

LEVERAGING THE ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL CUSTOMERS ON BRAND PROMOTION: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF USER GENERATED CONTENT

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Abstract—User-generated content (UGC) is a part of brand promotion, as digital marketing continues to change in a marketing models into community-driven, cooperative ecosystems. This study examines how consumers perceive their role in brand promotion when they create and share user-generated content (UGC) on various platforms. Brands can fully acknowledge consumers as co-creators of value instead of just passive recipients of marketing messages by understanding these points of view. Investigating what customers think prepares the way for determining how authenticity, empowerment, and trust encourage consumers to voluntarily promote brands on their own. Building on this information the underlying incentives that drive consumers to produce and distribute brand-related content. This behavior is greatly influenced by psychological, social, and emotional elements like recognition, community belonging, and self-expression. The study links these incentives to consumer perception, indicating that consumers' levels of engagement increase when they experience a sense of ownership and alignment with brand values. This connection emphasizes how consumers' participation in online brand ecosystems is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. the best ways for brands to interact with consumers and inspire them to produce genuine promotional content. By incorporating knowledge, it guides how crucial it is to build relationships based on trust, encourage creativity, and develop interactive digital spaces. Brands can create engagement strategies that increase brand visibility and foster long-term, sustainable advocacy by knowing the attitudes and motives of their customers.

Keywords: Brand Advocacy, Customer Perception, Human -Brand Connection, Participatory Ecosystem, Value Co - Creation.

INTRODUCTION

User – Generated Content (UGC) has emerged as a pivotal element in the present marketing system, rearranging how brands collaborate with consumers and encouraging purchasing behavior. Marshall McLuhan argued that technology has fundamentally changed the way we interact with each new innovation rebuilding the human communication pattern (Ezzeldeen, 2025) the diverse variation from the analog to the digital era has not only accelerated the flow of information but also expanded the reach pf communication across boundaries. In a social media context, digital technology enables more interactive, instant and personal communication through various platforms such as social media, instant messaging application and virtual conference (**Crowston & Fagnot, 2018**). In the business world, this change opens up new opportunities where brands can connect to the consumers directly through digital channels that are oriented towards personalization and user experience.

One of important impact of new media is a fundamental change in marketing formal strategies, which are now increasingly oriented towards direct interaction and personalization, this media startup with the opportunities for brand to reach consumers quickly and effectively in a way of various digital platforms as like social media (**al, 2017**) through this platform companies can introduce the messages that are more relevant in accordance with the requirement of the end users. It is not only a means of promotion but also a two-way formal space between brands and consumers where companies can react to the questions. this methodology not only increase the end user's commitment but also makes powerful brand images and which drives the long-term trust (**Yi et al., 2019**) by using new media strategy companies can opt to more competitive market dimensions and meet consumers expectations in the digital era.

The rise of user generated content has drastically changed the way customers can interact with brands they are no longer just random consumers they are now involved in creating brand stories. user generated content is real since it comes directly from customers experience and point of view. Traditional advertising on the other hand is often seen as **(al q. e., 2022)**. It remains how consumers reaction in collaborating with the brand promotion with reference of user generated content which becomes more relevant in knowing the digital consumers with moderate boundaries of advance marketing. It is important to look at why people make and convey user generated content on internet network. Initially, it indicates that extrinsic aspects like rewards and acknowledgments incentives with intrinsic influence or motivation includes self-expression profoundly affects the consumers **(Khan et al., 2021)** favors of user generated content which is combining personal touch with the social interconnection and material incentives that elaborates why customers take places in creating brand related content Businesses have a strategic problem when it reflects to know ways for organization to collaborate with customers to acquire them create promotional advertisement. Analysis shows the organization that use user generated content in digital campaigns get higher level of customers strengths, loyalty and trust Increasing acceptance of user generated content has reshaped brand promotion by introducing each consumer at the value creation. Knowing how customer thought their performance as active contributors which gives knowledge about the credibility that user generated content lends to the online or digital communication **(Lou & Yuan, 2019)**. According to the insights, recognizing the strategies which brands can engage customers for sustainability of user generated content as a method for long-term success By knowing customers methodology, understanding how user generated content can be a powerful content for brand promotion in the current technology era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- **(Baumöl et al., 2016):** The authors explore psychological, cultural, and social factors influencing consumer behavior. Motivation, perception, and attitude are highlighted as key drivers. The study provides a foundational understanding of how emotional and social triggers shape consumer engagement with brands.
- **(Chung, 2025) :** it emphasizes the importance of longitudinal insights in understanding consumer-brand relationships, relevant for tracking UGC evolution.
- **(Crowston & Fagnot, 2018):** the paper examines how ethical brand behavior influences consumer appreciation and advocacy. It links psychological responses to brand actions, offering insight into why consumers may voluntarily promote brands via UGC.
- **(Ezzeldeen, 2025):** mixed-methods study on influencer marketing during COVID-19 shows how individual actors amplify brand visibility. It supports the concept of individual customers acting as brand promoters, aligning with your UGC mediation hypothesis.
- **(Fredrickson, 2001):** This study analyses social media's role in brand promotion. It highlights authenticity and engagement as key factors, offering strategic insights into how brands can encourage UGC creation.
- **(Yi et al., 2019):** the authors demonstrate that CSR and social media communication enhance brand image in wine tourism. The findings support the idea that brand-driven factors can motivate UGC and foster brand loyalty.
- **(Sykora et al., 2022):** It proposes a framework for evaluating UGC's impact on brand outcomes, directly addressing your research gap on UGC's mediating role.
- **(Lou & Yuan, 2019):** This study investigates UGC's role in brand engagement across digital platforms. It identifies emotional and social identity factors as key motivators, aligning with your objective to explore complex motivations behind UGC.
- **(Khan et al., 2021):** A comparative analysis of UGC across Instagram, TikTok, and Reddit reveals platform-specific dynamics and temporal shifts in content creation. It addresses the limitation of single-platform studies and supports your aim to explore UGC's evolving nature.

RESEARCH GAP

Even though user-generated content (UGC) is becoming more widely acknowledged as a potent instrument for increasing brand awareness and consumer interaction. The marketing advantages that user-generated content (UGC) provides for brands, it provides information about how specific consumers view their own contribution to brand promotion. Because consumer perception is a key factor in determining the and willingness of their promotional behavior, this leads to a theoretical disconnect. sincerity A full grasp of why consumers interact with brands on digital platforms is not yet possible due to the fragmented and frequently context dependent nature of current findings studies addresses the reasons behind

the creation of user-generated content. brands are making a greater effort to get consumers to produce promotional content, but there isn't more information to support which engagement tactics actually work for regular consumers as opposed to influencers or sponsored creators. In terms of how brands can successfully encourage voluntary participation, this points to a significant practical gap.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a systematic literature review to explore the behavioral, motivational, and strategic dimensions of User-Generated Content (UGC) in digital brand promotion. Secondary data was collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, published studies, and reputable online databases, focusing on consumer psychology, brand engagement, and UGC dynamics across multiple system. The review process involved thematic coding and identify patterns in consumer motivations like self-expression, social identity, and perceived brand affiliation and to know how UGC mediates the relationship between individual consumer actions and brand outcomes like trust, loyalty, and visibility. By integrating insights from longitudinal, cross-platform, and theory-driven studies, the methodology aims to address research gaps in existing literature, particularly those overlooking the evolving nature of UGC and its strategic relevance in the Indian digital marketing context. This approach ensures academic rigor while offering actionable implications for brands seeking to foster participatory ecosystems through authentic consumer engagement.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To examine how individual customers perceive their role in contributing to brand promotion through user-generated content.
2. To analyze the motivations behind why customers, create and share content related to brands on digital platforms.
3. To identify how brands can effectively engage and encourage individual's customers to generate promotional content.

DISCUSSION

Consumers no longer view themselves as passive recipients of brand message, but rather as co-creators or contributors. consumers regard user-generated content (UGC) to be authentic social roof and usually view contributions (reviews, images, and testimonies) as encouraging peers to arrive at better decisions, expressing one's individuality, or engaging with brand communities. (Yi et al., 2019) Perception differs depending on the platform and type of content: reviews and ratings are seen as helpful peer support, whereas short-form videos and visual posts frequently portray authors as authorized champions or micro-influencers. Additionally, studies show that consumers' perceptions of UGC's utility and reliability influence whether or not they think their contributions are worthwhile for promoting a company.

Multiple incentive factors are frequently identified by research as motivating the development of UGC: extrinsic (rewards, visibility), social (belonging, social acknowledgment), and intrinsic (enjoyment, self-expression, identity presentation). Self-determination theory and mixed-methods studies demonstrate that content creation is highly predicted by desires for relatedness and competence, whereas reward systems can be beneficial but run the danger of diminishing authenticity if they are employed excessively. (Baumöl et al., 2016) Differences in platforms and culture are important because some producers place more value on social status and recognition than others do on supporting the community or chronicling events. Motives are multifaceted, and both situational incentives and psychological needs should be included in measurements, according to recent systematic tests.

Analysis indicates that brands who integrate user-generated content (UGC) into official marketing, offer social recognition, and create platform features and campaigns that reduce contribution effort have increased involvement rates. (Crowston & Fagnot, 2018) Campaign hashtags, simple upload processes, showcasing user postings on official channels, and grassroots projects as opposed to just commercial incentives are strategies that prove effective. According to empirical research, incorporating user-generated content (UGC) into the buying process boosts trust and purchase intention. Brands that prioritize authentic consumer voices, such as reviews, images, and video testimonials, have a greater advantage than those that only use financial incentives. To determine which engagement strategies truly promote continuous contributions, it is essential to measure the impact of user-generated content (UGC) (engagement, trust, and conversion). Customers today actively see themselves as producers to corporate identification and promotional activities rather than passive consumers, according to research on user-generated content (UGC). This changing perception results from the increasingly participatory character of digital platforms, where public brand representations are directly shaped by the experiences, opinions, and evaluations of customers. (Fredrickson, 2001) While noted that consumers' perceived

usefulness and trust impact their willingness to promote businesses online, (Lou & Yuan, 2019) that user-generated content (UGC) greatly increases brand legitimacy and reach in industries like fashion. All of this research supports the idea that consumers' perceptions of their involvement in brand promotion are now important factors in determining the caliber of participation and the effectiveness of marketing. Customers' reasons for participating in content development show that social, emotional, and psychological factors are important. In addition to self-expression, community belonging, and enjoyment, consumers create user-generated content (UGC) for social recognition. (Sykora et al., 2022) connected the authenticity of user-generated content (UGC) to increased consumer-brand trust, while emphasized that social media settings give users "identity spaces" that increase their motivation to share. Together, these findings imply that consumers' motivations and platform affordances interact to affect not just why they produce content but also how successfully they use it to influence brand outcomes.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Since individual consumers actively influence how brands are viewed online, user-generated content (UGC) has grown in importance in digital brand promotion. In sights pertaining to the first goal demonstrate that consumers now see themselves as significant participants in marketing initiatives, understanding that their opinions, reviews, and shared experiences improve brand outreach and credibility. consumers are driven to produce and distribute brand-related content on digital platforms by a variety of factors, including enjoyment, social belonging, self-expression, and brand trust. These perks show how consumers are willingly supporting brand narratives as part of a shift towards participatory communication. by establishing trusting relationships with their audiences through incentive-based programs, interactive campaigns, personalised engagement, and open communication, brands can promote long-term user-generated content (UGC). Brands that use these tactics not only increase consumer involvement but also foster advocacy and enduring loyalty. the interrelated goals show that using user-generated content (UGC) as a potent and long-lasting tool in contemporary digital branding requires an awareness of consumer perceptions, motivational factors, and strategic engagement techniques.

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