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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USER- AND MARKETER-GENERATED CONTENT

JINGNAN MIAO  
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Reviewed and approved\* by the following:

Francis E. Dardis  
Associate Professor of Advertising and Public Relations  
Thesis Supervisor and Honors Advisor

Fuyuan Shen  
Professor of Advertising and Public Relations  
Faculty Reader

\* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

## **ABSTRACT**

This research investigated the effectiveness of two types of media content (user- and marketer-generated contents) and two product categories (search and experience goods) among U.S. college students. Understanding how college students perceive the two types of media contents and how they like or dislike, engage with the brand, and intend to purchase allowed the development of suggestions for using different media contents based on different product categories as a marketing tool.

A questionnaire was administered using Qualtrics and snowball sampling. The questionnaire was sent out to 99 students at a large northeastern university. The study finds out that marketer-generated contents have stronger relationship with attitude towards brands, attitude towards advertising, and purchase intention, compared to user-generated content. However, the research study does not find any statistically significant relationships between product categories and attitude towards brands, ad attitude, and purchase intention. Customer brand engagement does not show significant relationship with product categories and types of media content.

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## INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (Alexander, 1960).

As many researchers have extensively covered in the past, there are four main elements in marketing — product, promotion, placement and price. These four pillars lay the foundation for conducting research on the effect and impact of marketing methods and contents in this field. Many researchers put their focuses on these four areas in their studies in the past.

The history of consumer marketing has gone through three phases. The first phase started in the late 1950s, when the advertising industry began to rise and boom, and it ended around the 1960s (Tariq & Wahid, 2011, p. 1054). During this time, manufacturers started to reach to their consumers through various media channels. According to Schultz and Schultz (1998), the effectiveness of the advertising messages was highly correlated to the media budget manufacturers worked on.

The second phase started from the 1970s and ended in the late 1990s. During this stage, retailers started to get involved in the marketing campaign. Retail industry transformed into regional ventures. Retailers and companies became closer to the consumers because of the invention of magnetic-strip cards, especially credit cards (Schultz & Schultz, 1998). Until then, the marketplace still followed the rule of one-way communication: the messages were sent from the marketers or retailers to the consumers, without feedback or input from the consumers' end. Therefore, retailers played very important roles — they had the authority to decide which products to put into the market, when the products should be sold to consumers, and where the products should be sold.

The third phase began in the early 2000s, during which Internet and information technology started to play a more critical role in consumers' daily lives. In addition, during this phase, consumers became the dominant force of the marketplace — they could choose what types of marketing contents they desire to consume. According to Schultz and Schultz (1998), the third stage of marketing involves consumer convenience, interactivity, advanced technology, and open conversations between sellers and buyers, in which two-way communication dominated (p. 15). Thus, in this phase, consumers are actively involved with brands and products in different marketing contents.

Throughout history, marketers have been trying to find the best way to reach consumers. With the development of technology, consumers gradually take over from advertisers in determining “what is important, what is value and what relationships are needed and wanted” (Schultz & Schultz, 1998, p. 15). Under this context, researchers began to take interest in assessing new ways to measure and study the effectiveness of various contents on media platforms.

The transformation of marketing in the past decade has fundamentally changed the ways content are created advertisements are distributed, and messages are received. While recent study has recognized the importance to understand how marketing has evolved from the perspective of technological transformation, plenty of unanswered questions remain on the relationship between marketers and consumers, how technology begins to play a significant role in today's marketplace, and how consumers take over the right to make the decisions on desired messages.

Because of the increase of information clutter – consumers are exposed to hundreds of thousands of messages every day – marketers try to find the best way to reach consumers. Therefore, in order to understand these questions, I decided to dive into the field and examine the effectiveness of the different types of message contents in marketplace.

## **User-Generated Content (UGC) and Marketer-Generated Content (MGC)**

User-Generated Content, or UGC, refers to content that is published “outside of professional routines and practices” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). It is seen to “appear within or in opposition to professional media, often as a disruptive, creative, change-making force” (Lobato, Thomas, & Hunter, 2011, p. 899). Individuals or groups could create such content and share in the public. It “can be seen as the sum of all ways in which people make use of Social Media” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Compared to UGC, Marketer-Generated Content, or MGC, is generated by marketers on social media on behalf of companies, in order to engage consumers actively.

The origin of UGC dates back to the mid-2000s when new media and internet aroused. The impact of user-generated content has developed since then. As reported in Qiang (2010), the percentage of Internet content that is user-produced (50.7%) now exceeds those that is professionally produced (47.3%). When discussing UGC, people normally associate the term with electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), which is defined as the “interpersonal communication about products and services between consumers” (Lee & Youn, 2009, p. 473). It is one of the most influential product information sources for consumers, especially for those who tend to trust peer consumers, friends, family members, and people they know more than they trust marketers (Blackshaw, 2006). While these two concepts are very similar and closely aligned with each other, they are different, depending on “whether the content is *generated* by users or the content is *conveyed* by users” (Cheong & Morrison, 2008, p. 3). For example, the videos on YouTube that are generated and posted by individuals are UGC. However, the YouTube video link sent by friends on Facebook or similar social websites is eWOM. This study is not intended to discuss eWoM. Rather, it is solely focused on differentiating UGC from MGC.

Cheong and Morrison (2018) identified three aspects for UGC. The first aspect of brand-related UGC focuses on how credible and engaging the content is for consumers. The study on brand-related UGC conducted by Cheong and Morrison (2018) thoroughly examined on the first aspect, in which the researchers considered content generated on different web platforms (e.g., YouTube, blogs and forums). While the study emphasizes on audience' perceptions of UGC versus the types of contents generated, it does not provide a systematic comparison of how audience view differently between UGC and MGC. Therefore, in order fulfill this gap in knowledge, this study will explore how UGC and MGC differ in influencing audience perception across platforms.

The second aspect of brand-related UGC questions how effectiveness of UGC and MGC vary across different product categories (e.g., search versus experienced goods). Goh, Heng and Lin (2013) examined the differences between UGC and MGC. However, it did not compare each type of contents in the context of different product categories. As such, the study has some limitations. Firstly, researchers failed to randomize the experimental participants, so the result might be biased. Secondly, the data sample of this study came from a single retailer and its consumers, making the research results susceptible to snowball effect in which most participants think in a similar pattern.

The third aspect of brand-related UGC focuses on the relationship between UGC and the customers' purchase behavior. In this aspect, brand-related UGC is considered a predictor or a driver of the potential sales outcome (Smith, Fischer & Yongjian, 2012, p.103). Dhar and Chang (2009) predicted music sales with UGC data from a variety of media platforms, such as blogs and social media websites. However, their study failed to focus on understanding how UGC and MGC differ for different product categories, which is the focus of my study.

## **Product Category**

Nelson (1970) distinguished search and experience goods by identifying the extent to which consumers evaluate their attributes prior to purchase (Nelson, 1974). Search goods are defined as “those dominated by product attributes for which full information can be acquired prior to purchase” (Klein, 1998, p. 196); experience goods “are dominated by attributes that cannot be known until purchase and use of the product or for which information search is more costly and/or difficult than direct product experience” (Klein, 1998, p. 196). For example, the taste of a bottle of spring water can be assessed prior to purchase in a grocery store, but the taste of a bottle of wine cannot. Researchers base the classification on the extent to which customers feel they need to experience goods directly to evaluate quality (Weathers, Sharma & Wood, 2007). In other words, if a customer has greater need to use one’s sense to evaluate the goods, the products tend to have more experience qualities. In addition to customers’ perception, Laband’s (1991) paper argues that price is another attribute of product in this classification. The researcher stated that the more money customers need to pay for the products, the more likely the customers would need to consider thoroughly before purchasing. As a result, “as the cost of purchase increases, the would-be buyer rationally seeks to acquire additional information prior to purchase regarding product quality and performance” (p. 498). Therefore, another purpose of this paper is to understand how audience react to the same type of advertisements for either search or experience goods.

## **Attitude toward the ad**

Attitude toward the ad in general has been the main focus of many researchers because many have found that attitudes toward specific ads could influence the overall brand attitudes and purchase intention (Muehling, 1987). Lutz (1985) defines Attitude toward the ad in general as “a

learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner to advertising in general” (p. 53). Some researchers have shown that attitude toward the ad are composed of several dimensions, such as social, economic, etc. Sandage and Leckenby (1980) proposed two determinants of attitude toward the ad in general: attitude toward the institution of ads (i.e., purpose or effects) and attitude toward the instrument of ads (i.e., methods or practices). Consequently, one of my research interests would focus on the differences of attitude toward the ad on different types of contents and different types of product categories. In this paper, the attitude toward the ad is measure based on the scale used in Muehling (1987). Based on the above review, I hereby present my two research questions:

**RQ1:** Is there a significant difference in the attitude toward the ad toward different product categories between search and experienced Goods?

**RQ2:** Is there a significant difference in the attitude toward the ad toward different product categories between user- and marketer-generated contents?

### **Attitude toward Brand**

Over the years, a number of research studies has provided the definition of attitude toward brand. Mitchell and Olson (1981) defined attitude toward the brand as “[an] individual’s internal evaluation of the brand” (p. 318). Giner-Sorolla (1999) claimed that this definition has incorporated two characteristics of attitude: (1) attitude is centered or directed at a brand, and (2) attitude is evaluative in nature. Spears and Singh (2004) define attitude toward the brand as “a relatively enduring, unidimensional summary evaluation of the brand that presumably energizes behavior” (p. 55). However, attitude toward brand is different from feeling elicited by the brand. As stated in Spears and Singh (2004), “feelings are transitory, whereas attitudes are relatively

enduring... Feelings are qualitatively different from cognitive or evaluative responses that are a respondent's statements of praise or criticism of the characteristics of message itself" (p. 56). This study focuses on the differences of attitude toward brand in general on different types of contents and different types of product categories. In this paper, the attitude toward advertising is measure based on the scale used in Muehling (1987). The research questions in relation to attitude towards brand are:

**RQ3:** Is there a significant difference in the attitudes of brands toward different product categories between search and experienced goods?

**RQ4:** Is there a significant difference in the attitudes of brands toward different product categories between user- and marketer-generated contents?

## **Customer Brand Engagement**

### **Conceptualization of Customer Brand Engagement.**

Used primarily in business setting, Customer brand engagement (CE) is a measurement representing a strategic imperative for generating enhanced corporate performance, including sales growth (Neff, 2007), superior competitive advantage (Sedley & Perks, 2008), and profitability (Voyles, 2007). It increasingly attracts attention from both practitioners and academics due to the development of Internet for exchanging information and interacting with customers (So, King & Sparks, 2014). Furthermore, with the growth of online environment and information cluster, companies increasingly rely on social networks, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, to engage with their customers.

In contrast, marketing scholars conceptualizes CE to include a strong behavioral focus (So, King & Sparks, 2014). According to the Marketing Science Institute (MSI, 2010), CE is

“customers’ behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm beyond purchase, which results from motivational drivers including: word-of-mouth activity, recommendations, customer-customer interactions, blogging, writing reviews, and other similar activities” (p. 4). What is more, Brodie, Hollebeek, et al. (2011) presents the following general definition of CE:

“Customer engagement (CE) is a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, cocreative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g., a brand) in focal service relationships. It occurs under a specific set of context dependent conditions generating differing CE levels; and exists as a dynamic, iterative process within service relationships that cocreate value. CE plays a central role in a nomological network governing service relationships in which other relational concepts (e.g., involvement, loyalty) are antecedents and/or consequences in iterative CE processes. It is a multidimensional concept subject to a context- and/or stakeholder-specific expression of relevant cognitive, emotional and/or behavioral dimensions.” (p. 9)

In addition to Brodie, Hollebeek, et al (2011)’s definition, many other scholars and researchers have given CE different definitions. For instance, some researchers consider CE to be a behavioral interaction, resulting from a range of motivational drivers (MSI, 2010); some other researchers argue that CE should be a multidimensional construct combining both psychological and behavioral aspects (Brodie, Hollebeek, et al., 2011).

Supported by such multidimensional definitions of CE, we understand that participation in CE activities does not guarantee a truly engaged customer. “The truly engaged customer must have an enduring psychological connection with the brand in addition to behavioral participation. While

a behavioral approach may provide an indication of customers' participation level in CE activities, a multidimensional approach will capture the full complexity of CE" (So, King & Sparks, 2014, p. 307). The research questions in relation to customer brand engagement are:

**RQ5:** Is there any significant difference in the customer brand engagement (CE) between search goods and experience goods?

**RQ6:** Is there any significant difference in the customer brand engagement (CE) between user- and marketer-generated contents?

### **Customer brand engagement dimension model.**

A review of literature reveals five dimensions of CE, namely, *enthusiasm*, *attention*, *absorption*, *interaction*, and *identification*.

**Enthusiasm.** "Enthusiasm represents an individual's strong level of excitement and interest regarding the focus of engagement" (So, King & Sparks, 2014, p. 308). This dimension started from the concept of work engagement. In work context, engagement encompasses employees' enthusiasm, inspiration, and sense of significance (Salanova, Agut, & Peiro, 2005). The finding of Patterson et al., (2006) indicates that "an engaged employee feels enthusiastic and passionate about his/her work and role in the organization". Hence, enthusiasm is consistent with the dimensions of activation (Hollebeek, 2009), resulting in engagement.

**Attention.** Researchers have increasingly focused on attention as a key dimension of engagement. According to Rothbard (2001), attention is the duration of focus on, and mental preoccupation with, work, as one of the dimensions of employee engagement (EE). In this case, employees who are engaged with the organization tend to pay a lot of attention on the work. In other words, "personal engagement is associated with feeling attentive, connected, integrated, and

focused in one's role performance" (So, King & Sparks, 2014, p. 308). Regulatory engagement theory defines engagement as "sustained attention, where behaviorally turning attention away from something lowers the level of engagement" (Scholer & Higgins, 2009, p.138). Thus, engagement requires attention (Lin, Gregor, & Ewing, 2008)

**Absorption.** Investigators recognized absorption as a dimension of CE (Hollebeek, 2009). Absorption is "a high level of concentration and engrossment" (So, King & Sparks, 2014, p. 309). If a person has high level of engagement, he or she is more likely to concentrate on things and be absorbed with it (Scholer & Higgins, 2009). As demonstrated in Patterson et al. (2006), absorption is a pleasant state that customers are fully concentrated and engrossed in their roles. An engaged customer of Universal Studios will easily forget about the time passes. So, King & Sparks (2014) claims that "a deep level of concentration and total immersion in one's role while interacting with the firm, its offering, or other customers, signifies a strong level of CE" (p. 309).

**Interaction.** Customer interaction is another dimension of CE, which is a behavioral aspect. It refers to customers' online and offline participation with the brand or other customers outside of purchase. Customer interaction includes sharing ideas and thoughts about their purchase experience. As the intensity of engagement increases, the probability that a customer participates in the activities tends to increase. Hence, customer interaction has become an important part of conceptualize of CE (So, King & Sparks, 2014, pp. 309-310).

**Identification.** In addition to enthusiasm, attention, absorption, and interaction, identification is another key dimension of CE. The idea of identification is that individuals identify themselves as members in a group or organization. The idea was originated from social identity theory, which states that self-concept comprises a personal identity and a social identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Similarly, customers who have developed strong consumer-brand relationships tend

to self-identify themselves in the brand, creating higher level of satisfaction. From a consumer perspective, identification is an individual “perceived oneness with or belongingness to an organization” (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995, p. 46). For example, customers might identify with Pepsi as a brand because of its young and edgy brand image. Identification is an important dimension, because it engages consumers in company-related behaviors (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003) and extra-role behavior, such as recommending products to friends and peers (Bhattacharya et al., 1995). Therefore, identification is a cognitive component that justifies consumers’ engagement behaviors.

### **Purchase Intention**

Purchase intention is one of the most common markers that marketers use to understand customers’ behaviors and evaluate the marketing campaign (Ghalandari & Norouzi, 2012). Some researchers identify the correlation between customers’ actual behaviors and their purchase intention. For example, Kim and Pysarchik (2000) demonstrates a strong correlation between these two constructs. In their study, they conclude that purchase intention serves as an alternative for measuring consumers’ purchase behaviors. Supported by Azjen (1991), consumers’ purchase intention serves as the mediator between their attitude toward a product and their actual purchase behavior. By concluding in high correlation ( $r = 0.95$ ) between purchase intention and purchase probability, Gruber (1971) claims that intention connects consumers’ reactions toward the products and the actual purchase and use of the products. Therefore, in my study, I choose to use purchase intention as a measurement of purchase behaviors. The research questions in relation to customers’ purchase intention are:

**RQ7:** Is there a significant difference in the purchase intention (PI) between search and experienced goods?

**RQ8:** Is there a significant difference in the purchase intention (PI) between user- and marketer-generated contents?

## METHOD

### Experimental Design

In order to test the hypotheses, a 2 (marketer- versus user-generated contents) X 2 (search versus experience goods) between subjects experiment was conducted. A total of 99 students were recruited to participate in this experiment, and the final sample with valid data included 63 undergraduate students from a major university (54% female, 46% male, average age at 20.3 years old). They were randomly assigned to the four between-subjects conditions by the survey program, Qualtrics.

IRB approval was granted before all experimentation.

### Materials

#### Stimulus.

Based on the research results, four video ads were chosen from the Internet as stimuli in this experiment (see Appendix C): two gym ads (one is featured from a consumer perspective and the other one featured from a marketer' perspective (i.e., official advertisements). two energy drink ads, (one is user-generated and the other one is marketer-generated).

### Procedure

This experiment was a 2 (marketer- versus user-generated contents) X 2 (search versus experience goods) design, and participants were assigned to the stimuli randomly. It was conducted using the Qualtrics survey program. Participants in the experiments were recruited through their student organizations. They receive an email from the investigator including the link to an online survey. Participants were able to take and complete the surveys from any devices at any time. When participants opened the questionnaire, they were presented with instructions and the IRB-approved

implied consent form. Once their consent has been received, one of the four stimuli would be randomly picked for the respondent to watch. Each of the stimuli would be shown in full length for approximately 1 minute to ensure that it would make an impression. The questions (see Appendix A) were placed in a specific order so that participants will less likely to be affected by the potential confounding effects from variations in learning and attention.

## Measures

### **Independent variables.**

The independent variables in this experiment were product categories (search versus experience goods) and media contents (marketer- versus user-generated contents). Product category was manipulated in two media contents respectively, so do media contents. Therefore, participants were exposed either to a marketer-generated content in search goods or experience goods, or a user-generated content in search goods or experience goods, as described above.

### **Dependent variables.**

This experiment examined the effectiveness of different advertising messages in different product categories and contents. All variables were measured based on self-report response to an online survey. The complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

**Attitude towards brand.** The five variables within this category are measure by five 7-point scales, from “Bad” to “Good”, “Low Quality” to “High Quality”, “Not likeable” to “Likeable”, “Unpleasant” to “Pleasant”, and “Unappealing” to “Appealing.” They were asked to indicate their overall evaluation of the advertisement they watched by choosing the appropriate number on the scale. These measures were used by Muehling (1987).

**Attitude toward the ad.** Participants were asked to indicate their attitudes on five variables on five 7-point scales, from “Bad” to “Good”, “Not likeable” to “Likeable”, and “Unappealing” to

“Appealing”. They were asked to indicate their overall evaluation of the advertisement they watched by choosing the appropriate number on the scale. These measures were used by Muehling (1987).

**Customer brand engagement.** Participants were asked to indicate on a 7-point scale (from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”) on the extent to which they agreed with the following statements: (a) In general, I like to get involved in brand community discussions. (b) I am someone who enjoys interacting with like-minded others in the brand community. (c) I am someone who likes actively participating in brand community discussions. (d) In general, I thoroughly enjoy exchanging ideas with other people in the brand community. (e) When I am interacting with the brand, I forgot everything else around me. (f) Time flies when I am interacting with the brand. (g) When I am interacting with brand, I get carried away. (h) In my interaction with the brand, I am immersed. (i) I like to learn more about this brand. (j) I pay a lot of attention to anything about this brand. (k) I concentrate a lot on this brand. (l) I like to learn more about this brand. (m) I am passionate about this brand. (n) I am enthusiastic about this brand. (o) I love this brand. (p) I am heavily into this brand. These measures were used by So, King & Sparks (2014), and indexed into one Customer Brand Engagement index.

**Purchase intention.** Participants were asked to indicate their attitudes in three categories on three 7-point scales, from “Unlikely” to “Likely”, “Improbable” to “Probable”, and “Impossible” to “Possible”. The variables measure the extent to which they would consider purchasing the products shown in the video. These measures were used by Zhang & Buda (1999) and indexed into one Purchase Intent index.

**Demographics**

Participants were asked to indicate their (a) gender and (b) age. However, this data would not be used for final results. The purpose for investigator to collect these data is to screen out the unqualified participants, who are not falling in the 17-24 age range.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were explored for the demographic questions, the independent variables, and the four dependent variables.

**Demographic.** For this experiment, 93 individuals were recruited, but only 63 surveys were returned. Hence, only the 63 complete responses were used in this study. In order to understand the sample taking the survey, some simple descriptive statistics were run.

The result shows that: the average age of the respondents is 21.08 years old. The maximum age of a participant is 24, while the minimum is 18. In terms of gender, 54% are female and 46% are male.

**Independent variable.** Of the 63 participants, 30.20% watched the user-generated content in search good product (Gatorade), 25.40% watched the marketer-generated content in search good product (Gatorade), 23.80% watched the marketer-generated content in experienced good product (Gym), and 20.60% watched the marketer-generated content in experienced good product (Gym).

**Dependent variables.** Reliability tests were run for the four dependent variables. The first question tested audience's attitude toward brand after watching the video ads. It was measured on five different scales: bad vs. good, low quality vs. high quality, not likeable vs. likeable, unpleasant vs. pleasant, unappealing vs. appealing. The Cronbach's alpha for this measure is 0.964, and it is therefore considered a reliable measurement.

The next measurement is the overall attitude toward the ads, and this is based on questions using the scales of bad vs. good, unappealing vs. appealing, and not likeable vs. likeable. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.967, referring the measure as reliable.

Customer brand engagement items were tested for reliability ( $\alpha=.967$ ). Lastly, the Cronbach's alpha for purchase intention is tested to be 0.949, satisfying the acceptance Alpha level to merit the index.

### Inferential Statistics

Descriptive statistics are presented in **Table 1**. To understand that whether each dependent variable is statistically significant, an ANOVA test was conducted. The results indicate that the attitude towards brand has no statistically significant value,  $F(6.56) = 15.939$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . The attitude toward the ads has statistically significant value,  $F(8.38) = 21.241$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . Purchase intention also has statistically significant value,  $F(4.93) = 12.531$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . However, customer brand engagement is not statistically significant, as shown in the results, where  $F(1.11) = 1.702$ ,  $p = 0.351 > 0.05$ .

**Table 1.** Means and Standard Deviations on scaled dependent measures.

	UGC Gym (n=13)	UGC Drink (n=19)	MGC Drink (n=16)	MGC Gym (n=15)
Brand Attitude	3.43 <sub>b</sub> (1.76)	3.57 <sub>b</sub> (1.75)	4.67 (1.58)	5.61 <sub>a</sub> (0.96)
Ad Attitude	3.48 <sub>c</sub> (1.84)	3.43 <sub>bc</sub> (1.91)	4.95 <sub>ab</sub> (1.43)	5.82 <sub>a</sub> (0.91)
Customer Brand Engagement	3.79 (1.35)	3.94 (1.18)	3.94 (1.43)	4.55 (0.93)
Purchase Intention	3.25 <sub>b</sub> (2.05)	3.87 (1.90)	5.08 <sub>a</sub> (1.18)	5.12 <sub>a</sub> (0.97)

*Note: Numbers with different subscripts differ significantly at the  $p < 0.05$  level.*

In addition to the ANOVA test, a series of Post Hoc Tests were run, in order to address the research questions and compare the relationship between types of contents and product categories. Since customer brand engagement is not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ), the relationships among four independent variables will not be presented.

For the attitude towards brand, user-generated content of gym ( $M = 3.43$ ) is significantly different from marketer-generated content of gym ( $M = 0.966$ ),  $p < 0.05$ ; user-generated content of drink ( $M=3.57$ ) is significantly different from marketer-generated content of gym ( $M = 5.61$ ),  $p < 0.05$ . However, user-generated content of gym ( $M = 3.43$ ) shows no significant difference from user-generated content of drink ( $M = 3.57$ ),  $p = .993$ . User-generated content of gym also shows no significant difference from marketer-generated content of drink ( $M = 4.67$ ),  $p = .153$ . Marketer-generated content of gym has no significant difference from marketer-generated content of drink,  $p = .346$ . User-generated content of drink product is not significantly different from marketer-generated content of drink,  $p = .174$ .

Under the attitude toward the ads, UGC + Gym ( $M = 3.48$ ) is significantly different from MGC + Gym ( $M = 5.82$ ),  $p < 0.05$ ; UGC + Drink ( $M = 3.43$ ) is significantly different from MGC + Drink ( $M = 4.95$ ),  $p < 0.05$ , and UGC + Drink is also significantly different from MGC + Gym ( $M = 5.82$ ),  $p < 0.01$ . On the other hand, user-generated content of gym shows no significant difference from user-generated content of drink,  $p = 1.000$ , and it has no significant relationship from marketer-generated content of drink,  $p = .074$ . Marketer-generated content of drink has no significant difference from marketer-generated content of gym,  $p = .438$ .

Under the purchase intention, UGC + Gym ( $M = 3.25$ ) is significantly different from MGC + Drink ( $M = 5.12$ ),  $p < 0.05$ , and UGC + Gym is also significantly different from MGC + Gym ( $M = 5.08$ ),  $p < 0.05$ . However, user-generated content of gym is not statistically different from user-generated content of drink,  $p = .702$ . User-generated drink shows no significant difference from marketer-generated content of gym,  $p = .135$ . Marketer-generated content of drink shows no significant difference from marketer-generated content of gym,  $p = 1.000$ , and it also shows not significant difference from user-generated content of drink,  $p = 0.108$ .

## **DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION**

### **Discussion**

With the average age of each respondent at 21.08 years old and taking the survey distribution into account, it is safe to assume that the majority of the population of this study is college students. In other words, this demographic certainly played into the findings.

Research Question 1 asked whether there are any significant differences in the attitude toward the ad toward different product categories between Search and Experienced Goods. As the results have shown, when the type of media content remains the same, product categories do not significantly differ in terms of attitude toward the ad. In other words, no matter what product category is presented in the advertisement, audience' attitude toward the ad will not be affected.

Research Question 2 aims at understanding whether there are any significant differences in the attitude toward the ad toward different product categories between user- and marketer-generated contents. The results shown that for both categories, the effectiveness of MGC is statistically significantly higher from UGC. For both search and experience goods, marketer-generated content has greater mean than user-generated content. In other words, it is reasonable to assume that marketer-generated content could result in more positive attitude toward the ad among the audience under the same product category. The reason for this result could be that the quality of the user-generated videos is not as good as the marketer-generated ones. In addition, the messages delivered in user-generated videos are not as clear as the ones created by marketers, which tend to have stronger marketing objective.

Research Question 3 tried to understand whether there are significant differences in the attitudes of brands toward different product categories between search and experienced goods. As the results have indicated, when the type of media content remains the same, product categories do not significantly differ in terms of attitude towards brands. Therefore, regardless of the difference of product categories, the attitude towards brand would not be affected under the same type of media content.

Research Question 4 asked whether there are significant differences in the attitudes of brands toward different product categories between user- and marketer-generated contents. The results showed that for experienced goods, marketer-generated content would lead to more positive attitudes toward brand. However, as the results indicated that, under the search goods category, there is no significant relation between types of media contents with the attitudes toward brand. In other words, audience have the same attitude towards brands under search goods, regardless of the media contents. The reason for this situation may be that audience already know the features of the search goods. As a result, the no matter what messages are delivered by marketer or other users, audience will not have more positive attitude towards the brand in search goods.

Research Question 5 and Research Question 6 focus on understanding the relationship between customer brand engagement (CE), media contents, and product categories. However, based on the ANOVA test, there has no significant relation. Therefore, no matter what product categories or who generates the contents, consumers would not have significant engagement with the brand or advertising. Future research studies could use different product types (e.g., fashion, travel, etc.) to get richer insights in the relationship between customer brand engagement (CE), media contents, and product categories.

Research Question 7 asked whether there are any significant differences in the purchase intention (PI) between search and experienced goods. The results show no significant connection between product categories with purchase intention. In other words, the product categories have no impact on consumers' purchase intention under the same type of media content.

Research Question 8 asked whether there are any significant differences in the purchase intention (PI) between user- and marketer-generated contents. The results show the significant relationship between types of media content with purchase intention, under the experience goods. In other words, marketer-generated content will lead to higher purchase intention, compared to user-generated content. However, in the search goods product category, there is no significant relationship between media contents and purchase intention. In other words, audience have the same intention to purchase the products that fall under the search goods.

### **Limitations**

The greatest limitation this study faced was the sample – both for overall number surveyed and snowball effects. Only 63 subjects completed the survey – 54 percent of participants were female and 46 percent were male. A larger, more diverse (gender and age) sample was needed to better answer the research questions. In addition, since participants are from the same organizations with the investigator or are friends with investigator, snowball effect might be involved in this study.

The stimuli used in this study were in the sport category – Everyday gym and Gatorade. However, it is just one of the many product categories. In other words, it only has some representations on the search and experience goods.

This research study does not specify which media platform the audience will be exposed to the messages, though all videos are linked to the existing YouTube videos. In other words, the

study examines solely the general effectiveness of marketer- or user-generated media contents on search and experience goods. Participants might set themselves in different scenarios where they would watch the videos when they were doing the experiment. Thus, the effectiveness of the same video messages might differ in various media platforms.

### **Future Research Direction**

Future studies of a similar nature could be conducted with a sample that includes more diversity. As stated before, this research study only consists of college students in a major university. The future studies could enlarge the sample size to either college students in multiple geographical areas or subjects aged varied in the same area. In addition, it may also be worth pursuing to see how results may differ if the study were replicated by only examining the impact of search and experience goods in the same product types. Other product types were not examined in this study, because it was difficult to define search and experience goods in different people. Some people may think wine is an experience goods, others might believe it is a search goods. Hence, there is great potential for exploring other product types of search and experience goods, especially in relation to customer brand engagement since it shows no statistical significance in this experiment.

To take this study one step further, research on the relationship between search and experience goods, user- and marketer-generated content, customer brand engagement, overall attitudes, and purchase intention could be explored in multiple social media platforms. Different features of different social media platforms may result in significant impacts on audience' perception on the messages. Even though in this study the investigator only tries to understand the general effectiveness of user- and marketer-generated content, future studies focusing on different social media platforms could result in new insights.

Lastly, with the advanced development of technology, businesses begin to utilize interactive media technology, such as Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, etc. The academic research stream in the interactive media industry is fairly new and has not yet well-established. According to Bezjian-Avery, et al. (1998), the traditional linear advertising format of conventional ads is actually better than interactive advertising for certain kinds of consumers and for certain kinds of ads. Hence, more research should be conducted in order to understand whether such new media technology is effective on consumer engagement and persuasion.

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## Appendix A

### Test Measures

You have been selected randomly to answer questions  
ONLY about the advertisement that you just saw.

1. [Attitudes toward brand] **Please indicate your overall evaluation of the advertisement you just watched by circling the appropriate number on each line:**

Bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Good
Low Quality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	High Quality
Not likeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Likeable
Unpleasant	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Pleasant
Unappealing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Appealing

2. [Attitudes toward ad] **Please indicate your overall evaluation of the advertisement you just watched by circling the appropriate number on each line:**

Bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Good
Unappealing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Appealing
Not likeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Likeable

3. [Customer Brand Engagement] **Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements:**

a. In general, I like to get involved in brand community discussions.

- 1) Strongly disagree
- 2) Disagree
- 3) Somewhat disagree
- 4) Neither agree or disagree
- 5) Somewhat agree
- 6) Agree
- 7) Strongly agree

b. I am someone who enjoys interacting with like-minded others in the brand community.

- 1) Strongly disagree
  - 2) Disagree
  - 3) Somewhat disagree
  - 4) Neither agree or disagree
  - 5) Somewhat agree
  - 6) Agree
  - 7) Strongly agree
- c. Strongly I am someone who likes actively participating in brand community discussions.
- 1) Strongly disagree
  - 2) Disagree
  - 3) Somewhat disagree
  - 4) Neither agree or disagree
  - 5) Somewhat agree
  - 6) Agree
  - 7) Strongly agree
- d. In general, I thoroughly enjoy exchanging ideas with other people in the brand community.
- 1) Strongly disagree
  - 2) Disagree
  - 3) Somewhat disagree
  - 4) Neither agree or disagree
  - 5) Somewhat agree
  - 6) Agree
  - 7) Strongly agree
- e. Strongly When I am interacting with the brand, I forgot everything else around me.
- 1) Strongly disagree
  - 2) Disagree
  - 3) Somewhat disagree
  - 4) Neither agree or disagree
  - 5) Somewhat agree
  - 6) Agree
  - 7) Strongly agree
- f. Time flies when I am interacting with the brand.
- 1) Strongly disagree
  - 2) Disagree
  - 3) Somewhat disagree
  - 4) Neither agree or disagree
  - 5) Somewhat agree
  - 6) Agree
  - 7) Strongly agree

- g. When I am interacting with brand, I get carried away.
- 1) Strongly disagree
  - 2) Disagree
  - 3) Somewhat disagree
  - 4) Neither agree or disagree
  - 5) Somewhat agree
  - 6) Agree
  - 7) Strongly agree
- h. In my interaction with the brand, I am immersed.
- 1) Strongly disagree
  - 2) Disagree
  - 3) Somewhat disagree
  - 4) Neither agree or disagree
  - 5) Somewhat agree
  - 6) Agree
  - 7) Strongly agree
- i. I like to learn more about this brand.
- 1) Strongly disagree
  - 2) Disagree
  - 3) Somewhat disagree
  - 4) Neither agree or disagree
  - 5) Somewhat agree
  - 6) Agree
  - 7) Strongly agree
- j. I pay a lot of attention to anything about this brand.
- 1) Strongly disagree
  - 2) Disagree
  - 3) Somewhat disagree
  - 4) Neither agree or disagree
  - 5) Somewhat agree
  - 6) Agree
  - 7) Strongly agree
- k. I concentrate a lot on this brand.
- 1) Strongly disagree
  - 2) Disagree
  - 3) Somewhat disagree
  - 4) Neither agree or disagree
  - 5) Somewhat agree
  - 6) Agree
  - 7) Strongly agree

l. I like to learn more about this brand.

- 1) Strongly disagree
- 2) Disagree
- 3) Somewhat disagree
- 4) Neither agree or disagree
- 5) Somewhat agree
- 6) Agree
- 7) Strongly agree

m. I am passionate about this brand.

- 1) Strongly disagree
- 2) Disagree
- 3) Somewhat disagree
- 4) Neither agree or disagree
- 5) Somewhat agree
- 6) Agree
- 7) Strongly agree

n. I am enthusiastic about this brand.

- 1) Strongly disagree
- 2) Disagree
- 3) Somewhat disagree
- 4) Neither agree or disagree
- 5) Somewhat agree
- 6) Agree
- 7) Strongly agree

o. I love this brand.

- 1) Strongly disagree
- 2) Disagree
- 3) Somewhat disagree
- 4) Neither agree or disagree
- 5) Somewhat agree
- 6) Agree
- 7) Strongly agree

p. I am heavily into this brand.

- 1) Strongly disagree
- 2) Disagree
- 3) Somewhat disagree
- 4) Neither agree or disagree
- 5) Somewhat agree
- 6) Agree
- 7) Strongly agree

\* (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree)

4. [Purchase Intention] **Assume you were planning to buy the product in the ad. What would be the chances of you purchasing the brand?**

Unlikely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Likely
Improbable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Probable
Impossible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Possible

Lastly, we would like you to tell us about yourself. These questions are for classification purposes only. All information you are currently providing will be completely anonymous, so please respond as accurately as possible to each question.

1. **What is your age?** \_\_\_\_\_ (write here)
  2. **Please circle your gender.**
- a. Female      b. Male

## **Appendix B**

### **IRB Implied Informed Consent Form**

**Title of the project:** The differences in effectiveness of UGC and MGC Advertisements on YouTube: Attitudes, Consumer Brand Engagements, Purchase Intention.

**Principal investigator:** Jingnan Miao, Schreyer Honors College, PSU  
Email: [jzm5906@psu.edu](mailto:jzm5906@psu.edu) Work phone: 814-777-6171

**Description of the project:**

The study in which you will be participating is part of a project intended to evaluate how people will respond to the copy of advertising messages. This research use questionnaire, which will last about 10 minutes. If you agree to take part in the study, you will be asked to watch a 1-minute video clip and fill out a series of questions regarding your thoughts and opinions.

By participating in the study, you will help researcher identify how to effectively communicated product information in ads. Results from this research could help researcher and practitioners improve ad and message designs in the future. In the meantime, you also might experience first-hand experimental research methods and procedures that are commonly employed in advertising and marketing communication research.

**Discomfort and risks:** There are no risks or discomfort associated with participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

**Statement of confidentiality:** This research does not ask for any information that would identify who the responses belong to. Therefore, your responses are completely anonymous. The code on the questionnaire will be used only to allow the researcher to link all the responses to the materials you have read. If this research is published, no information that could identify you will be written because your identity is in no way linked to your responses.

**Right to ask questions:** You may ask any questions about the research procedures, and these questions will be answered. Further questions should be directed to Jingnan Miao at [814-777-6171](tel:814-777-6171).

**Voluntary participation:** You do not have to participate in this research. You can stop your participation at any time. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study.

The completion and return of the survey implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to participate in the research.

**Appendix C**  
**Stimuli**



*Stimulus 1: User-Generated Content (UGC) & Experience Goods video*



*Stimulus 2: User-Generated Content (UGC) & Search Goods video*



*Stimulus 3: Marketer-Generated Content (MGC) & Search Goods video*



*Stimulus 4: Marketer-Generated Content (MGC) & Experience Goods video*

## **Academic Vita** **Jingnan Miao**

201 Vairo Blvd, Apt 130  
State College, PA 16803

814-777-6171  
niccmiao@gmail.com

### **EDUCATION**

The Pennsylvania State University  
*Class of 2018*

University Park, PA

B.A. (Hon) in Advertising  
B.S. in Information Science and Technology

### **ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE**

- Student Honors Thesis, Penn State Schreyer Honors College, Aug 2016 - present

### **STUDENT ACTIVITY EXPERIENCE**

- Business Operation Manager, The Daily Collegian (Student Newspaper), Apr 2017 - present
- Business Operation Specialist, The Daily Collegian (Student Newspaper), Apr 2016 - Apr 2017
- Promotion Representative, The Daily Collegian (Student Newspaper), Aug 2015 - Apr 2016
- Member, Public Relations Committee, Penn State Dance Marathon (THON), Aug 2016 - Feb 2017
- Peer Mentor, Donald P. Bellisario College of Communications Peer Mentor, Feb 2016 – Dec 2016
- President, Nonprofit Photography Studio (Student Club), Aug 2015-Apr 2016

### **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

- Social Media Intern, Penn State Undergraduate Admissions Office, Aug 2017 - Dec 2017
- Brand Marketing Intern, SURGE Business Development, May 2017 - Aug 2017
- Account Executive Intern, NBCUniversal Media LLC, Jun 2016 - Jul 2016
- Marketing Intern, ParkingBee, Feb 2016 - May 2016

### **HONORS, SCHOLARSHIP & AWARDS**

- Schreyer Scholar, Penn State Schreyer Honors College, 2017-present
- Member, Kappa Tau Alpha Honors Society, 2017-present
- Member, Alpha Delta Sigma Honors Society, 2017-present
- The Interstate Advertising Managers' Association Scholarship, 2017-2018
- 1st Place, LevLane Case Competition, Penn State Smeal College of Business, 2017
- Dean's List for 7 consecutive semesters, Penn State, 2014-2017