

**PROJECT TITLE: Online Brand Advocacy and Online Brand Detraction: Brand Management Insights**

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**PROJECT BACKGROUND**

**ABSTRACT**

This study builds on the pioneering work into Online Brand Advocacy (OBA) and Online Brand Detraction (OBD) by Wilk et al. (2018, 2019, 2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b, 2023a, 2023b, 2024a, 2024b, 2025). OBA includes positive experience and knowledge sharing, brand defence in a time of crisis or need, and virtual visual cues to show support for the brand (Wilk et al., 2018). It fosters a stronger connection between the online consumer community and the brand, and shields the brand in a time of crisis. OBD is the opposite of OBA. Instigated by an adverse brand encounter, customers engage in negatively valenced behaviour, such as giving negative reviews and posting negative user-generated content (UGC), to inform others not to conduct business with the brand (Wong, 2023; Wong & Hung, 2023; Abdelrazek & El-Bassiouny, 2023; Ebbott et al., 2021; Willson et al., 2021; Wilk et al., 2023, 2024). Both constructs are relatively new to academic literature and thus present an opportunity for further investigation. Therefore, this research seeks to identify the motivators and outcomes; the industry and cultural context factors of OBA and OBD.

**PROJECT OVERVIEW**

Online Brand Advocacy (OBA) is a powerful, customer-driven, authentic, and experience-based, online voice for brands (Wilk, et al., 2018) which is fostered through social media that centres around two pillars: 1. the sharing of content which is distributed through online and mobile technologies, and 2. the facilitation of interpersonal interaction to connect members of social networks (Wilk, et al., 2023; 2022; 2021). OBA includes positive experience and knowledge sharing, brand defence in a time of crisis or need, fostering a stronger connection between the online community and the brand, strengthening brand loyalty and trust, galvanising of online brand community, increasing brand awareness, and driving further

positive word-of-mouth online (Wilk et al., 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b, 2023a, 2023b, 2024a, 2024b, 2025).

OBA is an important tool for brand building (Wilk et al., 2024; Vorobjovas-Pinta & Wilk, 2022), digital entrepreneurship (Wilk et al., 2021), online brand community development (Wilk, Soutar & Harrigan, 2020; Wilk et al., 2018), fuelling brand influence online (Meek, Wilk & Lambert, 2021; Ebbott et al., 2021; Willson et al., 2021), fostering customer-brand relationships (Wilk, Soutar & Harrigan, 2021), public relations (Wilk et al., 2024), nurturing online brand advocates (Wilk et al., 2018; 2020; 2021; 2022; 2023; 2024), brand crisis management (Wilk et al., 2025; Wilk, et al., 2023; Morgan & Wilk, 2021; Morgan et al., 2021), luxury brand community building (Wong, 2023), employees' brand advocacy (Cavdar Aksoy, & Duzenci, 2023), sport community (Wong & Hung, 2023) and fostering the sustainability agenda (Abdelrazek & El-Bassiouny, 2023).

Online Brand Detraction (OBD), on the other hand, is the opposite of OBA. Instigated by an adverse brand encounter, customers engage in negatively valenced behaviour, such as giving negative reviews and posting negative user-generated content (UGC), to inform others not to conduct business with the brand (Wilk et al., 2023, 2024). This in turn may negatively influence the way other customers' think, feel, and behave toward this provider. Other customers, such as reviewees (potential customers), view negatively valenced UGC, such as reviews given by customers, as trustworthy information which they utilize to decrease uncertainty with purchase decisions and may result in the customer changing their plans overall, such as deciding against buying from a brand. Accordingly, negatively valenced UGC has the potential to negatively influence the brand's online reputation, thus reducing their appeal and value (Azer and Alexander, 2018).

Thus, negatively valenced UGC can produce detraction effects. To further explore the under researched detraction effect of negatively valenced UGC, it is important to determine what characterizes OBD. The concept of OBD is currently undefined; however, based on the Wilk et al. (2018) study, it is positioned as the adverse of online brand advocacy (OBA). Founded on research into OBA, coupled with findings from studies into negative online reviews (El-Said, 2020), negative customer brand engagement (Rasool et al., 2020), negative customer engagement online (Azer and Alexander, 2020), insights into brand detractors and brand

haters (Bayarassou et al., 2024), OBD may be posited as an elaborate, negative statement about a brand, with strong and unique cognitive and affective characteristics supported by virtual visual cues.

Brand detractors post UGC that is more negatively or unfavourably weighted about their brand experience and have the potential to detract reviewees from trying, interacting with, purchasing from, or visiting the brand. OBD is reflective of an individual's unfavourable perceptions about a brand (cognitive dimension), their dislike and negativity towards the brand (affective dimension).

Undoubtedly, in this digital age, brands will find it difficult to survive without online brand advocates who provide social proof and brand voice across a multitude of digital touchpoints which brands often do not have access to. Therefore, this presents an opportunity to explore OBA and OBD in other contexts, such as the not for profit sector (NFP), education, employee-employer dyad, other company stakeholders.

Therefore, this project seeks to understand OBA and OBD in various contexts to shed further light on the brand-stakeholder, brand-consumer, relationships, and assist businesses and organisations in brand and crisis management.

The main research questions (RQs) for this project to address are:

1. What motivates social media users to advocate or detract from brands within their online social networks?
2. What are the outcomes of OBA and OBD for the brand?
3. What industry-contextual factors exist that may affect the level of OBA and/or OBD given for a brand?
4. What does the interplay between OBA and OBD look like? Is it conducive to building an online brand community of advocates?
5. What cultural-contextual factors exist that may affect the level of OBA and/or OBD given for a brand?

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