

CHAZEN INSTITUTE RESEARCH BRIEF

How Selfies Can Drive Brand Engagement

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ Selfies aren't just a popular consumer trend; they're also a widely used marketing tactic for brands to increase consumer engagement and influence purchase decisions. But the point of view from which the selfie is taken makes all the difference.
- ✓ Brand selfies—where consumers hold a branded product in frame without appearing next to it—are the most effective user-generated image for stimulating consumer-brand engagement.
- ✓ While consumer selfies—where consumers pose with branded products—can represent a stronger level of endorsement, they also risk diverting viewers' attention away from the brand.
- ✓ Selecting the right consumer-generated selfie to share across corporate channels can drive higher brand engagement and increase purchase likelihood.

User-generated content (UGC) has changed the way consumers and brands engage with one another. Every day, consumers share millions of images across social media featuring brands in some form or fashion. Marketers track and tap into this content, even using consumer-generated images as inspiration for brand and social campaigns. But which type of image generates the most engagement for brands?

In “[The Power of Brand Selfies in Consumer-Generated Brand Images](#)” Chazen Senior Scholar **Oded Netzer** and colleagues from the University of Hamburg show that brands derive the most value, in terms of social media engagement and expressed purchase intent, when consumers take a photo of a branded product from their point of view as opposed to the traditional selfie where consumers pose with a product.

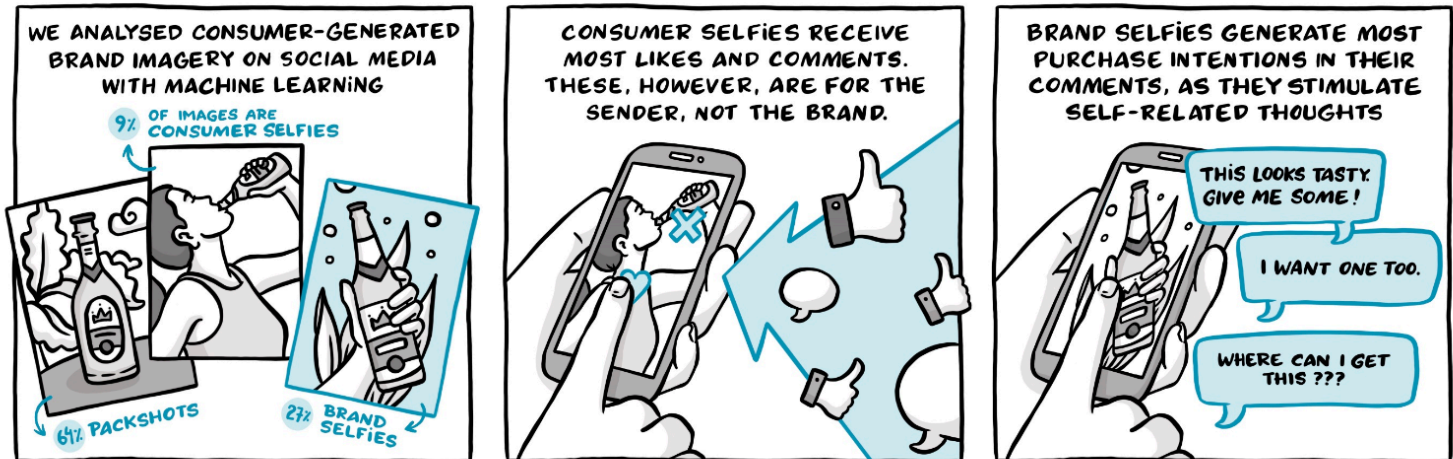
Research

Netzer and his coauthors analyzed nearly a quarter of a million logo appearances of 185 brands across Twitter and Instagram using machine learning tools. They then classified the types of branded images that appeared on social media, identifying three categories:

1. *Brand selfies*: branded products held in a consumer's hand (consumer faces are not visible in the frame)
2. *Consumer selfies*: consumer faces appear together with a branded product
3. *Packshots*: standalone images of branded products

The researchers also tracked consumer reactions to branded images (number of likes and comments received) and brand engagement (explicit brand mentions and expressed purchase intents in captions and comments and use of brand-related hashtags and handletags), two key marketing metrics.

The Power of Brand Selfies



Results

The research reveals that when it comes to selfie images, point of view matters. While consumer selfies tend to generate the highest level of engagement in terms of likes and comments, this engagement is often targeted at the person who created the post rather than the brand. Brand selfies, which show the brand from the viewer’s perspective, are consistently the top performing consumer-generated images in terms of brand engagement and purchase likelihood.

Brand selfies receive more likes overall but fewer brand mentions and purchase intent comments, implying that likes often refer to content that is unrelated to the brand.

Contrary to popular belief, consumers seldom take an image of the brand together with their face, despite brands encouraging consumers to do so. Such consumer selfies are not necessarily beneficial to brands either, as they are likely to lead to lower brand mentions and purchase intent comments.

From a brand perspective, consumer selfies can be a double-edged sword. While consumer-generated images with faces increase attention to the image itself (in the form of likes

and comments), the faces also divert attention away from the brand. The fact that consumer selfies achieve more likes than the other two image types does not necessarily translate into higher levels of brand engagement.

The research suggests reconsidering the marketing value of likes for consumer-generated brand images. Both image and brand engagement must be assessed to obtain a full understanding of a brand’s standing with consumers online. According to the researchers, featuring brand selfies on corporate channels and in marketing campaigns can be a powerful vehicle to increase brand engagement and purchase intention.

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