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**Review of *Brand-urile în era Web 2.0. Conținutul generat de consumatori [Web 2.0 Brands. User-generated Content]*
by Rodica Săvulescu, Bucharest: Tritonic, 2016, 252 pages**

The web 2.0 era has shifted brand ownership from communication specialists towards consumers. This is the main idea on which Rodica Săvulescu builds her argumentation in her recently published book, *Web 2.0 Brands. User-generated content (2016)*. The emergence of new technologies blurs the lines between content producers and consumers. In this book, the author addresses the topic of democratization of content in relation with brand communication. The revolution of the Internet has brought significant changes and its ramifications can be seen in all levels of society, including areas such as journalism, cultural industries, political and brand communication, or advertising campaigns. The online medium fosters a level of democratization of communication. The development of Web 2.0, with its new platforms and instruments offers each individual the chance to become content creator and co-creator. In the communications arena, the debate nowadays focuses on topics such as *how does consumer generated content influence brand image?*; *is brand communication democratization real?*; and *what is the role of social media, as an instrument for active consumers?* The answer to these questions is not clear cut, being the object of extensive research for both advertising professionals and scholars.

These topics, however, cannot be addressed without acknowledging the participation paradigm, a characteristic of Web 2.0. When examining the extent of literature in the field one can notice the large body of research focusing on the importance and consequences of online communication. Nevertheless, there is still need to concentrate on and examine the implications of the Internet era in terms of branding and communication. In other words, can the new technologies provide opportunities and create a culture of participation and open source brands? An answer to this question is offered in *Web 2.0 Brands. User-generated content*, a book written by Rodica Săvulescu that is addressed to students, scholars, and professionals alike.

The book guides the reader through the main concepts of Web 2.0, active web, prosumers, the characteristics of user generated content (UGC) and its role in the creation of a participation culture, and the influence that UGC has upon the practices of the Romanian advertising

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professionals. The book is divided into four chapters each focusing on a certain topic. Throughout all sections the author provides an unbiased perspective comparing the main schools of thought regarding Web 2.0 and the active public, UGC and participation culture, brand communication in the digital era and the democratization of brand communication.

In the first chapter, the reader gets acquainted with the theories regarding fundamental concepts concerning UGC: the active public and consumer emancipation. The author contextualizes this debate from the perspective of Web 2.0 and its characteristics. A special emphasis is placed upon the comparison between traditional representations of publics and recent studies involving the evolution of the publics in the digital era.

The second chapter discusses the UGC features, and its impact on the emergence of a participation culture. The author illustrated these theories using practical examples from creative industries, journalism, and political communication. The chapter drew our attention through the numerous instantiations which are useful for readers who want to further understand these concepts. From the music industry and even film industry UGC is central in most discussions:

The film industry is in the foreground when talking about participation culture. Some cinematic productions attract interest of a high number of fans who wish to be part in the universe they appreciate, and companies try to adapt to these requests. (...) The cult film *Star Wars* is presented as an example where fans show their involvement through different materials that they create, starting from the original films, following their script, more or less (Săvulescu, 2016, p. 132).

In the third chapter the debate about UGC is particularized to the advertising field. The author links the theories of participation culture with theories about brand communication in order to illustrate how consumers are involved in co-creative content about brands. The last feature is meant to illustrate the main characteristic of the Web 2.0 realm. The debate is concluded through the introduction of the term *open source brand*. The concept is defined by the idea of the collaborative effort of consumers and companies in building a brand. Brand identity becomes fluid and is the result of negotiation of meaning between consumers as co-creators and companies.

The last chapter is probably the most telling, as it offers the current stage of development in the Romanian advertising industry. The author's insights on what drives the Romanian advertising industry in relation with UGC and brand communication are based on 30 interviews with industry professionals. The study provides an understanding of UGC in social media and how it influences advertising campaigns. UGC in the digital era helps marketers and advertisers connect with the new generation of prosumers by understanding their behavior. The results of the study reflect a dire reality: Romanian advertisers do appreciate UGC, but acknowledge the fact that in some situations their communication interest might contradict users' views. In this context, the author concludes:

The democratization of brand communication is limited to a guided polyphony in which consumers are granted permission to express their views in relation to a brand but only in the terms established by companies. Any transgression of the imposed rules is sanctioned and polyphonic discourse is transformed into a continuation of the official brand communication despite the involvement of a public with diverse opinions (Săvulescu, 2016, pp. 216-217).

Rodica Săvulescu's book offers a valuable contribution to the field of user generated content in the advertising industry. In order to build her argument, she analyses theories of par-

ticipation culture and active publics comparing two perspectives: the traditional one, in which the company is the main provider of the direction of brand communication, and the modern one, fostered by new media, in which the role of consumers increases. The theoretical hypotheses extensively analyzed in the first three chapters are then challenged through an empirical investigation, which reveals an expression of the Romanian advertising current state in what concerns UGC. *Web 2.0 Brands. User-generated content* explores a field that is still under scrutiny in the Romanian academic community. Therefore, the book offers a much needed insight into the field from both a scholarly and professional point of view. The book is placed at the junction between cultural studies, media studies, and branding, which makes it a must read for any reader interested in any of these fields.