

SHARING THE LOVE

OR: Why do people bother to post nice things about Companies and Products on Social media?

MOTIVATION & REWARD IN BRANDED USER-GENERATED CONTENT CREATION

AND

What happens when the Brand shares it!

AIMS & OBJECTIVES ?

RESEARCH AIM: To understand the motivation for creating positive branded UGC, and the resulting consequences for the User, to inform good practice in social media community management

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

- To identify content creators in a brand community
- To evaluate the extent of their UGC activity across brands
- To explore the motivations underlying content creating behaviour
- To appraise the effects on the User of having their UGC used by the brand
- To identify the characteristics of self-selecting social media brand advocates
- To make recommendations for the management of UGC and its contributors in online brand communities.



When members of the public express themselves online, the term 'User Generated Content' (UGC) can be used to describe the phenomenon (Boyd and Ellison, 2018). Additionally 'User Generated Branding' (UGB) has been defined by Burman & Arnhold as "...the strategic and operative management of brand related user-generated content (UGC) to achieve brand goals" (2010a). In practical terms this requires that marketers identify and reuse naturally-occurring content created by users and also invite or stimulate their audience to post content for them to reuse. This may take a variety of forms such as photography, video, text and is usually on a social media platform such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter (Vries and Gensler, 2017).

This research concerns the use of UGC as part of the content strategy for organisation's social media feeds. The digital marketing team at UoN has been using UGC extensively in recent years, in keeping with practice in the Universities sector (Higgins, 2018) and more widely in Social Media Marketing (Gallegos, 2017; Feldwick, 2018).

The nature of the relationship between the creator and the brand has not been extensively investigated. Online users are considered self-aware and their online identities can often be complex reflections of themselves (Araujo, Neijens & Vliegenthart, 2015). It is thought that Functional theory is critical to understand motivation and behaviour. It describes four personality functions; utilitarian, knowledge, ego-defensive and value-expressive (Katz, 1960). These four motivational types were used by Daugherty et al (2008) to explore the motivation to create branded content but did not go so far as to investigate the feedback loop to investigate what happens if the brand talks back.

More recently, Crowston and Fagnot (2017) explored the drivers for creating UGC. This work was helpful in describing motivations around the concept of 'Helping Theory' and a model was proposed to describe levels of contribution to the joint effort. Their stage theory will be adapted for this inquiry. A key outcome of Crowston and Fagnot's work (2017) was that recognising the phases of contribution (initial, sustained and meta) had implications for practitioners managing UGC projects. A range of commercial tools for managing Branded UGC are coming to market - Taggbox, Stackla, Pixlee, TAP - which would seem to offer Brand Community Managers a systematic way of harnessing and developing UGC, however there has been little research into the effect on the contributing consumer. TAP have consulted with the Researcher and have expressed an interest in the findings of this study.

Understanding how to stimulate and motivate users into content production is central to the decisions about how to recruit, retain and reward content producers, so research findings in this area will have a contribution to knowledge and a commercial application both in my own institution and more broadly in Digital Marketing practice.

Methodology

Approach:

While a conceptual model has been proposed, a Grounded Theory strategy has been selected for the exploration of the motivations of the content creating user in order that theory can be developed from the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). The research will be conducted using two qualitative methods:

Internet Mediated Observation combined with semi-structured interviews.

Garcia et al. argue that the blending of online and offline worlds require that researchers incorporate computer-mediated communication into their research design (2009) since the two spaces interact with one another in transformative ways (Bakardjieva, 2005).

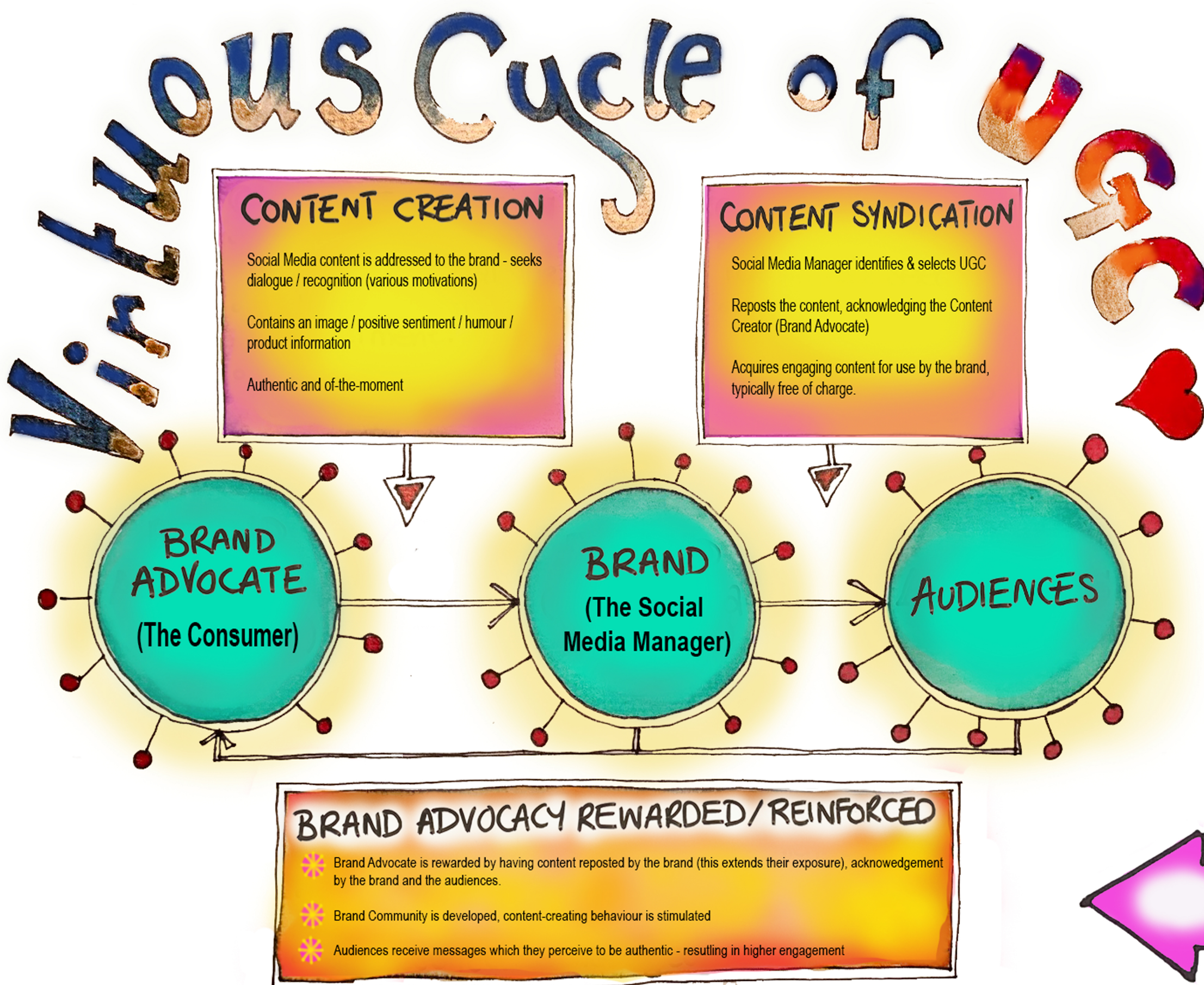
Internet Mediated Observation will be used to select cases on the basis of online behaviours on social media platforms Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. This will satisfy research objective (a) "To identify content creators in a brand community". Semi structured interviews will permit the researcher to reveal why the participant has behaved in a given way as well as simply 'what' and 'how' (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016) Since research objective (c) concerns motivation, and objective (d) seeks to understand effects on the participant, the interview is the most appropriate instrument to explore these factors. Research objective (e) "Identify the characteristics of self-selecting social media brand advocates" will be answered using information derived the analysis phase of the research. Objective (f) "To make recommendations for the management of UGC and its contributors in online brand communities" will be answered in the conclusion.

importance

Informing Digital Marketing Practice

This research is being undertaken as part of a Professional Doctorate therefore there is a requirement to inform practice. The University of Northampton (UoN) is the Researcher's employer and a relationship has been developed with the organisation's digital marketing practitioners to ensure that the insight can effectively transfer to action. Consequently this is the main stakeholder and host organisation for the research.

In order to better make a contribution to knowledge, the scope of the research extends beyond the Higher Education sector. 2-4 other UGC-using organisations will be invited to participate.



Araujo, T., Neijens, P. and Vliegenthart, R. (2015) 'What Motivates Consumers To Re-Tweet Brand Content?', *Journal of Advertising Research*, 55(3), pp. 284-295. doi: 10.2501/JAR-2015-009.
 Bakardjieva, M. (2005) 'Internet Society6: The Internet in Everyday Life Technology in Everyday Life Introduction8: What is Everyday Life8?', in *Internet Society: The Internet in Everyday Life*. London: Sage Publications, pp. 37-75.
 Boyd, D. M. and Ellison, N. B. (2018) 'Social Network Sites: Definition, History & Scholarship', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13, pp. 210-230. doi: 10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x.
 Burmann, C. (2010a) 'A call for "User-Generated Branding"', *Journal of Brand Management*, 18. doi: 10.1057/bm.2010.30.
 Crowston, K. and Fagnot, J. (2017) 'Stages of motivation for contributing user-generated content: A theory and empirical test', *International Journal of Human - Computer Studies*, 109, pp. 89-101. doi: 10.1016/j.ijhcs.2017.08.005.
 Daugherty, T., Eastin, M. S. and Bright, L. (2008) 'Exploring Consumer Motivations for Creating User-Generated Content', *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, Routledge, 8(2), pp. 16-25. doi: 10.1080/15252019.2008.10722139.
 Gallegos, J. A. (2017) '9 Things We Learned from the 2018 User Generated Content (UGC) Report | Social Media Today, Social Media Today, Available at: https://www.socialmediatoday.com/news/9-things-we-learned-from-the-2018-user-generated-content-ugc-report/513245/ (Accessed: 29 December 2018).
 Garcia, A. C., Bechtloff, J. and Cui, Y. (2009) 'Ethnographic Approaches to the Internet and Computer-Mediated Communication', doi: 10.1177/0891241607310839.
 Higgins, N. (2018) 'Bringingthemyourseasoning - The Native, The Native, Available at: https://thenative.com/2018/02/bringingthemyourseasoning/ (Accessed: 29 December 2018).
 Katz, D. (1960) 'The Functional Approach to the Study of Attitudes', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Oxford University Press, 24(2), Special Issue: Attitude Change), p. 163. doi: 10.1086/266945.
 Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2016) *Research Methods for Business Students*, 7th edn, Research Methods for Business Students, 7th edn. Harlow, Available at: https://www.dawsonera.com/readonline/9781292016641 (Accessed: 4 January 2019).
 Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1994) 'StraussCorbin Grounded Theory Methodology', in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd Ed., pp. 273-285.
 Vries, L. De and Gensler, S. (2017) 'Effects of Traditional Advertising and Social Messages on Brand-Building Metrics and Customer Acquisition', *Journal of Marketing*, 81(September), pp. 1-15. doi: 10.1509/jm.15.0178.