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Managerial and Departmental Differences in the Perceived Influence of Brand-Owned Touchpoints on Brand Perception - Case Study

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Abstract

Managing touchpoints is a crucial task of today's digital retail companies to ensure a consistent brand perception for their customers. However, even from a company perspective, people from differing departmental or managerial levels may perceive the influence of touchpoints on brand perception differently, highlighting varying priorities in touchpoint management. Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to investigate the differences in the perceived influence of brand-owned touchpoints on differing managerial and departmental levels and their implications on effective company resource alignment and goal fulfillment. We conclude that differences in perceived influence of brand-owned touchpoints on brand perceptions are present on all managerial and departmental levels and thus not only need to be acknowledged by managers but also need to be harmonized to ensure an effective resource alignment and goal fulfillment.

Keywords: Brand-Owned-Touchpoints; Customer Journey; Brand Perception; Digital Retail

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1. Introduction

With department store revenue peaking in 2001 [1]–[3] and E-commerce revenue constantly growing [4] today's retailers face a significant challenge in staying competitive to E-commerce. Taking on this challenge, retailers are engaging in a new form of retail called "digital retail", which makes use of state-of-the-art technology such as smartphones, to engage customers, drive sales and offer unique customer experiences superior to pure online customer experiences. For example, previous studies show that using smartphones to provide an augmented and personalized customer experience can increase brick-and-mortar store sales and that mobile payments can lead to a more streamlined and efficient shopping experience [5]–[8]. However, in "digital retail" the connection of online and offline customer journeys leads to a constant increase of touchpoints customers can encounter, most of which retailers are unable to influence [9],[10]. Yet, retailers remain able to influence their brand-owned touchpoints (BOTs), which according to Lemon and Verhoef [9], are defined as customer contact points (e.g. advertising, websites, loyalty programs, etc.) designed and managed by retailers only. Kuehnl et al. [11] show that the extent to which consumers perceive multiple brand-owned touchpoints as designed in a thematically cohesive, consistent, and context-sensitive way constitutes an effective customer journey design that positively impacts customer loyalty. However, this triggers the question of how BOTs can be designed in a cohesive, consistent, and context-sensitive way when, even from a company perspective, people from differing departmental or managerial levels may perceive the influence of BOTs on brand perception differently.

The objective of this paper is to reveal differences in the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perception at the example of a case study of an Austrian action fashion retailer and to highlight the implications of such differing perceptions on effective company resource alignment and goal fulfillment. Consequently, we address the following main research questions: *What are differences in the perceived influence of brand-owned touchpoints on brand perceptions on the differing managerial and departmental levels of an action fashion retailer and how do they impact effective company resource alignment and goal fulfillment?* To answer the questions the paper is structured as follows: First, the used method and its underlying data are introduced in section 2. Following, section 3 analyzes and discusses the differences in the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perception on different managerial and departmental levels. Additionally, section 3 gives an overview of the limitation of this paper and future research opportunities. Concluding, Section 4 answers the research questions.

2. Methodology

Following Yin [12], we conducted a descriptive single case study with embedded units to acquire data about the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perception on different managerial and departmental levels. We cooperated with an action fashion retailer situated in Austria who recently started to adopt a digital retail strategy. The following subsections provide the steps we followed to collect and analyze the data of this paper.

2.1. Workshop

To get a comprehensive overview of the retailer's BOTs we used a workshop design proposed by Zimmermann and Auinger [13], which was specifically designed to identify BOTs. Accordingly, our workshop utilized focus groups supported by the creative techniques World Café [14] and Channel CARDS [15] to reach a state of data saturation. Following Saunders et al. [16] data saturation presents a state at which no additional knowledge and likewise no additional knowledge about BOTs could be extracted from the employees of the action fashion retailer. It hereby represents the best overview of BOTs that can be generated by using the retailer's internal resources. The state of data saturation is verified using the Cohen's Kappa statistic. Our workshop reached a Cohen's Kappa value of 0.76 what, according to Landis and Koch [17], represents a substantial agreement and thus a state of data saturation. In accordance with the workshop design, we used focus groups supported by the creative techniques instant word clouds and instant polls to cluster and structure the gained touchpoint overview. The workshop revealed 145 BOTs, which were clustered into 12 top-level BOT categories.

2.2. Survey

Subsequently, the gained overview was used in a subsequent survey, which was sent to all employees of the action fashion retailer. The survey presented the BOTs of each top-level BOT category separately to the participants asking the question of how the employees, taking a customers' perspective, would rate the influence of the respective touchpoint and top-level BOT category on brand perception on a five-point Likert scale. The distribution of the survey participants across the different levels of management, departments, and the corresponding response rates are shown in Table 1 and 2. Looking at the management levels, the employees response rate on average was 30% (see Table 1). However, as the response rates of the higher managerial levels (C-level, Head of department, Team leader) are high, we regard the sample as sufficient to show differences in the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perceptions across the different managerial levels and thus as representative.

Table 1. Management level response rate.

Management level	Responses	Number of employees	Response rate
C-level	2	2	100%
Head of department	7	12	58%
Team leader	11	26	42%
Executive	57	250	23%
Other	9	N/A	N/A
Total	86	290	30%

The response rate from the companies departments on average was 33% (see Table 2). However, we excluded every department with less than five survey participants, except for the management board, from our analysis. As five out of ten departments have a response rate of over 40%, we also regard this sample as representative to show differences in the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perceptions across the differing departmental levels.

Table 2. Department level response rate.

Department level	Responses	Number of employees	Response rate
Category Management	13	35	37%
Marketing	12	28	43%
Finance	9	42	21%
IT	7	17	41%
Digital	6	25	24%
ISIS	6	21	29%
Distribution Systems	5	23	22%
Own Retail	5	10	50%
Product Management	5	11	45%
Management Board	3	5	60%
Total	71	217	33%

2.3. Statistics

Testing skewness and kurtosis value as well as performing a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and a Shapiro-Wilk test show the validity of non-parametric testing (see Table 3). Because of their non-parametric nature, we analyzed the survey data using Kruskal-Wallis tests to detect statistically significant group differences in the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perception. We limited our analyses to group differences between top-level BOT categories because of a high probability of a type 1 error when testing 145 BOTs individually. However, as the top-level BOT categories

consist out of the 145 BOTs the results remain comparable. When statistically significant group differences were identified, we used Dunn-Bonferroni post-hoc tests to pinpoint the differences between the different levels of management and departments. Subsequently, we tested the effect size of the discovered differences using Cohen's d. The software SPSS (v. 26) [18] was used to analyze the survey data.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics.

Top-level BOT category	M	SD	Skew.	Kurt.	K-S/p[a]	S-W/p
CRM	4	0.907	-0.721	0.346	0.298/<0.001	0.855/<0.001
Events	4	0.758	-0.288	-0.15	0.294/<0.001	0.828/<0.001
Classic Media	4	0.715	-0.354	0.04	0.325/<0.001	0.805/<0.001
Cooperation	4	0.643	-0.349	0.27	0.34/<0.001	0.791/<0.001
Online Marketing	4	0.765	-0.369	-0.425	0.261/<0.001	0.836/<0.001
Out of Home	4	0.807	-0.142	-0.2	0.225/<0.001	0.867/<0.001
Point of Sale	4	0.751	-0.507	0.156	0.289/<0.001	0.827/<0.001
Public Relations	4	0.759	0.121	-0.366	0.259/<0.001	0.845/<0.001
Print	4	0.82	0.023	-0.488	0.234/<0.001	0.865/<0.001
Service	5	0.706	-1.347	1.862	0.342/<0.001	0.712/<0.001
Social Media	4	0.851	-0.747	0.793	0.296/<0.001	0.844/<0.001
Website	4	0.604	-0.087	-0.343	0.331/<0.001	0.762/<0.001

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Note: Median (M), Standard Deviation (SD), Skewness (Skew.), Kurtosis (Kurt.), Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (K-S), Shapiro-Wilk (S-W) test and their significance (p)

3. Analyzing Differences

We analyze managerial and departmental differences in the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perception by taking the following steps. First and second, the statistical group differences on the managerial and departmental level are presented. Third, these differences are discussed in a management context and lastly, the limitations of this approach are given.

3.1. Group Differences - Managerial Level

The C-level is the highest authority in the company and thus responsible for developing and visualizing a company's long term strategy and to communicate this strategy to the lower levels of management [19],[20]. Therefore, we took its survey results as a base to get a general overview of the mean differences in the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perception on the managerial level (see table 4). For this overview, we calculated mean values despite having used Likert scales, which only produce ordinal data from which in general no mean value can be calculated, as we regard the psychological difference of the items on the Likert scale as equal (Likert range from 1 = "Has no influence" to 5 = "Has extreme influence"). Employees who answered "other" were excluded from the following analyses, as they could not be assigned to a distinct managerial level. Looking at the mean differences between the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perception of the C-level compared to the other management levels reveals differences ranging between plus 33% (Head of department/ "Events"/ absolute difference 1.0) and minus 20% (Executive/ "CRM"/ absolute difference -0.89). To analyze statistically significant group differences a Kruskal-Wallis test was performed (see table 4), which could detect no significant differences except for the top-level BOT category "Point of Sale". Consequently, a Dunn-Bonferroni post-hoc test was performed (see table 5) to pinpoint the group combination which significantly differs from each other. The post-hoc test shows a significant difference

(p = 0.029) between the managerial levels "Executive" (Median = 4) and "Head of department" (Median = 5). The effect size according to Cohen [21],[22] is d = 0.593 which represents a medium to large effect.

Table 4. Managerial differences.

Top-level BOT category	CL	HD/ Ad/Pd	TL/ Ad/Pd	EX/ Ad/Pd	KW-H	df	Asymp. Sig.
CRM	4.50	4.14/-0.36/-8%	3.82/-0.68/-15%	3.61/-0.89/-20%	4.298	3	0.231
Events	3.00	4.00/1.00/33%	3.91/0.91/30%	3.96/0.96/32%	1.773	3	0.621
Classic Media	3.00	3.71/0.71/24%	3.64/0.64/21%	3.67/0.67/22%	0.804	3	0.849
Cooperation	3.50	3.57/0.07/2%	3.73/0.23/6%	3.70/0.20/6%	0.658	3	0.883
Online Marketing	4.00	4.29/0.29/7%	3.45/-0.55/-14%	4.09/0.09/2%	6.905	3	0.075
Out of Home	3.00	2.71/-0.29/-10%	3.27/0.27/9%	3.28/0.28/9%	2.351	3	0.503
Point of Sale	4.50	4.71/0.21/5%	4.09/-0.41/-9%	3.89/-0.61/-13%	8.905	3	0.031
Public Relations	3.50	3.71/0.21/6%	3.55/0.05/1%	3.47/-0.03/-1%	0.547	3	0.909
Print	3.00	3.71/0.71/24%	3.64/0.64/21%	3.46/0.46/15%	1.609	3	0.657
Service	5.00	4.86/-0.14/-3%	4.36/-0.64/-13%	4.42/-0.58/-12%	4.747	3	0.191
Social Media	4.00	3.71/-0.29/-7%	3.55/-0.45/-11%	4.00/0.00/0%	4.449	3	0.217
Website	4.00	4.00/0.00/0%	4.09/0.09/2%	4.25/0.25/6%	1.916	3	0.590

Asymptotic significances (2-tailed) are presented, significance level is 0.05

Note: C-level (CL), Head of department (HD), Team leader (TL), Executive (EX), Absolute difference from C-level (Ad), Percentage difference from C-level (Pd), Kruskal-Wallis H (KW-H)

Table 5. Dunn-Bonferroni post-hoc test and effect size for "Point of Sale" on the managerial level.

Group comparison (M)	Test statistic	Std. error	Std. test statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.	η²	Cohen's d
EX (4)/ TL (4)	4.576	6.699	0.683	0.495	1.000	N/A	N/A
EX (4)/ CL (4.5)	16.417	14.634	1.122	0.262	1.000	N/A	N/A
EX (4)/ HD (5)	22.952	8.147	2.817	0.005	0.029	0.081	0.593
TL (4)/ CL (4.5)	11.841	15.637	0.757	0.449	1.000	N/A	N/A
TL (4)/ HD (5)	18.377	9.835	1.868	0.062	0.370	N/A	N/A
CL (4)/ HD (5)	-6.536	16.310	0.401	0.689	1.000	N/A	N/A

Asymptotic significances (2-tailed) are presented, significance level is 0.05, adjusted significance by Bonferroni correction

Note: C-level (CL), Head of department (HD), Team leader (TL), Executive (EX), Median (M)

3.2. Group Differences – Departmental Level

Similar to the C-level in the managerial section, we took the Management Board as a base to get a general overview of the mean differences in perceived influence of BOTs on brand perception on the departmental level (see table 6) because it represents the highest authority on the departmental level. For this overview, we also calculated mean values despite having ordinal data as we regard the psychological difference of the items on the Likert scale as equal. On the departmental level, the mean differences in the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perception between the management board and the other departments ranged from plus 39% (Marketing/ "Print"/ absolute difference 1.17) to minus 40% (Product Management/ "Social Media"/ absolute difference -1.87). Performing a Kruskal-Wallis test (see table 6 - continued) revealed three statistically significant group differences in the top-level BOT categories "CRM", "Print" and "Point of Sale". Following, a Dunn-Bonferroni post-hoc test was performed to pinpoint the group combinations that significantly differ from each other. Table 7 displays all group combinations, which lead to

significant differences after a Bonferroni correction was applied. For the top-level BOT category "Point of Sale" the post-hoc test shows a significant difference (p = 0.003) between the departments "Product Management" (Median = 3) and "Digital" (Median = 5), with an effect size of d = 0.936, which represents a large effect. For the top-level BOT category "Print" the post-hoc test shows a significant difference (p = 0.028) between the departments "Digital" (Median = 3) and "Marketing" (Median = 4) with an effect size d = 1.025 which also represents a large effect.

Table 6. Departmental differences.

Top-level BOT category	MB	CM/ Ad/Pd	MA/ Ad/Pd	FI/ Ad/Pd	IT/ Ad/Pd	DI/ Ad/Pd
CRM	4.33	3.54/-0.79/-18%	4.17/-0.17/-4%	3.22/-1.11/-26%	3.57/-0.76/-18%	4.33/0.00/0%
Events	4.00	3.92/-0.08/-2%	4.17/0.17/4%	3.89/-0.11/-3%	3.86/-0.14/-4%	4.00/0.00/0%
Classic Media	4.00	3.46/-0.54/-13%	4.08/0.08/2%	4.00/0.00/0%	3.86/-0.14/-4%	3.83/-0.17/-4%
Cooperation	3.67	4.00/0.33/9%	4.00/0.33/9%	3.44/-0.22/-6%	3.29/-0.38/-10%	3.83/0.17/5%
Online Marketing	4.67	4.08/-0.59/-13%	4.25/-0.42/-9%	3.89/-0.78/-17%	4.00/-0.67/-14%	4.50/-0.17/-4%
Out of Home	3.67	3.31/-0.36/-10%	3.75/0.08/2%	3.44/-0.22/-6%	3.29/-0.38/-10%	3.00/-0.67/-18%
Point of Sale	4.00	4.08/0.08/2%	4.17/0.17/4%	4.22/0.22/6%	3.71/-0.29/-7%	4.83/0.83/21%
Public Relations	3.33	3.77/0.44/13%	3.58/0.25/8%	3.44/0.11/3%	3.86/0.52/16%	3.67/0.33/10%
Print	3.00	3.92/0.92/31%	4.17/1.17/39%	3.78/0.78/26%	3.14/0.14/5%	2.83/-0.17/-6%
Service	4.67	4.54/-0.13/-3%	4.42/-0.25/-5%	4.11/-0.56/-12%	4.86/0.19/4%	5.00/0.33/7%
Social Media	4.67	4.23/-0.44/-9%	3.92/-0.75/-16%	3.89/-0.78/-17%	3.71/-0.95/-20%	4.17/-0.50/-11%
Website	4.67	4.15/-0.51/-11%	4.08/-0.58/-13%	4.00/-0.67/-14%	4.29/-0.38/-8%	4.67/0.00/0%

Asymptotic significances (2-tailed) are presented, significance level is 0.05

Note: Management Board (MB), Category Management (CM), Marketing (MA) Finance (FI), Digital (DI), Absolute difference from Management Board (Ad), Percentage difference from Management Board (Pd)

Table 6. Departmental differences – Continued.

Top-level BOT category	ISIS/ Ad/Pd	DS/ Ad/Pd	OR/ Ad/Pd	PM/ Ad/Pd	KW-H	df	Asymp. Sig.
CRM	4.17/-0.17/-4%	3.60/-0.73/-17%	3.60/-0.73/-17%	3.00/-1.33/-31%	18.604	9	0.029
Events	4.00/0.00/0%	3.80/-0.20/-5%	3.60/-0.40/-10%	3.80/-0.20/-5%	2.236	9	0.987
Classic Media	3.83/-0.17/-4%	4.00/0.00/0%	3.20/-0.80/-20%	3.00/-1.00/-25%	16.574	9	0.056
Cooperation	3.67/0.00/0%	4.00/0.33/9%	3.40/-0.27/-7%	3.20/-0.47/-13%	16.397	9	0.059
Online Marketing	4.17/-0.50/-11%	4.20/-0.47/-10%	3.80/-0.87/-19%	3.00/-1.67/-36%	14.427	9	0.108
Out of Home	3.50/-0.17/-5%	3.40/-0.27/-7%	3.00/-0.67/-18%	2.40/-1.27/-35%	12.459	9	0.189
Point of Sale	4.00/0.00/0%	3.80/-0.20/-5%	4.20/0.20/5%	3.00/-1.00/-25%	19.951	9	0.018
Public Relations	3.50/0.17/5%	3.40/0.07/2%	3.00/-0.33/-10%	3.20/-0.13/-4%	6.671	9	0.671
Print	3.67/0.67/22%	3.60/0.60/20%	3.40/0.40/13%	3.20/0.20/7%	21.690	9	0.010
Service	4.17/-0.50/-11%	4.60/-0.07/-1%	4.60/-0.07/-1%	4.00/-0.67/-14%	13.318	9	0.149
Social Media	4.00/-0.67/-14%	4.00/-0.67/-14%	3.80/-0.87/-19%	2.80/-1.87/-40%	13.700	9	0.133
Website	4.17/-0.50/-11%	4.20/-0.47/-10%	4.40/-0.27/-6%	3.60/-1.07/-23%	10.805	9	0.289

Asymptotic significances (2-tailed) are presented, significance level is 0.05

Note: Distribution Systems (DS), Own Retail (OR), Product Management (PM), Absolute difference from Management Board (Ad), Percentage difference from Management Board (Pd), Kruskal-Wallis H (KW-H)

Table 7. Dunn-Bonferroni post-hoc test and effect size for "CRM", "Print" and "Point of Sale" on departmental level.

Group comparison (M)	Test statistic	Std. error	Std. test statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.	η²	Cohen's d
POS – PM (3)/ DI (5)	45.150	11.337	3.983	<0.001	0.003	0.18	0.936
Print – DI (3)/ MA (4)	-32.917	9.611	-3.425	0.001	0.028	0.208	1.025

Asymptotic significances (2-tailed) are presented, significance level is 0.05, adjusted significance by Bonferroni correction

Note: Median (M), Point of Sale (POS), Product Management (PM), Digital (DI), Marketing (MA)

3.3. Discussion

The differences in the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perception revealed one statistically significant difference on the managerial level when assessing the top-level BOT category "Point of Sale" between Executives and C-level (see table 5). Although significant, the difference only manifests itself in a median difference of one Likert-point between 4 (Executive) to 5 (C-level). As the difference in meaning when rating a 4 or 5 on a Likert scale is minimal, we argue not too much attention should be placed on this difference. On the departmental level, it was possible to identify two statistically significant differences with very strong effect size. First, in the top-level BOT category "Point of Sale" the departments "Product Management" (Median = 3) and "Digital" (Median = 5) differ significantly from each other (see table 7) which displays a huge discrepancy between these two departments. Looking at the "Product Management" in general, it becomes evident that, when compared to the other departments, its ratings differ the most from the rating of the "Management board" displaying a severe difference in the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perception. Second, in the top-level BOT category "Print" the departments "Digital" (Median = 3) and "Marketing" (Median = 4) differ significantly from each other. Although the difference of one point is not huge, we argue that, in this case, it is still relevant as it shows that the "Digital" department has more or less lost interest in brand owned print touchpoints, however, the "Marketing" department still seems to attach considerable importance to it. Looking at these isolated results it could be argued that the differences in the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perception are only a minor concern for the action fashion retailer. However, it can also be observed, that the means (see table 4 and 6) of the perceived influence from BOTs on brand perception can differ very strongly from each other on both of these levels (min.: -40% /max.: +39%). For example, on the managerial level, the influence of the top-level BOT category "Events" on brand perception is perceived as far less important by the C-level (3.00) as by the Heads of department (+33%/+1.00), Team leaders (+30%/+0.91) and Executives (+32%/+0.96). In contrast, the influence of the top-level BOT category "CRM" is perceived as more important by the C-level (4.50) as by the Heads of department (-8%/-0.36), Team leaders (-15%/-0.68) and Executives (-20%/-0.89). Giving an example from the departmental level, the influence of the top-level BOT category "Print" on brand perception is perceived as far less important by the Management board as by any other department, except for the Digital department. Contrary, the influence of the top-level BOT category "Social Media" on brand perception is perceived as far less important by the management board as any other department. As our analyses are based on representative samples, we conclude that these observed differences are indeed currently present between the managerial and departmental levels of the action fashion retailer. Thus, this shows that the company's highest managerial and departmental authorities (C-level/ Management board) were not able to communicate their exact view of the company's BOTs to the lower levels of management or other departments. From a managerial point of view, this is problematic as Grewal and Roggeveen state [23] today's digital retailers need a systematic and integrated customer journey management to optimize product placement, service, and communication. As every manager or department tries to maximize only the output of the BOTs they regard as most important [24], we argue that if managers or even complete departments have differing opinions about how influential and thus important the various BOTs of a company are, this will lead to a mismatch in company resource alignment, prioritization, and ultimately goal fulfillment. Managers are core actors in the drive for superior performance, economic gain, and the creation of sustainable competitive advantage [25]. Looking at our results it becomes evident that today's managers need to minimize the differences in the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perception on the managerial as well as the departmental level to ensure an effective company resource alignment and goal fulfillment. We conclude that this task is especially important for the highest company authorities

as they are responsible for the development and communication of a company's long-term strategy. Therefore, we argue that these highest authorities need to harmonize the managerial as well as departmental levels of their companies. On the managerial level, this means that differences in the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perception should be discussed, understood, and ultimately evened out to ensure a consistent companywide customer journey management strategy. On the departmental level, the differences in the perceived influence of BOTs should also be discussed and understand but ultimately utilized, allowing the different departments to make use of their differing perceptions of BOTs and thus foster creative and innovative handling of BOTs in the future.

3.4. Limitations and Future Research

As is the case with every study, ours has its limitations. First, it has to be noted that we only surveyed the employees of one retailer, which is why our paper presents a snapshot of the present situation of one retailer. Therefore, no generalizations about differences in the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perceptions on the managerial or departmental levels in other companies can be deducted from our paper. Second, although we regard our sample as representative, we were not able to include all departments into the analyzes as some of them had a low response rate what reduces the overall explanatory power on the department level. In general, statistical power could be improved with even higher response rates leading to more statistically significant results after Bonferroni correction. At last, the use of mean values deducted from Likert scales may have led to less accurate depictions when comparing differences between the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perception. Future research might advance the concept of measuring differences in the influence of BOTs on brand perception by analyzing additional companies from different forms of retail, include more participants and use different statistical methods. Ultimately, these efforts could lead to a new management tool, which is able to point out and harmonize differences in perceived influence of BOTs on brand perceptions on managerial and departmental levels, which in turn could improve company performance.

4. Conclusion

Looking at our research questions "*What are the differences in perceived influence of brand-owned touchpoints on brand perceptions on the differing managerial and departmental levels of an action fashion retailer and how do they impact effective company resource alignment and goal fulfillment?*" we conclude that differences in perceived influence of brand-owned touchpoints on brand perceptions are present on all managerial and departmental levels. Thus, they need to be acknowledged by companies and their managers to ensure effective resource alignment and goal fulfillment. In particular, on the managerial level, differences in the perceived influence of BOTs on brand perception should be discussed, understood, and evened out to ensure a consistent companywide customer journey management strategy. On the departmental level, the differences in the perceived influence of BOTs should also be discussed, understand, and utilized, allowing the different departments to make use of their differing perceptions of BOTs and thus enable creative and innovative handling of BOTs in the future. These points are especially important for digital retailers as they rely on an effective and consistent customer journey to engage their customers in multifarious online and offline environments using various BOTs.

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