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AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF UGC & WEB TALK ON BRAND ATTITUDE

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Abstract: Social Media and Social Networking Sites are integrated part of our life today. Innovative features of Social Networking sites have empowered customers to share their own experiences with millions of other members, after consuming a product or service. These shared experiences of other users have been influencing the perception of other customer in building the attitude towards the brand because customers emphasize more on user generated contents and social web talks than brand promoted contents and advertisements. Digitally exposed customers encounter with hundreds of user generated contents and electronic word of mouth every day. Present study used 'Stimulus-Response' framework to evaluate the influence of Brand related user generated content & electronic word of mouth on Brand Attitude. Responses from 256 respondents had been recorded and analyzed with help of suitable statistical applications to reach the conclusion. The study also evaluated combined influence of user generated content and electronic word of mouth on brand attitude and observed strong correlation between UGC & eWOM with brand attitude.

Index Terms: User Generated Content, UGC, Electronic Word of Mouth, eWOM, Purchase Intention, Buying Behavior in Digital Platform

Introduction: Being empowered with Web 2.0 technology, Social Networking site applications have created excellently innovative collaborative platforms for their users. Along with several personal posts, members of those social networking sites also have been sharing their own experiences, they have gained after consumption of a product or a brand. They are sharing, whatever they believe. These brand related user generated contents are consumed by millions of other users in the platform and social web talk is initiated in the form of electronic word of mouth (Evans, 2010). As India is the second largest country in terms of internet users (just after China), users of social media, go through several product related customer generated posts every day and these user created posts are considered as most significant input in their decision making process (Internet Adoption in India, 2021). Experiences shared by other customers, are believed to be more authentic than brand promoted contents. Today's customer builds perception, largely depending on shared information of other users. User generated contents and electronic word of mouth is treated as most trusted input in buying related decision making process of other customers and building the perception on the brand and the product. Social web is considered as the largest source of any product or brand related information now (Hajli, 2014). Present study has chosen consumer electronics market to study the influence of user generated content and electronic word of mouth on brand attitude of Indian customers.

Literature Review:

Shuqair et al (2016) conducted a study with customers of Bahrain to understand the influence of UGC and electronic word of mouth. The research work observed that the customers are significantly influenced by electronic word of mouth and perceived other customer's post, reviews and sharing are more trustworthy. Positive shared experience of other users, build confidence and trusts in other customers (Shuqair et al., 2016). Regarding information, customers of present century depends on social networking sites and develops their attitude on the basis of web conversation (Devedi et al., 2017). Social networking sites provide excellent applications to collaborate, which generates social web talks and initiates electronic word of mouth (Evans, 2010). A study conducted by Fehrest (2020) revealed a positive relationship between UGC and staying accommodation selection. Research also argued that among all the UGCs, the travellers review is considered as the most important input to the decision making process (Fehrest et al., 2020). To know about different features of the product and after sales services quality provided by the brand, customers depend more on user generated contents and reviews posted in different social networking platforms and websites (Ivana, 2021). Arif et al (2020) accepted the role of social media in providing awesome platform to communicate among themselves and express opinion very easily. The study also advocated the role of social networking sites in customer engagement (Arif et al., 2020). Web 2.0 technology has brought radical change in decision making process of customers of digital era. Shared opinion of other customers play pivotal role in brand positioning and attitude formation of customers, which leads to acceptance or avoidance response (Perera et al., 2020). In their research Poch & Martin (2015) evaluated impact of UGC on customer's attitude. Factors as involvement,

customer knowledge and customer orientation were examined in the study. It revealed significant correlation between smart phone, social media and user innovation. Study claims significant role of UGC in reshaping consumer attitude towards the brand in this era after observing strong positive correlation with Consumer Based Brand Equity Constructs. (Poch & Martin, 2015)

Objective of the Study

Theoretical background study, Literature review & Gap analysis have facilitated to formulate objectives of the study, as follows-

- To examine the influence of Brand Related User Generated Content (UGC) on Brand Attitude
- To investigate the influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) on Brand Attitude.

Hypothesis:

The study was conducted to analyze below mentioned hypotheses-

H₁1: User Generated Content influences Brand Attitude Significantly

H₁2: Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) has significant impact on Brand Attitude

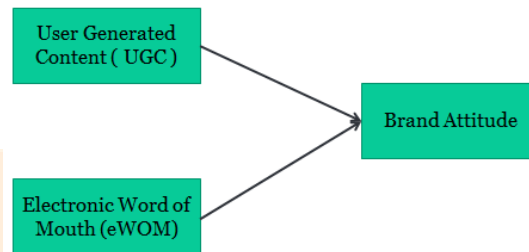


Image 1: Causal Model for the Study

Research Methodology

The research was designed with survey method, using a well-structured questionnaire. Study used five point likert scales to record the response obtained from 256 randomly chosen samples. Research used **Stimulus – Response** framework to formulate research structure. Two visual stimuli were created to exhibit the respondents. Internal consistency of the measures were validated by Cronbach's Alpha Test. Regression Analysis was carried out for hypothesis testing. For descriptive and Statistical Analysis, SPSS & Jamovi had been used.

Reliability of Measures Analysis:

Internal consistency of the measures was examined by Cronbach's Alpha Value.

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha Value
User Generated Content (UGC)	0.80
Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)	0.78
Brand Attitude	0.74

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Value Calculation

Cronbach's Alpha value for UGC had been found 0.80 ('Good'), eWOM is 0.78 (<0.70; Acceptable and very close to 'Good'), & Brand Attitude is 0.74 (<0.70; Acceptable). Obtained values of Cronbach's Alpha ensured internal consistency of the measures with satisfactory value (Kooning et al, 2009).

Analysis & Discussion:

Correlation Matrix:

		UGC	eWOM	BA
UGC	Pearson's r	—		
	p-value	—		
eWOM	Pearson's r	0.63	—	
	p-value	< .001	—	
BA	Pearson's r	0.472	0.531	—
	p-value	< .001	< .001	—

Table – II: Pearson's Correlation matrix

To understand linear association of UGC and eWOM with Brand Attitude, Person's correlation matrix had been developed. Pearson's r Value supported linear association between the variables UGC – Brand Attitude, eWOM – Brand Attitude. P-Value of nonexistence of relationship between the variables were < 0.001 which prominently rejected null hypothesis and strongly advocates towards strong relationship between the variables.

Hypothesis 1:

			Unstandardized Estimate	Standard Error	Standardized Estimate (β)	t Value	P Value
Brand Attitude	<---	User Generated Content	0.559	0.065	0.472	8.543	***

Table-III: Regression Analysis Result_UGC - BA

Obtained results ($P < 0.001$, $t = 8.54$, $\beta = 0.472$) established significant influence of User Generated Content on Brand Attitude. Null hypothesis is rejected with significance of less than 0.001 and Alternative Hypothesis is accepted for Hypothesis-I.

Hypothesis II:

			Unstandardized Estimate	Standard Error	Standardized Estimate (β)	t Value	P Value
Brand Attitude	<---	Electronic Word of Mouth	0.628	0.063	0.531	10.006	***

Table-III: Regression Analysis Result_UGC - BA

Obtained value of P (< 0.001) significantly rejected Null hypothesis and accepted Alternative hypothesis with Standard Error of 0.06 only. Influence of eWOM is significantly established on Brand Attitude with β value 0.531. High value of the ratio of Regression Weight & S.E also establishes the fact.

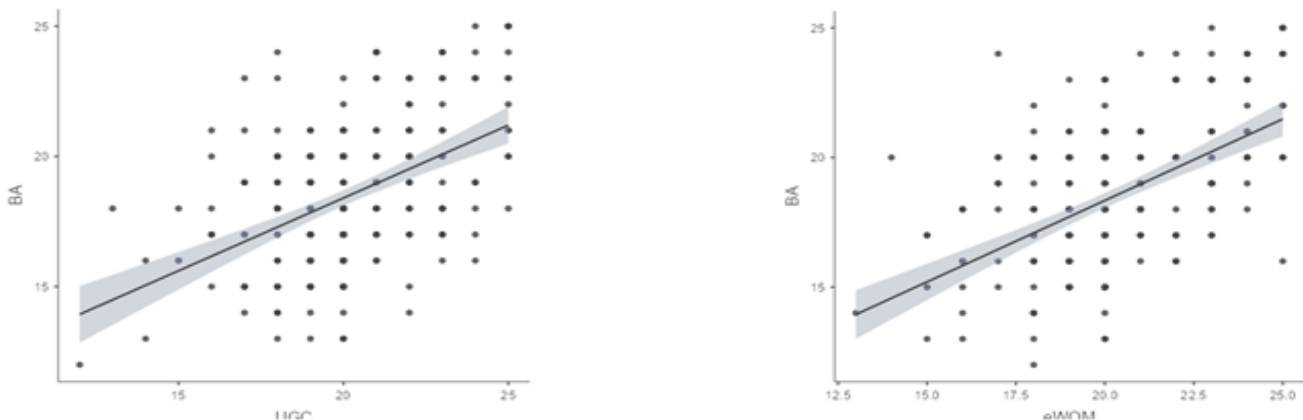


Image 2: Regression Line for Hypothesis I & II

Combined Influence of UGC & eWOM on Brand Attitude

The study also investigates combined effect of User Generated Content & Electronic Word of Mouth on Brand Attitude as UGC is highly associated with eWOM and it is the form of propagation of UGC. Users of the platforms also exposed to both positive & negative eWOM regarding UGC.

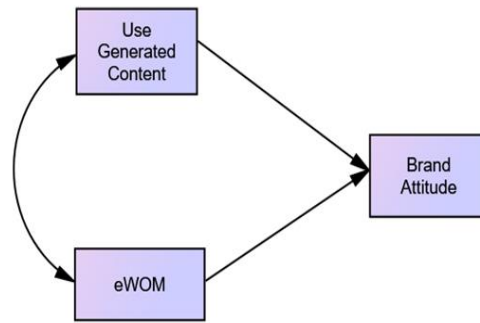


Image 5: Combined Influence of UGC & eWOM on Brand Attitude

Regression Analysis: Combined Influence of UGC & eWOM

Study also evaluated combined influence of UGC & eWOM on Brand Attitude of Indian customers

			Unstandardized Estimate	Standard Error	Standardized Estimate (β)	t Value	P Value
Brand Attitude	<---	UGC	0.27	0.079	0.228	3.409	***
Brand Attitude	<---	eWOM	0.459	0.079	0.388	5.803	***

Table- IV: Combined Influence of UGC & eWOM

Obtained results (UGC to Brand Attitude: $\beta=0.228$, $t=3.409$, $P < 0.001$ & eWOM to Brand Attitude: $\beta=0.388$, $t=5.803$, $P<0.001$) of combined influences of UGC & eWOM on Brand Attitude also establishes significant influence of these two variables on Brand Attitude.

Conclusion:

Analysis of the results obtained from the study establishes significant impact of User Generated Contents (UGC) & Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) on formation of Brand Attitude of Indian customers. Due to high exposure to social web talks and thousands of user Generated contents created every day, today's customers are influenced by the trustworthy source of information related to product and brand. Other customer's shared information are shaping the Brand Attitude of today's customer and also triggering the Purchase Intention. Like all other arena, Web 2.0 technology and SNS applications have played crucial role in moderating customer behavior. Brands should use these gold mines of information in the form of Social Web talk, in all decision making process of the organization. Only customer centric approach can help brand in positioning and forming a positive attitude of the customers towards the Brand.

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