



Defining Branded Content for the Digital Age: An Exploration of Marketing Communication Experts' Key Conceptualisations

Bjoern Asmussen, Serena Wider & Tribikram Budhathoki (Brand Strategy Research Group,
Oxford Brookes University, Oxford)

Ross Williams, Neil Stevenson & Elliot Whitehead (Ipsos MORI, London)

commissioned by Andrew Canter (Branded Content Marketing Association, London)

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Two Stage Approach

Stage One: A literature review/analysis

Practitioner and academic publications reviewed and analysed (Charmaz, 2006), identifying that branded content is discussed in five different ways:

1. Traditional Trademark Owner Perspective

2. Digital Trademark Owner Perspective

3. Integrated Trademark Owner Perspective

4. Stakeholder Perspective

5. All-Encompassing Perspective

Stage Two: Thirty industry expert interviews

We conducted thirty telephone interviews with UK-based senior marketers to assist us in understanding how the industry conceptualises branded content



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Stage Two: Thirty industry expert interviews

KEY FINDINGS:

Managerial Definition

Holistic Definition



The holistic definition of branded content

From a holistic or all-encompassing perspective, branded content is defined as any manifestation associated with a particular brand in the eye of the beholder.



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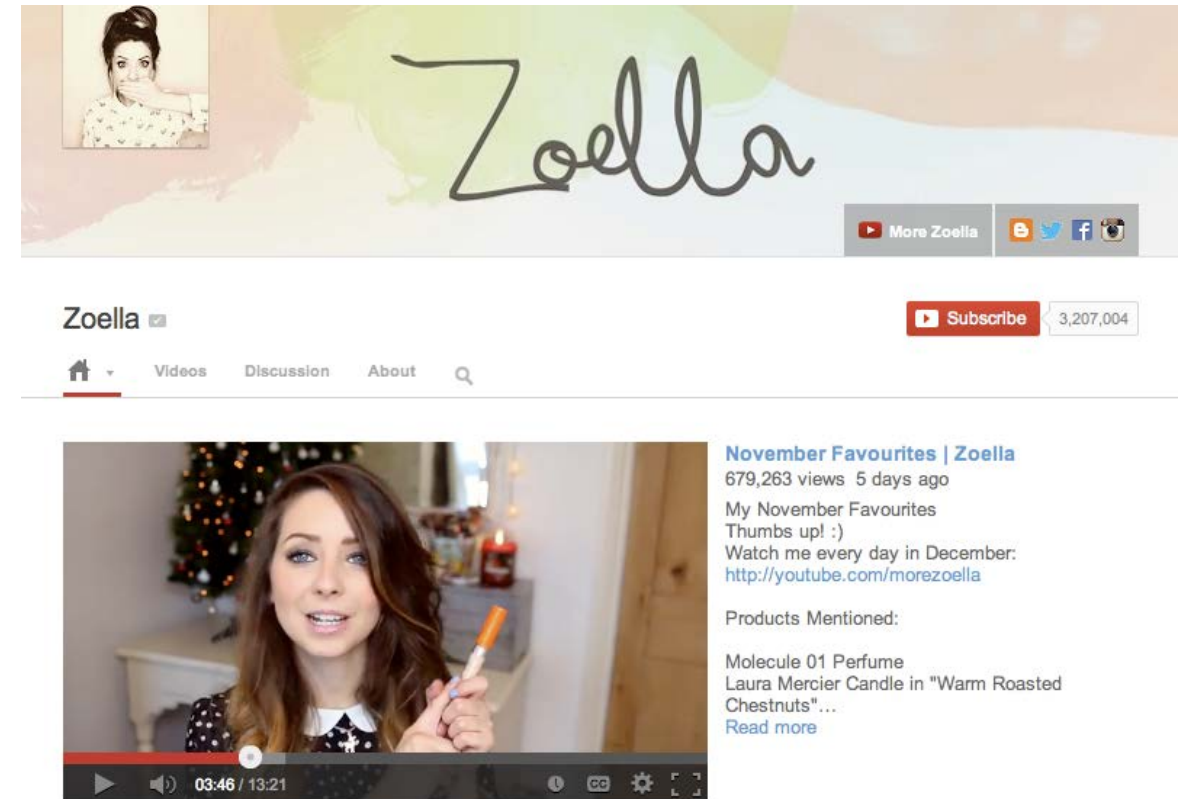


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Virtually Anyone Can Become A Branded Content Creator

- **Manifestation: Any perceptible (e.g. visual) expression of a brand, tangible and/or intangible**
- **Anything posted about a brand, created internally or externally**
- **The trademark owner is not necessarily in control of the content or distribution of it**
- **BUT: This is far too broad from a managerial perspective**
- **BUT: What makes branded content distinctive?**



Towards A Managerial Definition Of Branded Content ...

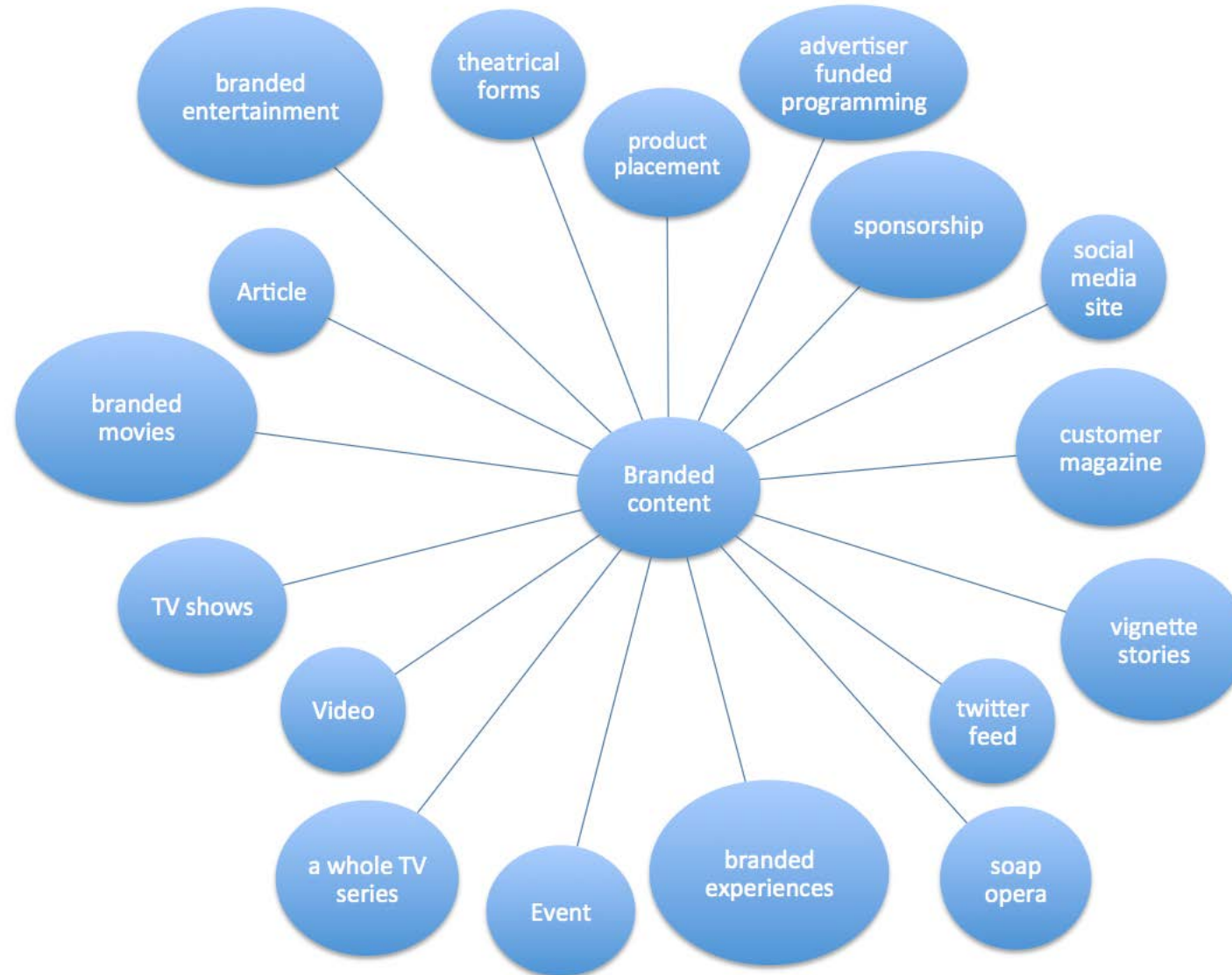
Trademark or brand owner is interpreted as being “in control”

It can be managed and “controlled” to a large extent

Content that usually is wholly or at least in part created and/or funded by the brand’s legal owner

Even when co-creating with consumers, a level of “control” is assumed

Branded Content As A Deliverable Or Outcome



Source: Expert Interviews

#LikeAGirl



Branded Content vs Advertising

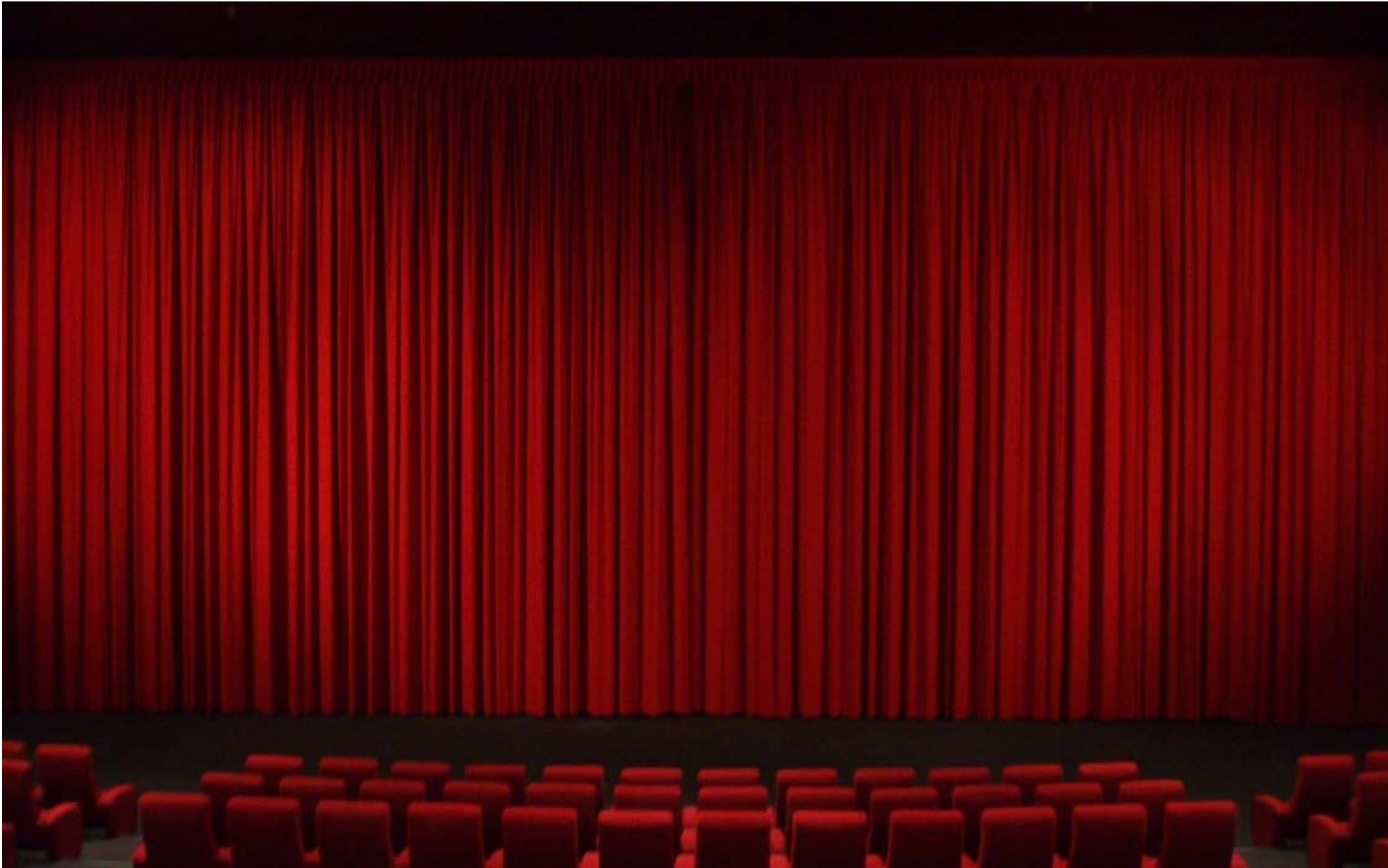
Our findings indicate that while advertising is perceived by various experts as using primarily an interruption-based delivery approach (push), branded content is perceived as being primarily about a non-interruption-based rationale (pull).

“... if you create advertising ... you’re getting in the way of whatever it is the audience is actually wanting to consume – you’re **disrupting** that ...

If you create content ... the big differentiator is that you’re asking somebody to **choose to engage** with you – they have to make a decision to go and see your movie, or to watch your Youtube video, or to follow your feed on social media.” (Expert 22)



A New Managerial Definition Of Branded Content



A New Managerial Definition Of Branded Content

It's a deliverable, not a discipline

It's a matter of choice / pull

Branded content is any **output** fully/partly funded or at least endorsed by the legal owner of the brand which promotes the owner's brand values, and makes audiences **choose** to engage with the brand based on a pull logic due to its entertainment, information and/or education value.

The owner is in control

Can achieve high levels of earned distribution / promotion

Conclusion



- **Limitation: Qualitative research in UK with 30 'managerial experts' only**
- **Holistic definition: Branded content is an all-encompassing socio-technological phenomenon**
- **Managerial definition: Branded content is distinctive from advertising**
- **Managerial definition: Branded content is about making people choose to engage with the brand**
- **Difference between Branded Content and Content Marketing is key**



Thank you for your attention

■ **Bjoern Asmussen**

bjoern.asmussen@brookes.ac.uk