

EXPLORING CONSUMER MOTIVATIONS FOR CREATING USER-GENERATED CONTENT

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ABSTRACT: The advent of Web 2.0 technologies has enabled the efficient creation and distribution of user-generated content (UGC), resulting in vast changes in the online media landscape. For instance, the proliferation of UGC has made a strong impact on consumers, media suppliers, and marketing professionals while necessitating research in order to understand both the short and long-term implications of this media content. This exploratory study (n = 325) seeks to investigate consumer consumption and creation of UGC and the attitudinal factors that contribute to these actions. The data confirm the established relationship between attitude and behavior and indicate attitude serves as a mediating factor between the use and creation of UGC. With regard to the creation of UGC, the ego-defensive and social functions of attitude were found to have the most explanatory power.

During the past several decades, the media landscape has evolved into a complex and dynamic conglomeration of both traditional and interactive media that seek to serve the needs of today's fast-paced lifestyles. While traditional media struggle under the weight of increased segmentation, the interactive environment provides the capacity to capitalize on this fragmented market by offering niche media vehicles that give consumers a voice amidst the whirlwind of information and advertising. In the online world, these niche media markets increasingly are driven less by publishers and more by user-generated content (UGC). User-generated content refers to media content created or produced by the general public rather than by paid professionals and primarily distributed on the Internet. Although the creation and dissemination of content has been a constant for hundreds of years, the potential for an ordinary consumer to communicate with and influence a mass audience was only recently put within reach given the advent of Web 2.0 technologies. Examples of prominent Web 2.0-based Web sites that support the creation and consumption of UGC include YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, Wikipedia, StupidVideos, Flickr, Blogger, and personal Web pages, among many others.

With the explosion of Web 2.0 technologies, UGC creates a plethora of niche markets within the media landscape that attract more than 69 million users and generate more than \$450 million in advertising revenue (Verna 2007). As a result, the online information market continues to shift toward a user-centric model and away from the conventional media model, characterized as publisher-centric. Consumers today are active and in charge of their media experiences, making it more important than ever to understand motivational factors that drive media consumption (McQuail 2000). This power shift challenges media theorists to change the way they

traditionally have identified audiences, with a lesser focus on examining the theoretical effects of media and a greater focus on understanding why and how consumers use media (Severin and Tankard 1992). Thus, it is imperative for researchers to gain a better understanding of the impact of UGC within the media environment, specifically why users create such content. To date though, little research has investigated UGC among either the users or the creators of this type of media. In response, this exploratory study examines the core relationship between a consumer's motivational sources for creating UGC and how these sources affect perceptions of UGC.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Media Evolution and the Internet

Mainstream media, including television, radio, and print publications, have moved through evolutionary lifecycles since their inception. Similarly, the online media landscape has evolved into a robust information space that provides both marketers and consumers with an outlet for efficient, timely communication. As increasing numbers of consumers direct their attention away from traditional media and toward interactive media, marketers confront the challenge of integrating their offerings with those created by consumers themselves. The past several decades reveal a steady decline in newspaper readership and magazine circulation, and though the television market continues to grow in terms of overall viewership, it also suffers a proliferation of program offerings, leading to fragmented audiences and decreasing program ratings (Anderson 2005).

Amid an apparent mass media meltdown, the Internet has emerged as an outlet in which traditional forms of media

entertainment can converge and offer consumers content at the time and place most convenient for them. Media scholars acknowledge that traditional media models of communication may no longer adequately represent digital media, for which "convergence" may serve as an increasingly more accurate representation (Perry 2002). With online usage expanding annually, the Internet has come to serve as a media outlet for an overwhelming majority of American adults (i.e., 71%) (Verna 2007). Although traditional media are nowhere near extinction, trends clearly are changing, such that consumers are in greater control of their media consumption, and audiences face the opportunity to make media content choices themselves rather than rely on traditional gatekeepers (Perry 2002).

The emergence of the Internet, by its very nature, has enhanced content and file sharing applications, which in turn have shaped the creation and distribution mechanisms for UGC. Over time, the Internet has become a highly personalized information space in which consumers can tailor their media exposure to their specific needs and desires (Liang, Lai, and Ku 2006). Tailored exposures become possible through Web-based applications that aggregate information and UGC according to their subscriber's specifications, which again indicates consumer-centric media exposures rather than publisher-centric ones. As the consumption, creation, and distribution of UGC continues to evolve, content aggregation tools and Web 2.0 applications built on Really Simple Syndication (RSS) technology will become more usable and accessible to consumers, helping create a manageable information space that is both customized and relevant. The ability to publish content in the online environment has been possible since the inception of the Internet, because personal publication mechanisms are inherent to the structure of this information space. However, constant, organic growth and change is what leads to an information explosion online and the creation of UGC. Ultimately, a balance of power between message producers and media audiences has been lacking for years, and UGC potentially represents a power shift within the industry. The trend toward greater control means media theorists must focus more on understanding audience motivations for consuming media content as users are confronted with more choices today than ever before (Severin and Tankard 1992).

Motivational Sources for Creating UGC

Media consumption represents a deliberate, active behavior in which audiences seek content according to their internal

motivations (Eastin and Daugherty 2005). These internal motivations represent functional sources designed to meet specific consumer needs and serve as the foundation for attitude formation, ultimately influencing behavior (O'Keefe 2002). A person's attitude represents a psychological tendency, expressed by evaluating a particular object, and can serve various motivations (Eagly and Chaiken 1993). In terms of media use, a consumer's willingness to experience UGC depends on his or her attitude toward the consumption or creation of UGC. However, because individual motivations can vary greatly, consumers may decide to consume, or more specifically create, UGC for different reasons, which is precisely the justification for this study.

Katz's (1960) seminal work on functional theory is considered by many essential for understanding the complex motivational underpinnings and functions of attitude. Functional theory states that attitudes serve various motivations, depending on the purpose, such that one's behavior becomes a function of their attitude toward that behavior (O'Keefe 2002). The basis of this theory centers around the view that to influence behavior, we must understand its motivational source (i.e., attitude). Overall, theorists widely accept functional theory as a robust framework for recognizing diverse motivational sources (Abelson and Prentice 1989; Herek 1987; Locander and Spivey 1978). Katz's (1960) typology posits that any given attitude serves one or more of four distinct personality functions: utilitarian, knowledge, ego-defensive, and value-expressive functions. The utilitarian function acknowledges that people are motivated to gain rewards and avoid punishment from their environment. Specifically, this function represents attitudes based on self-interest. In terms of UGC, consumers served by this motivational source create UGC primarily for their own personal incentives. In contrast, the knowledge function recognizes that people are driven by the need to gain information to organize and understand their environment. That is, we are motivated by the need to understand and make sense of our experiences. Creators of UGC therefore would produce UGC because it helps them understand their environment, the topic at hand, and/or ultimately themselves, because they feel a sense of intrinsic wisdom. The value-expressive function entails attitudes that allow people to express or relate their self-concepts and values, which enhance one's image in the eyes of the world through matching moral beliefs. Thus, creators of UGC feel inherently gratified with a sense of self-esteem because they have created content and become members of an online

community that shares the principles they consider important. It validates and helps them feel good about who they are and what they believe about the world. Finally, the ego-defensive function represents motivations designed to protect people from internal insecurities or external threats, which serve the internal function of defending one's self-image. In this case, UGC creators participate to minimize their own self-doubts, feel a sense of belonging, and possibly reduce guilty feelings about not contributing.

Although these four functions remain the core constructs for understanding attitudinal motivations, contemporary researchers continue to clarify and explore additional contributions. For example, Smith (1973) proposes an extension of the value-expressive function, focused on the motivation for social adjustment, in which people express attitudes or behavior that are agreeable to others. The function also has evolved to include motivations derived from relationships with others and recognizes the distinction between internal beliefs and the desire for external relationships, independent of moral values. In particular, the social function compels people to seek opportunities to interact with friends or participate in activities perceived favorably by important others (Clary et al. 1998). In terms of the creation of UGC, the social function would be a strong motivator, because concepts of sharing and interacting socially are widespread. In turn, UGC creators and consumers might be motivated by this function because of how their important reference groups would perceive their membership in such an online community.

Even though each functional source may make independent motivational contributions to the formation of one's attitude, the theoretical assertion remains that a person's attitude results from a multitude of origins and likely is driven by a combination of sources (Katz 1960). This study attempts to expand the understanding of the creation of UGC by investigating consumer's motivations and subsequent attitudes from within the functional theory framework. We thus propose:

H1: *A consumer's functional source of motivation relates positively to his or her attitude toward creating UGC content.*

Attitude -> Behavior Relationship

The motivational sources driving media consumption depend on the formation of positive or negative attitudes toward a medium. However, because virtually everyone in the United

States engages in daily media consumption, media researchers often end up comparing attitudes and experiences with media (i.e., behavior) using a reciprocal relationship perspective (Perry 2002). According to Myers (1998), the attitude->behavior relationship can range from nonexistent to very strong, such that attitude about a given object determines the person's interactions with that object. Although varying degrees of strength can exist in the attitude->behavior relationship, Fazio (1986) identifies three key components for the development of an attitude: (1) affection, (2) cognition, and (3) behavioral intention. The affective and cognitive components of an attitude center around a consumer's feelings, beliefs, and ultimate evaluation of the object, whereas the behavioral component accounts for the action, if any, the consumer takes. As it relates to UGC, a consumer's attitude derives from both the perceived value of the content and how it relates to his or her existing beliefs and feelings (i.e., motivational sources).

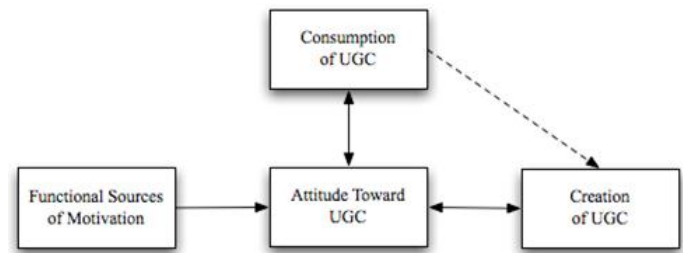
To parse out the development of attitudes and their relationship to behavior, Fazio and Towles-Schwen (1999) present an integrated framework of the attitude behavior process called the "MODE" model, which classifies two processes that guide the attitude-behavior relationship: spontaneous processing and deliberative processing. In a situation that involves spontaneous processing, consumers react and form an attitude based on their "perceptions of the object in the immediate situation" (Fazio and Towles-Schwen 1999, p. 97). Generally, this immediate situation depends on environmental triggers that cue a memory for the consumer and indicate an impending behavior. Any resulting behavior indicates the consumer's attitude at that given time and depends on the immediacy of the situation, as well as the accessibility of memories about such a situation (i.e., personal theory). In contrast, the deliberative processing approach does not focus on preexisting attitudes provoked by environmental cues but instead draws on the raw data present in a given situation. With deliberative processing, people form their attitudes on the basis of a data evaluation; specifically, "it involves consideration of the specific attitude object and the potential consequences of engaging in a particular behavior" (Fazio and Towles-Schwen, 1999 p. 100). Although it is difficult to imagine a situation in which personal theories of action do not apply to a certain degree, the deliberative approach is decidedly more applicable to UGC, because it involves data-driven decisions based on aggregated content. Specific objects requiring evaluation change rapidly when examining UGC, but the act of consuming such content

results from a consumer's attitude toward such an activity and the technological components with which he or she interacts to obtain such content. Given a positive interaction with a given piece of UGC, a consumer's attitude toward its consumption and creation should become more positive.

The deliberative processing route lends itself well to the consumption of UGC, whereas the spontaneous processing of attitude objects applies better to the creation of UGC. Spontaneous processing of attitudes relies on personal theories of action associated with environmental triggers that cue memories, which suggest an attitude and course of action needed. The act of creating UGC therefore depends on attitude toward both previous experiences with UGC and the immediacy of the situation that involves its creation. In this regard, consumers must have positive attitudes toward UGC in general to prompt their positive reaction to a situation in which they can create their own UGC. Provided a positive cue exists, we expect the likelihood of UGC creation to increase as positive exposures to UGC increases.

A consumer's attitude also may affect both the creation and consumption of UGC independently, though we know little about how attitude may explain this relationship. Nevertheless, research has attempted to clarify how attitudes moderate the relationship between exposure to an attitude object and ultimate behavior, but few studies address how attitude might mediate such a relationship. Spivey, Munson, and Locander (1983) seek to determine which sources of attitude affect the relationship between exposure to advertising and purchase intention by manipulating the advertising content to serve different aspects of Katz's (1960) functional sources of attitude. They conclude that messages are more likely to induce attitude change if they match the primary functional factor that determines a consumer's attitude. According to their research, a consumer's attitude toward a given object depends on its relationship with the consumer's "primary functional profile" (Spivey, Munson, and Locander 1983, p.267). Therefore, a consumer's attitude toward UGC should derive partially from how well UGC maps to his or her functional attitude schema. That is, we propose a connection between a consumer's attitude toward consuming and creating UGC. Even though these behavior types are distinct, the reciprocal nature of the attitude->behavior relationship suggests that a consumer's reinforced attitude mediates the relationship between the behaviors, such that consumption of UGC precedes creation, as we depict in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Consumer Attitude->Behavior Relationship Involving UGC



Behavior ultimately is influenced by the attitude of the consumers who experience it; therefore, we must explicate a more complete conceptualization of the elements of such attitudes. Understanding how a consumer's attitude influences his or her behavior may have significant explanatory power in distinguishing the relationship between the consumption and creation of UGC.

H2: *A consumer's attitude toward UGC mediates the relationship between his or her consumption and creation of UGC.*

METHOD

Sample and Procedure

A survey was administered to an opt-in subject pool recruited for Web-based research (i.e., online panel). Data was gathered from 325 participants over a seven-day period with 1,000 e-mail invitations sent on day one, 1,500 on day three, and 500 on day 5. The survey was closed once 325 completed surveys were recorded (day seven). Because a purposive sample was selected based on sample size, response rate was not calculated since the survey was closed after being open for the designated duration. However, the completion rate, defined as those who completed the survey divided by those who accessed it, was 77%.

DESIGN

An 82-item questionnaire was developed and pre-tested on a small sample of academic professionals to ensure clarity. In addition, because UGC is an emerging form of media content, a conceptual definition was provided as a reference for respondents to interpret the questionnaire:

User-generated content (UGC) refers to media content that is created or produced by the general public rather than by paid professionals and is primarily distributed on the Internet. This includes such online content as digital video, blogging,

podcasting, mobile phone photography, wikis, and user-forum posts, among others.

Measured Variables. Measures include self-reported media usage, attitude toward UGC, type of UGC experienced, how often respondents create UGC, the five functional sources of attitude toward UGC, and basic demographic variables.

Media Use. Media use (i.e., consuming UGC) was recorded via a self-reported 'average time spent per day' item, as well as creating UGC. To assess the type of UGC most commonly experienced, prevalent categories previously identified were selected (i.e., videos, pictures, audio, blogs, drawings, discussion forums, personal Web sites, and wikis).

Attitude toward UGC. Attitude toward UGC was measured using an established four-item seven-point semantic differential scale (unpleasant/pleasant, unappealing/appealing, unpleasant/pleasant, not enjoyable/enjoyable) with higher values represent a more positive attitude (Bruner, James, and Hensel 2001).

Function Sources. Functional sources of attitude were derived from established scales found in the literature and restated to match the context of this study. Each of the items were seven-point Likert type scales anchored by strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (7). To assess the utilitarian function, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with three-items focused on identifying whether they create UGC because it benefits them personally, because it helps them get what they want, and because it allows them to get as much out of the Internet as they can (Bosnjak and Batinic, 2002; Gastil, 1992). In turn, the knowledge and ego-defensive functions were measured by scales adopted from Clary et al (1998). The three knowledge items used measured respondent's agreement with whether they learn more about things when creating UGC, whether they are able to gain a new perspective on things when creating UGC, and whether creating UGC enables them to learn things through direct, hands on experience. The three-item ego-defensive measures assessed agreement with the notion that creating UGC makes them feel important, increases their self-esteem, and makes them feel needed. Subsequently, the three-item value-expressive function was measured by ascertaining respondent's level of agreement with statements such as creating UGC is consistent with my most basic beliefs, I feel morally obligated to create UGC, and creating UGC reflects my moral beliefs (Gastil, 1992). Finally, the social function of attitude was measured by assessing three-items focused on the agreement with whether creating UGC is a good way to meet

people, is a great way to make new friends, and creating UGC makes them feel like a part of a community (Clary et al., 1994). In order to minimize response bias, all subsequent items were randomly ordered.

RESULTS

Data Analyses

The sample consists of 50.5% men and 49.5% women with the largest portion (25.8%) falling between the ages of 35 to 44 years ($M = 44.3$). Most respondents classified themselves as Caucasian (82.5%) while attending some college (32.9%) with a household income ranging from \$20,001 to \$40,000 (28.3%). For a complete profile of the sample characteristics see the appendix.

Eighty-seven percent of respondents reported experiencing at least one type of UGC while spending on average 55.66 minutes each day consuming this type of media content. To parse consumption out further, respondents were asked to delineate which types of UGC they consume on a regular basis. The findings reveal that viewing pictures online (51.1%), watching videos (48.9%), and browsing personal web sites (25.5%) are the most common categories of UGC experienced (Table 1). In turn, UGC creators represented 21.84% of the sample and spend on average 112 minutes, or just under two hours, creating UGC on a typical day. The creators of UGC also exhibited interesting patterns in their creation of UGC: 44% have contributed pictures to the UGC community, roughly 41% have created a blog, 46.5% have participated in a discussion forum, and 42.3% have created their own website (Table 1). Thus, most UGC content creation appears to be in the realm of text and photos with video, audio, and drawing creations slightly less popular.

Overall, respondent's reported a moderately favorable attitude toward UGC overall ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 1.38$, $\alpha = .93$). Furthermore, the knowledge ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.36$) and social ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 1.39$) motivational sources were identified as the most favorable descriptively (Table 2). All functional sources of attitude measures were tested for internal consistency and a specified factor structure based on theory-driven indicators using principal components factor analysis. The analysis was performed in order to verify that the items used were indeed measuring different functions. Reliability assessment was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha with each scale (Social $\alpha = .93$; Ego-Defensive $\alpha = .96$; Knowledge $\alpha = .95$; Utilitarian $\alpha = .85$; Value-Expressive $\alpha = .87$) exceeding the generally accepted guideline of .70 (Hair et al. 1998).

Table 1. Consumption of UGC by Type for Consumers and Creators of UGC

Type	Consumption ^a	Creation ^b
Videos	48.9%	21.1%
Pictures	51.1%	44%
Audio	19.1%	9.9%
Blogs	23.4%	40.8%
Drawings	6.8%	7%
Discussion forums	20.6%	46.5%
Personal Web sites	25.5%	42.3%
Wikis	11.7%	4.2%
Other	8.3%	11.3%

^an = 325.
^bn = 71.

Table 2. Attitude toward UGC Across Functional Sources for Creators of UGC

Motivation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Social	4.36	1.39
Ego-defensive	3.94	1.54
Knowledge	4.45	1.36
Utilitarian	3.98	1.36
Value-expressive	3.34	1.37

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis one posits that a consumer's functional source of motivation relates positively to his or her attitude toward creating UGC content. Using multiple regression to test this relationship within the realm of UGC, we find significance ($F(5,70) = 5.19, p < .01; R^2 = .29$), in support of the hypothesis. However, when examining the contribution of each individual function, we find significant relationships for only three of the five motivational sources. Specifically, creators of UGC rely predominantly on the ego-defensive function ($\beta = .42, t(5,70) = 2.38, p < .05$) and social function ($\beta = .34, t(5,70) = 2.54, p < .01$) as their motivational sources when forming attitudes toward UGC. In contrast, a negative relationship was discovered with the value-expressive function ($\beta = -.43, t(5,70) = -2.89, p < .01$) and no significant relationships for the utilitarian ($\beta = .17, t(5,70) = 1.26, p > .05$) and knowledge ($b = -.07, t(5,70) = -.48, p > .05$) functions in contributing to participants' attitude toward UGC creation.

Hypothesis two states that a consumer's attitude toward UGC should mediate the relationship between consumption and creation. To determine whether attitude mediates the relationship between the consumption and creation of UGC, an analysis was conducted as specified by Baron and Kenny (1986). To establish mediation, (1) the consumption of UGC must positively affect the mediator (attitude toward UGC); (2) consumption of UGC must positively affect the dependent variable (creating UGC); and (3) the mediator must positively affect the dependent variable when regressed in conjunction

with the independent variable. When these conditions are met, the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable also must be lesser in the third step than in the second step (Baron and Kenny 1986).

The first analysis indicates that consumption positively influences a consumer's attitude toward UGC ($\beta = .39, t(324) = 7.52, p < .01, R^2 = .15$). Furthermore, consumption positively influences the creation of UGC ($\beta = .33, t(70) = 2.93, p < .01, R^2 = .11$). Finally, the third analysis indicates that attitude ($\beta = .25, t(2,70) = 2.01, p < .05$) mediates the relationship between the consumption and creation dimensions of UGC ($F(5,70) = 6.51, p < .01; R^2 = .16$). Accordingly, the effect of consumption on the creation of UGC weakens when included in the analysis with attitude ($\beta = .23, t(2,70) = 1.88, p > .05$). Thus, a consumer's attitude serves as a mediator in the relationship between consumption and creation of UGC, in support of the hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

As UGC becomes more prevalent, understanding why consumers are drawn to create content becomes increasingly important, especially as the media industry moves toward a user-centric model of consumption. Identifying motivational sources that influence the formation of consumer attitudes toward UGC also may result in a more robust predictive model of audience behavior, which is increasingly important to both scholars and industry professionals. As a result, it is imperative to gain an understanding of how consumer attitudes interact with motivational sources for the creation of UGC to recognize how such content might benefit advertisers and marketers.

The ego-defensive and social functional sources contribute significantly to attitudes formulated about the creation of UGC. The ego-defensive function specifically compels people to protect themselves from internal insecurities and external threats, and the creation of UGC in this sense helps consumers minimize their self-doubts and feel a sense of community. The social function assists consumers in seeking out activities that are perceived as favorable by important others and gives them the opportunity to associate with friends. In relation to the creation of UGC, consumers engage in such actions to connect with others and feel important. Even though we identify a negative relationship between the value-expressive function and a consumer's attitude toward UGC, this is not necessarily a surprising result given the conceptual construct. Value expressiveness reflects internal moral beliefs, often associated with serious or controversial

topics and issues (e.g., religion, political positions). However, most types of UGC offer entertainment, focused on humor and light-hearted topics (Verna 2007). This claim is not to suggest that content reflecting moral beliefs is not created and distributed online but rather that this type of content tends to be professionally produced.

One unforeseen result is the noticeable difference between UGC creation and consumption behavior. Our findings indicate that consumers are substantially more likely to create blogs, post within discussion forums, and construct Web sites than simply to consume these forms of UGC. In contrast, UGC audiences are more inclined to watch videos, view pictures, listen to audio, and visit wiki sites when experiencing UGC rather than when creating such content. These findings are intriguing in the sense that they suggest different motivations or expected outcomes associated with specific behaviors. Although content control remains a strong advantage of the Internet, UGC users appear more inclined to treat these vehicles like traditional sources and adopt a passive approach. In contrast, UGC creators strive toward self-expression by engaging in behaviors that provide them with a voice or showcase their individual thoughts (e.g., blogs, forums, personal Web sites). These differences also may simply reflect the impact of individual skill or self-efficacy. For example, the creation of videos, production of music, and acquisition of necessary knowledge to post a wiki require more aptitude than simply using a computer keyboard (i.e., as required by an online discussion forum). Nevertheless, the differences between these two activities demand more investigation to provide a more thorough understanding.

In addition, these findings confirm the relationship between a consumer's attitude and behavior toward a given attitude object (i.e., consumption and creation of UGC). Determining this positive relationship is critical as we attempt to investigate the effects of the consumption and creation of UGC on both consumer behavior and marketing efforts. This relationship suggests that as a consumer's attitudes toward UGC strengthens, the consumption and creation of such content increases, while being mediated by attitude. This finding spotlights the importance of creating positive customer experiences with UGC, in terms of both products offered and content provided by marketers to promote goods and services through UGC.

Any study contains inherent limitations that affect the overall validity and reliability of the results. With regard to this research, a few limitations should be considered when

interpreting the findings. For example, a purposive sample was used that does not represent the Internet population as a whole. Although strong consideration was taken in the choice of an online panel to collect data for this study, little control was given to the researchers in terms of sampling. Nevertheless, the objective of this research was not to generalize findings to the entire online panel universe but rather to explore the relationships among the proposed theoretical constructs. In addition, another limitation is the extremely broad definition of UGC used in this study. In considering this definition, it is possible that respondents could have over-reported consumption and creation of UGC.

CONCLUSIONS

This study attempts to expand the knowledge of UGC by testing the motivations for creating UGC. This framework is important to both scholars and practitioners because the Internet can serve as a more powerful medium than traditional media, in the sense that consumers now may consume, interact with, control, create, and distribute media content. As UGC becomes more prevalent, identifying the motivational reasons for creating such media also becomes increasingly important. Therefore, understanding consumer attitudes toward UGC, especially motivational sources, should result in a better model of behavior, which is increasingly important to researchers focused on Internet marketing.

From a theoretical perspective, we offer what Calder, Phillips, and Tybout (1981) refer to as an "effects application" of theory. That is, the observed data help identify functional sources of motivation for creating UGC rather than specifically assessing the status of or extending an existing theoretical framework. It is not that the findings fail to enhance our understanding of functional theory (Katz 1960); rather the purpose is to examine a current phenomenon through an established theoretical framework instead of testing a theoretical framework to provide a general understanding of the world (Calder and Tybout 1999). Research conducted from this perspective relies on the notion of theoretical explication to verify and replicate previous research in different contexts (Chaffee 1996). Unquestionably, the confirmation of ego-defensive, social, and value-expressive functional sources of motivation and their contributions to the attitude formation toward creating UGC offers a positive theoretical affirmation. The next step is to identify how these motivational sources differ in affecting the consumption of UGC and whether additional sources exist.

Furthermore, the managerial implications of this research are immediate as the ability to develop brand relationships via social experiences through UGC, and the means to deliver persuasive messages to consumers who experience or create UGC, represents the future of marketing. This research successfully connects functional theory and sources of motivation with attitudes toward UGC. Specifically, ego-defensive and social functional sources are serving as strong contributors toward attitudes formulated for creating UGC. The ego-defensive function recognizes that people have self-doubts that they seek to minimize. Likewise, the social-function drives people to spend time with others and experience a sense of community. Marketers must understand these motivations for consuming this form of media and either strive to provide similar content creation opportunities or advertise on popular UGC sites to reach these consumers. Each of the functional sources can make motivational contributions to the formulation of a consumer's attitude. Although utilitarian and knowledge based functions do not appear to provide significant contributions, these findings do not mean that future UGC categories or consumer preferences might not adopt these motivational sources at some point. Therefore, a thorough understanding of the psychological makeup of UGC consumers is even more critical because the creation and delivery of promotional messages might be refined for maximum impact. By providing consumers with a forum in which they may create and distribute their own UGC, marketers might enhance the value of the brand information they present by engaging consumers in an active media experience.

The UGC content market likely will expand greatly during the next decade as more users migrate toward consuming and creating UGC. Furthermore, as the digital information society continues to evolve, identifying key motivational sources that lead to functional changes in or the reinforcement of attitudes can help clarify media consumption online. Therefore, an essential component of success in this market will be determining the key motivational factors that reinforce attitudes toward and increase the consumption and creation of UGC. Opportunities abound for both advertisers and marketers in this burgeoning information space, as evidenced by the forecasted \$4.3 billion in advertising revenues by 2011 (Verna 2007). Marketers thus must seize this opportunity to communicate relevant content to audiences through this channel. Of course, this single study represents just a first step in a new and unexplored area of online consumer behavior,

and continued work must verify and validate these results to provide a full understanding of the impact of UGC.

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APPENDIX : RESPONDENT PROFILE

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	164	50.5
Female	161	49.5
Age		
18 - 24	18	5.5
25 - 34	74	22.8
35 - 44	84	25.8
45 - 54	71	21.8
55 or older	78	24.0
Ethnicity		
Black/African American	20	6.1
Asian/Southeast Asian	8	2.5
White/Caucasian	268	82.5
Latino/Hispanic	17	5.2
Indigenous/Aboriginal Person	4	1.2
Mixed Ethnicity	8	2.5
Education		
Some high school	3	.9
High school or equivalent	61	18.9
Some college	107	32.9
Associate's degree	40	12.3
Bachelor's degree	74	22.8
Master's degree	30	9.2
Professional degree	5	1.5
Doctoral degree	5	1.5
Income		
Less than \$20,001	32	9.8
\$20,001 - \$40,000	92	28.3
\$40,001 - \$60,000	79	24.3
\$60,001 - \$80,000	44	13.5
\$80,001 - \$100,000	39	12.0
\$100,001 - \$120,000	20	6.2
More than \$120,000	19	5.8

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