2008a), pp. 268 et seq.; STICHNOTH (2008), pp. 63 et seqq. In particular, STICHNOTH validated within the context of internet based communication that the customer-brand relationship had a positive influence on a customer's re-purchase and cross-buying intention, willingness to pay a higher price and recommend the brand. Besides, he showed that the customer-brand relationship had a positive influence on the brand image and a negative influence on the attractiveness of competing brands.

brand management influenced – brand touch points. Since brand related UGC is available content it represents at the same time a **brand touch point** for other con-sumers.[143] Thus, it can be regarded as a non-company initiated brand touch point next to corporate communication efforts such as Public Relations and sponsorships, point of sale and customer relationship activities.[144] To give the example of the res-taurant chain McDonald's, user generated anti-brand content (e.g. incriminating video game) represents a brand touch point to consumers just as well as the company driven touch points from Happy Meal via testimonial Ronald McDonald to employee of the month and the McCafé next door.[145] So it can be concluded that brand related UGC has a significant impact on the consumers' brand experience and brand expec-tations (see Figure 9).
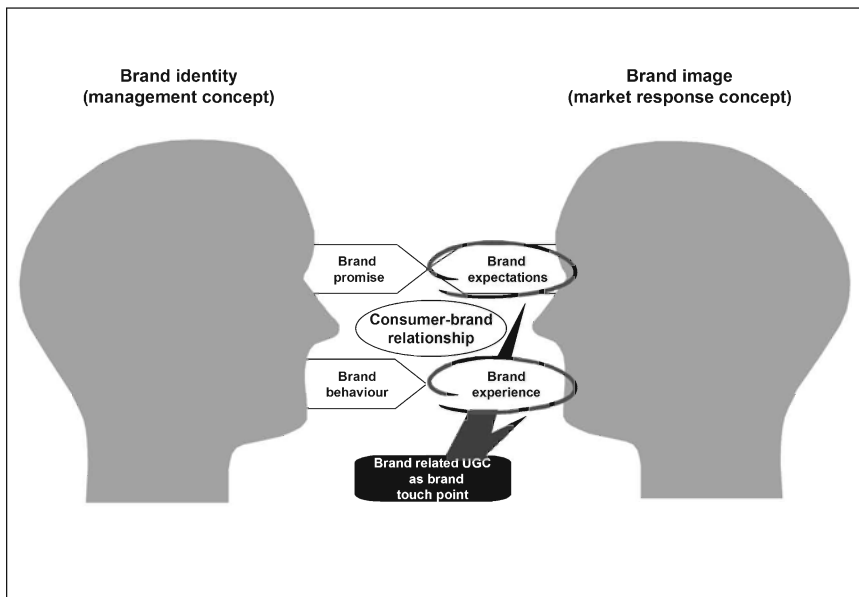
Figure 9   Brand related UGC as brand touch point
Source: Own illustration based on MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), p. 359.

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[143] This assumption is backed by GfK's Brand Health Management Model in which UGC is allocated to 'consumer experiences' within the 'brand signals' dimension (see JARCHOW (2008), p. 5).

[144] For an overview of brand communication vehicles see MEFFERT/BURMANN/KIRCHGEORG (2008), pp. 649 et seqq.

[145] For details on brand touch points regarding the McDonald's example see BURMANN (2007), p. 4.

This consumer-to-consumer interaction is explicitly considered in the identity-based brand management approach. The proponents argue that the brand image might be strongly shaped by a brand's allegedly typical customers and users. Those peers did not only generate associations on the brand attribute level, but also influenced the perceived brand personality as well as the symbolic brand benefit associations of other consumers. The consideration of co-customers as social benefit factor (e.g. in terms of social integration and acceptance) provides a potential explanation why users engage in UGB both on the creator's and receiver's side.

Given the relevance of brand related UGC as brand touch point, **UGB as management approach** needs to cope with it within the three-level identity-based brand management process (see Figure 8). A situation analysis is considered the starting point of the identity-based strategic management process. Since the objective of the situation analysis is to gather information about consumers and in particular to identify their brand touch points and explore the fit between brand identity and brand image[146] brand related UGC as representation of grassroots brand perception is to be integrated into the analysis. Therefore, monitoring of brand-related UGC is considered an integral part of UGB within the scope of the strategic brand management process. Implementing the learning from monitoring brand related UGC may result in an adaptation of brand positioning and thus affect operative brand management instruments such as product and communication politics but also pricing and distribution and legal issues.

Beside the rather passive monitoring brand related UGC may be also actively incorporated into the marketing mix of the operative brand management. Notably, it could be part of the brand communication strategy. It is thereby regarded as a tool for both external and internal target groups. Given the insights from monitoring and the trackability options of brand related UGC campaigns in the computer mediated environment UGB could also contribute to brand performance measuring.

As mentioned above UGB is understood as a specific brand management type. It is characterized by its management subject – brand related UGC. It comprises brand related artefacts from comments, reviews and ratings to artistic work created and distributed by users. It can be both an expression of customer complaint and brand fan dedication. It may appear in all qualities from single dilettante efforts to comprehensive sophisticated brand building approaches in a community. It may be visualized in the form of text, image, audio or video. It may appear as original writing or shot but

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[146] See also in the following BURMANN/MEFFERT (2005b), pp. 77 et seqq.

also as montage, re-cut or remix given a certain creative effort behind. It may be distributed on UGC platforms in the internet such as forums, blogs, feedback and review sites, video and photo sharing sites, podcast sites, social networking sites, Wikis, virtual worlds (see Appendix I) but also via mobile and other electronic devices.

As the integration in the identity-based brand management approach implies UGB might have a strategic and operative component. Management is thereby understood in the sense of dealing with the subject to achieve brand goals, not in the sense of steering it. It is not assumed that brand related UGC may be controlled by the branded company. In fact, management is understood as goal-oriented influence.

Given the definition of brand related UGC and the foundation of the identity-based brand management process the following preliminary definition for UGB is proposed:

> *"**User generated branding (UGB)** is the strategic and operative management of brand related user generated content (UGC) to achieve brand goals."*

With regard to the expected learning from the literature review of related research fields this preliminary definition will be revisited and further specified in chapter C 2.2.

3 Relationship marketing as the practical reference of this study

Apart from the identity-based brand management approach as theoretical framework, UGB shall be also considered against the background of marketing approaches which deal with the broad field of customer participation. First, the thoughts of relationship marketing are briefly introduced which recognized marketing as exchange system long ago before the emergence of participatory media. Then the idea of interactive marketing is discussed which reflects the new media potential within the customer dialogue. Finally, UGB and brand-related UGC are positioned within these marketing approaches.

3.1 Relationship marketing

Relationship marketing is a field of relationship management, understood as active and systematic analysis, selection, planning, design and control of business relationships.[147] Essential is the paradigm shift from transaction oriented to relationship oriented thinking, aiming at economic success in the long run via sustainable business relationships.[148] Although relationship management comprises all sorts of horizontal, vertical, lateral and internal relationships of an enterprise, **customer relationship management** (CRM) takes centre stage within the scope of this study. CRM aims at addressing customers in an individual way with respect to both customer acquisition and retention.[149] The objective is to build and maintain profitable and sustainable customer-brand relationships exploiting customer lifetime value. The focus is not on short-term purchase decisions but long-term relationships to valuable customers.

BELZ/SCHÖGEL/ARNDT distinguish four key principles of CRM: customer orientation, economic efficiency, individualisation and IT application.[150] The importance of brand related UGC is thereby highlighted with respect to individualisation. By integrating customers via UGB applications, customer involvement could be strengthened and

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[147] For a detailed definition see amongst others DILLER (1995), p. 442. The terms 'relationship marketing' and 'relationship management' are often used synonymously. However, WENSKE points out that the latter primarily refers to the IT supported framework (see WENSKE (2008a), p. 52).

[148] See amongst others BELZ/SCHÖGEL/ARNDT (2008), p. 8. BAGOZZI recognized already in the 1970s the importance of exchange systems for marketing, concentrating the attention on relationships among social actors and variables affecting their behaviour (see BAGOZZI (1975).

[149] For CRM objectives see also in the following BELZ/SCHÖGEL/ARNDT (2008), pp. 8 et seqq.; SCHÖGEL/WALTER/ARNDT (2008), pp. 439 et seq.; TOMCZAK (1994), pp. 195 et seqq.

[150] See also in the following BELZ/SCHÖGEL/ARNDT (2008), pp. 8 et seqq. It is to be noted that the scholars understand brand related UGC in a broader sense, including mass customization. applications.

additional customer insights won. On the other hand, such programmes also facilitated data gathering, i.e. personal customer information, which, in turn, supported the IT integration necessary for efficient CRM.

The idea of relationship marketing emerged long before the existence of social media. BERRY introduced the term in 1983 as "...*attracting, maintaining and ...enhancing customer relationships*".[151] He thereby took a company-dominant position and focused on customers as sole stakeholders. Currently, relationship marketing is used as a **super ordinate term** comprising various sub research fields such as the analysis of relationship phases (customer life cycle), customer retention tools, interactions and networks as well as customer-brand relationships.[152] While some interaction approaches still keep the company-oriented view as coined by BERRY, the concept of customer-brand relationship considers customers as equal partners. Only in the latter sense, relationship marketing thus suits the idea of UGB.

3.2 Interactive marketing

Based on the ideas of relationship marketing, interactive marketing takes a step forward in response to recent shifts in branding environment.[153] According to SCHÖGEL/HERHAUSEN/WALTER this relatively new marketing discipline applies social media to engage customers in a dialogue.[154] Exploiting the potential of Web2.0 and mobile devices, both high interactive and individual customer address (richness) and high connectivity (reach) is achieved. The focus is on dialogue, considering branded companies as members of **communication networks** which they may influence but not control. As relationship marketing, interactive marketing can be also understood as **super ordinate term** comprising various sub research fields classified by Web2.0 applications (e.g. blog marketing, brand community marketing) and channels (e.g. word of mouth marketing).[155]

Interactive marketing thereby pays special attention to the active participation of consumers as evidenced by user generated content, products and services.[156] Taking in-

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[151] BERRY (1983), p. 25. For an overview of further relationship marketing definitions see WENSKE (2008a), p. 53.

[152] For an in-depth consideration of the named sub fields see WENSKE (2008a), pp. 54 et seqq.

[153] Such trends include information overload, diversification of communication channels, changing media consumption, shrinking impact of traditional media and individual customer address (see SCHÖGEL (2009). For shifts in branding environment also see chapter A 1.1.

[154] See SCHÖGEL/HERHAUSEN/WALTER (2008), pp. 342 et seq.

[155] See amongst others STANOEVSKA-SLABEVA ibid., pp. 221 et seqq. UGB relevant approaches are discussed in chapter C 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5 of this study.

[156] See SCHÖGEL/HERHAUSEN/WALTER ibid., p. 339; STANOEVSKA-SLABEVA (2008), p. 221.

teractivity between brand and customers as well as interactivity among customers into account, SCHÖGEL distinguishes four marketing interaction types (see Figure 10). With respect to UGB, the **customer-driven communication** type is of matter since the 'acting customer' takes centre stage. SCHÖGEL thereby considers both user generated content stimulated by the branded company and consumer created brand messages occurring unprompted. To some extent, also community marketing[157] as well as viral and buzz marketing[158] are of relevance with regard to UGB. Understanding UGB as management of brand-related user generated content, communities constitute a social network wherein consumer created brand messages might be created and distributed. In case a branded company establishes such an online community as platform for UGC, it might be regarded as application of UGB. With regard to viral and buzz marketing, the focus is also on content transmission. This is, however, not restricted to brand related UGC as subject of UGB.[159]

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[157] For an in-depth consideration of brand and online communities see chapter C 1.4.
[158] For an in-depth consideration of viral and buzz marketing in the context of word of mouth research see chapter C 1.3.
[159] For a detailed differentiation of UGB from related terms (e.g. online communities, word of mouth) see chapter C 2.
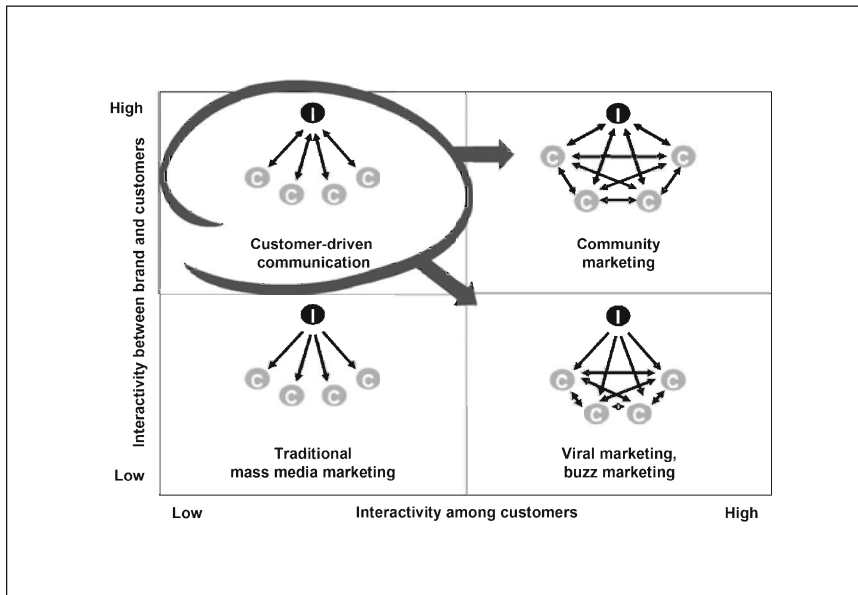
Figure 10   Interaction types in marketing
Source: Adapted from SCHÖGEL (2009).

3.3   Integration of UGB and brand related UGC into relationship marketing

As shown, the concepts of relationship and interactive marketing are useful to understand possible applications and target values of UGB in brand management practice. With respect to relationship marketing, the importance of **consumer-brand relationships** for UGB is highlighted. However, the UGB inherent management idea is only met if relationship is understood as mutual exchange between equal partners following the consumer-brand relationship definition within the identity-based brand management approach. Besides, the status of the consumer-brand relationship construct as pre-economic target value is reconfirmed. That implies that UGB effects could be measured in terms of strength and changes in consumer-brand relationship as outcome variable.

Since UGB is rooted in the social media environment, reference to interactive marketing is obvious. In particular, parallels to SCHÖGEL's customer-driven communication approach are manifest, considering both unprompted and stimulated brand related UGC. As mentioned, UGB is also related to sub fields of interactive marketing such as brand community and word of mouth marketing. However, two basic differ-

entiations are crucial for clear understanding: first, the **distinction of management, content and channel**, and second, the **distinction of stimulation and reaction**. The first differentiation is essential to separate UGB as management approach, brand related UGC as content and word of mouth and community as channel and network respectively. That is, UGB makes use of those concepts, but shall not be equated with it.

The second differentiation is crucial to define the scope of interactive marketing versus UGB. As shown in the introduction, the UGB phenomenon has two faces: On the one hand, there are branded companies which stimulate UGC by blogs, challenges, communities, etc. in order to achieve brand goals. On the other hand, however, there are countless unattached users which create and distribute brand messages unprompted, using off-brand platforms and making off-brand statements. Thus, interactive marketing only covers part of the UGB phenomenon, i.e. the stimulation part. The big off-brand part, however, is not addressed. This distinction between stimulation and reaction shall be further elaborated in the course of this study.

4 Web2.0 and the digital world as context factors of this study

As mentioned above, the emergence of brand related UGC and thus UGB is linked with Web2.0 and the digital world. Basically, four main factors can be distinguished[160]: advancements in digital technology, a changed understanding of hierarchy and architecture through Web 2.0 as platform, changes in the community due to increasing digital skills and shrinking privacy concerns as well as legal facilitations. This classification includes IT, social, demographic, economic, legal and institutional drivers encouraging brand related UGC.

4.1 Advancements in digital technology

Recent advancements in digital technology have been fostering the creation, distribution and consumption of brand related UGC. First, due to high-speed broadband the **internet has become faster**.[161] In 2007, a fourth of the total of 1 billion internet households worldwide had broadband connections.[162] This global transition from slow dialup connections to fast broadband drastically changed the environment in which users create, post and download content allowing the handling of large media files.[163] With regard to the emergence of widespread fibre, wireless broadband and ubiquitous networks this trend is likely to amplify.[164] Besides, costs of internet usage have been decreased, mainly due to the introduction of flat rates.[165]

Second, **improved hardware** with higher processing speed, hard drive and memory capacity facilitate the digital content creation.[166] While the technical quality of consumer electronic devices such as digital cameras, video recorders, and mobile phones has been increasing their cost were decreasing making them accessible to a greater public. Especially new mobile phone platforms allowing users to send and re-

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[160] See also in the following BERNHARDT/BOYLE/CLARK et al. (2007), p. 42; WUNSCH-VINCENT/VICKERY (2007), pp. 13 et seqq.

[161] See WUNSCH-VINCENT/VICKERY (2007), p. 13.

[162] See BERNHARDT/BOYLE/CLARK et al. (2007), p. 44. The broadband household penetration rate for developed countries is already high and expected to grow further by 2011. For instance, US – 73.1% (2006)/94.1% (2011), Japan – 52.3%/76.1%, UK – 47.1%/76.8%, Germany – 30.8%/63.2%. (see BERNHARDT/BOYLE/CLARK et al. (2007), p. 44 based on eMarketer).

[163] For example, the download of a 3 MB music file takes approx. 7 minutes by means of ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network) but only less than a minute by means of DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) (see GÖTTGENS/DÖRRENBÄCHER (2008), p. 216. For further speed related comparisons of internet connection modes see JACOBS (2008), pp. 14 et seq.

[164] See WUNSCH-VINCENT/VICKERY (2007), p.13.

[165] For details on price evolution of internet usage in Germany see JACOBS (2008), pp. 15 et seq.

[166] See also in the following WUNSCH-VINCENT/VICKERY (2007), p. 13.

ceive clips and pictures at higher speed are expected to drive UGC in future. Third, **easy-to-use software tools** have been developed allowing ordinary people to create audio and video files, edit them, and distribute them in the internet. This emerging software also enables content management of interactive systems[167] without professional knowledge. And fourth, the rise of **UGC hosting sites and services** is regarded an essential factor providing users space to post their work. Mobile networks, video platforms and video game consoles geared to UGC are expected to provide additional impetus.

4.2 Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is considered a major driver for brand related UGC. This second generation of the World Wide Web does not refer to a technical update[168] but to a **fundamental mind shift** in the ways software developers and end-users think and use the Web.[169] The new understanding of the web as a platform[170] was initially expressed by example and later specified as *"...a more mature, distinctive medium characterized by user participation, openness, and network effects."*[171] Although the term Web 2.0 has clearly taken hold[172] there is still no commonly agreed definition.[173] Pioneer O'REILLY, however, identified eight Web 2.0 **core patterns**[174] whereof four are regarded of special relevance for brand-related UGC: first, the pattern of harnessing collective intelligence by creating architecture of participation using network effects;

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[167] Content management includes tagging, podcasting, group rating and aggregation, recommendation, content distribution via RSS feeds (see ibid., p. 13).

[168] Many of the technology components of Web 2.0 have existed since the early days of the Web which was introduced in 1989 as system of interlinked hypertext documents to be accessed via the internet. For example, new techniques such as Ajax (Asynchronous JavaScript) are based on existing underlying protocols like HTTP (Hypertext Transfer Protocol), just adding layers of abstraction on top of them. For a critical discussion of the notion of Web 2.0 see JACOBS (2008), pp. 12 et seqq.

[169] See MUSSER/O'REILLY (2006), p. 5; KOLBITSCH/MAURER (2006), p. 187. For Web 2.0 basics see KILIAN/HASS/WALSH (2008), pp. 4 et seqq.

[170] See O'REILLY/BATTELLE (2004); O'REILLY (2005); GRAHAM (2005); MUSSER/O'REILLY (2006). The phrase Web 2.0 was first used publicly in the homonymous O'Reilly Media conference in 2004.

[171] MUSSER/O'REILLY (2006), p. 7.

[172] For the term "Web 2.0" about 80 million citations are shown by the search engine Google (URL: www.google.com; accessed on 2 April 2008).

[173] For example, HAGEL defines Web 2.0 as "*...an emerging network-centric platform to support distributed collaborative and cumulative creation by its users*" (HAGEL (2005)). HÖGG/MECKEL/STANOEVSKA-SLABEVA et al. talk about "*...the philosophy of mutually maximizing collective intelligence and added value for each participant by formalized and dynamic information sharing and creation*" (HÖGG/MECKEL/STANOEVSKA-SLABEVA et al. (2006), pp. 23 et seqq.). For a reference list of recent defintions see JACOBS (2008), pp. 10 et seq.; also see HUDETZ/DUSCHA (2008), pp. 386 et seq.

[174] See also in the following MUSSER/O'REILLY (2006), pp.12 et seqq.; O'REILLY (2005), sections 2-7.

second, the pattern of so-called 'innovation in assembly' meant in the sense of building platforms to foster innovation by remixing data services; third, the pattern of rich user experiences beyond traditional web site metaphors combining the best of desktop and online software, and fourth the pattern of cost-efficient lightweight business models which were based on syndication instead of coordination and designed for 'hackability'.[175] Examples of such lightweight business models included the online auction house eBay and the online book seller Amazon which treated the web already in the so-called Web 1.0 era as a platform leveraging brand related UGC.[176]

Thus, it can be concluded that the underlying principles of brand related UGC – notably user participation, remixability, and rich user experience – are already inherent to its platform Web 2.0. A key lesson of Web 2.0 is that users are invited as co-developers and that their content is acknowledged as value added. The modular architecture of Web 2.0 thereby fosters brand related UGC by providing networks and peer-to-peer communication platforms for individual knowledge accumulation and real-time collaboration.

4.3 Emergence of the digital community

Beside technological and architectural factors, community factors have played a significant role in boosting brand related UGC. In general, communication in the internet is perceived by users as interpersonal communication meeting the need for peer information and social contact.[177] UGC production is thereby mainly driven by the so-called net generation or **'digital natives'** – a group of young, male, digitally skilled early adopters who grew up with the internet and actively use Web 2.0 applications.[178] In recent years, however, Web 2.0 applications have begun to **move mainstream**, ascending spread to older age groups and institutional functions.[179] Accord-

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[175] Further patterns state that unique, hard-to-recreate data sources should be used. Besides, the software should be above the level of a single device integrating various services and should be updated on a regular basis as part of the normal user experience. Furthermore, customer self-service should be leveraged by reaching out to the entire web employing the so-called long tail. For further explanation of Web 2.0 themes and rules see O'REILLY/BATTELLE (2004); O'REILLY (2005); O'REILLY (2006).

[176] Amazon, for instance, has allowed users to write reviews and consumer guides since its launch in 1995 and opened its source code interface for cooperative work with external developers in 2002. Google is cited as another forerunner (see O'REILLY (2002); O'REILLY (2005): section 1).

[177] See KIECKER/COWLES (2001), p. 72; KROEBER-RIEL/WEINBERG (2003), pp. 253 et seq.

[178] See TAPSCOTT (2007), pp.40; WUNSCH-VINCENT/VICKERY (2007), pp. 13 et seq. For surveys about the generation bias in UGC production see FORRESTER's US Social Technographics study (see LI (2007a); HEMPEL (2007)) and the ARD/ZDF online study for Germany (see FISCH/GSCHEIDLE (2008), p. 359).

[179] See WUNSCH-VINCENT/VICKERY (2007), pp. 13 et seq.

ing to the ARD/ZDF online study almost half of the senior German internet population ages 50-59 consults Wikipedia at least infrequently, 18% frequent video sharing sites and 15% participate in photo communities. [180]

Besides, a growing desire for **self-expression and contact** can be observed which has not been covered by traditional media platforms.[181] P2P online platforms provide a stage for self-advertisement and new identity creation rewarding users with visibility and applause by their peers in the community at low entry barriers.[182] KREUTZER/MERKLE consider profiling, talkativeness, search for social contact and escapism as main non-commercial motives for Web 2.0 usage.[183] STÖCKL/ROHRMEIER/HESS provided empiric evidence that content generating users were primarily driven by fun, information dissemination, the desire for contact and personal documentation.[184] The demand for self-expression thereby goes hand in hand with a **changed attitude towards privacy**: While engaging online people are willing to reveal and share a lot of personal information. Telling others about themselves, providing personal information and keeping record of personal experiences were identified as key drivers of the UGC engagement of weblogers and video producers.[185]

4.4 Facilitation of legal schemes

The rise of new legal means has also contributed to a greater availability of UGC. As the success of **open source software projects** (see chapter C 1.1.3) provided evidence contributing one's innovations to a commons does not inevitably lead to the destruction of incentives to innovate due to free-riding of others on the innovator's product.[186] Community managed open source software projects keep private intellectual property claims aside from both innovators and adopters. O'MAHONY showed that such OS projects protect their work by using several legal and normative tactics which do not disregard intellectual property rights.[187] According to VON KROGH/VON

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[180] See FISCH/GSCHEIDLE (2008), p. 357. According to AGOF 60% of German citizens ages 50-59 and 25% of seniors ages 60 and more use the internet; these older users account for a fourth (24%) of the German online population (see AGOF (2008b), pp. 5 et seqq.).

[181] See also in the following WUNSCH-VINCENT/VICKERY (2007), pp. 13 et seq.

[182] See JACOBS (2008), pp. 21 et seq.

[183] See KREUTZER/MERKLE (2007), pp. 151 et seqq.

[184] See also in the following STÖCKL/ROHRMEIER/HESS (2008), pp. 283 et seq.; based on survey (N=489) among weblogers and video producers about their motivations to produce content. The study results are introduced in detail in chapter 1.5.1C 1.5.1.

[185] See ibid., p. 279.

[186] See also in the following VON KROGH/VON HIPPEL (2006), p. 975.

[187] See O'MAHONY (2003).

HIPPEL this example of user collaboration questions the "...*entire fabric of assump-tions buttressing the necessity of intellectual property protection regimes*"[188].

Against this background legal facilitations emerged: On the one hand, there are **end-user licensing agreements** granting copyright to users for UGC (e.g. virtual world Second Life). On the other hand there are **flexible licensing schemes** such as Creative Commons. Creative Commons (CC) is a corporation[189] which newly defines the spectrum of possibilities between full copyright (all rights reserved) and the public domain (no rights reserved) by providing free licenses for a 'some rights reserved' copyright labelled by the CC logo.[190] So licensees could keep their copyright while inviting certain uses of their work.

Beside intellectual property risks service providers face potential liability risks arising from UGC including claims of defamation through posting defamatory statements about other people on their sites and violations of right to privacy and publicity, i.e., by collecting and publishing information from children such as name, age, etc.[191] **Up-dates to copyright laws**, however, have enabled UGC infrastructure providers to protect themselves based on the separation of creation and distribution of UGC.[192] Figure 11 provides a summary of the described UGB context factors which drive the creation and consumption of brand related UGC.
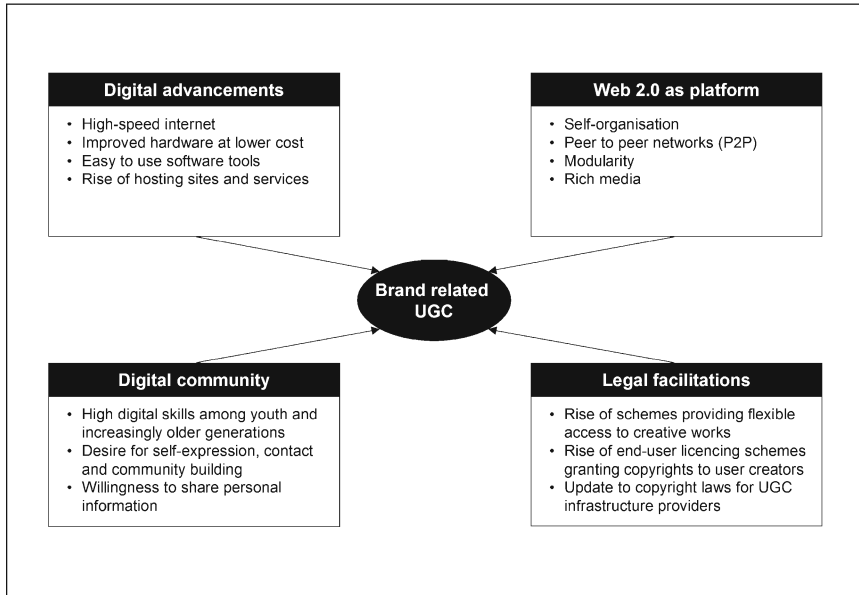
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[188] VON KROGH/VON HIPPEL (2006), p. 975.

[189] Creative Commons is a Massachusetts US charitable corporation sustained by the support of or-ganizations including the Center for the Public Domain, The Rockefeller Foundation, and The Wil-liam and Flora Hewlett Foundation, as well as members of the public (see CREATIVECOMMONS (2008)).

[190] See also in the following ibid.

[191] See LATHAM/BUTZER/BROWN (2008), pp. 1 et seqq.; BOORTZ (2008), p. 18.

[192] In the US relevant legal updates include the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998 granting 'safe harbors' to content providers and the Communications Decency Act of 1996 providing broad im-munity for publishing statements of third parties to providers of computer services (see LATHAM/BUTZER/BROWN (2008), pp. 2 et seqq; BOORTZ (2008), p. 18).

Digital advancements

- High-speed internet
- Improved hardware at lower cost
- Easy to use software tools
- Rise of hosting sites and services

Web 2.0 as platform

- Self-organisation
- Peer to peer networks (P2P)
- Modularity
- Rich media

Brand related UGC

Digital community

- High digital skills among youth and increasingly older generations
- Desire for self-expression, contact and community building
- Willingness to share personal information

Legal facilitations

- Rise of schemes providing flexible access to creative works
- Rise of end-user licencing schemes granting copyrights to user creators
- Update to copyright laws for UGC infrastructure providers

Figure 11   Context factors of user generated branding

Source: Own illustration based on Bᴇʀɴʜᴀʀᴅᴛ et al. (2007), p. 42; Wᴜɴsᴄʜ-Vɪɴᴄᴇɴᴛ/Vɪᴄᴋᴇʀʏ (2007), p. 14.

5 Discussion and summary of the theoretical basis

In this section, a reference framework for user generated branding (UGB) was developed by relating the concept to the identity-based brand management approach, relationship marketing and Web2.0 and the digital world as context factors. It was shown how advancements in digital technology, the Web 2.0 platform, increasing digital skills of consumers, shrinking privacy concerns as well as legal facilitations have been driving user generated content and thus evoked new challenges for brand management.

Main take-away is the **differentiation of UGB as a management approach and brand related user generated content (UGC) as its subject**. Deriving from the notion of information and content, brand related UGC was defined as "*…the representation of the voluntary creation and public distribution of personal brand meaning undertaken by non-marketers outside the branding routines and enabled by multimedia technology*". Based on the identity-based brand management approach, UGB is understood as "*…the strategic and operative management of brand related user generated content (UGC) to achieve brand goals*". That is, UGB is considered as goal-oriented handling of all kinds of user generated brand related artefacts – from original artistic work, comments, reviews and ratings to remixes with corporate content; from text and image to audio and video; from customer complaint to brand fan dedication. These consumer created messages are thereby distributed by means of Web2.0 and mobile platforms such as blogs, media sharing sites and social networking sites.

With respect to the **identity-based brand management approach**, the emergence of brand related UGC refers to communication behaviour as a result of the consumer-brand relationship. It is understood as a creative form of recommending or advising against a brand. The published user generated brand messages are thus regarded as brand touch points for other consumers. From a consumer perception perspective, brand related UGC stands next to corporate communication efforts such as advertising and Public Relations. UGB as management approach copes with these grassroots messages within the identity-based brand management process. Monitoring brand related UGC is regarded as an integral part of the strategic management process. Incorporating the won insights may result in adaptations of the operative brand management instruments, notably communication politics. It may also contribute to brand performance measuring.

Considering UGB against the background of **relationship marketing**, the relevance of consumer-brand relationship is highlighted. Given its role as pre-economic target value of brand management, consumer-brand relationship appears to be an appro-

priate reference value for measuring the effects of UGB initiatives. This point shall be deepened in section D when developing a UGB effectiveness model.

In terms of practical reference, parallels between UGB and **interactive marketing** are manifest. However, interactive marketing only covers one side of the whole UGB phenomenon, assuming the chance of stimulation and manipulation of brand related UGC from a corporate point of view. In this context, the role of UGB as active and passive management approach respectively is to be clarified. Furthermore, the aspects of management, content, and channel need to be clearly distinguished in order to differentiate UGB from other approaches within interactive marketing. Thus, the definition of UGB shall be further specified in the following section.