NNT : 2024AIXM0256

# THÈSE DE DOCTORAT

Soutenue à Aix-Marseille Université
le 10/09/2024 par

ABBAS Hassan

# Impact of type of content (UGC vs BGC) on customer involvement and brand engagement : A signaling theory perspective

Discipline
Sciences de Gestion

École doctorale
ED 372 – SCIENCES ECONOMIQUES ET DE GESTION

Laboratoire
CERGAM

Composition du jury

| | |
|---|---|
| Nehme Azoury<br>Professeur, Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik, Liban | Rapporteur |
| Virginie de Barnier<br>Professeure, Aix Marseille Université, IAE | Directrice de thèse |
| Agnès Helme-Guizon<br>Professeure, Grenoble Alpes Université, IAE | Presidente du jury & Examinatrice |
| Jocelyn Husser<br>Professeur, Aix Marseille Université, IAE | Co-directeur de thèse |
| Jean-François Lemoine<br>Professeur, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne | Rapporteur |

# Affidavit

I, undersigned, ABBAS, Hassan hereby declare that the work presented in this manuscript is my own work, carried out under the scientific supervision of *Prof. de Barnier, Virginie (Director)* *and* *Prof. Husser (Co-Director),* in accordance with the principles of honesty, integrity and responsibility inherent to the research mission. The research work and the writing of this manuscript have been carried out in compliance with both the French national charter for Research Integrity and the Aix-Marseille University charter on the fight against plagiarism.

This work has not been submitted previously either in this country or in another country in the same or in a similar version to any other examination body.

Place Aix-en-Provence, date 8 juin 2020



Cette œuvre est mise à disposition selon les termes de la Licence Creative Commons Attribution - Pas d'Utilisation Commerciale - Pas de Modification 4.0 International.

# Liste de publications et/ou brevets et participation aux conférences

1) Liste des publications et/ou brevet [1] réalisées dans le cadre du projet de thèse :

    1. Analyzing the Impact of User-Generated and Firm-Generated Content on Online Shopper Behavior in a Developing Market: A Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) Approach (Acceptance in the journal)
    2. Individuals' perception of moral and ethical issues aroused by social media: a netnographic approach. (Submitted)
    3.
    …

2) Participation aux conférences[2] et écoles d'été au cours de la période de thèse :
    1. SZABIST International Conference 2.0
    2. Colloque Marketing Digital
    3.

    …

[1] Cette liste comprend les articles publiés, les articles soumis à publication et les articles en préparation ainsi que les livres, chapitres de livre et/ou toutes formes de valorisation des résultats des travaux propres à la discipline du projet de thèse. La référence aux publications doit suivre les règles standards de bibliographie et doit être conforme à la charte des publications d'AMU.

[2] Le terme « conférence » est générique. Il désigne à la fois « conférence », « congrès », « workshop », « colloques », « rencontres nationales et/ou internationales » … etc.
Indiquer si vous avez fait une présentation orale ou sous forme de poster.

# Impact of Type of content (User Generated Content vs Brand Generated Content) on customer involvement and brand engagement: A signaling theory perspective 3Cs (Credibility, Consistency and Clarity)

Hassan Abbas

Dissertation submitted to the faculty of
Aix-Marseille Graduate School of Management - IAE
Chemin de la Quille Puyricard, Aix-en-Provence, France.
In the fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
In
Discipline: Sciences de Gestion

Director: Prof. Virginie de Barnier
Co-director: Prof. Jocelyn Husser

Keywords: User Generated Content, Brand Generated Content, social media, customer involvement, brand engagement

**Copyrights: Hassan Abbas (2024-25)**

**Impact of Type of content (User Generated Content vs Brand Generated Content) on customer involvement and brand engagement: A signaling theory perspective 3Cs (Credibility, Consistency and Clarity)**

Hassan Abbas

# Abstract

This thesis investigates the impact of User-Generated Content (UGC) versus Brand-Generated Content (BGC) on customer involvement and brand engagement with the conceptual background of the signaling theory (Dunham, 2011). Using a mixed-methods approach, the research begins with a qualitative study enabling triangulation of methods: lexical analysis, thematic analysis, and netnography. The qualitative phase revealed that consumers perceive UGC as more credible, consistent, and clearer compared to BGC, leading to greater customer involvement and brand engagement.

Building on these findings, and a pre-test, a quantitative study was conducted with 400 participants using LEGO and GoPro as the focal brands to test our models implying the following variables: brand credibility, brand consistency, brand clarity, customer involvement and brand engagement. The study developed and tested five models: a Global Model, UGC Model, BGC Model, and separate models for LEGO and GoPro. The UGC Model exhibited superior fits and stronger effects on brand credibility, clarity, consistency, customer involvement, and brand engagement compared to the other models. The findings validated the proposed hypotheses, demonstrating that UGC significantly outperforms BGC in enhancing the signal in terms of brand's credibility, clarity, consistency, and ultimately driving higher customer involvement and brand engagement.

This research contributes to the literature by empirically supporting the superior influence of UGC through a signaling theory perspective and provides practical insights for marketers to leverage UGC effectively. It highlights the importance of a signals' credibility, consistency, and clarity in content marketing, and thus suggesting that brands should facilitate and encourage the creation of UGC to foster deeper consumer relationships. Future research should explore the long-term effects of UGC on brand engagement and investigate the role of different social media platforms in moderating the impact of content types.

# Résumé

Cette thèse examine l'impact du contenu généré par les utilisateurs (UGC: User Generated Content) par rapport au contenu généré par les marques (BGC: Brand Generated Content) sur l'implication des clients et l'engagement envers la marque, en se basant sur le cadre conceptuel de la théorie du signal (Dunham, 2011). Utilisant une approche mixte, la recherche commence par une étude qualitative permettant la triangulation des méthodes: analyse lexicale, analyse thématique et netnographie. La phase qualitative a montré que les consommateurs perçoivent l'UGC comme plus crédible, cohérente et claire comparé au BGC, ce qui conduit à une plus grande implication des clients et à un engagement accru envers la marque.

Sur la base de ces résultats et d'un pré-test, une étude quantitative a été menée auprès de 400 participants utilisant LEGO et GoPro comme marques principales pour tester nos modèles compose des variables suivantes : crédibilité de la marque, cohérence de la marque, clarté de la marque, implication des clients et engagement envers la marque. L'étude a développé et testé cinq modèles : un modèle global, un modèle UGC, un modèle BGC et des modèles séparés pour LEGO et GoPro. Le modèle UGC a montré des indicateurs d'ajustements supérieurs et des effets plus forts sur la crédibilité, la clarté, la cohérence de la marque, l'implication des clients et l'engagement envers la marque par rapport aux autres modèles. Les résultats ont validé les hypothèses proposées, démontrant que l'UGC surpasse significativement le BGC en améliorant le signal en termes de crédibilité, clarté, cohérence de la marque et, finalement, en générant une plus grande implication des clients et un engagement envers la marque.

Cette recherche contribue à la littérature en soutenant empiriquement l'influence supérieure de l'UGC à travers la perspective de la théorie du signal et fournit des recommandations pratiques pour les marketeurs afin de tirer parti efficacement de l'UGC. Elle souligne l'importance de la crédibilité, de la cohérence et de la clarté des signaux dans le marketing de contenu, suggérant ainsi que les marques devraient faciliter et encourager la création d'UGC pour favoriser des relations plus profondes avec les consommateurs. Les recherches futures devraient explorer les effets à long terme de l'UGC sur l'engagement envers la marque et étudier le rôle des différentes plateformes de médias sociaux dans la modération de l'impact des types de contenu.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving wife **Heer Hassan**, my kids, amazingly beautiful and intellectual daughter **Hazel Abbas**, and super creative son **Zurain Abbas**, my loving parents without whose support this wouldn't have been possible and my psychologist sister **Farwa Abbas** who kept on doing free sessions to keep me sane. It wouldn't have been possible without all of your support and sacrifice.

# Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I extend my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Virginie de Barnier. From the very beginning, she has been my guiding light, illuminating the path of this challenging journey. Her unwavering belief in my abilities and her keen insight into the intricacies of my research were instrumental in bringing this thesis to fruition. Prof. de Barnier taught me that completing a thesis is not a sprint but a marathon, a lesson that carried me through every moment of doubt and struggle. Her support during times of anxiety and depression was invaluable, and I could not have asked for a more dedicated and compassionate mentor.

I would also like to thank the IAE Graduate School of Management. The entire team provided essential support throughout my academic journey, from the initial registration process to ensuring that everything remained on track. Their dedication to the students' success is truly commendable, and I am deeply grateful for their assistance.

A heartfelt thanks goes to the CERGAM lab team. Your camaraderie, collaboration, and encouragement created a stimulating and supportive environment that greatly enhanced my research experience. Each of you contributed to my growth as a researcher, and I am thankful for the shared knowledge and collective effort.

My deepest appreciation goes to my parents, whose unwavering support and belief in me made this achievement possible. Their sacrifices, encouragement, and constant love have been the foundation upon which I built my academic pursuits. I cannot imagine completing, or even starting, this PhD without them.

I am also deeply grateful to my sister. As a psychologist, she offered me not only professional guidance but also personal reassurance that helped me navigate the many doubts and challenges that arose during this journey. Her support was a crucial pillar that kept me steady and focused.

Lastly, I owe a profound debt of gratitude to my wife. Her extraordinary ability to manage our home and care for my parents and our two children allowed me to dedicate myself fully to my research. She ensured that our children's education, nutrition, and health were always prioritized, and her love and support provided me with the strength to persevere. Her unwavering belief in me and her constant encouragement were the bedrock of my success.

## Contents


Affidavit ..... 0

Liste de publications et/ou brevets et participation aux conférences ..... 1

General Introduction ..... 23

1. Chapter 1: Literature Review ..... 46

1.1. User Generated Content ..... 46

1.1.1. Emergence of User Generated Content ..... 46

1.1.2. UGC Literature Review ..... 48

1.1.3. Types of UGC ..... 49

1.1.4. UGC and e-WOM ..... 49

1.2. Signaling Theory: ..... 52

1.2.1. Origins of Signaling Theory ..... 52

1.2.2. Brand Signal: ..... 55

1.2.3. 3C Attributes of a Signal: ..... 55

1.3. Customer Involvement ..... 59

1.3.1. Managerial Perspective of Customer Involvement ..... 59

1.3.2. Customer Involvement literature review ..... 62

1.3.3. Involvement and Co-creation ..... 64

1.3.4. Factors underlying involvement. ..... 66

1.3.5. Involvement and organizations ..... 66

1.3.6. Type of products and involvement ..... 68

1.3.7. Perceived risk and involvement ..... 69

1.3.8. Effects of customer involvement ..... 70

1.3.9. Customer involvement and customer engagement ..... 71

*1.3.10.* Customer Involvement in Services Perspective: ..... 72

1.3.11. Dimensions of Involvement ..... 75

1.4. Brand Engagement ..... 75

1.4.1. Managerial Perspective of Brand Engagement ..... 75

1.4.2. Brand Engagement literature review ..... 80

1.4.3. Engagement definition: ..... 83

1.4.4. Brand Engagement ..... 86
1.4.5. Brand Engagement through Gamification ..... 90
1.4.6. Brand Engagement through Online Brand Communities ..... 93
1.5. Chapter Summary: ..... 96
2. Chapter 2: Qualitative Research ..... 98
2.1. Research Objective: ..... 98
2.2. Research Questions: ..... 98
2.3. Epistemological Position ..... 100
2.4. Introduction: Qualitative Research ..... 102
2.5. Approaches of Qualitative Research ..... 103
2.5.1. Lexical Analysis ..... 103
2.5.2. Thematic Analysis ..... 104
2.5.3. Netnography ..... 105
2.6. Triangulation of methods ..... 108
2.7. Qualitative Research Methodology: ..... 110
2.8. Screening Sample ..... 110
2.9. Sample Selection ..... 111
2.10. Sample Details: ..... 112
2.11. Semi Structured Interviews: ..... 115
2.12. Interview Guide ..... 115
2.13. Interview Guide Execution: ..... 116
2.14. Pilot Study: ..... 117
2.15. Interview guide for qualitative studies. ..... 118
3. Chapter 3: Qualitative Analyses ..... 123
3.1. Lexical Analysis ..... 123
3.1.1. Lexical Analysis –Words' frequency ..... 123
3.1.2. Lexical data analysis of words' frequency ..... 126
3.1.3. Lexical Analysis - Most Preferred Social Media Network ..... 127
3.1.4. Lexical Analysis - Type of Content ..... 130
3.1.5. Lexical Analysis – Type of Content (Gender Based) ..... 131
3.1.6. Lexical Analysis – Brand Promotions ..... 132
3.1.7. Lexical Analysis for Emotions: ..... 132

3.1.8. Lexical analysis discussion ..... 137
3.2. Thematic Analysis: ..... 140
3.2.1. Phases of Thematic Analysis: ..... 140
3.2.2. Thematic analysis conclusion ..... 148
3.2.3. Thematic analysis results and discussion ..... 149
3.3. Netnography ..... 160
3.3.1. Netnography data collection, analysis and representation ..... 162
3.3.2. Data collection process ..... 162
3.3.3. Netnography results and discussions ..... 167
3.4. Qualitative research analyses chapter summary ..... 186
4. Chapter 4: Quantitative Research ..... 190
4.1. Model Construction and Research Hypothesis ..... 190
4.1.1. Model Construction ..... 190
4.1.2. Development of Hypothesis: ..... 191
4.1.3. Hypothesis: ..... 209
4.2. Pretest of scenario and questionnaire ..... 210
4.2.1. Objective of pretests: ..... 210
4.2.2. Choice of the brand ..... 211
4.2.3. Total pretest sample ..... 216
4.2.4. Pretest 1: Scenario 1 LEGO UGC ..... 216
4.2.5. Pretest 2: Scenario 2 LEGO BGC ..... 220
4.2.6. Pretest 3: Scenario 3 GoPro UGC ..... 223
4.2.7. Pretest 4: Scenario 4 GoPro BGC ..... 227
4.2.8. Demographic (Between groups mean comparison) ..... 230
4.2.9. Pretest quantitative analysis chapter summary ..... 231
5. Chapter 5: Measurement Scales ..... 233
5.1. Importance of measurement scales: ..... 233
5.2. Customer involvement: ..... 234
5.2.1. Definition and interests of customer involvement: ..... 234
5.2.2. Discussion and choice of customer involvement measurement scale ..... 235
5.3. Brand credibility: ..... 240
5.3.1. Definitions and interest of brand credibility: ..... 240

5.3.2. Discussion and choice of brand credibility measurement scale: 241
5.4. Brand consistency: 245
5.4.1. Definition and Interests of Brand Consistency 245
5.4.2. Discussion and choice of brand consistency measurement scale 246
5.5. Brand clarity: 249
5.5.1. Definition and interests of brand clarity: 249
5.5.2. Discussion and choice of brand clarity measurement scale: 249
5.6. Brand engagement 253
5.6.1. Definition and interests of customer brand engagement: 253
5.6.2. Discussion and choice of brand engagement measurement scale: 254
5.7. Control variable brand familiarity: 260
5.7.1. Definition and interests of brand familiarity: 260
5.7.2. Discussion and choice of brand familiarity measurement scale: 261
5.8. Elaboration of the Questionnaire 265
5.9. Measurement scales chapter summary 271
6. Chapter 6: Quantitative Analysis 274
6.1. Sample validation Quantitative Study: 274
6.1.1. Scenario 1: LEGO UGC 275
6.1.2. Scenario 2: LEGO BGC: 279
6.1.3. Scenario 3: GoPro UGC 282
6.1.4. Scenario 4: GoPro BGC 285
6.2. Elaboration of the 5 models studied 289
6.3. Comparison of Model Fit Indices 292
6.4. Model Fit Indices conducted 293
6.4.1. Fit Indices 294
6.4.2. Absolute Fit Indices 294
6.4.3. Incremental Fit Indices 294
6.4.4. Parsimonious Fit Indices 295
6.5. Model 1: Global Model – (LEGO UGC, BGC) and (GoPro UGC, BGC) 297
6.5.1. Model 1 Fit Indices: 298
6.5.2. Model 1: Effect Size 299
6.6. Comparison of Model 2 and Model 3: Global UGC Model & Global BGC Model 311
6.6.1. Model 2: Global UGC Model – LEGO UGC and GoPro UGC 311

6.6.2. Model 2 Fit Indices: 312
6.6.3. Model 3: Global BGC Model – LEGO BGC and GoPro BGC 314
6.6.4. Model 3 Fit Indices: 315
6.6.5. Model 2 and 3 hypotheses testing: 317
6.7. Model 4: LEGO Brand (UGC and BGC): 336
6.8. Model 5: GoPro Brand (UGC and BGC) 352
6.9. Discussion of each model 373
6.9.1. Model 1: Global Model 373
6.9.2. Comparison Model 2 and Model 3: 374
6.9.3. Model 4: LEGO UGC and LEGO BGC 378
6.9.4. Model 5: GoPro UGC and GoPro BGC 379
6.9.5. Summary of discussion 381
7. Chapter 7: Contributions, Limitations & Recommendations and Conclusion 383
7.1. Theoretical Contributions: 383
7.2. Methodological Contributions: 384
7.3. Managerial Contributions: 385
7.4. Contribution section conclusion 387
7.5. Limitations 389
7.6. Recommendation 390
Global conclusion 392
8. References 407
9. Appendices 439

**List of Tables**

Table 1 - Summary of Successful BGC Campaign ..... 30

Table 2 - Overview of the Dissertation..... 45

Table 3 - Synthesis of Research Design ..... 99

Table 4 - Summary of chosen Qualitative Research Methods..... 107

Table 5 - Details of the selected sample and discarded interviews (In green)..... 113

Table 6 - Gender Wise Participant graph..... 114

Table 7 - Gender wise participant education ..... 114

Table 8 - Gender wise participant income ..... 115

Table 9 - Most referred words ..... 123

Table 10 - Graphical Representation of Lexical Analysis - Most Frequent Words..... 126

Table 11 - Lexical Analysis - Most Preferred Social Media Network ..... 127

Table 12 - SEP (Literature Review)..... 133

Table 13 - Standardized Emotional Profile (SEP) by Holbrook & Batra, (1987) ..... 134

Table 14 - lexical analysis for emotions under the SEP Framework..... 136

Table 15 - Thematic Analysis..... 142

Table 16 - Details of the Communities for Netnographic data collection ..... 163

Table 17 - Results Summary of Netnographic Study ..... 184

Table 18 - Comparison of selected brand ..... 211

Table 19 - Experiment Groups..... 216

Table 20 - Demographic details of Pre-test scenario 1 LEGO UGC..... 218

Table 21 - Mean comparison Att. towards brand before and after Pre-test scenario 1 LEGO UGC

..... 219

Table 22 - Manipulation check Pre-test scenario 1 LEGO UGC ..... 219
Table 23 - Demographic details of Pre-test scenario 2 LEGO BGC ..... 221
Table 24 - Mean comparison Att. towards brand before and after Pre-test scenario 2 LEGO BGC ..... 222
Table 25 - Manipulation check Pre-test scenario 2 LEGO BGC ..... 222
Table 26 - Demographic details of Pre-test scenario 3 GoPro UGC ..... 225
Table 27 - Mean comparison Att. towards brand before and after Pre-test scenario 3 GoPro UGC ..... 226
Table 28 - Manipulation check Pre-test scenario 3 GoPro UGC ..... 226
Table 29 - Demographic details of Pre-test scenario 4 GoPro BGC ..... 228
Table 30 - Mean comparison Att. towards brand before and after Pre-test scenario 4 GoPro BGC ..... 229
Table 31 - Manipulation check Pre-test scenario 4 GoPro BGC ..... 230
Table 32 - ANOVA - (Demographic between groups mean comparison) ..... 230
Table 33 - Summary Comparison of Customer Involvement scales ..... 238
Table 34 - Summary Comparison of measurement scales for brand credibility ..... 243
Table 35 - Summary comparison of measurements scale for brand consistency ..... 247
Table 36 – Summary of comparison of measurement scale for Brand clarity ..... 251
Table 37 - Summary of comparison of measurement scale for brand engagement ..... 258
Table 38 – Summary of comparison of measurement scale for Brand familiarity ..... 264
Table 39 - KMO and Bartlett’s test results ..... 275
Table 40 - Descriptive Statistics ..... 276
Table 41 - Average Variance Extracted ..... 278

Table 42 - KMO & Barlett's test ..... 279
Table 43 - Descriptive Statistics ..... 280
Table 44 - Average Variance Extracted ..... 281
Table 45 - KMO & Bartlett's test ..... 282
Table 46 - Descriptive Statistics ..... 282
Table 47 - Average Variance Extracted ..... 284
Table 48 - KMO & Bartlett's test ..... 285
Table 49 - Descriptive Statistics ..... 285
Table 50 - Average Variance Extracted ..... 286
Table 51 - Comparison of Effect size between Global Model, UGC Model and BGC Model .. 290
Table 52 - Comparison of Model Fit Indices ..... 292
Table 53 - Global Model Fit Indices ..... 298
Table 54 - Effect Size ..... 299
Table 55 - Model Summary ..... 303
Table 56 - ANOVA ..... 303
Table 57 - Results of linear regression analysis ..... 303
Table 58 - Model Summary ..... 305
Table 59 - ANOVA ..... 305
Table 60 - Results of linear regression analysis ..... 305
Table 61 - Model Summary ..... 307
Table 62 - ANOVA ..... 307
Table 63 - Results of linear regression analysis ..... 307
Table 64 - Model Summary ..... 308

Table 65 - ANOVA ..... 308
Table 66 - Results of linear regression analysis ..... 309
Table 67 - UGC Model (LEGO UGC and GoPro UGC) Fit Indices ..... 312
Table 68- Effect size UGC Model (LEGO UGC and GoPro UGC) ..... 313
Table 69 - BGC Model (LEGO BGC and GoPro BGC) Fit Indices ..... 315
Table 70 - Effect size BGC Model (LEGO BGC and GoPro BGC) ..... 316
Table 71 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand credibility ..... 317
Table 72 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand clarity. ..... 318
Table 73 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency. ..... 319
Table 74 - UGC Model Summary ..... 320
Table 75 - ANOVA UGC model ..... 320
Table 76 - Results of linear regression analysis UGC model ..... 320
Table 77 - BGC Model Summary ..... 321
Table 78 - ANOVA BGC Model ..... 321
Table 79 - Results of linear regression analysis BGC Model ..... 321
Table 80 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency and brand credibility ..... 322
Table 81 - UGC Model Summary ..... 323
Table 82 - ANOVA UGC Model ..... 324
Table 83 - Results of linear regression analysis UGC Model ..... 324
Table 84 - BGC Model Summary ..... 324
Table 85 - ANOVA BGC Model ..... 324
Table 86 - Results of linear regression analysis BGC Model ..... 324

Table 87 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC between brand clarity and brand credibility. ..... 326
Table 88 - UGC Model Summary ..... 327
Table 89 - ANOVA UGC Model ..... 327
Table 90 - Results of linear regression analysis UGC Model ..... 327
Table 91 - BGC Model Summary ..... 327
Table 92 - ANOVA BGC Model ..... 328
Table 93 - Results of linear regression analysis BGC Model ..... 328
Table 94 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand credibility and customer involvement ..... 329
Table 95 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand engagement ..... 330
Table 96 - UGC Model Summary ..... 331
Table 97 - ANOVA UGC Model ..... 331
Table 98 - Results of linear regression analysis UGC Model ..... 331
Table 99 - BGC Model Summary ..... 332
Table 100 - ANOVA BGC Model ..... 332
Table 101 - Results of linear regression analysis BGC Model ..... 332
Table 102 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC between brand clarity and brand credibility ..... 333
Table 103 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand engagement. ..... 334
Table 104 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand credibility ..... 336
Table 105 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand clarity ..... 337
Table 106 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency ..... 338

Table 107 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model Summary ..... 339
Table 108 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model ANOVA ..... 339
Table 109 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model Results of Linear regression analysis ..... 339
Table 110 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency and brand credibility ..... 340
Table 111 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model Summary ..... 341
Table 112 - UGC and BGC Model ANOVA ..... 341
Table 113 - UGC and BGC Model Results of regression analysis ..... 342
Table 114 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency and brand credibility ..... 343
Table 115 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model Summary ..... 344
Table 116 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model ANOVA ..... 344
Table 117 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model Results of regression analysis ..... 344
Table 118 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC between customer involvement and brand engagement ..... 346
Table 119 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on customer involvement ..... 347
Table 120 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model Summary ..... 348
Table 121 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model ANOVA ..... 348
Table 122 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model Results of linear regression analysis ..... 348
Table 123 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC between customer involvement and brand engagement ..... 349
Table 124 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand engagement. ..... 350
Table 125 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand credibility ..... 352

Table 126 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand clarity ..... 353
Table 127 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency ..... 354
Table 128 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model Summary ..... 356
Table 129 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model ANOVA ..... 356
Table 130 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model Results of linear regression analysis ..... 356
Table 131 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency and brand credibility ..... 358
Table 132 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model Summary ..... 359
Table 133 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model ANOVA ..... 359
Table 134 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model Results of linear regression analysis ..... 359
Table 135 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency and brand credibility ..... 361
Table 136 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model Summary ..... 362
Table 137 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model ANOVA ..... 362
Table 138 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model Results of linear regression analysis ..... 362
Table 139 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC between customer involvement and brand engagement ..... 364
Table 140 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on customer involvement ..... 365
Table 141 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model Summary ..... 366
Table 142 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model ANOVA ..... 366
Table 143 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model Results of linear regression analysis ..... 366
Table 144 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC between customer involvement and brand engagement ..... 368

Table 145 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand engagement ..... 369

Table 146 - Summary Model wise hypothesis results ..... 370

Table 147 – Summary of Theoretical Contributions ..... 396

Table 148 - Managerial Contributions summary ..... 399

Table 149 - Summary of Limitations ..... 402

Table 150 - Summary Future Recommendations ..... 405

**List of Figures**

Figure 1 – Social Media user over time (YOY) ..... 24

Figure 2 – Asia Pacific UGC Platform Market ..... 25

Figure 3 - Instagram page of SM Influencer ..... 31

Figure 4 - Engagement rate by the type of influencer ..... 32

Figure 5 – Favorite Social Media Platforms ..... 33

Figure 6 - User Generated Content ..... 35

Figure 7 - Brand Generated Content ..... 36

Figure 8 – Walgreens (One of the United States largest pharmacy chains) ..... 60

Figure 9 – LEGO Website Screenshot ..... 61

Figure 10 – GoPro Website Screenshot ..... 61

Figure 11 – Technology adoption rates. ..... 76

Figure 12 – Red Bull brand engagement advert. ..... 77

Figure 13 – LEGO Brand engagement advert. ..... 78

Figure 14 – GoPro brand engagement advert. ..... 78

Figure 15 - Word Cloud of the Lexical Analysis - Most Frequent Words ..... 125

Figure 16 - Word Cloud ..... 128

Figure 17 - Most Preferred Social Media Networks ..... 129

Figure 18 - Lexical Analysis - Type of Content ..... 130

Figure 19 - Lexical Analysis – Type of Content (Gender Based) ..... 131

Figure 20 - Lexical Analysis – Brand Promotions ..... 132

Figure 21 - Lexical Analysis Emotion ..... 139

Figure 22 - Phases of Reflexive Thematic Analysis ..... 140

Figure 23 – Development of Proposed Model ..... 191

Figure 24 - Development of Proposed Model..... 195
Figure 25 - Development of Proposed Model..... 200
Figure 26 - Development of Proposed Model..... 203
Figure 27 - Development of Proposed Model..... 205
Figure 28 - Development of Proposed Model..... 207
Figure 29 - Final Proposed Model ..... 208
Figure 30 - LEGO UGC Pretest Scenario..... 217
Figure 31 - Pre-test scenario 2 LEGO BGC ..... 220
Figure 32- Pre-test scenario 3 GoPro UGC ..... 224
Figure 33 - Pre-test scenario 4 GoPro BGC..... 227
Figure 34 - Comparison – Model 1, Model 2, and Model 3. ..... 290
Figure 35- Global Model ..... 297
Figure 36 - Global Model 2 LEGO UGC and GoPro UGC..... 311
Figure 37 - Global Model 3 LEGO BGC and GoPro BGC ..... 314

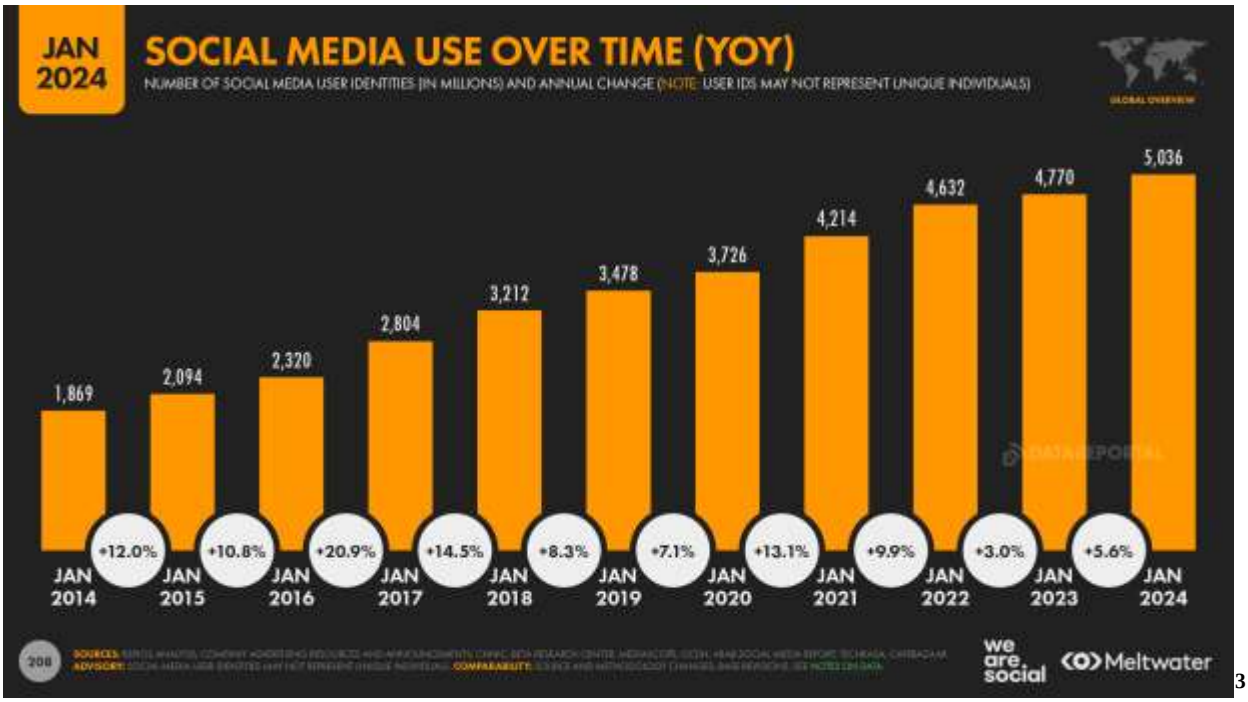
## General Introduction

In today's dynamic world of digital marketing, the trade-off between the type of content in social media is crucial (Aljarah et al., 2022). Two types of contents are commonly used today: User-Generated Content (UGC) is defined as any form of content—text, videos, images, reviews, etc.—created by people rather than brands (Smith, 2018). This content is often shared on online platforms, such as social media, blogs, and forums (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). UGC can be a powerful tool for brands, as it can help to increase brand awareness, engagement, and loyalty (Mangold & Faulds, 2009)., and Brand-Generated Content (BGC) refers to any form of content—text, videos, images, etc.—created and disseminated by brands or companies (Kumar & Pansari, 2016). This content is typically shared on official brand channels, such as websites, social media pages, and blogs (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). BGC can range from promotional messages, such as advertisements and product announcements, to non-promotional content, such as educational articles and behind-the-scenes glimpses (Godes & Mayzlin, 2009). Those two types of content form a critical axis around which modern brand narratives and consumer behaviors revolve. With the advent and ascension of social media, what was once a clear boundary between producer and consumer has blurred, redefining content creation and engagement. The field of advertising is no longer just concerned about what brand wants to convey and how it wants to convey. Rather, it's more customer centric now (Kumar & Pansari, 2016, Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). In contemporary digital culture, the access to and availability of forums and content creation tools such as cameras and post shoot editing software have significantly contributed to a new era of content creation, empowering consumers by democratizing media production. Juppi, (2017) discusses the empowerment achieved through digital storytelling, which shares similar ideals with participatory video, enabling ordinary people to produce media content and use it as a tool for civic engagement (Juppi, 2017).

### Growth of Social Media

This context takes place with growing social media all over the world (see figures 1 and 2 below).

*Figure 1 – Social Media user over time (YOY)*

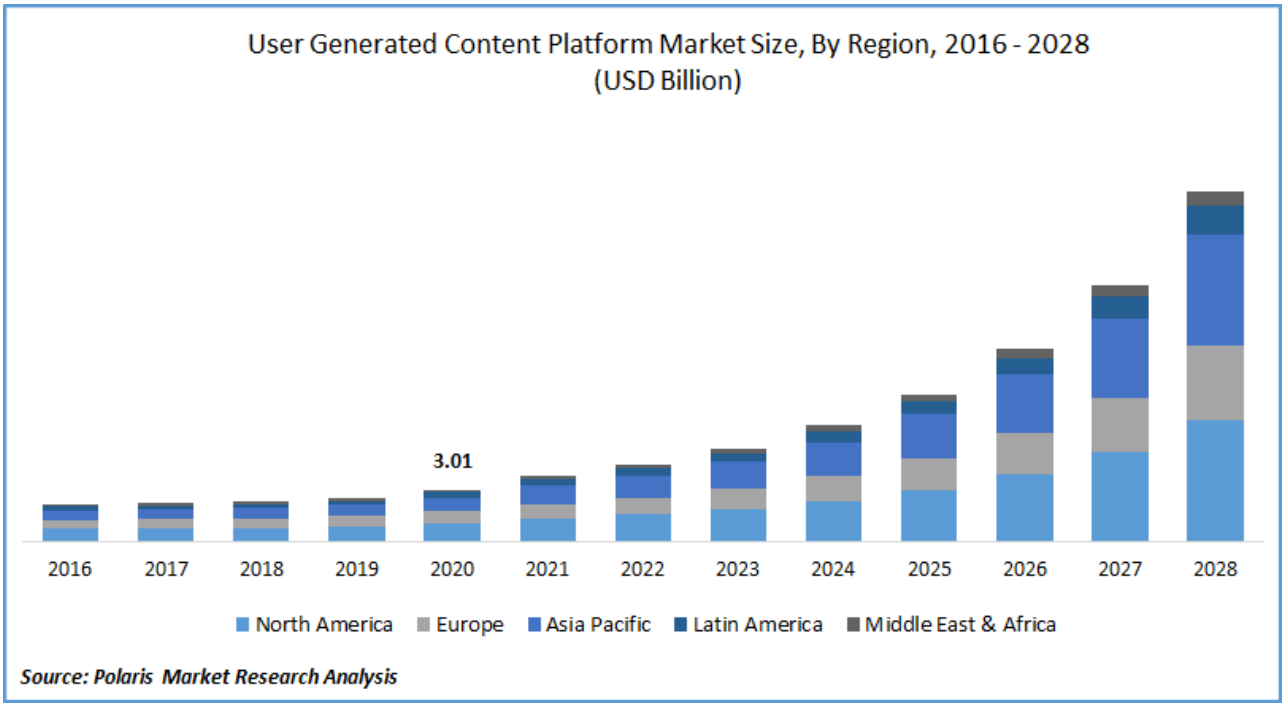


[3]

[3] https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-deep-dive-social-media-is-still-growing

## Growth of User Generated Content

*Figure 2 – Asia Pacific UGC Platform Market* [4]




The above graph in figure 1 depicts the year-over-year (YOY) growth in the number of social media user identities (in millions) from January 2014 to January 2024. Each bar represents the total number of social media users at the start of each year, with an annotation indicating the percentage increase compared to the previous year. The graph reveals a consistent upward trend and trajectory in social media use, starting at 1,869 million users in January 2014 and reaching 5,036 million users by January 2024.

The annual growth rates vary, with the most significant increases observed between January 2016 and January 2017 (20.9%), and January 2020 to January 2021 (13.1%). Other notable growth periods include January 2017 to January 2018 (14.5%) and January 2014 to January 2015 (12.0%). The graph shows more moderate growth rates in recent years, with a 5.6% increase from January 2023 to January 2024. This overall trend highlights the rapid and sustained expansion of social media use globally over the past decade.

[4] https://www.polarismarketresearch.com/industry-analysis/user-generated-content-platform-market

The global user-generated content (UGC) platform market, valued at USD 4.4 billion in 2022 (Allied Market Research, 2022), is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 29.4% from 2023 to 2030. UGC platforms enable brands to gather and repurpose content, such as social media mentions and short videos, to enhance sales, advertising, and marketing efforts. This form of content has become increasingly important as brands seek to engage customers more authentically amid a growing aversion to intrusive marketing techniques (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016, Smith, 2018). UGC's influence is particularly strong in social media, where consumer-shared content can significantly impact brand perception and consumer behavior. The music industry, for example, has leveraged UGC to sustain engagement and growth, especially during the COVID-19 (MIDiA Research, 2020). Artists and labels encouraged fans to create and share content related to their music, fostering a sense of community and connection (SoundGrail, 2023). Brands frequently collaborate with users, repurposing testimonials and fan art for marketing purposes, as seen with companies like GoPro, LEGO, Coca-Cola. For example, in 2014, Coca-Cola launched the "Share a Coke" campaign, replacing its iconic logo with popular names on bottles and cans. The campaign encouraged consumers to share photos of themselves with their personalized Coke on social media using the hashtag #ShareaCoke. Coca-Cola then repurposed this user-generated content across its own marketing channels, showcasing real people enjoying their products and creating a sense of community and personalization.

This campaign was incredibly successful, boosting Coca-Cola's sales and brand engagement significantly. It demonstrated the power of harnessing UGC and turning customers into brand advocates.

UGC platforms also foster creativity by showcasing diverse talents on platforms like Instagram, which is popular for UGC campaigns. Effective UGC strategies, such as hashtag contests, have proven successful in building brand loyalty and expanding reach, one stellar example of such a campaign is the Sephora's #KissAndTell campaign. This campaign encouraged users to share photos of themselves wearing their favorite Sephora lipstick shades, using the hashtag #KissAndTell. The results were astounding:

- 4.8 billion impressions: The campaign reached an immense audience, generating billions of views and interactions.
- 17.8% engagement rate: The hashtag garnered a high level of engagement, indicating active participation and interest from users.

The #KissAndTell campaign not only showcased the diversity and creativity of Sephora's customer base but also amplified the brand's reach and solidified its position as a trendsetter in the beauty industry. This example underscores the power of UGC campaigns in fostering creativity, building brand loyalty, and driving impressive results. By tapping into the authentic voices and experiences of their customers, brands can create a powerful and engaging marketing strategy that resonates with their target audience.

Another successful UGC campaign was launched by Apple for its iPhone brand. The "Shot on iPhone" campaign is a prime example of a UGC (user-generated content) campaign that harnessed the creativity of everyday users to create stunning visuals and promote the iPhone's camera capabilities. Apple encouraged users to share photos taken with their iPhones using the hashtag #ShotOniPhone, showcasing the diverse perspectives and talents of iPhone users worldwide. The results were astounding.

- Global Reach: The campaign garnered billions of impressions worldwide, showcasing the iPhone's photography capabilities to a massive audience.
- Diverse Content: The #ShotOniPhone hashtag became a repository for breathtaking photos across various genres, from landscapes and portraits to street photography and abstract art.
- Billboards and Exhibitions: Apple curated the best #ShotOniPhone images and showcased them on billboards in major cities and in exhibitions, giving amateur photographers global recognition.
- Increased Brand Engagement: The campaign fostered a sense of community among iPhone users and increased engagement with the Apple brand, as users felt their creativity was valued and celebrated.

One particularly striking example is a photo taken by a young photographer in Mumbai, India. The image captured the vibrant colors and bustling energy of a local market, showcasing the

iPhone's ability to capture stunning details and rich hues. This photo was selected for a billboard in Times Square, New York City, providing the photographer with incredible exposure and validation. The "Shot on iPhone" campaign demonstrates the power of UGC in marketing. By empowering users to showcase their creativity and share their unique perspectives, Apple created a campaign that resonated with audiences worldwide and elevated the iPhone's status as a tool for artistic expression.

Brand-generated content (BGC) is an integral component of a brand's marketing strategy, providing a controlled and consistent message to consumers. Unlike user-generated content (UGC), BGC is created and disseminated directly by the brand, allowing for precise alignment with brand values and objectives. This section explores the impact and effectiveness of BGC through various successful campaigns, demonstrating how brands leverage this approach to enhance their visibility, engagement, and loyalty.

BGC ensures that the brand's narrative is conveyed clearly and consistently across all channels. This control over messaging is essential for building and maintaining a strong brand identity. According to Keller (2009), consistent brand messaging helps to build brand equity and consumer trust, which are crucial for long-term success. By crafting high-quality, compelling content, brands can effectively communicate their unique value propositions, fostering deeper connections with their audience.

Red Bull's "Gives You Wings" Campaign

Red Bull’s "Gives You Wings" campaign is an exemplary case of successful BGC. Known for its extreme sports sponsorships and adrenaline-pumping advertisements, Red Bull has built a brand synonymous with energy, adventure, and performance. Through a series of high-quality videos and events, such as the Red Bull Stratos space jump, Red Bull has managed to create a powerful and consistent brand message that resonates with its target audience.

- Global Brand Recognition: The campaign has helped Red Bull become a household name worldwide.
- Engagement: High levels of consumer engagement, with millions of views and shares on social media.

- Brand Loyalty: Increased brand loyalty and consumer association with extreme sports and adventure.

Dove’s "Real Beauty" Campaign

Dove's "Real Beauty" campaign, launched in 2004, aimed to challenge traditional beauty standards by showcasing women of all shapes, sizes, and ethnicities. This BGC initiative featured advertisements, social media content, and videos that celebrated natural beauty and self-acceptance. By focusing on real women and their stories, Dove successfully aligned its brand with positive social values and authenticity.

- Enhanced Brand Perception: Dove is seen as a champion of real beauty and inclusivity.
- Consumer Trust: Increased trust and emotional connection with the brand.
- Social Impact: The campaign sparked widespread conversations about beauty standards and body positivity.

Brands are increasingly leveraging data analytics to optimize their BGC strategies. By analysing consumer behaviour, engagement metrics, and feedback, brands can tailor their content to better meet the needs and preferences of their audience. According to Chaffey and Smith (2017), brands that use data-driven BGC strategies see a significant increase in engagement and ROI.

Adidas’ "Impossible is Nothing" Campaign

Adidas’ "Impossible is Nothing" campaign is another notable example of successful BGC. This campaign features athletes and celebrities sharing their personal stories of overcoming obstacles, aligning with the brand’s message of perseverance and achievement. The campaign uses a mix of advertisements, social media content, and documentaries to inspire and connect with consumers on a deeper level.

- Emotional Connection: Strong emotional appeal that resonates with a wide audience.
- Brand Differentiation: Positions Adidas as a brand that supports and celebrates human potential.
- High Engagement: Significant engagement on social media and other platforms.

Despite its benefits, BGC comes with challenges. Maintaining authenticity, avoiding overly promotional content, and ensuring relevance to the target audience are critical factors for success. Brands must balance BGC with UGC to create a comprehensive content strategy that leverages both controlled messaging and authentic consumer experiences.

Brand-generated content plays a crucial role in shaping and maintaining a brand's identity and message. Through well-crafted campaigns like Red Bull's "Gives You Wings," Dove's "Real Beauty," and Adidas' "Impossible is Nothing," brands can effectively communicate their values, engage with their audience, and build long-term loyalty. By integrating data analytics and collaborating with influencers, brands can optimize their BGC strategies for greater impact. Understanding and leveraging the strengths of BGC, alongside UGC, enables brands to create more effective and engaging marketing strategies.

*Table 1 - Summary of Successful BGC Campaign*

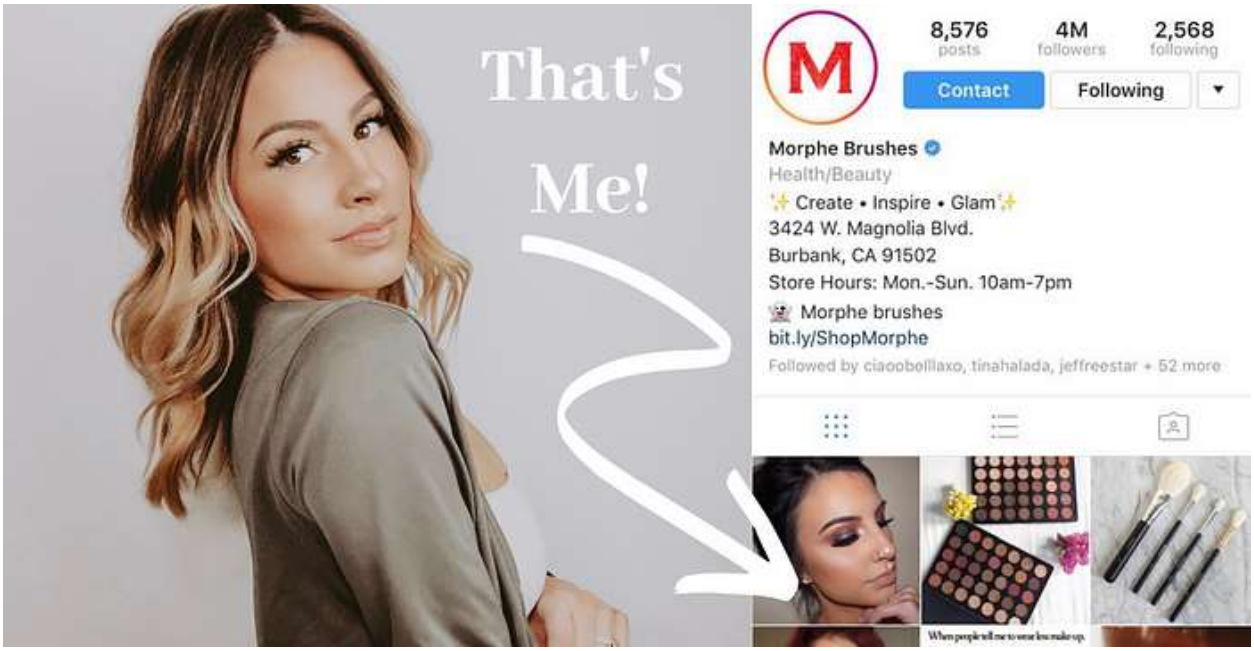
| Campaign | Brand | Description | Impact |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Gives You Wings** | Red Bull | High-energy content and extreme sports sponsorships | Global recognition, high engagement, increased brand loyalty |
| **Real Beauty** | Dove | Celebrated natural beauty with real women | Enhanced brand perception, increased consumer trust, social impact |
| **Impossible is Nothing** | Adidas | Stories of athletes overcoming obstacles | Emotional connection, brand differentiation, high engagement |
| **Collaborative Campaigns** | Various Brands | Partnerships with influencers for wider reach | Expanded reach, enhanced credibility, increased sales |

By understanding and leveraging the unique strengths of BGC, brands can craft more effective and impactful marketing strategies that complement their UGC efforts, leading to greater overall success in their digital marketing endeavours.

## Democratization of media production

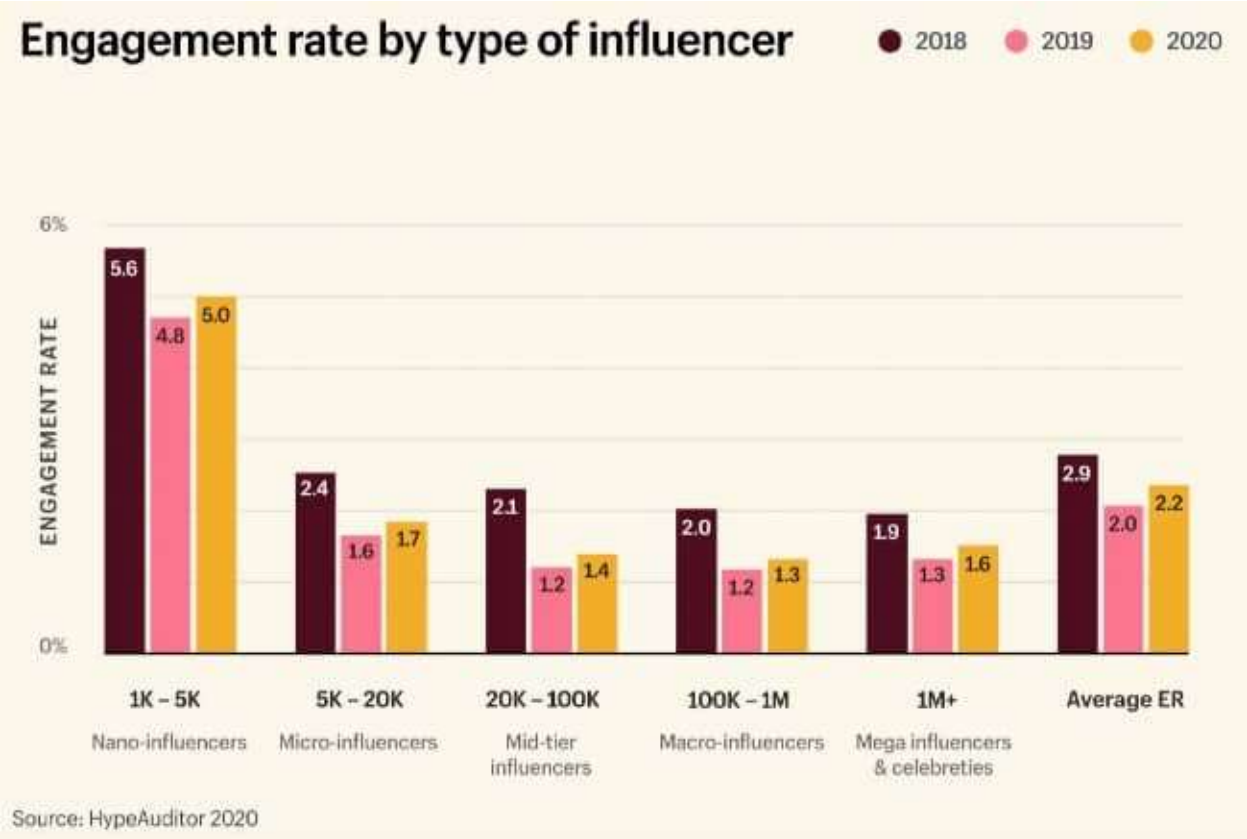
Furthermore, Not & Petrelli (2019) delve into how digital tools empower cultural heritage professionals, providing them with the means to author and deploy personalized visitor experiences, which underscores the broad applicability and influence of such tools in various professional fields (Not & Petrelli, 2019). This content creation is not limited to or by a brand or company bound. A prime example of this is the rise of "micro-influencers" on platforms like Instagram and TikTok. These individuals, with follower counts ranging from a few thousand to tens of thousands, can leverage their authentic voices and niche expertise to create content that resonates with specific audiences.

*Figure 3 - Instagram page of SM Influencer*




A study by Markerly found that micro-influencers have up to 60% higher engagement rates than macro-influencers (those with over 100,000 followers). This means their content is more likely to be seen, liked, and shared, giving them significant sway over their followers' opinions and preferences. Brands have taken notice of this trend, partnering with micro-influencers to reach targeted audiences and generate authentic content that aligns with their brand values.

*Figure 4 - Engagement rate by the type of influencer*

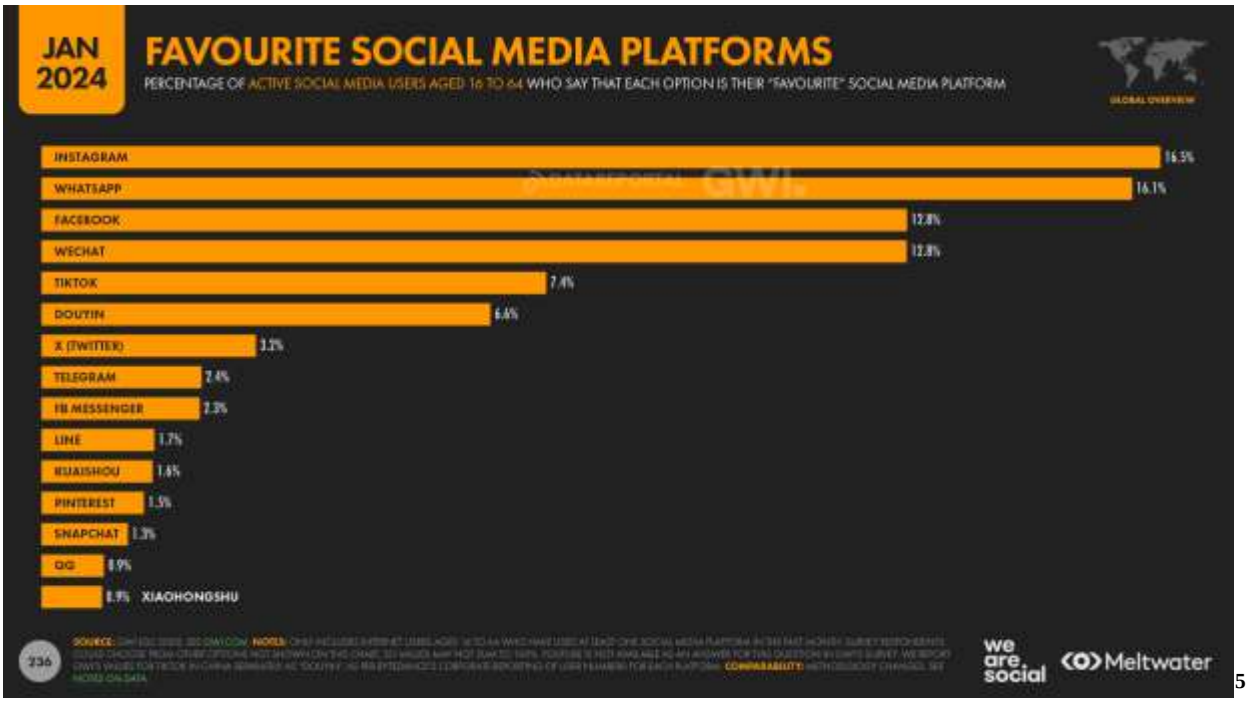



This transformation has democratized media production, enabling users to share their experiences and opinions widely, thereby influencing brand perceptions on a scale previously unimagined. Simultaneously, it has provided brands with innovative avenues to engage directly with their audiences, creating a two-way communication channel that has become integral to successful marketing strategies.

**Social Media Platforms**

In this context many social media platforms have developed all over the world (see figure 5 below) with various market shares, some disappearing (give example of former platforms which disappeared) and some new ones appearing each year (give examples of the newest ones, their dates of appearance and their actual market share).

*Figure 5 – Favorite Social Media Platforms*



[5]

As depicted in the above graph it shows the favorite social media platforms among active users aged 16 to 64 globally as of January 2024. Instagram leads with 16.5%, closely followed by WhatsApp at 16.1%. Facebook and WeChat are tied at 12.8%. TikTok (7.4%) and Douyin (6.6%) also have significant popularity. Other platforms include X (formerly Twitter) at 3.2%, Telegram at 2.4%, FB Messenger at 2.3%, LINE at 1.7%, Kuaishou at 1.6%, Pinterest at 1.5%, Snapchat at 1.3%, and both QQ and Xiaohongshu at 0.9%.

**Evolution of the Social Media**

The early 2000s marked the beginning of a significant transformation in the way content was not just produced but also consumed. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter emerged not just as networking sites but as powerful tools for personal expression and public discourse whereby users could share their thoughts, ideas, and views. Over the years, these platforms have evolved from simple communication channels into complex ecosystems that

[5] https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-deep-dive-social-media-is-still-growing

facilitate a vast array of interactions from personal sharing to brand advertising. This shift has required brands to adopt increasingly sophisticated strategies to engage effectively with their audiences. As detailed by (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), social media has forced brands to rethink their roles from broadcasters to participants in a dialogic communication process where responsiveness and adaptability are key (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social media's impact on communication is profound and far-reaching. A report by Statista (2023) projects that the number of social media users worldwide will reach 4.89 billion by 2027, up from 3.96 billion in 2022. This growth in users directly translates to increased potential for UGC creation and consumption. This massive and growing audience represents a critical component of the global consumer base, making social media an important and crucial element of business strategy. The influence of social media extends beyond mere numbers; it shapes consumer behaviors and expectations. Consumers now look to social media for pre-purchase information and post-purchase support, making it a vital element of the customer journey. A study by Hootsuite (2022) highlighted that 78% of consumers are more likely to purchase from a brand after a positive experience on social media, underscoring the platform's role in driving business outcomes (Hootsuite, 2022).

**Type of Content and its importance**

User-generated content has dramatically transformed the landscape of online marketing by offering a voice to the consumer that can be as influential, if not more so, than traditional marketing messages. According to a report by Nielsen (2015), 92% of consumers trust organic, user-generated content more than they do traditional forms of advertising. The credibility attributed to UGC derives from its creation by fellow consumers, whose endorsements are perceived as more genuine and trustworthy. However, the very nature of UGC that makes it so valuable—its credibility and rawness—also introduces risks. As (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006) note, negative UGC can spread swiftly and damage a brand's reputation almost overnight, presenting a significant challenge for companies to manage.

While UGC offers credibility, BGC provides a brand with the opportunity to craft its narrative deliberately. Effective BGC must align with the brand’s values and resonate with consumer expectations. This content must be meticulously crafted to communicate brand promises and values clearly and consistently, thereby reinforcing the brand's identity and enhancing its

credibility. The success of Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" campaign exemplifies this approach, where personalized bottles fostered a sense of individual connection and community engagement, blending traditional BGC with personalized touches that approached the feel of UGC (Sawaftah et al., 2021).

*Figure 6 - user Generated Content*



*Figure 7 - Brand Generated Content*




The relationship between UGC and BGC is complex and multifaceted. Brands must navigate a landscape where they not only produce content but also react and respond to content generated by users. This interplay demands a strategic approach where both types of content are leveraged to reinforce one another, enhancing the overall effectiveness of marketing efforts. (Tafesse, 2015) highlights that brands that skillfully integrate UGC and BGC often achieve higher levels of consumer trust and engagement, resulting in stronger brand loyalty and better business outcomes.

Exploring the dynamic between UGC and BGC through the lens of signaling theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the complexities of modern marketing strategies and their impact on consumer involvement and brand engagement. By examining the roles of credibility, consistency, and clarity, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of effective content strategies in the digital age, offering insights that are crucial for both practitioners and academics in the field of marketing.

## Variables of Interest

UGC and BGC phenomenon can be considered as signal and therefore can be studied with the conceptual background of the signaling theory (add authors). According to Erdem and Swait (1998), the four pillars of signaling theory—content, clarity, consistency, and credibility—are crucial for effective brand communication. However, existing research has predominantly concentrated on brand investments, clarity, and consistency, often neglecting the content aspect (Erdem et al., 2006, 2008; Erdem & Swait, 2004). Social media, with its interactive nature, has revolutionized personalized communication, making it an ideal platform for studying these dynamics (Zhang et al., 2020). This doctoral thesis objective is to study the impact of UGC and BGC through the lens of signaling theory.

## Signaling Theory perspective

Signaling theory, originally conceived in the field of economics to explain information asymmetry, has found extensive application in the study of digital marketing. This theory posits that in situations where information about a product or service is not directly observable, other indicators must be used to infer quality. In the realm of digital marketing, UGC and BGC serve as such indicators or signals. As Connelly et al., (2011) elucidate, these signals must be observable, costly, and reliably correlated with the underlying attributes they claim to represent. UGC, for instance, signals credibility because it is costly in terms of the effort and personal experience it conveys. Similarly, it conveys or often signals consistency and clarity, reflecting the content creator's passion and commitment as this has now become a profession.

## Justification for the variables of interest

The focus of our research study on user-generated content (UGC) and brand-generated content (BGC) stems from their pivotal and important role in modern social media marketing and their impact on consumer behavior. BGC is recognized for its ability to serve as a credible, clear, and consistent signal to customers, thereby enhancing their involvement and engagement with brands (authors). The objective of this research is to prove whether BGC can be as credible, clear and consistent as UGC or even better off in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. When examining the effect of User-Generated Content (UGC) versus Brand-Generated Content (BGC) through

the lens of signaling theory, our focus on brand consistency, brand clarity, and brand credibility as key signals is strategically justified. These variables are crucial because they directly influence customer involvement and brand engagement, which are immediate and observable outcomes of the signals sent by brands (Biswas & Biswas, 2004; Busenitz et al., 2005). Unlike brand loyalty, brand authenticity, and brand advocacy, which are longer-term outcomes influenced by a multitude of factors, brand consistency, clarity, and credibility offer more direct and measurable impacts within the scope of signaling theory (Boulding & Kirmani, 1993; Connelly et al., 2011).

Brand consistency ensures that the messages conveyed by a brand are uniform across different platforms and content types, thereby reducing ambiguity and reinforcing brand identity (Erdem & Swait, 1998). This uniformity is vital for customers to form a coherent perception of the brand, which directly influences their level of engagement and involvement (Erdem, Swait, & Valenzuela, 2006).

Brand clarity involves the precision and transparency of the brand's communication, which enhances the customer's understanding and trust in the brand (Beverland, 2005). Clarity in messaging is crucial in signaling the brand's value propositions effectively, leading to higher customer involvement as customers can easily comprehend and relate to the brand’s messages.

Brand credibility, defined as the believability of the brand’s intentions and actions, is another critical signal that affects customer perception and behavior (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000). Credible brands are perceived as trustworthy and reliable, fostering deeper customer engagement due to increased trust and perceived value.

In contrast, variables such as brand loyalty, brand authenticity, and brand advocacy are more long-term outcomes and are less immediate indicators of the signaling process. Brand loyalty is a result of sustained positive experiences and interactions over time (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001), while brand authenticity involves perceptions of genuineness that develop gradually as customers interact with the brand across various contexts (Morhart et al., 2015). Brand advocacy, the willingness of customers to promote the brand to others, is also a downstream effect that builds upon ongoing positive experiences and strong brand relationships (Brown, Barry, Dacin, & Gunst, 2005).

Therefore, by focusing on brand consistency, brand clarity, and brand credibility, our study targets the primary signals that UGC and BGC immediately impact, thus providing a more direct and actionable understanding of their effects. Two main concepts are chosen to measure the efficiency of UGC and BGC in this doctoral thesis: customer involvement and brand engagement. Justify here the choice of these 2 variables (customer involvement and brand engagement) as done above for the other variables.

Studying the variables of brand credibility, brand clarity, and brand consistency alongside customer involvement and brand engagement is essential for several reasons. Brand credibility is a cornerstone of consumer trust and is vital in uncertain markets (Erdem & Swait, 1998a, 2004). It is defined as the believability of a brand's promises regarding product quality and positioning (Morhart et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014).

Brand clarity ensures that consumers can clearly understand the brand's message, reducing information costs and perceived risks (Aaker, 1991). Consistency in brand messaging reinforces consumer perceptions of reliability and quality over time (Park et al., 2008). High customer involvement, characterized by active participation and feedback, leads to greater customer engagement, which encompasses both attitudinal and behavioral responses (Vivek, Beatty et al., 2014; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985).

Engagement is crucial for fostering positive relational outcomes such as repeat purchases and co-creation of value (Verhoef et al., 2010). By examining these variables, this thesis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how different content types of influence consumer-brand interactions and contribute to more effective marketing strategies (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2014).

**Research Objectives**

The objective of our research study is to address a significant theoretical gap in the current literature on the behavior of users over social media, specifically the difference in the impact of user-generated content (UGC) versus brand-generated content (BGC) on the level of customer involvement and brand engagement. While previous studies have explored various aspects of social media marketing, there is limited understanding of how these two types of content influence consumer perceptions and behaviors differently through the theoretical lens of

signaling theory. This gap is critical as understanding these dynamics can enhance the effectiveness of social media strategies for brands, resulting in more effective and efficient marketing strategies (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Muntinga et al., 2011).

Existing research has largely focused on the general benefits of social media marketing, such as increased brand awareness and customer interaction (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). However, there is a need to delve deeper into the specific impacts of different types of content. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) emphasized the importance of social media as a platform for authentic and interactive communication but did not differentiate between UGC and BGC in terms of their specific effects on consumer behavior.

Kietzmann et al. (2011) introduced the "honeycomb" framework of social media, highlighting various functional blocks such as identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. While this framework provides a comprehensive understanding of social media functions, it does not explicitly address how UGC and BGC operate within these blocks to influence customer involvement and brand engagement differently.

Muntinga et al. (2011) explored the motivations behind consumers' engagement with brand-related content in social media, identifying factors such as entertainment, information, remuneration, and social interaction. Their work underscores the complexity of consumer engagement but lacks a focused comparison between UGC and BGC. By applying signaling theory, our study aims to fill this gap by examining how the perceived credibility and authenticity of UGC compared to BGC affect customer involvement and brand engagement.

Moreover, previous studies have shown that UGC often carries higher credibility and authenticity, which are crucial for building trust and engagement (Cheong & Morrison, 2008; Erkan & Evans, 2016). These findings suggest that UGC could have a more significant impact on consumer behavior than BGC, which tends to be perceived as more biased and self-promotional (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). By focusing on the signaling effects of UGC versus BGC, our research aims to provide deeper insights into these content types of differential impacts on consumer behavior.

In summary, this study seeks to extend the current understanding of social media marketing by addressing the theoretical gap related to the distinct impacts of UGC and BGC on customer

involvement and brand engagement. This understanding is essential for developing more targeted and effective social media strategies that leverage the strengths of both content types to enhance brand performance.

**Research Problem**

The problem our research addresses is to determine and distinguish between the comparative effectiveness of user-generated content versus brand-generated content in fostering consumer involvement and engagement with a brand. The study seeks to identify the motivations behind consumer interactions with these different types of content and understand the impact of content type on the perceived credibility, consistency, and clarity of brand communications. The research problem is formulated through the following research questions: What are the motivations for engagement with social media and its content? What is the impact of UGC on the customer's level of involvement and engagement with a brand?

**Theoretical Interests of our research Study**

The theoretical interests of our research study focus on understanding how different types of social media content—specifically user-generated versus brand-generated—affect consumer perceptions, attitudes and thus behaviors. By investigating and understanding these dynamics, the study aims to integrate several existing streams of research related to signaling theory, in particular the 3C's (credibility, consistency, and clarity), and their influence on customer involvement and brand engagement. This exploration intends to contribute to the broader theoretical framework by showcasing how content type can manipulate perceived brand attributes and drive consumer engagement.

**Managerial Interests of our research study**

From a managerial perspective, this thesis provides valuable insights into how brands can form strategies and how they can strategically use different types of content to enhance customer involvement and engagement. Understanding the effectiveness of user-generated content compared to brand-generated content can help managers design more effective social media strategies that leverage the credibility, consistency, and clarity of their communications. This

research aims to offer practical recommendations for marketers on how to optimize content to maximize consumer engagement and brand loyalty.

**Research Study Epistemology**

Given the objective and nature of the study's goals, it is suitable to adopt a constructivist epistemological standpoint. Constructivism asserts that knowledge is actively built by humans through their engagement with experiences, interactions, and interpretations of their environment. This perspective aligns with examining the impact of different content types (user-generated and brand-generated) on consumer participation and brand engagement. The constructivist approach recognizes the significance of subjective perceptions and contextual factors in shaping individuals' understanding and interaction with information. By incorporating the 3Cs of signaling theory—credibility, consistency, and clarity—this framework posits that knowledge and engagement are collaboratively generated by individuals through their interactions with external stimuli. This epistemological stance supports the study's aim to understand the nuanced ways in which different content types of influence consumer behavior in the social media landscape.

**Outline of the thesis**

| Chapter | Research Focus | Methodology |
|---|---|---|
| Chapter 1: Literature Review: User-Generated Content (UGC), Signalling Theory, Customer Involvement, Brand Engagement | Theoretical foundations of UGC, signalling, involvement, and engagement | Literature review |
| Chapter 2: Qualitative Research | Research objectives, questions, epistemology, and approaches (lexical analysis, thematic analysis, netnography) | Qualitative research design |
| Chapter 3: Qualitative Analysis | Lexical analysis of word frequency, social media use, content types, brand promotions, emotions; Thematic analysis of patterns and themes; Netnographic analysis of online communities | Data analysis and interpretation |
| Chapter 4: Quantitative Research | Model construction, hypothesis development, pretesting of scenarios and questionnaires | Quantitative research design |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Chapter 5:<br>Measurement Scales | Importance and selection of scales for customer involvement, brand credibility, consistency, clarity, engagement, and familiarity | Scale development and validation |
| Chapter 6:<br>Quantitative Analysis | Comparison of model fit indices, reliability and validity tests, hypothesis testing, effect size analysis | Statistical analysis |
| Chapter 7:<br>Contributions, Limitations, Recommendations, Conclusion | Theoretical, methodological, and managerial contributions; Limitations of the research; Recommendations for future research; Overall conclusion | Discussion and implications |

In the first part of the dissertation, Chapter 1 establishes the foundation for this research by reviewing existing literature on User Generated Content (UGC), signalling theory, customer involvement, and brand engagement. It explores the emergence and types of UGC, the role of signalling theory in brand communication, the concept of customer involvement and its dimensions, and the significance of brand engagement in the digital age.

Chapter 2 delves into qualitative research methodologies, outlining the research objectives and questions. It discusses the epistemological position of the study and introduces various qualitative approaches, including lexical analysis, thematic analysis, and netnography. The chapter also details the research design, sample selection, and data collection procedures employed in the study.

Chapter 3 presents the qualitative analysis findings, starting with a lexical analysis that examines word frequency, preferred social media networks, types of content, brand promotions, and emotions expressed in UGC. Thematic analysis is then employed to identify and interpret patterns and themes within the data. Additionally, netnographic analysis provides insights into online communities and discussions related to UGC.

Chapter 4 transitions to quantitative research, focusing on model construction and hypothesis development. It outlines the theoretical framework and proposes hypotheses regarding the relationships between UGC, signaling theory, customer involvement, and brand engagement.

The chapter also details the pretesting of scenarios and questionnaires to ensure the validity and reliability of the research instruments.

Chapter 5 explores the measurement scales used in the study. It discusses the importance of measurement scales and delves into the specific scales employed to assess customer involvement, brand credibility, brand consistency, brand clarity, brand engagement, and brand familiarity. The chapter concludes with the elaboration of the questionnaire used in quantitative research.

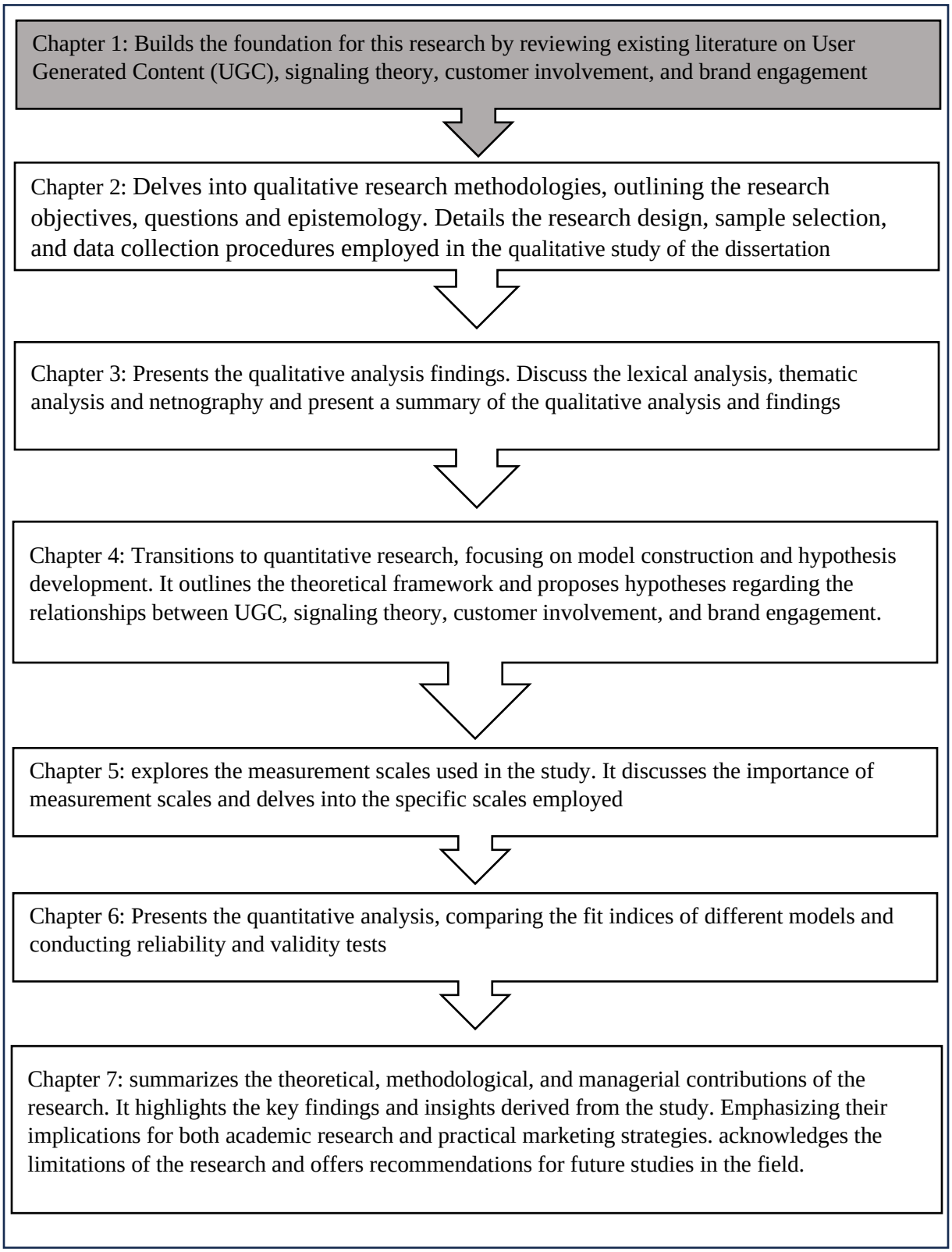
In the second part of the dissertation, Chapter 6, It analyzes the global model, global UGC model, global BGC model, LEGO brand model, and GoPro brand model, testing the hypotheses and discussing the effect sizes.

Chapter 7 summarizes the theoretical, methodological, and managerial contributions of the research. It highlights the key findings and insights derived from the study, emphasizing their implications for both academic research and practical marketing strategies. The chapter also acknowledges the limitations of the research and offers recommendations for future studies in the field.

Finally, the dissertation concludes with a comprehensive summary of the research findings, emphasizing the significance of UGC in shaping brand perceptions and engagement. It reiterates the theoretical and practical implications of the study and suggests avenues for further research to deepen our understanding of UGC's role in the evolving landscape of marketing and communication.

**Overview of the Dissertation**

*Table 2 - Overview of the Dissertation*



# 1. Chapter 1: Literature Review

In this chapter, a comprehensive review of the literature is presented to enhance the understanding of fundamental concepts and theories. It includes an in-depth discussion on user-generated content, its current applications, the principles of signaling theory, and the 3Cs (Credibility, Consistency, and Clarity) of a signal and their utilization by brands. Additionally, the chapter explores customer involvement, the different levels of involvement, and brand engagement.

## 1.1. User Generated Content

### 1.1.1. Emergence of User Generated Content

In the short span of last few years, social media has turned out to be a mainstream marketing platform and tool for the brands and companies (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). Traditionally, mainstream marketing mediums like television and radio were just used to advertise the product and service offerings of a firm, but social media is not limited to just advertising. It is a way of building and managing relationships with customers by involving and engaging them as partners and stakeholders. Social Media leverages ideas and information coming from these customers. It has also been a corner stone in bringing in the innovation for product and brand's management (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; A. N. Smith et al., 2012; Solis, 2010). The popularity of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest has been skyrocketing with billions of users engaged simultaneously around the globe. This phenomenon has provided with a stimulus to be leveraged for a greater value (Yadav et al., 2013).

Traditionally, the one way communication controlled by the marketers or the firms has now been diverged in to a peer-to-peer, multi-dimensional two-way communication (Berthon et al., 2008). "A brand is no longer what we tell the consumer it is – it is what consumers tell each other it is."(Scott Cook, co-founder, Intuit,). The plethora of online content created and shared by the social media users along with the reviews is an evidence of its drastic increase in the last few years (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2016; A. N. Smith et al., 2012). Deighton & Kornfeld, (2007) assert," it's the consumer who runs the show for the most part not the marketer in fact, forget the

'consumer' label altogether.” Social media with its dual dimensionality resultantly has opened up a new universe of interaction with the customers so that their preferences can be better understood. This clear and concise understanding further helps stimulate the ideas and has thus lured firms into creating their official brand pages, groups and communities on these social media platforms (Gensler et al., 2013; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Luarn et al., 2015). It is evidently a powerful tool to create involvement that leads to engagement with consumers in a real-time and direct manner along with efficiency at levels that were never achieved with the traditional mediums (L. D. Hollebeek et al., 2014; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Osei-Frimpong & McLean, 2018).

In 2022, most popular social media platform had 2.93 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2022) in comparison to a 2 billion users in 2017 (Social Bakers, 2017). Considering the massive number of people using it and looking at the gigantic growth in its number of users, Facebook is currently leading the other social media platforms like Twitter or Instagram. Companies see this as a great opportunity and that is a reason that almost 92% companies in the US are supposed to be advertising in 2022 (*U.S. Social Media Marketing Reach 2022*) which earlier stood at 72.5% (Moorman, 2016). Evidently, Facebook delivers the best ROI and this is the reason that almost every big or small business has such social media platforms in its marketing strategy (M. Martin, 2022) as it is termed as one of the most important and established channels of marketing (Marina Choi, 2011) and therefore its inevitable.

The sole purpose of such social media platforms is not limited to just advertising like in **ATL** advertisement platforms. Companies leverage such platforms to create a relationship with the customers that range from service issues, generating ideas and to engage customers with the firm (Solis, 2010). User generated content is considerably a common way to engage customers across all social media platforms (A. N. Smith et al., 2012). Companies today not only produce content on such platforms, but they also promote users to generate and post content. User Generated Content turns out to be more efficient when it comes to purchase intentions in comparison to branded posts or disclosed advertisements (Mayrhofer et al., 2020).

A user sees branded content in three different ways on Facebook. First, companies place paid advertisements in their target group’s news feed. The source of the post is disclosed, and such posts are also referred to as traditional advertisements. These sorts of posts are categorically

marked as advertisements as per Facebook advertisement policy. In 2018, 5 million companies actively advertised on Facebook (M. Martin, 2022). The second way of advertising on Facebook is to create a Page dedicated to the brand to create a community and elicit the feelings of users for the brand in terms of "Likes". In this case only the users who have followed a brand page are shown the advertisements in their news feed. More than 70 million small and big brand pages are being operated on Facebook to make the most of this advertising and engagement opportunity. The third way of posting such content is when it's done by the user himself. In this case the user appears to be the source of the branded content thus this exposes the content to the entire social network of that user who generated the content (*Facebook*, 2022).

### 1.1.2. UGC Literature Review

Owing to its covertness, user generated Content is under limelight as being the most effective and efficient tool of advertising. Business media such as Forbes (Olenski, 2017) or Adweek (Merckel 2017) are all praised about the UGC being most advantageous marketing tool because of its capacity to blend into editorial social media content. Outlets like Forbes recommend business to tap this opportunity by taking pro-active steps in the stimulation of the UGC (Olenski, 2017). According to Adweek, 'Not only is UGC much cheaper to implement, but it is also much more effective' (Merckel 2017). Businesses are even advised in MIT Sloan Management Review, to redefine their marketing strategy by including social media engagement i.e., User generated branded content as a measurement of ROI (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010).

UGC is a result of marketing strategies that focus on real-world tie-ins or contests. According to Ashley & Tuten, (2015), 26 out of 28 brands involve and engage users so that they may share the content. Users create content to be identified with a brand, because brands are not limited to giving discrete identification to products and services but this extends to the individuals who buy, consume and own the brand (Muñiz & Schau, 2007). For instance, amongst all others, Alcohol industry, notoriously use this covert marketing technique, real world tie ins are the one of the most efficient sources of content for such brand pages. These alcohol brands launch a series branded events (Nicholls, 2012), sponsor and organize sporting events (Pinsky et al., 2017), host meet-ups, video or photo competitions with a targeted brand positioning and are then asked to post in their communities thus promoting the brand (Lobstein et al., 2017): 'The personal brand experience of the fan leads to the circulation of branded information within the broader mediation of their everyday life within their circle of friends' (Brodmerkel & Carah,

2013, p. 279). In a study to understand how brands Mobilize the UGC, Carah & Shaul, (2016) analyzed a couple of highly effective campaigns by a famous alcohol brand Smirnoff's promotion on Instagram and concluded that users' 'use of hashtags places the brand within a wider flow of images related to their own bodies and identities' (Carah & Shaul, 2016, p. 74).

### 1.1.3. Types of UGC

Another common UGC posted on social media platforms is 'brand-selfies', which Sung et al., (2018) have interpreted as an 'effective means of self-expression'. UGC owes its effectiveness and persuasiveness to the fact that it is generated by a user, which, if in a good quality is considered highly credible and liked (Ertimur & Gilly, 2012; Steyn et al., 2011; Thompson & Malaviya, 2013). In a study Ertimur & Gilly (2012) found that instead of putting up their guard users become ad critique when its generated and posted by another user. If a brand is the source of a message, the user's persuasion knowledge is increased. In other words, the user as the source induces the least persuasion knowledge (Mayrhofer et al., 2020). If the source of persuasive message is a user in contrast to the brand itself the coping mechanism is not triggered that is in line with the Friestad & Wright (1994) Persuasion knowledge model. Similar assumptions were also put forth by Van Reijmersdal et al., (2015) that asserted that customers employ negative feelings and emotions when its persuasive message and results in reluctancy towards purchase intention.

### 1.1.4. UGC and e-WOM

In comparison to electronic word of mouth, reviews or product related stories, UGC differs as it does not necessarily have a persuasive of informative intent (A. N. Smith et al., 2012). According to the persuasion knowledge model, a coping mechanism is triggered when someone sees a branded advert that affects the persuasive intent of the message (Friestad & Wright, 1994, 1995). A content that is perceived as advert, at times creates a negative attitude that results in annoyance and avoidance (Mittal, 1994; Moriarty & Everett, 1994). Persuasion intent is often considered as an intruder in the context of communication (Friestad & Wright, 1994), which can be witnessed as when someone is browsing through some content on Facebook and he sees an advertisement, this creates resistance and results in either avoidance or even annoyance (Mayrhofer et al., 2020). Major motivations behind the UGC are personal Identification,

Integration and social interaction as it was found during the content analysis of Facebook posts pertaining to two apparel brands (A. N. Smith et al., 2012). Facebook is the central hub where brand centered content is most likely to be posted in comparison to twitter or YouTube (A. N. Smith et al., 2012).

Social Media platforms vary according to their capacity and limitations, for instance YouTube is a more personal and self-centered platform whereby twitter is a more of a micro blogging platform to discuss politics and real time world issues and Facebook with myriad of UGC types, is a platform that falls in between YouTube and Twitter (A. N. Smith et al., 2012). Amplification of the differences pertaining to the real-time and ubiquitous sharing of highly rich content has resulted in the emergence of other brand related UGC characteristics such as e.g., location sharing, sharing while purchasing/using the brand, brand connection with personal experience, response to advertising campaign). These features are more prominently displayed over Facebook in comparison to twitter or even YouTube (Roma & Aloini, 2019).

The creation of content is solely dependent on the motivation behind the content creation for instance when an individual is more self-obsessed and inclined towards his personal promotion he would be creating "Me Ads". In this type of content, the focus is to piggyback on the brand or the product. Similarly, other motivation could be to bring change and revolution and such motivation results in the creation of "Activist Ads". This sort of content creates a disruption by being more leaned towards message, image, elicit information, motivation for change and center of the content is not the creator rather the cause (Berthon et al., 2008).

UGC is defined as the content that is published or "created outside of professional routines and practices" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Peña-López, 2007, p. 61). UGC can be a result of individual production or it can be created, modified, shared and consumed collaboratively, and "can be seen as the sum of all ways in which people make use of social media," (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). It is relatively an old phenomenon, it's just the ease of accessibility and ease of access coupled along with rapidly evolving technology that has made creation of UGC an easy to do task and less demanding (Burgess & Green, 2009; Lange, 2019). Berthon et al., (2008, p. 8), defines user generated content as "any publicly disseminated, consumer generated advertising messages whose subject is a collectively recognized brand". UGC is considered to be a mean towards self-expression and communication towards others around in the online

community or groups (Boyd & Ellison, 2012). UGC is the result of social interactions, and it has multiple forms across different social media platforms. For instance Tweets on twitter, status updates on Facebook and YouTube Videos that entail product related information, reviews and advertisements (Dhar & Chang, 2009; Muñiz & Schau, 2007).

According to Muñiz & Schau, (2007) consumers are quite familiar with the styles, logics and basic grammar of advertising and thus are quite skillful when it comes to creation of content centered at brand promotion. At times there a void left by brands when it comes to advertising and this void is then filled by the creativity of the consumers (Muñiz & Schau, 2007). It is such a powerful tool that it has the potential to shape, form and even change the perception of a consumer about the brad (A. N. Smith et al., 2012). This is evident from the fact that in China alone the amount of content generated by users now exceeds from the content generated by professionals (Xiaoji, 2010). At times UGC is confused with electronic word of mouth, which is "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, p. 39). Although it can be overlapping at times when its brand related UGC but the latter is considerably a broader concept (A. N. Smith et al., 2012). UGC is way of self-expression and communication in the digital world (A. N. Smith et al., 2012). Content that is created around a brand, reviews about a certain product or brand or even unboxing videos that discuss the features and functionalities of a product all come under UGC.

UGC has a central role to play when it comes to development of online social interactions, electronic word of mouth and building stronger relationships with the brand (Moran et al., 2014; A. N. Smith et al., 2012). This can be seen as most of the major brands have been allowing their consumers and customers to create, share and consume content that is generated by other users and this has been fruitful in influencing the perceptions and purchase decisions (Sridhar & Srinivasan, 2012). This type of content is such a powerful tool that it has the potential to not just change the perceptions but influences a number pf phases in the overall consumers purchase decision making cycle (Yadav et al., 2013). UGC is a result of involvement that generates engagement in terms of likes and shares and thus creates a bond that is beyond just usage and consumption of brand (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016).

In the recent times, with the technological advancements and enhancements the social media has not remained the same as it is also advancing (Berger, 2014). These developments have led to a change in consumption trend over social media, with more focus on incorporation of visual oriented features and richer content (pollard, 2018). For instance, the new "Go Live" feature of Facebook that makes a live streaming platform was added just a couple of years back, and generally one would witness an increase in visual content over Facebook. Twitter's ex- CEO Jack Dorsey earlier increased the number of characters in a tweet and was even exploring options to make it easier for the users to express themselves over the platform by adding video and pictorial contents (Perez, 2018). Another reason for this shift is the usage of mobile phones, with the technological advancement a mobile phone has become more powerful than a computer and thus has opened up the space for more dynamic, ubiquitous, location-based and real time interactions and, at the resultantly the participation of users has increased drastically (Kaplan, 2012; Verhoef et al., 2017).

## 1.2. Signaling Theory:

### 1.2.1. Origins of Signaling Theory

Signals have been studied in a variety of research streams that include quality of higher education as a signal for the potential employers in the job market (Spence, 1978); price as a signal for the quality of the product (Stiglitz, 1989), advertising, describing the marketing strategy of the brand (Nelson, 1974), advertising and pricing strategy as well (Kihlstrom & Riordan, 1984; Milgrom & Roberts, 1986).

Signaling theory is basically a psychological appeal to the receiver, either through manipulation of the evolved preferences or by the reduction of skepticism. It is based on the exploitation of the psychological or sensory biases of the receiver instead of conviction of the honesty of the signal (Enquist & Arak, 1998; Guilford, 1997; Ryan, 1998). Within this context a signal is defined as a behavioral trait or action intended towards communicating an idea (Maynard-Smith et al., 2003). The purpose that a signal serve is to convey the information and to reduce uncertainty and asymmetry (Krebs, 1984). Basic rhetoric behind the signaling theory is transmission of information that is interpretable by the receiving party (Dunham, 2011).

Rudimentary, the foundation of the signaling theory is about sharing information as a signal to help both parties' benefit in terms of commerce or decision making based on the reduction of

uncertainty (Zahavi, 1975) and unclear information (Spence, 2002) about future directions (Krebs, 1984). For instance, (Spence, 1978) pivotal work on the labor markets showcased that in order to reduce the chances of rejection of job application from a prospect employee, a job applicant engages in a certain type of behavior. Spence demonstrated this phenomenon by illustrating how expensive higher education works as a signal to potential employer regarding the prospect candidates' capabilities and thus giving a signal about the quality of output.

Roots of signaling theory stem from the field of biology whereby animals are found to communicate through the conveyance of signals, and it ranges to fields like economics whereby the presence asymmetrical information is compensated by the external signals (Akerlof, 1978; Spence, 1978; Stigler, 1961). These roots further extend to fields varying from daily life to social sciences and this entails the field of business (Vocino & Oppewal, 2006) like it has been widely adopted in field of management to explain the role of information asymmetry for multiple research applications. For instance, in a recent study of corporate governance it depicted that how financial statements are used as a signal of performance to future investors (Y. Zhang & Wiersema, 2009). The research further extends to the study of heterogeneous boards to signal the cultural diversity (Miller & del Carmen Triana, 2009) entrepreneurship (Certo, 2003), Top management team skills and characteristics (Lester et al., 2006), presence of angel investors and venture capitalists (Elitzur & Gavious, 2003), and founder involvement (Busenitz et al., 2005). Researchers of Human resource management put a great emphasis on signaling theory because a number of studies have been implied to understand the signals showcased during the recruitment process (Suazo et al., 2009).

Within the field of business signaling theory has been under great focus in marketing, marketers are the ones who manipulate and transmit a signal in the form of an advertisement to lure consumers towards buying the goods and services offered by their company or brand and similarly the receivers are the consumers with the interpretation skills to accumulate and interpret the information accurately to their utility, even though at times these receivers are persuaded by not just the information but with the style or the content of the advertisement of the signal (Dunham, 2011). In the discipline of marketing the signaling theory has been adopted in multiple facets that include signals from Business to Business and from Business to consumers. In the field of marketing a signal is used for multiple purposes, for instance to transmit or gain

information about the quality of the product: advertising (Kirmani, 1990), price (Erdem et al., 2008), warranties (Boulding & Kirmani, 1993), additional Investments (Erdem & Swait, 1998a; Kirmani & Rao, 2000), or the brand (Erdem & Swait, 1998a, 2004).

Signaling theory is mainly divided into two research streams. The first stream pertains to information economics and is concerned about brand's investments (Klein & Leffler, 1981) and reputation (Shapiro, 1982, 1983) as a signal to assure its high quality. In case the firm may cheat it's going to suffer greater losses in the long run affecting its return on investments, their quality and at times affecting both.

Contrary to first stream, marketing mix elements are at the center stage in second stream as a signal of quality to the consumers. According to (Spence, 1974), signals carry information pertaining to characteristics of economic agents and these signals are manipulated at times by the firms. Based on this marketing mix elements such as warranties, packaging and advertising are the vehicles that provide both direct and indirect information about the product attributes and functionalities that are otherwise not disclosed to consumers. For instance, as a quality signal advertisement works effectively (Kihlstrom & Riordan, 1984; Milgrom & Roberts, 1986), higher price is associated with better quality (Spence, 1974; Tirole, 1988), warranties (Boulding & Kirmani, 1993; Grossman, 1981; Lutz, 1989) and similarly umbrella branding also functions like a signal by building upon the past reputation of the brand as a signal (Wernerfelt, 1988).

Marketing mix has been the inertia of studies focused on signals from firms to consumers for instance advertising (Kirmani, 1990) or retailer choice for the display and sales of the product (Davis et al., 1992) as quality signals. Although consumer researchers also have studied the impact of brand name on quality perceptions (Chu & Chu, 1994; Dawar & Parker, 1994), user generated content and its effect on customer involvement leading to customer engagement is yet to be explored in the perspective of signaling theory.

In marketing, the advertisement, brand, or other marketing mechanism used to transmit the signal will empower the receiver to become a consumer of the advertised products or service. This is because the majority of consumers do not have access to the core ideology or sensitive information about the firm that they are dealing with. These types of consumers are persuaded by the information that is communicated to them externally. Even within these consumers there is an evident difference in viewpoint (Pecot & De Barnier, 2018; Rindell et al., 2015). Signal is not

only dependent upon the design, sender or even the medium used by the sender but is largely dependent upon the understanding of the receiver. It is an imperative of the signal that it should provoke some thoughts and lead to some actions, and this is solely dependent upon the interpretation of the signal (Dunham, 2011).

Our thesis is focused on the effect of UGC in being a strong, credible, clear, and consistent signal towards customers to addon in their involvement and engagement because according to (Erdem & Swait, 1998a), content, clarity, consistency, and credibility are the four pillars of signaling theory. Current Research has only been focused on few selected antecedents to brand credibility that are investments, clarity, and consistency (Erdem & Swait, 1998a). Content itself is an important aspect of a signal that is neglected at large(Erdem et al., 2006, 2008; Erdem & Swait, 2004). Social media and other such advents have given rise to improved personalized communications that enhance the transmission of signals (M. Zhang et al., 2020).

### 1.2.2. Brand Signal:

The word brand is derived from Old Norse word brandr, which means “to burn” (an identifying mark burned on livestock with a heated iron) as brands were and still are the means by which owners of livestock mark their animals to identify them (Maurya & Mishra, 2012). AMA 1990 defines brand as “A name, term, design, symbol, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from competitors.” In other words, brands are a means to differentiate themselves from the competitors (or future competitors). Researchers (D. A. Aaker, 1991) strictly adhere to AMA’s. Brand signals basically serve the purpose of being an information vehicle that provides prospect consumers about the product attributes and to reiterate the credibility of the claim made and is based on the company’s past and present information and actions and about the marketing strategy and marketing mix details of the company (Erdem & Swait, 1998a).

### 1.2.3. 3C Attributes of a Signal:

Credibility, consistency, and clarity are termed as the 3Cs of a signal. In the earlier time, credibility was considered to be the only core element of a signal (Tirole, 1988) but such claims were dethroned by the later researchers. After further research and findings, it was evidently proved by (Erdem & Swait, 1998a) that credibility of the signal itself relies on or is determined by the consistency and clarity of the signal. These are also referred to as 3Cs of a brand and are

of equal importance and significance along with the Signal content, which is an equally important aspect of a signal that is largely neglected (Erdem et al., 2006, 2008; Erdem & Swait, 2004). All these elements that include content, credibility, clarity, and consistency have a direct effect on the positioning of the product. They help improve the position by positively increasing the perception about the quality and resulting in decreased information cost to the consumers (Erdem & Swait, 1998a).

#### *1.2.3.1. Signal Content:*

A signal content is the sort of information that a signal carries. Content depicts the strategic positioning and decisions of the marketing team. Contents alongside marketing activities results in the creation of association between brands and consumers, for instance hedonic, prestigious, green, innovative traits, regardless of the other factors of the signal (Erdem et al., 2008). The long ignored factor has the power to pursue consumers in to believing the claim of the brand (Dunham, 2011)

Majority of the research has long ignored the effectiveness of the content itself (Erdem et al., 2006, 2008; Erdem & Swait, 2004). (Baek et al., 2010) was one of its own kind of study that investigated the effects of content with the interaction effect of the prestige positioning and the credibility of the brand. Similarly, content is considered to be an alternate to spending additional investments as it helps improve the message conveyed and thus results in clearer, consistent and more credible position of the brand (Erdem et al., 2008). A firm's success is dependent upon how well it communicates its brand investment to the real end users (Erdem & Swait, 1998a).

#### *1.2.3.2. Signal Credibility:*

Brand or Signal credibility is referred to the believability of the proclaimed quality and other product positioning related information contained in a brand, that is also a firm's ability and willingness to deliver what has been promised in terms of quality (Erdem et al., 2006). Credibility plays a vital role when certain attributes of the firm offering are not clear to the consumers, and thus brand plays the role of a promise that ensures that the claims made

regarding the product quality and other functionalities are credible enough. Brands as a signal increase the confidence of a consumer in a product or service being offered and this results in reduced uncertainty at a lower information cost and lower levels of perceived risk, and collectively these factors work in a way that increases the expected utility of a consumer (Erdem & Swait, 1998a).

Credibility works as a heart for a brand in a market that is uncertain (Erdem & Swait, 1998a, 2004). For instance, a signal is only perceived to be authentic if its credible, thus credibility is the foundation stone for authenticity (Morhart et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014). Signals that do not fulfil their promised outcome are considered to be not credible because consumers cannot rely on these signals and thus affect the repeat sales resulting in long terms losses (Tirole, 1988). It is otherwise in vain to invest heavily in building brands name if it does not fulfil the promised utility. Credibility thus is the real motivation behind brands fulfilling the promised quality (Boulding & Kirmani, 1993). A credible brand signal even at times eliminates the needs for additional investments in the branding rather with the focused and improved content it enhances the credibility of the signal (Pecot & De Barnier, 2018). For instance, in a comparison of IBM and leading edge, IBM is always considered to be delivering better customer services, and it is the brand that does the magic and works as a credible signal in comparison to the later one (Erdem et al., 2002). According to (Wernerfelt, 1988) credibility has two major components, expertise, and trustworthiness. Thus, when a brand is considered to be expert in what it is doing this builds up on the trustworthiness as well (Wernerfelt, 1988). Credibility is greatly affected by consistency because it is considered to an antecedent of credibility (Erdem & Swait, 1998a).

#### *1.2.3.3. Signal Consistency:*

Credibility is directly dependent on the consistency of the marketing mix strategy of a brand. Consistency has a direct influence on consumers perceptions as it portrays the seriousness, willingness, and ability of the firm to deliver the promised quality of service or products over a course of time (Erdem & Swait, 1998a). Consistency is one of the key marketing principles (C. W. Park et al., 2008) and plays a pivotal role in the brand management. Managing a brand effectively requires a consistency within and across the marketing mix that includes the strategies from selecting the retailers to the price and its sub mix that include the theme and

adverts. This temporal consistency further enhances the message promised by the brand and thus makes it clearer and more credible position in the market and amongst the competing brands (Erdem & Swait, 1998a). The term Consistency also referred to the fact that brand has been stable (low variation) in terms of its attributes over time (e.g., "Mercedes-Benz always produces high-quality cars").

Consistency can be termed as the amount of convergence and harmony between the marketing mix elements and its stability over the time. Basically, brand investments are real time resources. A firm spend these resources to emphasize on the two main achievable objects; first being the surety to the consumer that the promised quality and attributes will be delivered and secondly, it's a long-term relation that the brand is trying to build (Klein & Leffler, 1981). Consistency is on the initial processing variable of the phenomenon Brand signal, thus it is of great importance and emphasis (Dunham, 2011). Consistency should be maintained even if they want to reposition the brand it should be done carefully that does not affect the consistency in terms of promises delivered before and the new promises that are to be delivered in the future in the case of both extension and reposition of the brand (Keller, 1993). If consumers are persuaded with these efforts (Hakala et al., 2011; Rose et al., 2016), they are going to be influenced and would eventually influence their belief about the brands consistency (Erdem et al., 2006).

Temporal consistency has a direct effect on perceived brand quality, and it further strengthens the perception of signal (brand) being credible (Boulding & Kirmani, 1993; Erdem & Swait, 2004). A brand must always avoid deliberate or undeliberate discrepancies between the actual offerings and the ones promised because this will result in erosion of credibility. One of the techniques to avoid such inconsistencies is to standardize the operations (e.g., McDonalds has been spending huge amounts to bring consistency to its menu and food over the different outlets). According to the literature of signaling theory, a signal that is consistent with it claims over a longer run would eventually result in higher levels of credibility and results in an enhanced brands equity. In a more concise manner, managing a brand is simply managing the credibility and consistency of the claims made under the name of the brand (Erdem & Swait, 1998a).

#### *1.2.3.4. Signal Clarity*

Signals clarity is the second process variable that captures the extent and amount of vagueness in the message or information provided by the brand. A signal can only be termed clear when the consumers are able to grasp the intended message behind the brand (Erdem & Swait, 1998a). According to the existing literature myths and stories create confusions rather than clarity and therefore brands should avoid such messages to avoid ambiguity in the message (Adorisio, 2014; Brown et al., 2013).

Similar to credibility and consistency, the degree of clarity of a signal is also linked with information cost, perceived risk, and resultantly linked with expected utility. In case the message propagated by the brand signal is clear it will not only decrease the information cost, uncertainty, and perceived risk but will also increase the utility expected by the consumer thus creates a positive image and position of the brand (D. A. Aaker, 1991). Furthermore, a clear communication is always considered to be more authentic and credible, same goes when it comes to brands communicating the quality as a signal, the clearer the signal more credible it will be considered (Erdem & Swait, 1998a) thus making a consumer believe that the promised quality is to be delivered (Vocino & Oppewal, 2006). Clarity is also considered to be antecedents of brand clarity so in order to achieve the credibility a signal must be clear along with being consistent (Erdem & Swait, 1998a).

## 1.3. Customer Involvement

### 1.3.1. Managerial Perspective of Customer Involvement

Marketing as a discipline has been witnessing a drastic change constantly. Marketing in today's world is more leaned towards building relationships with the stakeholders that include customers as well. According to Ch (2000) relationship marketing is a:

"Process of identifying and establishing, maintaining, enhancing, and when necessary terminating relationships with customers and other stakeholders, at a profit, so that the objectives of all parties involved are met, where this is done by a mutual giving and fulfillment of promises (p. 98)."

involvement is a way of analyzing and rationalizing one's choice. Involvement comprises of time, effort, dedication, and the expected outcome that is expected as an outcome for making a purchase decision involving a particular product or a service.

Notably, large firms like Walgreens[6] (One of the United states largest pharmacy chain) that spend a huge amount almost millions of dollars on building relationships and devising relationship marketing programs (Berry 2000). Similarly, firms like Patagonia, Starbucks, GE, American Express T-Mobile[7] etc. invest heavily in the relationship building.

*Figure 8 – Walgreens (One of the United States largest pharmacy chains)*




In comparison to the tangible aspects of any product or services offerings that can be imitated easily there are certain intangible aspects that are a result of a relationship with a customer and these aspects can hardly be imitated and even if imitated it takes a lot of time and efforts along with the strategies to ensure that the execution is done rightly.

Similarly, relationship marketing is a broader concept, and it inculcates multiple facets. One of the most important aspects within the discipline of relationship marketing is Customer Involvement. Customer involvement is concerned with the basic phenomenon of getting a customer involved with the product or the service offered by a particular brand. Both empirically

[6] https://www.walgreensbootsalliance.com/our-business/united-states-segment
[7] https://www.cm.com/en-us/blog/relationship-marketing-examples-done-right/

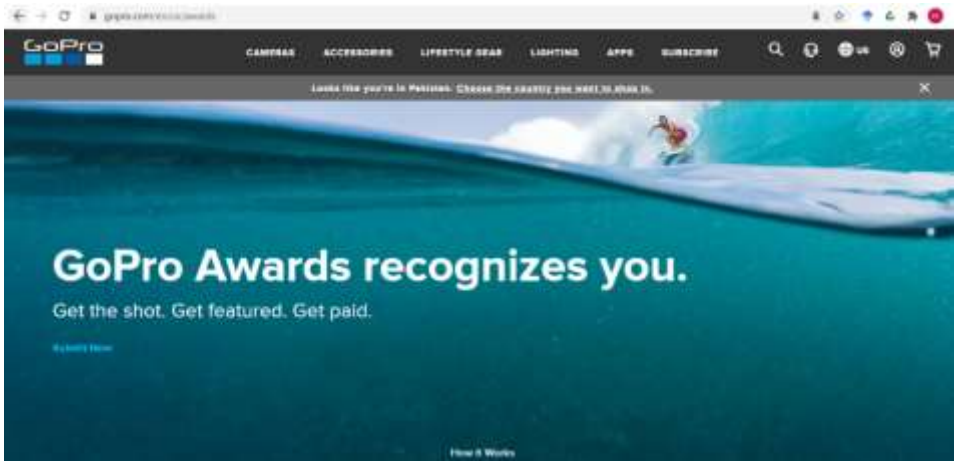
and theoretically, the importance of customer involvement has been long emphasized because of its moderating role in the customer information processing and decision-making process which effects the customers interest in building and retaining the relationship.

The construct of involvement is further classified in two broader categories, High Involvement and Low Involvement (Zaichkowsky 1985) Customers with high involvement vary in greater deals in comparison to customers with low involvement and this can be witnessed in terms of variance in the level of efforts put to find the alternatives (Carbonell, Rodríguez-Escudero et al. 2009). Highly involved customers attribute lower values to other competitive offerings and are more satisfied based on the perception that the current offerings been offered are better in quality (Carbonell, Rodríguez-Escudero et al. 2009). Companies like LEGO, GoPro etc. involve customers differently that not only creates a sense of ownership for the customer but also generates great value for the organization itself.

*Figure 9 – LEGO Website Screenshot*




*Figure 10 – GoPro Website Screenshot*



Customers can be involved in a multitude of activities, particularly in case of innovation a customer can be involved in three boarded categories (Dwyer, Schurr et al. 1987). Customers can be involved as a source of information, as a co-developer and even as an innovator. Like loyalty, engagement and other phenomenon of marketing involvement is also considered to be an internal state of mind that is a result of an experience a customer gets. According to the theory on involvement by (Astin 1999) suggests that the degree of involvement varies across the different range of products based on the cost and life of the product and service. Bread Loaf and other eatables in comparison to those of durable goods.

### 1.3.2. Customer Involvement literature review

In today's digital era, the behavior of a customer is more complex owing to the extended role of customers experience that goes beyond the purchase. According to the Gallup Management Journal, customer today does not restrict the judgment of a brand to just a channel but aggregate the overall brand experiences throughout the journey[8]. A customer's journey begins long before the actual purchase. Initially, a customer starts gathering information about a product or a service, the actual purchase experience and a variety of experiences that go beyond the purchase. These beyond purchase experiences entail, liking, discussing and further sharing the same information about the same brand over the social media (Malhotra, Malhotra et al. 2013, Hollebeek, Glynn et al. 2014), giving the ratings or reviews about the brand (Mathwick and Mosteller 2017), and a possible collaboration for the development of a new product as well (Hsieh and Chang 2016).

Customer involvement is deeply rooted in customer engagement (Vivek, Beatty et al. 2014), the definition of customer engagement entails the interactivity and connectivity of a customer with the overall offerings by a firm or with a particular brand that inculcates involvement with the other people who are also a part of a social network created around the product or service or brand and its offerings and activities that are beyond purchase (Vivek, Beatty et al. 2012). Emphasis on the understanding and realizing the importance of Customer involvement is based on the past theoretical and conceptual studies on customer engagement that satisfaction, emotions (Pansari and Kumar 2017), involvement, and participation (Brodie, Hollebeek et al. 2011) are the antecedents of the customer engagement. Empirical studies further elaborate the

[8] http://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/187601/online-shopping-destroys-customer-engagement.aspx

importance of how customer involvements affects and influences the engagement at not just brand level (Leckie, Nyadzayo et al. 2016) but the effects extend to even the product level (Dwivedi, Wilkie et al. 2016)

Importance and role of customer's involvement throughout the value creation process has received significant amount of attention in the literature (Yi, Nataraajan et al. 2011). This has been realized after extensively and carefully studied by researchers taking in to consideration the different perspectives(Chen, Wu et al. 2016). Anning-Dorson (2016) p.2 defines the capability to get involvement as "the extent to which firms are able to engage customers in the value creation and delivery process". Customer Involvement is a capability, linked with the service providing firms process in a way that the firm is encouraged to involve customer by interacting. Anning-Dorson (2016) defines customer involvement as an ability a firm has, and in order have fruitful and direct connection and interaction with the customer throughout the value delivery process this ability is being utilized by the firms. Customer involvement enables a customer to undertake multiple roles like one of sharing information and being a co-creator (Fang, Palmatier et al. 2008, Grönroos 2011).

In order to understand and decipher the complex process of selection and purchasing decisions, marketers consider customer involvement as one of the key factors Bruwer and Huang (2012). Marketers also understand the fact that the underlying factors keep changing and keep developing Sherif and Cantril (1947), defined customer involvement as a process that provokes certain day-to-day life attitudes and thus determines their behaviors. Day (1970) found that involvement basically shows the level of an individual's interest to his/her ego-structure. Zaichkowsky (1985), one of the pioneer researchers who worked on the concept of involvement defined involvement comprehensively. According to (Zaichkowsky 1985) involvement is the relevance based on inherent needs, interests and values of an objective to that of a person's perception. According to the literature it can be easily concluded that involvement is different from "Importance" (Baker, Cronin et al. 2009). Involvement is a whole process that starts with collection of pre-purchase information and entails processing of the information, hierarchy-of-effects, evaluation of the different attributes, and brand differences perceived by the customers, and results in the final purchase decision (O'Cass 2000).

Recently, multiple studies (Howcroft, Hamilton et al. 2007) have examined the degree and extent of customers involvement on the overall service environment and on the perception of benefits According to the findings supported the applicability of the involvement inventory scale to the overall service environment but it was not sufficient to show the effects on different other attributes, for example such involvement may exert a pressure on the expectations of the customer that ultimately effects their judgement or perception towards the performance of the service (Kinard and Capella 2006, Carbonell, Rodríguez-Escudero et al. 2009).

### 1.3.3. Involvement and Co-creation

Customers, when given a discretionary option to be involved and be active co-producer of the service design in comparison to being the passive customers, customers put in more time and efforts not just on idea and information sharing but in the overall co-production of the service the intend to consume (Varki and Wong 2003). Involvement can also be used an effective strategy to decrease the perceived risk (Laaksonen 1994, Mitchell 1999, Dholakia 2001) and thus by creating rapport decreases the dissatisfaction.

Customer Involvement as Co-Creation Dynamics of customers overall satisfaction have changed, service quality or high product quality standalone does not assure the satisfaction as they seek involvement to customize and match the features of the service or product to their needs(Yung and Chan 2002). Higher levels of innovation and service performances can be achieved with the customer involvement as co-creator (Cambra-Fierro, Melero-Polo et al. 2018).

Engaging customers in the co-creation is one of the most popular and effective tools available to not just produce goods and services but to innovate and let customers be a part of the value delivery process freely (Darmody and Solomon 2009). Researchers have critically evaluated the phenomenon of the co-creation and highly recommend that companies and organizations should work along with the customer with the customers full freedom and self-discretion to acquire the creativity and the novel capabilities and ideas (Zwick, Bonsu et al. 2008).

Given the fact that in order to prevent of resolve possible service failures, close interaction between the service provider and customer is of great importance and based on this majority of firms have adopted the proactive approach of involving the customer in the creation process that leads to loyalty behaviors (Carlson, Rahman et al. 2019).An extensive amount of literature is

available on the outcomes of customer co-creation (Cheung and To 2016) rather than the antecedents. Understanding the cause and conditions of the causes is of great importance to understand the resulting behaviors (Cheung and To 2020). Customers feel respected and recommend those firms to their close circle of friends and family which considers the suggestions of the customers throughout the value delivery process.

Cheung and To (2015) also found that relation-oriented customers with a higher level of involvement are supposed to put in more efforts and give more time to promote the product alongside improving the currently provided services. Modern day customers are actively participating throughout the service creation process rather than being the passive receivers (Henderson and Palmatier 2011). Co-creation, collaboration with the organization or other customers to improve or innovate new services and products is a result of customer involvement. Customer Involvement is a psychological state that explains importance and relevance of a particular product or service to an individual (Zaichkowsky 1985).

Customers that show high involvement are active and they eagerly share their views and experiences on the products and services and they share the novelist of ideas on where and how the improvement can be done, specifically in the fashion brands case (Samala and Katkam 2019) which is further supported by the fact that such customers at times even share much elaborated ideas in the forms of technical drawings and even graphical representation of the ideas (Kohler, Fueller et al. 2011).

Customers are the most innovative and creative when it comes to giving suggestions to firm in order to design new or improve currently offered services (De Almeida, Dholakia et al. 2014). Organizations and companies have started to utilize this source of innovation and creativity but arranging and organizing competitions whereby customers participate against a certain reward and even at times these companies equip the participants with a set of applications (Software) and toolkits through which customer can both enhance and improve their current set of skills and share the creative ideas (Agrawal and Rahman 2015). Customers that co-create with the companies or other customers enjoy the whole process, this phenomenon results in not just higher quality of service but also leads to positive word of mouth (Grott, Cambra-Fierro et al. 2019). Customer Involvement may not have the similar impact on its own but if the same is

implied in terms of co-creation this results in not just superior expectations in terms of services but also result in positive and favorable word of mouth (Cheung and To 2020).

### 1.3.4. Factors underlying involvement.

According to Mowen and Minor (1998) customer involvement is a construct that it affected by many underlying factors, these factors include personality, type of the product desired, how the communication has been done and the overall situation of the interaction with the customer under which the customer makes the purchases or acts. Similarly, Kapferer and Laurent (1985) also found certain predispositions based on the profile of the customer that effects the customer's involvement. These include the worth and importance of the product, perceived impact of the bad choice, the value product is offering symbolically and its hedonic value.

In comparison to these researchers, Zaichkowsky (1985) arguably poised that the involvement aspect of the customer can be understood by the three variables that include Situational; referring to a particular situation for instance buying a new refrigerator while the old one malfunctioned, Personal; that entails personal interests, needs, and inherent values and finally the Physical; referring to the objective points of differentiation. Unlike Zaichkowsky (1985) according to whom customer involvement is a unidimensional structure, Kapferer and Laurent (1985) found it to be a multidimensional structure and popularized it likewise. Another multidimensional model was proposed at FCB advertising agency, known as FCB grid. Vaughn (1980) and Vaugn (1986) proposed the model in which they combined different functionalities of the right and left hemispheres of the brain with involvement and proposed the FCB grid (**Error! Reference s ource not found.**) that inculcates rational and emotional purchase decisions alongside high and low involvement. This model was proposed to be applied in multiple settings with different psychological, behavioral, and economic settings.

### 1.3.5. Involvement and organizations

Organizations throughout their lifecycle keep evolving. To meet the required expectations of its current and future customers. During this same process organizations today have evolved from the basic relationship marketing to more in depth constructs of the relationship marketing (Bloch and Richins 1983). Organizations today and have switched to engaging and involving the current and potential customers by all means throughout process that involves collecting pre-production

information collection and till the delivery of the product or the service which is also terms as the value creation process (Pansari and Kumar 2017). This shift is majorly owing to the fact that organizations have started to realize that it is not the firm that stand alone creates the value, instead it's a co-creation construct that intakes the input of the customer as a key stakeholder (Lusch and Nambisan 2015). Storey and Larbig (2018), p. 101 reemphasize this phenomenon by stating that "Information on customer needs and how best to serve these needs are best obtained from the customer". Customers are the ones who face the problem thus this makes them having the closet possible information pertaining to the problem, whereas in contrast organizations have best possible means to manufacture or serve the best solution and based on this logic the importance of involving the customer cannot be ignored (Moeller, Ciuchita et al. 2013).

Although the slogan "Know your customers" has been popular choice of management in the service sector the dearth on psychological state, interaction, participation and affection is found (Woodruff and Gardial 1996, Stone, Woodcock et al. 2000). Customer being the final evaluator of the service matters the most and according to the research a dissatisfied customers spreads the negative information through word of mouth to at least three other individuals from their circle (Horovitz 1990). This in return leads to a negative impact on the overall market share of the firm thus reduces the overall performance (Tseng, Qinhai et al. 1999).

Marketers often misunderstand customer involvement by considering it same as market orientation (Mandolfo, Chen et al. 2020), Market orientation is mainly inclined towards collection and utilization of the market intelligence (Kohli and Jaworski 1990), customer involvement on the contrary avoids gathering the market information rather allows customers to innovate on their own. The major difference between market intelligence and customer involvement as the first is overall market intelligence the later deals with involving the customers in the whole process of Innovation (Cui and Wu 2016). Customer Involvement is an important element that determines the successful development of products and services (Tseng and Chiang 2016). Customers with high level of involvement tend to not only provide suggestions throughout the value creation process but also spread positive word of mouth throughout their social network and via social media and other such channels as well in comparison to the customers with lower levels of involvement because the low level of involvement makes them avoid putting extra efforts (Cheung and To 2016).

### 1.3.6. Type of products and involvement

People, while buying expensive items like car and house first gather information and evaluate feelings based on the information gathered because of high involvement but based on rationality (Vaughn 1980). Similarly, if the decisions are based on emotions for high involvement items like jewelry, cosmetics and fashion people before gathering information considers the feelings and ultimately then decide to buy (Vaughn 1980).

The case is different for the products with lower involvement, based on the rational decision making for items like food items and perishable items, they buy the product first and then gather the information and finally confronts with the feelings at the later stage (Vaugn 1986). Similarly, in the low involvement case with emotional purchase, an individual first goes for the feelings and afterward gathers the information before making a purchase. Examples include cigarettes and soft drinks (Vaugn 1986). According to Buck, Anderson et al. (2004), the ratio of affect to reason creates variance between the effects of affect and reason. Based on the calculation of average affective and rational involvement ARI model was proposed by Buck, Anderson et al. (2004).

Based on the systematic explanations by Vaughn (1980), (Vaugn 1986) and Buck, Anderson et al. (2004) it is found that customers imply to be more careful and obsessed while making purchase decisions pertaining to the products in which the ratio between the affection and rationality is high along with high involvement rather than the products with lower ratio of affection and rationality and lower involvement. In the case of high involvement products the information that is been processed is higher (Kressmann, Sirgy et al. 2006).

There is a close link and association between the type of the product and level of involvement that proves the fact that the way information is processed for different categories differ (Park and Moon 2003). Motivation and interest in a product are the basis for the classification of customers' involvement (Buck, Anderson et al. 2004). Accordingly, a product may be further processed based on utilitarian involvement (Cognitive) or the hedonic involvement (affective) (Zaichkowsky 1987). There is a variance in the search of information, for the utilitarian products is significantly more than that of hedonic ones (Mittal 1989). Effects of different types of advertisement vary for low involvement and hedonic products and utilitarian products with higher involvement. Emotional advertisement works best for hedonic products that usually have lower levels of involvement (Gohary and Hanzaee 2014).

### 1.3.7. Perceived risk and involvement

Researchers found that the varying level of involvement based on cognition and affection leads to different levels of information sought along with perceived risk that affects the purchase decision linked with the products with varying levels of rational and affective involvement (Kapferer and Laurent 1985). The perceived risk differs significantly in the case of products with higher rational involvement to that of low affective involvement and based on this when a product with high involvement does not meet the expectations the reaction varies in comparison to the failure of a product to meet the expectations with lower levels of involvement (Laurent and Kapferer 1985).

The different dimensions of Involvement possess greater importance in order to understand the construct (Laurent and Kapferer 1985), Risk involvement is associated with the possibility of negative outcome that is associated with the ill or wrong choice (Risk Importance) of the possibility of choosing a wrong product (Risk probability). Depending upon the product category, risk has a contextual meaning (Batra and Sinha 2000). Risk involvement is possible because of the selection of wrong product, because once the purchase has been done there are chances that either the customer is now stuck with the product or he is going to face certain issues while returning the same (Ko, Jung et al. 2004). This risk involvement varies for different product categories like for instance medical drugs, products pertaining to baby, or highly costly products like durables and the same will low in products with a lower cost like a ball pen etc.

According to Baker, Cronin et al. (2009), the relation between satisfaction and contact employees' customer orientation is moderated by Involvement. Customer with higher levels of involvement tend to be a part of solution providing team with the service related problems and consider more about getting the fair treatment (Varki and Wong 2003). The moderating effects of involvement do effect the perception about the risk in the case of physical intangibility and mental intangibility (Laroche, Bergeron et al. 2003). Customers with high involvement do not differ from those with low involvement when it comes to the expectations from the service providers in terms of the regular updates and price competitivity, these both desire fair treatment and equal involvement when it comes to the solution provider to the problems (Varki and Wong 2003)

### 1.3.8. Effects of customer involvement

Since customer involvement is a subjective term and a psychological phenomenon that is said to be reflecting the importance and relevance of a service or a product to an individual (Zaichkowsky 1985) thus leads towards a better understating of the overall behavior. Similarly, research in the past has also shown that customer involvement also affects the following factors as well:

- Brand loyalty (Knox, Walker et al. 1994),
- Brand discrimination (Zaichkowsky 1985),
- Product selection, and Purchase decisions (Mittal 1989, Smith and Carsky 1996).

For instance according to the study by (Arora 1995) the relationships between price, involvement, perceived quality and Intentions to switch for automobile insurance sector, there were greater chances to switch service providers even among highly involved groups if the switching was leading a lower prices and better perceived service quality. Although, customer involvements influence on the perception of service performance has been found but there has been little no work done to explore the other factors that effect and influence the strength of the link involvement and service performance perception (Arora 1995).

Research in the past has been devoted to study the perceptions of customers and its impact on the overall service performance (Brady, Cronin Jr et al. 2002, Martínez and Martínez 2010) yet, the focus on specific antecedents of service performance has been not studied thoroughly (Laroche, Bergeron et al. 2003). For example, as per the study by Varki and Wong (2003) customers' role in relationship marketing of services is dependent on the level of involvement. Highly involved customers prefer engaging with the service provider. Self-efficacy is a variable that makes customers use online tools and techniques available to co-produce and this is positively linked with the overall evaluation of the service evaluation (Van Beuningen, de Ruyter et al. 2009). Customers can alter and influence their experience through co-creation throughout the value creating process (Lengnick-Hall, Claycomb et al. 2000, Edvardsson 2005).

### 1.3.9. Customer involvement and customer engagement

Customer involvement is different from customer engagement in many aspects (Vivek, Beatty et al. 2014), the difference is of the antecedence and consequence because a customer is involved owing to the relevance or the value toa certain offering by the customer in comparison customer engagement is mainly the after effects a customer derives after an interaction with the product of the service offering. As per (Laurent and Kapferer 1985) involvement includes multiple dimensions that include cognitive (risk importance and interest) and affective (pleasure and sign) dimensions and customer engagement involves not only attitudinal but behavioral aspect in terms of response towards a brand. In conclusion, customer involvement mainly takes place because of the relevance, usefulness of a product or service offering, level of interest in a product category and customer engagement link with spending resources i.e., time, money, and efforts because of the connection with the brand (Brodie, Ilic et al. 2013).

Customer involvement is an important predecessor of customer engagement, and this fact is supported by a vast amount of literature (Brodie, Hollebeek et al. 2011, Vivek, Beatty et al. 2012, Leckie, Nyadzayo et al. 2016). Customer involvement has been conceptualized as a unidimensional concept but it was later under criticism because making it unidimensional was rather a simplistic view of the construct that diluted the superiority and richness of the relation between a customer and a product or a product category (Quester and Lim 2003). Criticism was mainly due to the fact that customer involvement is rather a complex construct and thus it can be captured likewise (Kapferer and Laurent 1985). Customer involvement is determined by the risk, interest, and psychological values like sign and pleasure associated with the product category (Laurent and Kapferer 1985, Quester and Lim 2003).

Customer involvement is defined as the level of interest and personal relevance in accordance to a certain object or decision based on an individual's values, goals and concept about self (Zaichkowsky 1985) and similarly the construct is said to have different types as well. Accordingly, involvement can further be classified as enduring involvement (Higie and Feick 1989), situational involvement (Laurent and Kapferer 1985), and purchase involvement (Mittal 1989).

### *1.3.10.* Customer Involvement in Services Perspective*:*

"Perceptions of service quality, for instance, may be dependent upon the degree of involvement with the product" (Gabbott and Hogg 1999) p.164.

Customer involvement is of great importance in terms of services perspective (Anning-Dorson 2016), because in such encounters the productions and consumption is done simultaneously and thus majority of the key aspects take place during the encounter which is the actual of interaction with a particular service (Shostack 1985).

Service providers have this bracket of time through which they can develop the trust, loyalty this enabling the retention of the customer along with earning a positive word of mouth promotion (Beckers, Van Doorn et al. 2018). Customer involvement is high in the case of services because of the phenomenon of " inseparability" between the consumption and production and to the fact that ownership is not transferred and that the purchased service cannot be returned (Laroche, Bergeron et al. 2003). Customer involvement is directly linked with the cognitive efforts, higher the involvement, more the cognitive investment is done for a particular service for instance Illies and REITER-PALMON (2004) found that the need for information search is high in the case of high outcome involvement. This creates a bias of a customer and thus leads to higher valuation of the relationship between the variables that effect the decision making (Mittal and Kamakura 2001).

Although for the past two decades, customer involvement has gained interest of the researchers but there has not been a common conceptual framework that defines the construct in its full (Rothschild 1984, Broderick and Mueller 1999). At times, customer involvement is linked to personal relevance (Celsi and Olson 1988, Cacioppo and Petty 1989), according to which involvement is simply the outcome of the extent of personal relevance between the customer and the product or the service been offered. According to his understanding there will be a variation in the levels of customers involvement owing to different personality types and situations.

Based on the earlier research and literature customer involvement is further classified in three perspectives labelled as product-centered, subject-centered, and response-centered (Finn 1983, Broderick and Mueller 1999). Based on the findings, it is implied that certain goods and services and inherently more appealing and involving and this is Product-centered involvement. Subject-centered involvement is like the perspective espoused by the researchers identified in the

previous paragraph in that the level of involvement felt towards a good or service is a function of the individual. Finally, response-centered involvement focuses on the level of the involvement a consumer has with the outcomes associated with a good or service centered (Finn 1983, Broderick and Mueller 1999).

According to a study by Laroche, Bergeron et al. (2003) aimed at studying the moderating role of customer involvement on the link between perceived risk and intangibility it was found that customer involvement does moderate the relationship between physical intangibility and mental intangibility and perceived risk and even with the higher levels of customer involvement this relation grows stronger.

Customers with high involvement are interested in forming and maintaining a long term relationship with the service providers (Varki and Wong 2003). Additionally, another framework that aids up in the understanding of impact of customer involvement is Elaboration likelihood model (ELM) developed by (Petty, Cacioppo et al. 1983). According to the ELM model, a customer gets more involved with a product or service, the higher the chances are that customer engages in elaboration (engagement in issue-relevant thinking). In the case of high involvement, the central route to persuasion is involved, that makes a customer an active evaluator of all the pre-purchase information, ranging from collection of the information to the processing. Similarly, under low involvement the peripheral route is followed that states that in this case customers rely on the available information and cues.

Development of multi-attribute models have received great deal of interest (Wilkie and Pessemier 1973, Lutz 1981). Literature also backs the fact there are certain external cues or internal processes different from the rational benefits and attributes of the product or the service. Psychological effects like those of  Halo effect (Beckwith and Lehmann 1975, Mitchell and Olson 1981), attitude formation using the classical conditioning (Gorn 1982), modification of the behavior (Nord and Peter 1980), mere exposure effects (Obermiller 1985), self-perception theory (Reingen and Kernan 1977).

Customer involvement entails interaction of the customer with a service provider and adds an interpersonal dimension thus it makes it indispensable to provider satisfactory services (Liljander and Mattsson 2002). Customer Involvement is a necessary requirement for a good and sound

relationship between customer and service provider and "service provider-customer" dyad creates that willingness for the customer to be involved (De Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder et al. 2001).

Wyer and Srull (1986) proposed a principle, according to the "Principal of Cognitive Economy" they termed consumers as "Cognitive Misers" which states that customers avoid searching information in depth. In accordance with this theory, highly involved customers will likely be forming a positive attitude towards long term relationship to avoid the information search along with other costs involved in starting new relationship (Varki and Wong 2003).

Further classifying the benefits of customer involvement, Gwinner, Gremler et al. (1998), elaborated three types of benefits; Social, Confidence and Special Treatment benefits. These benefits were identified to have influence on the customer involvement with a firm and were later used by other scholars as well (Kinard and Capella 2006, Patterson, Yu et al. 2006). The empirical study by Gwinner, Gremler et al. (1998), found that customers engage in the relationship to get the social benefits of; sense and feeling of familiarity, self-recognition, rapport, social support and friendship, the confidence boosting benefits of having reliance in the service provider and the special treatments expectations ranging from price discounts, VIP treatment and recognition and certain services not provided to the regular or new customers. Customers feels more involved with the services that have higher reflection of their personality and thus level of involvement could moderate the customer's behavior and benefit sought (Zaichkowsky 1985). Customers often seek these relationships to reduce the risk in the case of high involvement (Berry 2000)

Furthermore, confidence benefits can be the reduction in the anxiety, a psychological comfort, similarly social benefits include a knowingness between the customers and employees that gives a sense of relationship and special treatment includes special discounts or exclusive services (Kinard and Capella 2006). Impact of these benefits is helpful in identification of the behaviors such as spread of positive word of mouth, increased loyalty (Kinard and Capella 2006), higher levels of satisfaction and commitment (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner et al. 2002) and engaged customers for long term relations (Gwinner, Gremler et al. 1998, Patterson, Yu et al. 2006).

These three benefits may be different for different services and service settings, social benefits are of special consideration in services with high contact and customization in comparison to low contact and standardization and the magnitude will also vary given the difference in the nations like western nations and developing nations such as India, Thailand (Patterson and Smith 2001).

#### 1.3.11. Dimensions of Involvement

Similarly, the interest of a customer in a particular service or a product category is majorly because of the personal relevance, meaning and importance of that service or product offering. As defined by Zaichkowsky (1985), in the unidimensional conceptualization of the construct, the major motivator or the driver of the communication behavior is level of the interest. This interest further acts as a motivation to stay informed and updated with the developments of the brand and further discuss the same within their social circle, communities and be engaged in the brand experiences (Silvia and Kashdan 2009). For Instance a customer who is enthusiast about the automobiles will always be following the industry brands and be updated about the same (Malhotra, Malhotra et al. 2013)

According to the literature it has been evident that at times customers may be highly involved with a particular product category and at the same time may not be loyal to any of the brands of that category (Warrington and Shim 2000, Coulter, Price et al. 2003). This, thus leads to engagement and research has found that customer involvement works as a antecedent to the customer engagement (Leckie, Nyadzayo et al. 2016).

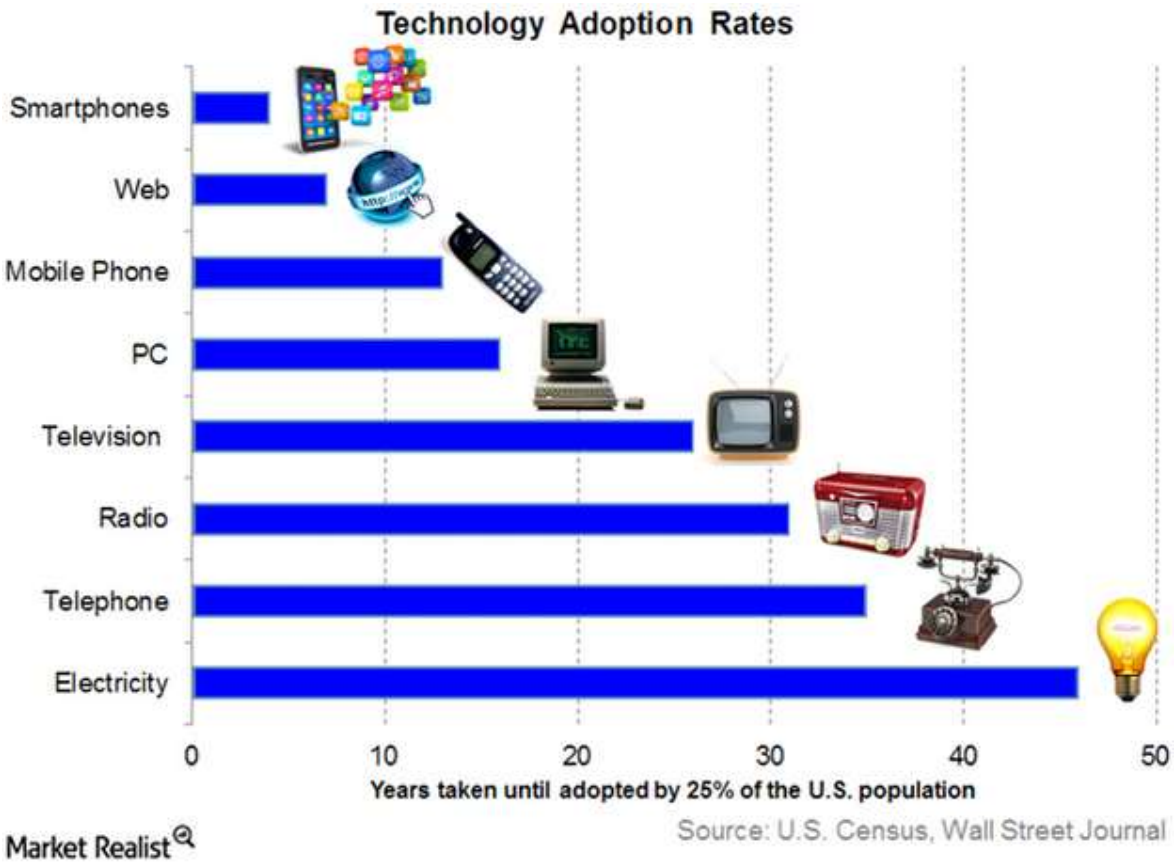
## 1.4. Brand Engagement

### 1.4.1. Managerial Perspective of Brand Engagement

Technology has enhanced drastically, with a diffusion rate faster than ever before and because of such drastic technology social media is the new buzz word that is resulting in a complete shift in the communication process all over the world. Social media took the boundaries down and brought together the whole world like it is referred to by the term “Global Village”. In today’s world of new and unorthodox mediums of connectivity and interaction and change in consumers both in terms of consumption patterns and from a passive approach that advocates to just lean

back and keep receiving the messages sent by brands to a completely changed perspective that believes in active participation and engagement with the brands.

*Figure 11 – Technology adoption rates.*




Importance of this concept can further be realized by the fact that this concept has been included in Marketing Science Institute's 2010–2012 Research Priorities (MSI 2010). This inclusion is not out of the blue, as it has been observed that big giants like Amazon, realizing the importance of the construct re-branded its tagline to include the aspect of engagement 'serving the world's largest engaged online community', which is now first in the Forbes 50 most engaging brand followed by Brand Like Alphabet Inc. Glass A, Starbucks, Footlocker, Alaska Airlines, FEDEX etc.[9]. In addition to that this concept is further empathized by the Customer Loyalty Engagement

[9] 50 most Engaged Companies – Forbes Insights https://www.forbes.com/insights/50-most-engaged-companies/#5357adee2dfa

Index (Keys 2011), according to which, brands which engage with its customers, convert that engagement into loyalty and based on the loyalties built, earn above average returns across categories are the real winners in the market. These emphases further highlight the fact that the future potential of Customer Brand Engagement is yet to be unlocked and unleashed[10].

In the context of success for a brand considering the element of growth, there are two types of growth, one that is natural or organic and the other one which is planted or pushed by the brand or the organization using multitude of tools and techniques. According to the literature organic growth is of greater importance since it shows natural leniency of the customers towards a brand and accordingly nothing else can better predict organic growth when it comes to customer engagement. Realizing the same fact, marketers today are highly motivated and are heavily investing to create or develop a long lasting, strong and an enduring bond between the customers and the brand by utilizing multiple means like interacting with the customers, sharing values, creating experiential content and a certain reward system. Brands like Red bull, LEGO, GoPro etc. make the most of the engagement phenomenon not just by creating a long-term relation of engagement but also in terms of content and product ideas.

*Figure 12 – Red Bull brand engagement advert.*




[10] Social Customer Service: 5 Brands You Should Learn from https://mention.com/en/blog/social-customer-service/

*Figure 13 – LEGO Brand engagement advert.*




*Figure 14 – GoPro brand engagement advert.*



It has been evident that although bombardment of advertisements, aggressive advertising campaigns, multiple sales promotions, low prices, and other reward points or such related offers and programs might be able to bring customer through the front door, but these types of relations will not be creating emotional relations and connections that are much more rewarding and beneficial in the longer run and brings profits and unmatched loyalty. It is firmly believed that if your customers aren't "true believers," your company is always at a risk of survival that is solely based on a relationship of price and such reliance do not prosper (Gallup 2019).

Building relationships with customers has always been at the core of marketing philosophy and it is always believed that retaining a customer is far more affordable than attracting or targeting a new customer each time. It has been evident that people always follow a particular process in order to sustain their orientation towards a goal for instance, if an individual is promotion focused, that individual will behave eagerly, and similarly if the individual is prevention focused he/she will behave in a preventive manner, the level and intensity of their engagement will be higher if the goal that they want to achieve is in line with their orientation in comparison to that goal which goes against their personal orientation or the one that disrupts their orientation. When the orientation and goal set are alike the intensity to engage in a particular activity will be intensive.

Engagement, from the word itself means an agreement, which shows involvement, although there are no consensus when we talk about the definition of engagement in marketing context, as at times it's been defined as "spectrum of consumer advertising activities and experiences—cognitive, emotional and physical—that will have a positive impact on a brand," and accordingly there are two possible means of getting engagement as its either earned or enticed [11] (Thompson 2014). Accordingly, Gallup (2019), elaborates the terms customer engagement as an emotional bond between a brand and its customers. Although it is widely believed that customers always make purchase decisions based on certain rationale of cost and benefits but research at times has shown inverse of this as customers who have strong emotional bond with a brand exerts the same emotional behaviors while making purchase decision even if it is not just rationale.

[11] Google "Brand Engagement in the Participation Age" 2014 https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/consumer-insights/consumer-trends/brand-engagement-in-participation-age/

Gamification has become one of the top trends in today's marketing field. Although the application of gamification is not limited to marketing, but it has been implied by HR across the globe to find out the talent and even teachers and students are also using this modern-day engagement tool to simulate real life situations and make decision and based on these decisions' strategies are thus laid out or the recruitment function has been carried out. Since the concept is gaining traction, most of the firms are looking forward towards creating one way or another to employ gamification as a tool to motivate customers to engage with the brands. Although the concept is generating positive outcomes but there is not a 100% success ratio as accordingly certain gamification projects have failed to generate the required level of engagement which ultimately effects the overall efficiency of the tool. (Insights 2018), and companies and slowly and gradually started to decrease the level of investments. Based on the general outcome there are both extremes, one that advocates the success of the gamification tool and other that negates the same.

### 1.4.2. Brand Engagement literature review

Given the power of social media, firms have started making the most of the available opportunity, started transforming themselves in order to communicate and deliver the value to its customers in the most efficient and effective manner (Kumar 2018). In the similar context, discipline of marketing has also seen many transactions, that ranged from transactional era to relational era and then currently the era of engagement (Pansari and Kumar 2017). According to many researchers, in the era of engagement, it is considered to be the key to get the competitive edge over other competitors (Obilo, Chefor et al. 2021) by positively influencing the important behavioral and altitudinal outcomes such as satisfaction (Brodie, Ilic et al. 2013), loyalty (Hollebeek 2011) and brand usage (Hollebeek, Glynn et al. 2014). Engagement is all about making long term relationships with the customers by creatively engaging them in the whole process from production till the delivery of the value (Pansari and Kumar 2017).

Research today (Aaker, Fournier et al. 2004) turns down the usual constructs like prior experience, that include perceived quality and the level of customer satisfaction as they fail to predict the consumer behavior in its full capacity and based on these findings, researchers today

advocate for more interactive relationships between brands and its consumers, that include 'customer engagement' (Van Doorn, Lemon et al. 2010). According to the recent developments in marketing research the concept of 'customer engagement' is an important tool to develop better understanding of customers overall experience and its retention insights (Bowden 2009).

Interacting with customers is not a new concept, it has been there since the early days and researchers have always focused on and emphasized its importance. In the similar context, according to the social exchange theory by Blau (1964), it is always believed that customers will be reciprocating positive thoughts, their positive feelings and will exert similar behaviors towards the object of interaction (a brand) based on the expectations of receiving certain benefits (monetary and non-monetary) from the relationship with the brand (Pervan, Bove et al. 2009). According to the theory, the interaction entails certain unidentified and non-specific liabilities whereby the representative of the brand or service provider is doing a favor to a customer by providing exceptional service thus making the customer feel obliged and motivated for being loyal with the brand. Under the same social exchange theory, it is believed that the partners between which the exchange is happening always try their level best keep the balance and if in case the balance is disrupted both the parties (The Brand and the customer), try to restore the balance by making different efforts and walking an extra mile to compensate the same. According to this exchange, a customer perceives that the amount or efforts that are implied are the costs, meanwhile the returns are believed to be the rewards, and behavior is based on the difference between these two. As these factors change the behavior of the customer changes according. This cost and reward perspective basically lays down the foundation for the interactive nature of customer engagement (Hollebeek 2011).

Similarly, researchers in the past have emphasized that strong brand loyalty can only be achieved by building strong and profitable relationships directly with the customers (Gustafsson, Johnson et al. 2005). According to the theory of Relationship marketing (Morgan and Hunt 1994) and service dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch 2008), customers, when interact with the brand make contributions proactively rather than just reacting to the brand message or other such brand related cues passively (Grönroos 2006, Vargo, Maglio et al. 2008). Given the proactive approach of customers it is obvious that while making these contributions these customers devote not just their time and efforts, but they give their cognitive, emotional, and physical resources. This

dedication and efforts are determined on the bases of their perceived or expected level of value that they get in return from such brand interactions (Higgins and Scholer 2009). Role of customer's proactive participation is especially of much importance in service dominant industry as customers co-create their personal experience and value with a particular brand by actively and explicitly interacting and communicating with the brand through different communication medium (Vargo, Maglio et al. 2008), that transform the consumers to active participants from just being a passive receiver (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000).

In the similar context, Customer engagement is considered to be a sub-part of relationship marketing (Vivek, Beatty et al. 2012), more concerned with companies that either offer services of are imply service-dominant logic (Brodie, Hollebeek et al. 2011), that solely rely on long lasting, mutually co created relationships between all the value generating stakeholders. According to the service dominant logic, importance of pro-active customers in the form of their suggestions and contribution in the whole co-creation process is at the center of the relationship marketing and thus is of great importance to understand for both firms and marketers (Vargo and Lusch 2008).

At the core of relationship marketing lies the concepts like patronage, retention and loyalty towards a brand, and customer engagement is considered to be a factor that contributes the most to these tenets of relationship marketing (Verhoef, Reinartz et al. 2010). In the similar context, if we take service dominant logic into consideration, customer engagement is the key because it, in true sense shows the diversity and dynamics of networking that include all stakeholders, organizations and customers that interact, co-create and enable value generation through joint efforts (Vargo, Maglio et al. 2008). The term co-created has been defined in the literature as "The level of perceived value created in the customer's mind that results from the interaction, joint and/or personalized activities that are for and with the stakeholders". The concept in anchored in interactivity, that along with the concept of customer engagement is of great importance and is expected to be of great insights in the broader areas of service and relationship marketing (Brodie, Hollebeek et al. 2011).

Customer's engagement with brand is gaining traction in the literature, it is believed to be a key factor that influences relational outcomes such as positive word-of-mouth, repeat purchase behavior, and customer participation through co-creation of the value (Verhoef, Reinartz et al.

2010). Customers, according are viewed as potential partners and active members who are willing to devote their physical resources along with emotional and cognitive efforts for the co-creation of value resulting from particular interactions with brand (Higgins and Scholer 2009).

### 1.4.3. Engagement definition:

Defining the term ‘engagement’ it basically reflects a state of motivation (Van Doorn, Lemon et al. 2010), which tends to take place by the virtue of an individual consumer’s (i.e. the ‘engagement subject’) interaction and experience as a result of this interaction (Hollebeek 2011, Hollebeek 2011) which is the key for any offering be it online or offline (Shankar and Batra 2009). Engagement has been used across a wide array of disciplines that include organizational behavior, social psychology and has now been widely discussed and adapted in the field of marketing (Brodie, Hollebeek et al. 2011, Leeflang 2011). Engagement terminology recently got the attention of marketers and has been viewed as an important and promising concept that will enhance the understanding about the customer’s behavioral outcomes that includes loyalty as a result. Engagement with a brand as a concept and terminology will also be helpful in predicting the behavior of a customer beyond just rational decision making behavior (Schau, Muñiz Jr et al. 2009). Brand has been defined by Brown, Dacin et al. (2006) as the “totality of all stakeholders' mental associations about the organization” and related. So, the real question lies what Brand engagement is. Accordingly, one of the pioneers of modern day research about brand engagement defines Customer engagement with a brand as “a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g. a brand).” (Brodie, Hollebeek et al. 2011). There are multiple overlapping and interchangeable terms used throughout literature but according to researchers there is a significant difference as Brodie, Hollebeek et al. (2011) explains that that the term ‘involvement’, somewhat coincides with the term ‘engagement’ but there is a significant difference, consumer brand ‘involvement,’ which is consumers intensity of interest and how much a consumers relates to the brand with his personality.

Although, In comparison to brand engagement, involvement has gained much attention (Coulter, Price et al. 2003), but according to the research, consumer brand ‘involvement’ predominantly act as an antecedent, to consumer brand engagement whereas ‘self-brand connection’ and ‘brand usage intent’ are the end results of the engagement. (Hollebeek, Glynn et al. 2014) The term

consumer ‘engagement’, is more focused and explains the dynamics of brand interaction (Brodie, Hollebeek et al. 2011). In a similar context, based on the evidence, people always try to follow a result or goal that also aligns with their basic orientation. They will exert eagerness if they are focused towards promotion and will be more careful and vigilant if they try to prevent something from happening and similarly they experience engagement if that is in line with their goal or ultimate motive in a stronger manner in comparison to a goal that is different and at times contradicting with their basic orientation, like pursuing an end results or a goal with more eagerness even though their orientation is toward prevention. If both the goal and orientation are in line it will likely be a stronger persuasion with positive reaction to the activity itself (Avnet and Higgins 2006).

As discussed earlier, engagement is a whole process, and throughout this process there are different stages or phases (Bowden 2009), which are supposed to be context dependent (Heath 2007) and will be varying based on certain other elements like industry, product or service attribute and consumer needs and interests (Patterson, Yu et al. 2006) and such phases may further be typified by the differing intensity of engagement (Sprott, Czellar et al. 2009). Researchers have been arguing over the dimensionality for example (Heath 2007) suggests that it’s a one-dimensional, emotion centered perspective of consumer’s engagement with an ad or other method of interaction, (Patterson, Yu et al. 2006) suggests it’s a multi-dimension comprising of vigor, dedication and other cognitive aspects of engagement. This view is further extended by (Ilic 2008) by adding aspirational and social-engagement dimensions although these could in particular be sub-components of emotional dimension of customer engagement.

Engagement is viewed as a behavioral motivation and thus leads to certain behaviors that are of great importance to any stakeholder (Schultz 2007). It is an individual-specific motivation that also depends on the context of the interaction that emerges from two-way interaction between a subject and object and in the example of brand, the object is the brand whereas the subject is the consumer that is exerting an engaging behavior. Engagement is not limited to marketing’s field only; it is a phenomenon that entails in almost every field of life since it a behavior. If we talk about educational psychology, student engagement was pivotal in achieving successful results (Bryson and Hand 2007). In the similar sense, if we talk about employee engagement, it has been evident that in the case such engagement is high, it contributes to both productivity and

profitability (Greenwood 2007). Engagement is a behavior that results in devotion thus that makes an employee over perform (Saks 2006). In the similar context researchers argue that it can be implied in terms of brand engagement as this will result in devotion and loyalty (Bowden 2009).

Engagement acts as one of the most important phenomenon's as evidently with higher levels engagement with a brand, an organization becomes closer to achieving its goals in terms of growing sales, reduced costs, positive word of mouth and higher number of referrals, consumers created or consumer co-created content thus resulting in higher long term benefits and ultimately the profits (Bijmolt, Leeflang et al. 2010). Consumer brand engagement is also been used as a new and key emerging criterion used to measure the performance of a brand (Bowden 2009, Kumar, Aksoy et al. 2010).

According to some researchers, social exchange theory is from where engagement is derived, and similarly some researchers suggest that it can be co-created and even it can initiated by both parties involved in the exchange the company or the consumer (Beckers, Van Doorn et al. 2018) whereas certain other believe that it can only be initiated by the consumer (Hollebeek, Glynn et al. 2014, Jaakkola and Alexander 2014, Beckers, Van Doorn et al. 2018).

As per social exchange theory consumers and firms continuously engage in valuable exchanges, and majority of these exchanges are transactional in terms of its nature i.e. whereby a firm/or a company will create some valuable products or services in exchange of the money from consumer thus it makes it a consumer generated action or response. Accordingly, trust and commitment are found to be antecedents of engagement (Obilo, Chefor et al. 2021). Despite such contributions and extensive research work, there are no consensus as to the true composition of engagement concept (Beckers, Van Doorn et al. 2018) and how to measure it (Hollebeek, Glynn et al. 2014). As discussed, the concept varies as in from simple, unidimensional, "brand as a part of self" constructs (Sprott, Czellar et al. 2009) to more complex, octo-dimensional, multi-order constructs (Calder, Malthouse et al. 2009). Given the ever growing importance of the engagement concept there is dire need to re-assess the earlier developed three dimensional scale to measure brand engagement by (Hollebeek, Glynn et al. 2014)

### 1.4.4. Brand Engagement

Brand Engagement is a multidimensional phenomenon that comprises of multiple behavioral dimensions that include, cognitive, behavioral and emotional dimension, which has a central role to play when it comes to relational exchange where other relational concepts are engagement antecedents and/or consequences in iterative engagement processes within the brand community (Brodie, Ilic et al. 2013). Additionally it is believed to be the positive valence towards brand related interaction or activity and is particular to certain brand interactions (Hollebeek, Glynn et al. 2014). Customer engagement and brand engagement are used simultaneously or consequently and are believed to be interchangeable despite differences in the names. According to (Brodie, Hollebeek et al. 2011) engagement play a role that is at the center of the conceptual relationship. Further, engagement exhibits conceptual distinctiveness from other, related concepts, including consumer 'involvement', and 'customer satisfaction.' (Hollebeek, Glynn et al. 2014)

Customer Satisfaction is a different concept, as customer satisfactions is a performance evaluation in totality by a consumer or a customer of the overall interactions and value exchanges that have taken place between the brand and consumer (Gustafsson, Johnson et al. 2005). Customer satisfaction covers the end result and inculcates the experience of a consumer as a whole and according to literature is rather a consequence of brand engagement and is positively related with brand engagement as with higher levels of engagement the overall satisfaction will tend to be easily increased (Brodie, Hollebeek et al. 2011). Engagement is different than satisfaction as engagement is leaned towards consumers behavioral, emotional, and cognitive responses during an interaction with a particular brand in contrast to satisfaction that mostly arises after the Interaction. There are a few differences between these overlapping and confusing concepts, as customers, most of the times believe there is a difference between experience and engagement theoretically (Lemke, Clark et al. 2011).

Literature supports this difference as Brakus, Schmitt et al. (2009) found: In comparison to brand involvement, brand experience does not presume a motivational state and similarly brand experience as opposed to consumer brand engagement does not inculcate the emotional aspect. Consumers always equate their engagement with a particular brand to their interaction with that particular brand (Hollebeek, Glynn et al. 2014). Accordingly, consumer brand engagement

results in higher propensity of customer retention and generates outcomes that results in loyalty (Hollebeek, Glynn et al. 2014).

Brand engagement, is linked with interaction which is the core of the engagement concept and this is reflected in its nature (Brodie, Hollebeek et al. 2011). According to (Bowden 2009) customer brand engagement is a superior predictor of customer's loyalty towards a given brand or brand that the consumer is engaging with the most. May, Gilson et al. (2004) Puts forward that engagement may also enhance an individual or customers motivation that results in loyalty. In the similar context, if the engagement enhances a person's intention to put more time and energy, passion and excitement thus it can be extended in customer or brand engagement domain (Wellins and Concelman 2005). Throughout literature, authors define engagement differently, for (Bakker and Schaufeli 2008) it is an individual – level variable that affects the loyalty. It is considered to be a motivational variable and similarly it also depends on context as well (Skinner and Belmont 1993) which serves as a foundation stone for many other researchers. Many authors believe it to be a two-way interaction between the subjects (Customer) and object (brand) (Achterberg, Pot et al. 2003) and advocates that the intensity of the engagement may vary from individual to individual. According to the newer developments, it is believed to be a personality trait that develops over a period of time and does not happen all of a sudden (Smith, Sansone et al. 2007). Its intensity might be different at a given point of time and may generate distinct outcomes at that particular point of time (Schaufeli, Martinez et al. 2002, Salanova, Agut et al. 2005). Although the nature of engagement is dynamic, (Schaufeli, Martinez et al. 2002) views engagement relatively persistent and pervasive state over the time period and its applicability as a consumer benefit variable.

Consumer brand engagement is also viewed as a prequel to retaining profitable customers and primarily key engagement objects cited throughout literature have included brands (Sprott, Czellar et al. 2009), products and organizations (Patterson, Yu et al. 2006) and consumer or customer as the subject (Bowden 2009). Given the unprecedented diffusion of technology and the accessibility of web 2.0 applications like weblogs, podcasts, wikis, multimedia sharing and social networks the importance of brand engagement has never been so much before (Anderson 2008). The applications of engagement are not just limited to this, if combined with ad

persuasiveness it can be used to measure and assess the effectiveness of such interactive encounters of audience with the advertisement (Breidbach, Brodie et al. 2014).

Brands that are 'highly engaging' and engage with the consumers at a higher pace usually put more efforts to exert certain behavioral, cognitive and emotional activities while strategizing the brand interaction that exhibits the core and interactive nature of the engagement concept (Brodie, Hollebeek et al. 2011, Leeflang 2011). Predominantly, engagement with a particular brand occurs during the interaction with that particular brand is a result of provocation of the underlying stimuli that is triggered during the interaction and similarly brands that do not have higher levels of willingness to put cognitive, behavioral, or emotional efforts is lower.

Given the lack of clarity and consensus related to the definition, forms and dimensionality and resulting in to the effect on operationally of engagement. Bowden (2009) throughout his research uses the term 'customer engagement', whereas (Foley 2006) uses a more broader term 'consumer engagement'. In addition to this Algesheimer, Dholakia et al. (2005) uses 'community engagement' term specifies engagement object as community rather than the term customer in customer brand relationship. Furthermore, Sprott, Czellar et al. (2009) proposes the specific engagement sub-type of 'brand engagement in self-concept'. There is still a dearth of research when we talk about specific types of engagement antecedents, or drivers. According to (Bowden 2009) role of earlier customer experience with a service brand works as an antecedent to effect the customer engagement levels, such insights remain very low in other types of engagements.

Customer brand engagement is usually due to direct or indirect interaction with the brand. Direct brand interaction refers to customers one-on-one direct, or physical interaction with the brand whereas indirect interaction could be through mass communication mediums (Brakus, Schmitt et al. 2009). Customer brand engagement is also related with multiple other concepts which either work as antecedent or consequence, if we talk about antecedents, involvement, interaction and flow (Patterson, Yu et al. 2006) are found to be anteceding a customer's engaging behavior (Bolton and Saxena-Iyer 2009) and rapport, co-created value, brand experience, perceived quality, trust, commitment, value and ultimately customer satisfaction are the consequence of the brand engagement (Saks 2006, Brakus, Schmitt et al. 2009) and this then leads to the ultimate objective of the whole engagement activity, that is loyalty (Bowden 2009).

Marketing researchers have unanimously agreed upon the social and long term economic benefits of consumer brand engagement (Obilo, Chefor et al. 2021) and thus have always advocated more efforts towards understanding this phenomenon. There have been many attempts to conceptualize, develop and validate measures of consumer engagement. Hollebeek, Glynn et al. (2014) Developed one such scale to measure consumer brand engagement that too in the context of social media which has been widely accepted and cited the most (Scale is in the appendix session).

As per Obilo, Chefor et al. (2021), "Consumers' positive and negative behavioral interactions with a brand and all its constituent elements (brand content, other consumers, etc.), beyond simple transactions, that result from their interest in and commitment to the brand." One of the issues raised throughout the literature has been that how would involvement result in higher level of cognition since the consumer is already "in the know" since the literature supports the positive relation between consumer brand engagement and involvement and cognitive processing. But to cater to this concern raised, Zaichkowsky (1985) posit that such highly involved consumers would opt for more information gathering and will try to learn more about the brand so that they should possess all the recent and relevant information about the brand. However, Obilo, Chefor et al. (2021) also gave a newer refined version of the conceptualization, as a series of non-transactional consumers' behavior exhibited and displayed solely due to the commitment and interest in the brand and are consistent of behaviors and no other components like cognitive and affective which is contrary to the one by (Hollebeek, Glynn et al. 2014) which said there are three components of the consumer engagement behavior, cognitive, affective and emotional. Obilo, Chefor et al. (2021) Put-forth a new four-dimensional model that explores behaviors including content engagement, consumer co-creation, consumer advocacy, and negative engagement. Content engagement is directly connected with the recent research areas on consumer based strategy (Hamilton 2016, Vredeveld and Coulter 2019). Consumers of today have evolved from passive recipients to active participants thus demand better and more sensibly crafted strategies. Similarly consumer co-creation links to the service-dominant logic literature (Vargo and Lusch 2014), exploring how consumers can aid the brand in improving the offerings to public. Advocacy and negative engagement links back to the relationship marketing perspective that view transaction as only the beginning of a potential life-time co-creation relationship with the potential customer (Grönroos 2006).

There is a dearth in literature about the negative impact of engagement as throughout the literature it is discussed only about the positive outcomes, (Obilo, Chefor et al. 2021) in its future considerations suggest that the negative impact of engagement is of great importance and must be studied by giving the example of HBO's famous season "Game of Thrones" which had a crazy fan following, fans who actually used to dress up like the characters and watch the episodes in cinemas and multiplexes. These customers turned into rage and even violent when the last season of the GOT was not up to the expectations set forth thus advocating that negative engagement is of equal or even more importance to study.

Importance of engagement can never be ignored as in todays' world a company cannot survive. Baer (2016) Vocalizing the importance of the customers who engage with the brands and developed a model R.A.I.D (Retention, advocacy, insights, and differentiation) explaining the ultimate outcomes of interaction, as it is more affordable to retain a customer than to target a new one each time.

### 1.4.5. Brand Engagement through Gamification

It is always believed that as a result of co-creative customer experience, whereby the customer comes into interaction with the brand providing the product or service causes the brand engagement, which reflects the interactive nature of relationships between the customer and the brand (Brodie, Hollebeek et al. 2011, Hollebeek, Glynn et al. 2014). In the similar context, the discussed dimensions of brand engagement (emotional, social, and cognitive) are closely linked with the ultimate outcome of brand engagement and within each dimension, there is a proven connection with engagement be it emotional that can also be termed as enthusiasm, social, specifically fits well in todays' era of social media communities and cognitive, or conscious attention is termed as thought processing. According to researchers, involvement, participation and self-expressive brand are key drivers of consumer brand engagement dimensions (Leckie, Nyadzayo et al. 2016).

Evidently, loyalty to a brand is an outcome of engagement as customers who are highly engaged ultimately show higher levels of satisfaction thus exhibit similar levels of brand loyalty. As a recency effect when such highly engaged customers they not just review certain information about a brand but also start advocating the brand and thus results electronic word of mouth that

creates an organic feedback or review that has a positive effect on the overall brand loyalty (Wirtz, Den Ambtman et al. 2013, Weiger, Wetzel et al. 2017).

Consumer today is more aware and is not easily lured by the marketers efforts to generate engagement by having loyalty programs, membership rewards that are based on certain materialistic and monetary outcomes of benefits and are more inclined towards loyalty that is generated through their inner satisfaction resulting from the engagement with the (Dholakia 2006). Engaging customer, is one of the most important aspects when it comes to create brand loyalty, but with the latest technological developments resulting into the emergence of Artificial Intelligence, and internet of things, newer and more sophisticated techniques and tools for engagement have come forth that makes the whole engagement process more interactive and extracts most important information, this whole process of interactivity and extraction of information is done quite easily, and one such technique is through the gamification. According to (Xi and Hamari 2020), games with the features that results into a sense of achievement and social interaction directly and positively impact the brand engagement along with the three core aspects of brand engagement discussed (Emotional, social, and cognitive). Gamification, it is a phenomenon according to which services and products are transformed in to an game like experience (Hamari 2017, Huotari and Hamari 2017).

According to literature and findings from multiple research findings, brand engagement is positively linked with brand loyalty (Keller 2001) thus gamification indirectly effects the brand loyalty with the mediating effect of brand engagement. Gamification generates engagement that is more long lasting and intrinsic (Xi and Hamari 2020). The importance of the efficiency of gamification cannot be ignored as one of the main drivers of engagement. Games are a popular and widely acceptable method of creating interactive engagements without extrinsic or utilitarian reasons (Hamari 2017, Wolf, Weiger et al. 2020) and at times this goes to the level of addiction (Grüsser, Thalemann et al. 2006). Interactions as a consequence of gamification facilitate self-brand connections as these are highly engaging although challenging (Berger, Schlager et al. 2018).

Gamification is a modern novel tool and believed to effective when it comes to create motivation and engagement amongst customers, along with creating a need to support and enhance the consumption behavior (Robson, Plangger et al. 2016). Gamified interactions usually give users a

sense of achievement that is linked positively with the emotional and cognitive dimensions of social brand engagement (Eisingerich, Marchand et al. 2019). Research supports, the fact that such achievement-oriented gamification experiences are related with cognitive brand engagement element and social interaction-oriented games had linkages with social brand engagement (Yang, Asaad et al. 2017). In the similar context, immersion-oriented aspects were linked with social brand engagement had no connection with emotional or cognitive brand engagement (Nobre and Ferreira 2017). Overall, the concept of brand engagement is linked in a positive manner with brand awareness, emotional brand engagement and cognitive brand engagement are also related with the brand loyalty (Xi and Hamari 2020).

Although, according to many researchers gamification is related with the brand engagement is a positive aspect and effects engagement positively but the whole process needs careful considerations (Berger, Schlager et al. 2018).

It has also been found that at times users psychological needs are even fulfilled to a satisfactory level by gamification (Peng, Lin et al. 2012) and this need fulfilment further enhances internal motivations by incorporating game elements based on web and visuals (van Roy and Zaman 2019). A sense of continuous service usage is further triggered by the game based experience (Wolf, Weiger et al. 2020). In a similar context it is firmly believed that if such gamified tools are adopted for the purpose of marketing to create customer engagement with the brand thus will enable the brand to outperform its competitors.

Although empirically there lacks evidence that support the relationship of different dimensions of brand engagement with the gamification tool but if we take in to consideration the extensive research on game and literature of brand engagement, expression of freedom can be linked with the immersion related features of such gamification tools (Wolf, Weiger et al. 2020), flow and optimal experience (Chang 2013), i.e. more emotional and affective aspects (e.g. enjoyment, joy, pride and surprise). In this context, emotional brand engagement is positively associated the immersion-based gamification, and achievement-oriented features can be linked to a more cognitive style, and goal-driven engagement and behavior.

In addition to all these connections, certain achievement oriented outcomes composed of goal structures like progression metrics, badges, missions, challenges, leaderboards, goals, etc. (Landers, Bauer et al. 2017), investment in terms of efforts by the individuals (Baek, Yoon et al.

2015) and value optimizing behaviors at times requires detailed information regarding the processes and thus it is believed to be linked cognitive brand engagement dimension. Likewise, features such as comments, likes, formation of groups and collaborations that result from social interaction are positively linked with social brand engagement (Leclercq, Hammedi et al. 2018).

The role of moderator or the service provider managing an online brand community can help develop a trust factor, along with reciprocity that will result in creation of the engagement opportunities because of the feeling of connectedness with the brand and enhances not just their own knowledge but creates an interactive (Gil de Zúñiga, Jung et al. 2012). As a result, the higher frequency of such interactions customers easily get the information about a particular brand or the features offered by that brand and as a consequence increases the overall social capital and enhance social brand engagement (Nobre and Ferreira 2017).

### 1.4.6. Brand Engagement through Online Brand Communities

Consumer involvement is a term that is often confused with engagement but involvement according to the literature is a precedent of the engagement. Involvement of a consumer with a band is explained as a perception of how customers based on their inherent values, interests and needs relate with a brand (Zaichkowsky 1985). It also highlights the fact that how important a brand or object is to an individual, or the centrality of a brand or object to an individual's ego structure (Russell-Bennett, McColl-Kennedy et al. 2007). According to the literature, higher degree of involvement leads to higher level of need to feel more close and connected with brand and this goes beyond just the consumption element (Zaichkowsky 1985). This need of connection is a result of involvement with the brands, that enables a customer to further instigate and gather information and knowledge about a particular brand that makes a customer feel more connected with the brand (Smith, Sansone et al. 2007). Accordingly, such highly involved consumers exhibit unprecedented levels of involvement or interest that paves the way forward resulting in higher levels of engagement (Vivek, Beatty et al. 2012). Evidently, research on online brand communities supports the fact that consumer engagement increases as a consequence of higher levels of involvement by the consumers and this keeps getting intensified (Wirtz, Den Ambtman et al. 2013). This involvement results in willingness to participate in

engaging activities that in return provide brand with organic and timely information (Fang, Palmatier et al. 2008), based on the same marketers can alter the brand offerings to improve and even develop new services (Hippel 2005). Research shows that consumer participation in interactions that provide common interest to both the organization and consumer, results in higher levels of enthusiasm, thereby leading to increased engagement with the organization/ brand (Vivek, Beatty et al. 2012).

Linking oneself with a brand firmly believing that brand to be an extension of self and based on this belief using the symbolic design of a particular brand in the construction of a consumers self-identities links back to the research findings by (Celsi and Olson 1988). This positive self-endorsement motives positively and significantly affect the level of engagement (Algesheimer, Dholakia et al. 2005). These close and organic interactions between consumers and representatives of service providing brand as a result of participation helps brands understand the real time issues in the overall delivery of the services and based on this information the same can be further improved in terms of the process or the offerings (Gruen, Summers, & Acito, 2000). Similarly, if a consumer is participating and getting the right response it ultimately adds to the overall satisfaction along with adding value to the services or product provided and consumer's starts believing that the resulting changes are his contribution towards the brand (Ippolito, 2009). Likewise, when a consumer's suggestions and feedback is given such value, this response results in ownership of the brand that boosts the overall loyalty with the brand interacted. Consumers take this participation as an investment and the results as a return and thus believe themselves to be a part of the brand or a representative of the brand.

In the context of the service sector, evidently the three dimensions of consumer brand engagement by (Hollebeek, Glynn et al. 2014) affect and influence brand loyalty. According to the literature, affection and activation related dimensions are found to be positively related with brand loyalty, meanwhile cognition has a negative effect on brand loyalty. According to the logical explanations and findings these negative effects are a bit surprising but researchers back up this with multiple explanations for instance, (Hollebeek 2011) suggested that the relation between consumer brand engagement resulting in the brand loyalty is not a linear relation rather it's a non-linear relation thus there is always a marginal point whereby the effect at one point will reach the maximum point and similarly once it reaches to an optimal point the fatigue and

burnout will affect the attitudinal loyalty most likely decreasing it which is backed by the prior research findings that advocate that continuous repetition or bombardment of the same advertisement will start back firing and might instigate once loyal and engaged customer to go against the brand (Cacioppo and Petty 1989).

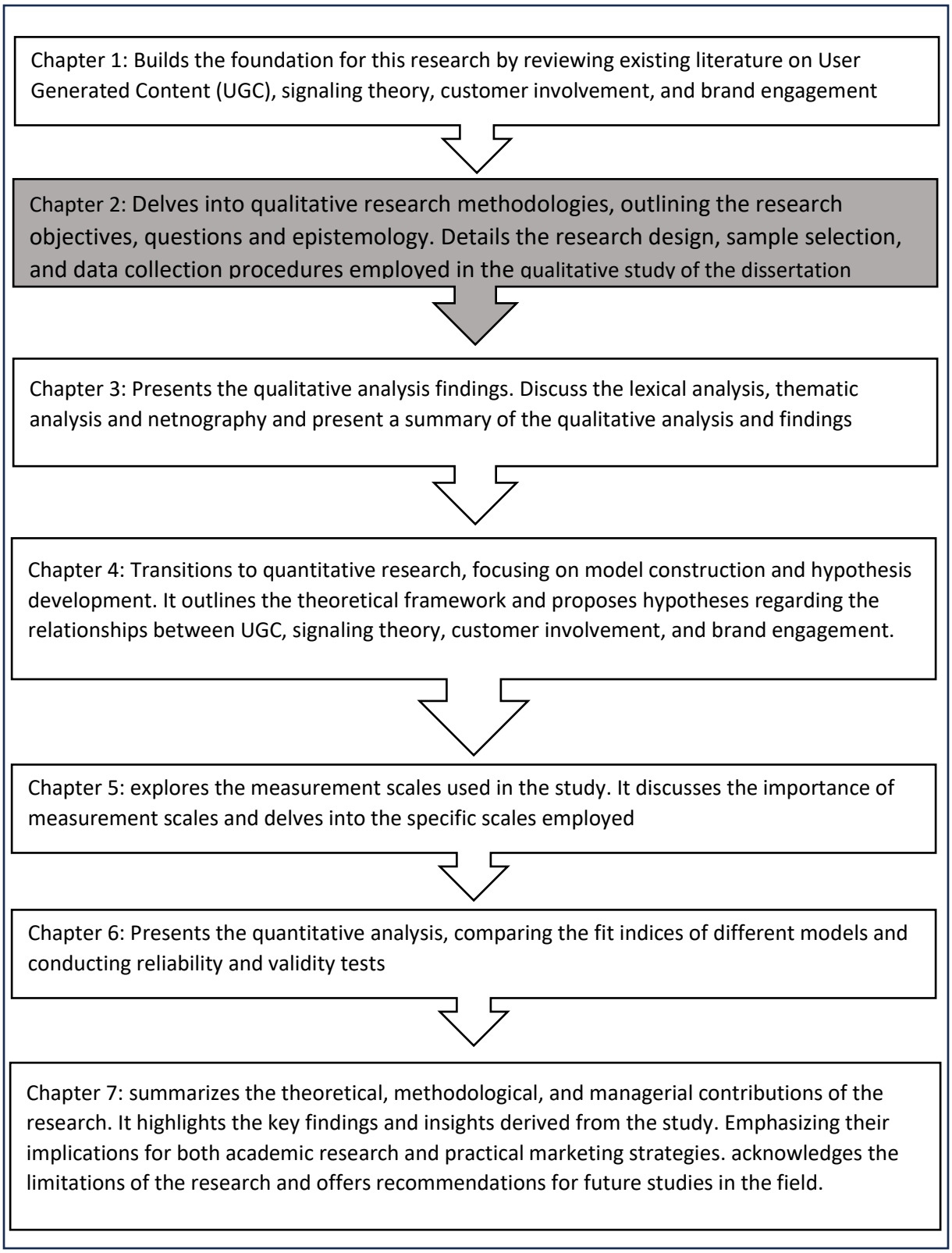
The precedents of brand engagement that include involvement, participation and self-expressive brand have been found to have difference and diverse effects on the three dimensions of consumer brand engagement (Breidbach, Brodie et al. 2014). For instance, highly involved consumer was found to be positively linked with the all three dimensions of brand engagement in accordance with the past research that proposed that consumer involvement acts as an antecedent to the emotional, cognitive and behavioral dimensions of brand engagement (Hollebeek, Glynn et al. 2014). Throughout literature, consumer's involvement has been found to be positively linked with brand loyalty highlighting and emphasizing the fact that consumers who are involved at higher levels with the brand are expected to showcase this loyalty by repetitive purchase behaviors and positive word of mouth both physically and electronically (Leckie, Nyadzayo et al. 2016). In comparison to involvement, participation just affects cognitive processing. This participation can at times be limited by the type of service the brand is providing for instance in the case of mobile phone service providers there is a little space to respond to the feedback and suggestions but in other service related brands this feedback or suggestion can go beyond simple participation and can results in co-creation and co-production (Bacile, Ye et al. 2014). If we take the example of a service provider that can change and customize according to the feedback of a consumer, like a consumer's relationship with a hairdresser, consumers take active roles throughout the process of delivery of service production and consumption. Likewise, according to the literature brands that are considered to be a part of self-expression, are positively linked with cognition and affection but are negatively affecting the activation aspect (Algesheimer, Dholakia et al. 2005, Sprott, Czellar et al. 2009).

Consumer Brand engagement mediate the effects of self-expressive brand and consumer involvement on the brand loyalty (Wallace, Buil et al. 2014). Researchers found that the link between participation by consumers and brand loyalty is fully mediated by cognitive processing. This reemphasizes the fact the consumer engagement has a significant role to play, particularly where consumers co-create based on their personal values and experience through active

dialogue and interacting with the focal brand. Based on these findings, such high brand engagement results in higher level of brand loyalty (Leckie, Nyadzayo et al. 2016).

## 1.5. Chapter Summary:

This chapter provides a detailed exploration of signaling theory and its relevance to user-generated content (UGC), customer involvement, and brand engagement. Signaling theory, initially from biology, explains how companies use signals to reduce information asymmetry and uncertainty (Spence, 1978; Stiglitz, 1989). Signals such as advertising and pricing convey information about product quality and firm reliability, reducing consumer skepticism (Erdem & Swait, 1998a). The chapter further discusses the significance of UGC as a credible and consistent signal, enhancing consumer involvement and engagement. Customer involvement is highlighted as a crucial factor in marketing, influencing information processing and decision-making (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Highly involved customers are more likely to be satisfied and loyal, actively participating in innovation and co-creation processes with brands (Carbonell Rodríguez-Escudero et al., 2009; Dwyer, Schurr et al., 1987). Brand engagement is presented as a multidimensional construct involving emotional, social, and cognitive dimensions, strongly linked to brand loyalty, and enhanced through techniques like content co-creation (Hollebeek, Glynn et al., 2014; Xi & Hamari, 2020). Overall, the chapter emphasizes that signaling theory, UGC, customer involvement, and brand engagement collectively contribute to effective brand management and improved consumer perceptions.


Chapter 1: Builds the foundation for this research by reviewing existing literature on User Generated Content (UGC), signaling theory, customer involvement, and brand engagement
Chapter 2: Delves into qualitative research methodologies, outlining the research objectives, questions and epistemology. Details the research design, sample selection, and data collection procedures employed in the qualitative study of the dissertation
Chapter 3: Presents the qualitative analysis findings. Discuss the lexical analysis, thematic analysis and netnography and present a summary of the qualitative analysis and findings
Chapter 4: Transitions to quantitative research, focusing on model construction and hypothesis development. It outlines the theoretical framework and proposes hypotheses regarding the relationships between UGC, signaling theory, customer involvement, and brand engagement.
Chapter 5: explores the measurement scales used in the study. It discusses the importance of measurement scales and delves into the specific scales employed
Chapter 6: Presents the quantitative analysis, comparing the fit indices of different models and conducting reliability and validity tests
Chapter 7: summarizes the theoretical, methodological, and managerial contributions of the research. It highlights the key findings and insights derived from the study. Emphasizing their implications for both academic research and practical marketing strategies. acknowledges the limitations of the research and offers recommendations for future studies in the field.

# 2. Chapter 2: Qualitative Research

In this chapter, we will explore various qualitative research methods, examine the advancements made in these approaches, and select three methods: Lexical analysis, Thematic analysis and Netnography, based on their relevance and significance.

## 2.1. Research Objective:

The objective of our research study is to dig deep into the minds of our participants and extract information pertaining to their everyday life attitudes, feelings, and actions on social media. To explore how they interact and engage over social media and what are the factors that affect this interaction. To understand the effect of the user generated content on level of involvement with a brand and how this brand involvement leads to the brand engagement.

We want to learn how different consumers or users react to user generated content for a brand in comparison to the content that is been generated by the brand itself. Which one of these contents is more efficient and effective in terms of returns, that in our case is the involvement and engagement with the brand. These research objectives lead to the following research questions:

## 2.2. Research Questions:

- What are the motivations for the engagement with social media and its content?
- What is the impact of UGC on the customer's level of involvement and engagement with a brand?

*Table 3 - Synthesis of Research Design*

| Synthesis of the design of the research | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Research Objective** | | Importance of type of content and its role in signaling about credibility, consistency, and clarity of the brand to its customers and how this effects the level of involvement and engagement with the brand |
| **Research Question** | | What are the motivations for the engagement with social media and its content?<br>What is the impact of UGC on the customer's level of involvement and engagement with a brand? |
| **Research Objectives** | | Dig deep into the minds of our participants and extract information pertaining to their everyday attitudes, feelings, and actions on social media.<br>Explore how they interact and engage over social media and what are the factors that affect this interaction.<br>Understand the effect of the user generated content on level of involvement with a brand<br>How this brand involvement leads to the brand engagement |
| **Research Positioning** | | Scientific realism: absolute truth does not exist, but some theories might be more accurate than others |
| **Theoretical Background** | | 3C's of the signaling theory that include (Credibility, consistency, and clarity) |
| **Research Contributions** | **Theoretical Contributions** | Integrate several existing streams of research related to the past in 3C's of the signaling theory and customer involvement and brand engagement. Show that the type of content (User Generated vs Brand generated) manipulates the perceived credibility, consistency and clarity between the brand and its customers involvement and engagement. Show that user generated content is more credible, consistent, and clear. |
| | **Methodological Contributions** | Critical discussion of qualitative and quantitative methods to identify the importance of type of content (User Generated and Brand Generated) as a credible, consistent, and clear signal. How type of content signals credibility, consistency, and clarity in the minds of the users. Suggestion of qualitative research based on the social media analysis. Validation of the measurement scale for customer involvement and brand engagement |
| | **Managerial Contributions** | Provide in-depth understanding of how type of content affects the level of customer involvement brand engagement. Suggest distinctive strategies making use of user generated content and based on prior customer knowledge. |

## 2.3. Epistemological Position

Epistemology, as a subfield of philosophy, pertains to the examination of the fundamental characteristics, extent, and constraints of human knowledge, as well as the processes by which it is attained. This inquiry explores inquiries pertaining to the essence of truth, the dependability of diverse information sources, and the standards for validating beliefs. A prominent topic of discussion in the field of epistemology is the differentiation between empiricism and rationalism. Empiricists argue that the acquisition of knowledge is mostly facilitated by sensory experience and observation, a viewpoint supported by prominent philosophers such as John Locke and David Hume. In contrast, proponents of rationalism believe that the acquisition of knowledge is significantly influenced by natural reasoning and intuition, as shown by the perspectives put forward by renowned philosophers such as René Descartes and Immanuel Kant. The aforementioned viewpoints contribute to fundamental comprehension, influencing the manner in which people see and engage with their surroundings (Russell, 2010).

A philosophical worldview is particularly having to be a part of every research proposal (Creswell, 2003). Marketing research was mainly dominated by a positivistic paradigm, but given its recent developments shows progression. Marketing research has opened up to constructivist approaches. There is a third approach that is known as constructivist approach. This approach tends to reject the views of both relativists and positivists (Hunt, 1990). In constructivists approach, it is argued that an absolute truth has been proven wrong at times by multiple scientific discoveries. This is in contradiction to the positivists (Healy and Perry, 2000; Sobh and Perry, 2006).

Some theories can and might be more accurate in comparison to others and this is arguably supported by a scientific realistic approach. Based on this, while it rejects the idea of absolute truth by positivists, it similarly negates the abandonment of the idea of truth, the relativists approach (Hunt, 1990, 1992). Four of the categories of scientific realisms are (Hunt, 1990, p. 9):

- Classical realism: The world exists independently of its being perceived.
- Fallibilistic realism: “the job of science is to develop genuine knowledge about that world, even though such knowledge will never be known with certainty.”
- Critical realism: “all knowledge claims must be critically evaluated and tested to determine the extent to which they do, or do not, truly represent or correspond to that world.”

- Inductive realism: A theory's ability to explain phenomena over a long period of time does not imply certainty but there are good reasons to believe it bears relation with some external reality.

The use of the qualitative methods has been rejected by some of the interpretations of realism, from methodological perspective (Sobh and Perry, 2006). While the need for comparisons and experiments is highly appreciated and recognized by the scientific realism (Hacking, 1982; Hunt, 1990). One may contend that this epistemological stance is founded upon a fixed perspective of societal existence, therefore lacking compatibility with our comprehension of historical events and cultural legacies as subjective interpretations influenced by contextual factors. The impact of the context is a fundamental aspect of realism (Sobh and Perry, 2006), and Hunt emphasized that scientific realism does not endorse a fixed perspective of social reality. Instead, it rejects the notion of an absolute and unchanging truth rooted in nature (1992). This perspective aligns with our comprehension of consumer participation and brand interaction.

Given the nature of our study goals, it is deemed suitable to adopt a constructivist epistemological standpoint. The theoretical framework of constructivism asserts that knowledge is actively built by humans via their engagement with experiences, interactions, and interpretations of the surrounding environment. This is consistent with the examination of the impact of various content kinds (user-generated and brand-generated) on consumer participation and brand engagement. The constructivist perspective recognizes the significance of people's subjective perceptions and contextual factors in influencing their comprehension and interaction with information. Furthermore, the inclusion of external variables, such as the 3Cs of signaling theory (namely, credibility, consistency, and clarity), may significantly impact the manner in which people perceive and interact with the given material. This epistemological framework espouses the notion that knowledge and engagement are not exclusively objective occurrences, but rather are collaboratively generated by humans via their interactions with the external environment.

## 2.4. Introduction: Qualitative Research

The aim of the qualitative research is to produce comprehensive, in-depth and detailed findings that help formulate or build a theory (Crick, 2021). If conducted objectively "it is unbiased, in-depth, valid, reliable, credible, and rigorous" (Anderson, 2010, p. 2). Several methods, that include in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and participants observations are used to explain and interpret a phenomenon that is under the research (Jonsen et al., 2018; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Sinkovics et al., 2008; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). Through qualitative research, researchers develop a detailed and rich understanding of different constructs, concepts, and theories such as why should they pursue a certain strategy and how is that going to help their managers in future decision making (Bansal & Corley, 2011; Crick, 2021; Ji et al., 2018; O'Donnell et al., 2002). Moreover, It can be helpful in developing in-depth assertions (via research propositions) about how a theoretical issue works in practice (Granata et al., 2018; A. K. Kohli & Jaworski, 1990).

While this method of research has been and can be used as a stand-alone methodology, it has proven to be beneficial if utilized as a pre-cursor or follow-up to quantitative research (Nemkova et al., 2015; Sharma et al., 2018). In other words, qualitative research can help shape scholars' knowledge of a certain theory with in-depth information that cannot feasibly be collected in quantitative research due to its objectivity and descriptive nature (Edmondson & McManus, 2007). These detailed and in-depth insights into a phenomenon are achieved through researchers immersing themselves within their data (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012).

## 2.5. Approaches of Qualitative Research

In this section, we will present and justify the qualitative methods selected for our research. Many other qualitative research methods do exist but were not selected. These are presented in appendix 1.

### 2.5.1. Lexical Analysis

Lexical analysis, with its origins in linguistics and information technology, offers a rapid solution for the treatment of texts. It is capable, not only of identifying semantic content but also important structural aspects of language. The automatic calculation of word lexicons and rapid identification of relevant text fragments requires an integration of both powerful quantitative analysis and search and retrieval tools. Lexical analysis is thus the ideal tool for the exploitation of open-text responses in surveys, offering a bridge between quantitative and qualitative analyses, opening new avenues for research and presentation of textual data (Bolden & Moscarola, 2000).

These analyses are driven by the calculation of word frequencies. Initially, the computer generates a "lexicon" of all words present in the text corpus. By listing these in decreasing order of frequency and applying filters (e.g., removing "tool words") we can quickly gain an idea of the main content. Further manipulation of the lexicon permits the grouping of similar terms (manually or automatically), identification of context (e.g., repeated expressions and relative lexicons), and the progressive isolation of terms key to the investigation (Moscarola, 2002). Based on our findings lexical analysis is an important tool for research because it helps identify patterns of language use and meaning. It can be used to analyze the frequency of words, phrases, or concepts in a text; compare different texts; measure sentiment or opinion; assess the readability of a document; detect authorship; and much more. By using lexical analysis, researchers are able to gain insights that

would otherwise not be possible without manually analyzing large amounts of data therefore given our research objectives and design. For these reasons we choose to use this approach.

### 2.5.2. Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a useful and flexible method for qualitative research. It offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analyzing qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998).

As thematic analysis does not require detailed theoretical and technological knowledge of approaches, such as grounded theory and DA, it can offer a more accessible form of analysis, particularly for those early in a qualitative research career. In contrast to IPA, grounded theory and other methods like narrative analysis, discourse analysis or conversation analysis, thematic analysis is not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework, and therefore it can be used within different theoretical frameworks, and can be used to do different things within them (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2020). The process is very onerous but each of the theme is been supported with the quotations from the participants (Bazeley, 2009; Guest et al., 2012). Given the fact that thematic analysis is a type of lexical analysis that focuses on the themes and topics expressed in a text. It goes in perfect synchronization and cohesion with lexical analysis. It can be used to identify key concepts, uncover new ideas, and explore relationships between different texts. Thematic analysis is particularly useful for qualitative research because it helps researchers gain deeper insights into their data by revealing patterns and connections that would not have been noticed without this method of analysis therefore, for these reasons we chose thematic analysis.

### 2.5.3. Netnography

Netnography is the digital version of ethnography. It is a qualitative research method that aims at exploration of users behaviors in online communities and digital tribes (Bartl et al., 2016). It has evolved as a research methods that is observational in nature and is implemented in the digital space (Kozinets, 2012). Netnography is defined as “a new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study the cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated communications” (Kozinets, 1997, 2002, p. 62)

Netnography is a qualitative research method that combines traditional ethnographic techniques with the use of online data collection methods. It allows for easier access to information by downloading communication data directly from an online community, making the research process faster and less expensive than traditional ethnographic methods. Additionally, netnography allows for the study of virtual communities and online interactions, which may not be possible with traditional ethnographic methods (Belz & Baumbach, 2010). Moreover, in comparison to ethnography, netnography is unobtrusive as data collection is primarily based on observation (D. Martin & Woodside, 2011).. This means that researchers can collect data without interfering with the natural behavior of the participants in the online community they are studying. This allows for a more authentic representation of the community and its interactions. It is one of main advantages of netnography thus this enables consumers to voluntarily reveal information, sensitive details by expressing themselves freely (Harhoff et al., 2003; Langer & Beckman, 2005). This makes netnography an empathetic way of indulging in online communities and gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior (Kozinets, 2002; Piller et al., 2011). Netnography is all about

observing the naturally occurring exchange of communications in online communities that makes it the most efficient tool to extract unbiased insights.

Recent advancements have resulted in more and more visual content, that includes videos (reels), audios, pictures and graphical data (Kozinets et al., 2014) thus making the data rich and deep. This results in a far deeper level of understanding the behaviors of people online. Another big advantage of netnography is the fact that it covers a broader range of participants for observations in comparison to the traditional ethnography, thus this makes netnography a perfect choice to study social behaviors. Netnography is widely recognized as an effective method for analyzing consumer behavior through the study of computer-mediated conversations. It allows researchers to gain insight into customers' preferences, needs, and decision-making processes by observing online interactions in virtual communities (Kozinets, 2002; Piller et al., 2011). The wide-ranging use and acceptance of netnography in various fields such as marketing, management, product innovation, and market research, as well as education and learning, highlights the method's effectiveness and applicability (Kozinets, 2002; Nind et al., 2013)

Given the fact that Netnography is an important tool for understanding the behavior of online communities. It can be used to gain insights into how people interact with each other, what topics they discuss, and how they use technology to communicate (Kozinets, 1997). It can also provide valuable information about customer preferences, trends in online behavior. Netnography is in perfect synchronization with our research objectives thus we decided to use netnography to analyze the effect of user generated content to the people involved and engaged with different brands over social media.

*Table 4 - Summary of chosen Qualitative Research Methods*

| Method | Main authors | Objectives | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Lexical Analysis** | • (Saussure, 1916)<br>• (Chomsky, 1957)<br>• (Miller, 1956)<br>• (Zimman, 2014)<br>• (Morgan, 1997)<br>• (Ferrier, 2001)<br>• (Ozanne, 2005) | • Ideal tool for the exploitation of open-text responses in surveys<br>• Bridge between quantitative and qualitative analyses<br>• Opening new avenues for research and presentation of textual data<br>• Identify patterns of language use and meaning | • Rapid solution for the treatment of texts<br>• Identifying semantic content<br>• Identification of context<br>• Analyze the frequency of words, phrases, or concepts in a text.<br>• Compare different texts.<br>• Measure sentiment or opinion | • Requires an integration of both powerful quantitative analysis and search and retrieval software.<br>• Complex<br>• Limited in Identifying power relations |
| **Thematic Analysis** | • (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2010)<br>• (Braun, Clarke & Hayfield 2014, 2017)<br>• (Allen, 2009)<br>• (Elliott, 2014)<br>• (Baer, 2016) | • Identify, analyze, and interpret patterns or themes within qualitative data.<br>• Understand the context and meaning of the themes within the data.<br>• Provide insights into the experiences, perspectives, and perspectives of the participants.<br>• Generate new knowledge and understanding about the research topic | • Theoretically Flexible<br>• TA is not wedded to any pre-existing theoretical framework.<br>• It can be used within different theoretical frameworks.<br>• Identify key concepts.<br>• uncover new ideas explore relationships between different texts.<br>• In-depth Analysis<br>• Rigorous and systematic approach<br>• Support for team-based research | • Times Consuming<br>• Not suitable for data low in richness<br>• Specialized Software and Skills<br>• Not appropriate for quantitative data |
| **Netnography** | • (Kozinets, 2002)<br>• (Markham, 1998) | • exploration of users' behaviors in online | • Unobtrusive<br>• Empathetic | • Limited to online communities only<br>• Privacy concerns |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | • **(Haddon, 2008)** | **communities and digital tribes**<br>• **observational in nature**<br>• **implemented in the digital space** | • **Voluntary Information Access**<br>• **faster and less expensive**<br>• **Data Rich & Deep**<br>• **virtual communities and online interactions**<br>• **authentic representation of the community and its interactions** | • **Ethical concerns**<br>• **Time consuming**<br>• **Complexity** |

We have chosen Lexical Analysis, which provides rapid solution for the treatment of large corpus, helps in identification of semantic content and context in the texts. It helps in quantifying the word frequencies and measures sentiments or emotions. Thematic analysis, although requires special software but is a very effective way to identify key concepts. One of its advantages is its flexibility, and it's not pre-wedded in a theory thus it helps identify and explore new relationships and helps in unearthing newer ideas and concepts. Similarly, netnography complements these two methodologies. It's unobtrusive, covers a larger target audience and it meets the requirements of modern-day engagements. It is faster, less expensive and the data is a real time depiction of emotions and feelings. Since it is collected in an online environment, it lessens the bias of interaction.

## 2.6. Triangulation of methods

A highly recommended and followed technique in order to understand complex issues is known as Triangulation. This involves generating information from multiple sources to understand complex issues pertaining to the underlying mechanisms behind psychological constructs (Decrop, 1999; Morrow, 2005). Triangulation is the process of using multiple sources of primary and/or secondary data to receive a well-rounded view of the area under investigation (Beverland &

Lindgreen, 2010; Doz, 2011; Gioia et al., 2013; Kriz & Welch, 2018; Styles & Hersch, 2005). In our research we are triangulating our methods to understand underlying research questions by using following three methods:

- Lexical Analysis
- Thematic Analysis
- Netnography

After in-depth divulgence in the literature, we have developed an understanding of multiple qualitative research methodologies. We realize that each method has its own advantages, disadvantages, and serves particular objectives. A researcher has to create a synchronization between the research method with that of the underlying research objective.

Triangulation of methods is a prescribed way to study complex and under-researched subjects (Decrop, 1999; Morrow, 2005). Based on the triangulation of methods lexical analysis is an ideal tool for the exploitation of open-text responses in surveys, works as bridge between quantitative and qualitative analyses, is open to new avenues for research and presentation of textual data, and help identify patterns of language use and meaning that matches our research objective in a perfect sync.

Similarly, TA, is an approach that is serving the objectives that aim to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns or themes within qualitative data, understand the context and meaning of the themes within the data, provide insights into the experiences, perspectives, and perspectives of the participants, generate new knowledge and understanding about the research topic. Finally, given its exact match with the objective of our research, netnography is the third method chosen. The objective of netnography is to observe their everyday attitudes, feelings, and actions on social

media, in their online communities and digital tribes. It is implemented in the digital space. It is an immersive technique whereby researcher is the instrument and has to indulge in a naturalistic and unobtrusive setting to gain deeper and meaningful insights.

## 2.7. Qualitative Research Methodology:

To perform lexical and thematic analyses we chose the classic approach of semi-structured individual interviews. These interviews are used to dig deep and explore the underlying concepts. In order to find out about the effects of user generated content and the concepts studied, in-depth individual interviews (Dilley, 2004; Kvale, 1996; Warren, 2002) are highly recommended. Although focus groups have extrinsic advantages such as speed and cost, there is evidence that individual in-depth interviews have intrinsic advantages relating to the quality of the research outcome (Stokes & Bergin, 2006). In-depth interview also known as one-on-one is a method of extracting more detailed information or deep understanding of a subject or concept (Showkat & Parveen, 2017).

## 2.8. Screening Sample

Sampling in qualitative research has long been under question for its being small in size and other aspects. In order to cater for this and make it more valid, we underwent a rigorous process of screening the participants like in quantitative research. In Quantitative research data collection tools such as surveys, researchers add some screening questions, 'informant quality' scales to measure the extent to which respondents are competent and qualified to participate by answering

a set of questions (see Boso et al., 2013; Crick & Crick, 2019; Hultman et al., 2009; Katsikeas et al., 2006).

A similar approach is adapted for the sampling for our qualitative part to be confident that the participating respondents have ample knowledge about the subject and key words that are going to be the core of the study (Bryman, 2016; Morrow, 2005; O'Donnell et al., 2002). We interviewed 37 participants but during and after the interview it was realized that some of these respondents lack the understanding of terminologies, and are not extensive users of social media thus, we had to screen out 07 interviews and after the screening 30 interviews were finalized for further analysis. This ensured that we had the most knowledgeable and best suited sample (Aguinis et al., 2020; Bryman, 2016; Gummesson, 2005; S.D. Hunt, 1992) to dig deep and explore our underlying concepts.

## 2.9. Sample Selection

Given its exploratory nature researchers need to continue conducting interviews until we reach a saturation point (Mason, 2010). In qualitative research study, in contrast to quantitative research it is better to have a rich and small sample than one that is limited and large (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Furthermore, since our goal is to understand the behavior of participants over social media, before starting the interview we undertook some questions to screen out the participants with a minimum usage of social media.

One of the major concerns was the question of social media usage frequency. In order to address this issue, and to make sure that the participants were frequent users of the social media, the interviews of the participants who showed the low social media usage frequency were not used for

the analysis and were discarded. Seven interviews out of 37 interviews were discarded owing the social media usage frequency.

## 2.10. Sample Details:

Interviews were conducted from 1st August 2022, lasting for a month and a half, and were completed on 20th September 2022. They lasted between 45 to 90 minutes with an average of 60 minutes. These profiles had an average age of 32. Out of 30 participants, 28 of the participants were graduates and above, that entails post-graduation and doctorate. In order to understand younger social media users' sample also included 4 participants from the college and bachelor's degree program.

Participants were from different origins that Included Australia, England, France, Germany, India, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Morocco, Pakistan, Portugal, Russia, Spain, UAE, and USA. Majority of these participants are currently living in Europe specially France and England. Participants had an average income of €15000 for males and €11500 for females. All *verbatims* were collected for analysis and represented a *corpus* of 101,992 words.

*Table 5 - Details of the selected sample and discarded interviews (In green)*

| Interviewee | Name | Age | Gender | Education | Marital Status | Profession | Income | Nationality | Currently Living | Most Used SM Platform | Daily Average Use of SM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Aaron Alizeh | 24 | Male | Masters | Single | Freelancer | 6000 Euros | France | France | Instagram | 6-7 Hours |
| 2 | Abdul Rehman Gilal | 32 | Male | Post Doc | Married | Assocaite Professor | 25000 Euros | England | Ireland | Facebook | 3-4 Hours |
| 3 | Adil Samo | 24 | Male | Masters | Single | Student | 8000 Euros | Pakistan | Italy | Facebook & Instagram | 4-5 Hours |
| 4 | Aqsa Shahid | 22 | Female | Masters | Single | Lawyer | 8000 Euros | Pakistan | England | Facebook & Instagram | 3-4 Hours |
| 5 | Barira Siddiqui | 27 | Female | Masters | Single | Account Manager | 15000 Euros | Pakistan | England | Instagram | 6-7 Jours |
| 6 | Farwa Abbas | 24 | Female | Bachelors | Single | Lecturer | 10000 Euros | Pakistan | Pakistan | Facebook & Instagram | 3-4 Hours |
| 7 | Hamza ech chaykh | 25 | Male | Masters | Single | Consultant | 12000 Euros | Morocco | France | Facebook & Instagram | 5-6 Hours |
| 8 | Hassan Daudpota | 36 | Male | Masters | Married | CEO Keys Production | 32000 Euros | Pakistan | Pakistan | Facebook & Instagram | 4-5 Hours |
| 9 | Jean Julian | 26 | Male | PhD Student | Single | Part time | 5000 Euros | France | France | Instagram | 3-4 Hours |
| 10 | Junaid | 30 | Male | Masters | Single | IT Professional | 22000 Euros | Pakistan | USA | Instagram & Facebook | 5-6 Hours |
| 11 | Kaneez Zainab | 34 | Female | Masters | Married | Lecturer | 18000 Euros | Iran | France | Facebook & Instagram | 3-4 Hours |
| 12 | Maira | 24 | Female | Masters | Single | Lawyer | 18000 Euros | Pakistan | England | Facebook & Instagram | 3-4 Hours |
| 13 | Marienelle Azucena | 24 | Female | Masters | Single | Film Producer | 22000 Euros | Portugal | France | Facebook & Instagram | 5-6 Hours |
| 14 | Naveed Siddiqui | 30 | Male | Masters | Single | HR Consultant | 20000 | Pakistan | UAE | Facebook & Instagram | 3-4 Hours |
| 15 | Nazish Shaikh | 29 | Female | Masters | Married | Influencer | 9000 Euros | Pakistan | Pakistan | Facebook & Instagram | 5-6 Hours |
| 16 | Noman Shah | 30 | Male | PhD Student | Married | Part time | 12000 Euros | Pakistan | France | Facebook & Snapchat | 4-5 Hours |
| 17 | Qasim Ali | 30 | Male | PhD Student | Married | Lecturer | 12000 Euros | Pakistan | France | Facebook | 4-5 Hours |
| 18 | Renato Reberra | 18 | Male | Bachelors | Single | Student | 4000 Euros | France | France | Instagram | 4-5 Hours |
| 19 | Saeed Abbas | 33 | Male | PhD | Single | Assocaite Professor | 12000 Euros | Pakistan | Spain | Facebook & Instagram | 3-4 Hours |
| 20 | Safdar Abbas | 32 | Male | Masters | Married | Marketing Professional | 7000 Euros | Pakistan | Pakistan | Instagram & Facebook | 5-6 Hours |
| 21 | Samita Rajpal | 33 | Female | Masters | Married | Social Media Influencer | 15000 Euros | Indian | UAE | Facebook & Instagram | 7-8 Hours |
| 22 | Sanam Noor | 31 | Female | Masters | Married | Government Employee | 16000 Euros | Pakistan | Pakistan | Instagram | 3-4 Hours |
| 23 | Stella Udintseva | 19 | Female | Bachelors | Couple | Student/part time | 6000 Euros | Russia | France | Instagram & Tik Tok | 3-5 Hours |
| 24 | Suhand Muskan | 18 | Female | College | Single | Student | 4000 Euros | Morocco | France | Instagram & Youtube | 4-6 Hours |
| 25 | Tahira Abdullah | 29 | Female | PhD Student | Single | Part time | 4000 Eruos | Pakistan | France | Facebook & Whatsapp | 3-4 Hours |
| 26 | Tuba Munir | 25 | Female | Masters | Single | Architect | 12000 Euros | Pakistan | Germany | Instagram | 4-5 Hours |
| 27 | Valeriya Khrushchalina | 26 | Female | Masters | Single | Part time | 9000 Euros | Russia | France | Instagram & Twitter | 3-4 Hours |
| 28 | Vladimir Rakhovskii | 26 | Male | Masters | Couple | Digital Consultant | 22000 Euros | Russia | France | Instagram & Telegram | 3-4 Hours |
| 29 | Yashma Qadir | 17 | Female | Bachelors | Single | Freelancer | 6000 Euros | Pakistan | Germany | Facebook, Instagram & Twitter | 4-5 Hours |
| 30 | Yasir Memom | 31 | Male | Masters | Single | Logistics Manager | 24000 Euros | Pakistan | Australia | Instagram | 3-4 Hours |
| 31 | Aafia Shahid | 24 | Female | Masters | Single | Social Media Influencer | 4000 Eruos | Pakistan | England | Instagram & Youtube | 3-4 Hours |
| 32 | Almas Gul | 26 | Female | Masters | Married | Government Employee | 12000 Euros | Morocco | France | Facebook & Whatsapp | 4-5 Hours |
| 33 | Mnhel Babgi | 32 | Female | PhD | Married | Part time | 9000 Euros | Saudi Arab | France | Instagram | 3-4 Hours |
| 34 | Sabeen Manzoor | 28 | Female | Masters | Single | Part time | 22000 Euros | Pakistan | Pakistan | Instagram & Twitter | 3-4 Hours |
| 35 | Shagufta | 24 | Female | Masters | Single | Lecturer | 6000 Euros | Pakistan | UAE | Instagram & Telegram | 4-5 Hours |
| 36 | Terry | 26 | Female | Masters | Single | Financial Advisor | 24000 Euros | Lebonan | France | Facebook, Instagram & Twitter | 3-4 Hours |
| 37 | Urooma hassan | 27 | Female | Masters | Married | Freelancer | 6000 Euros | Pakistan | Pakistan | Instagram | 4-6 Hours |

*Table 6 - Gender Wise Participant graph*

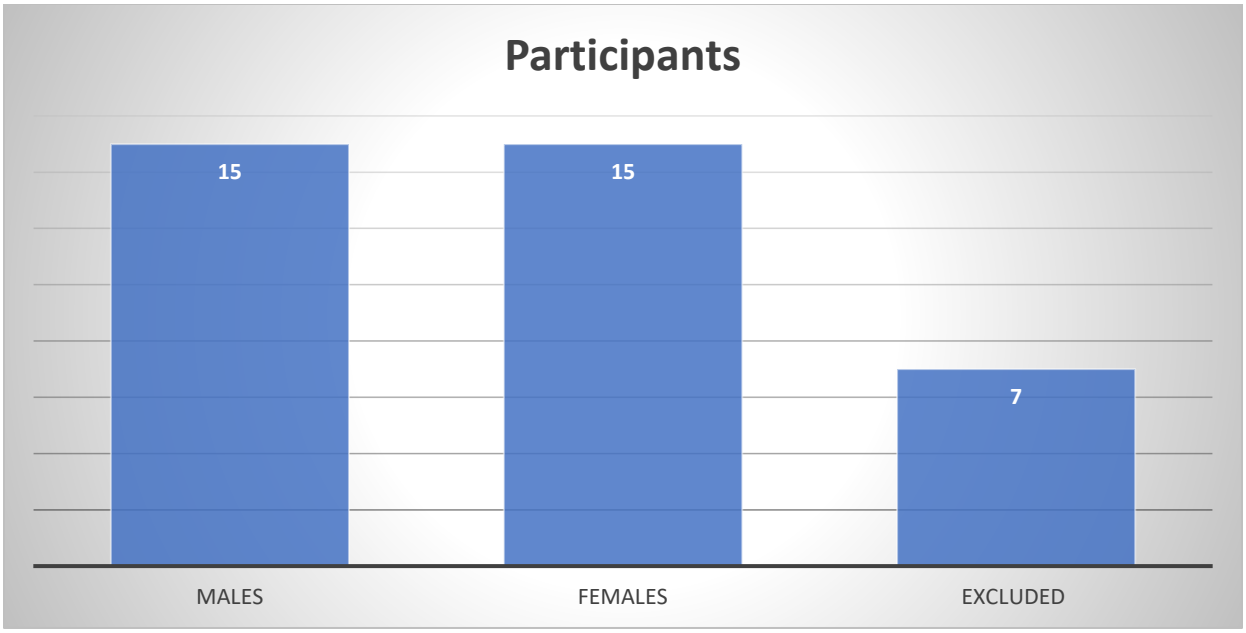



*Table 7 - Gender wise participant education*

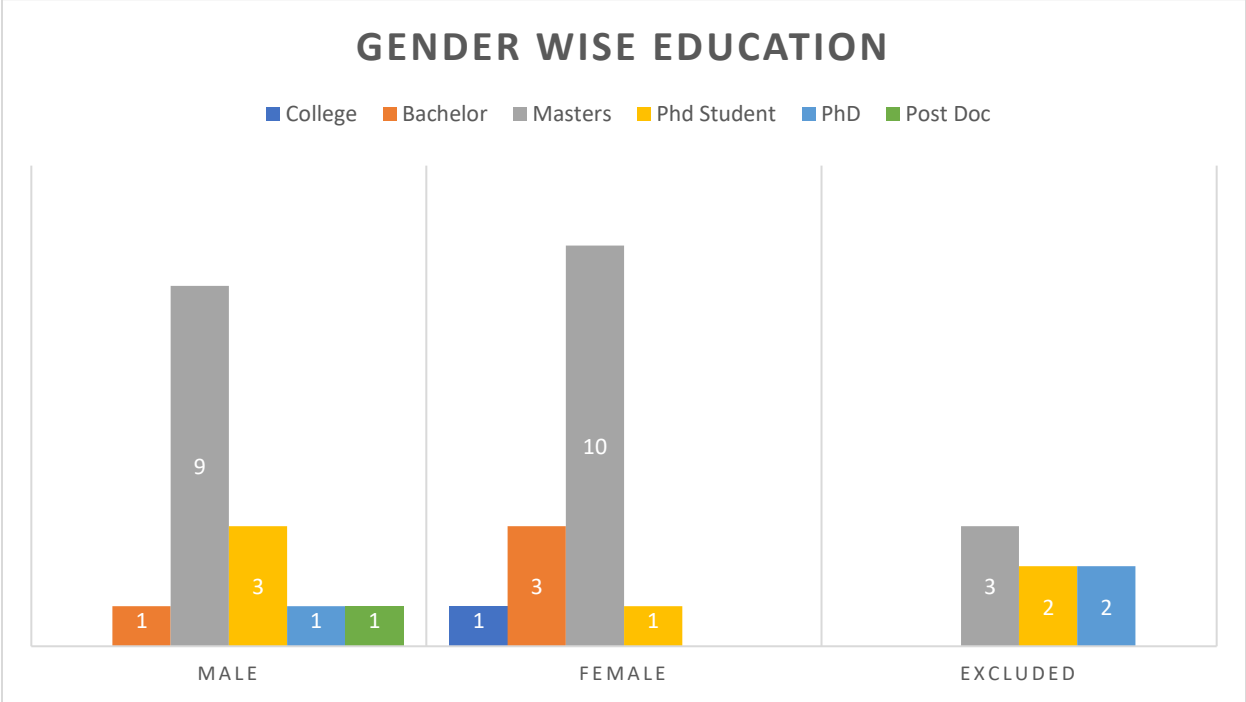
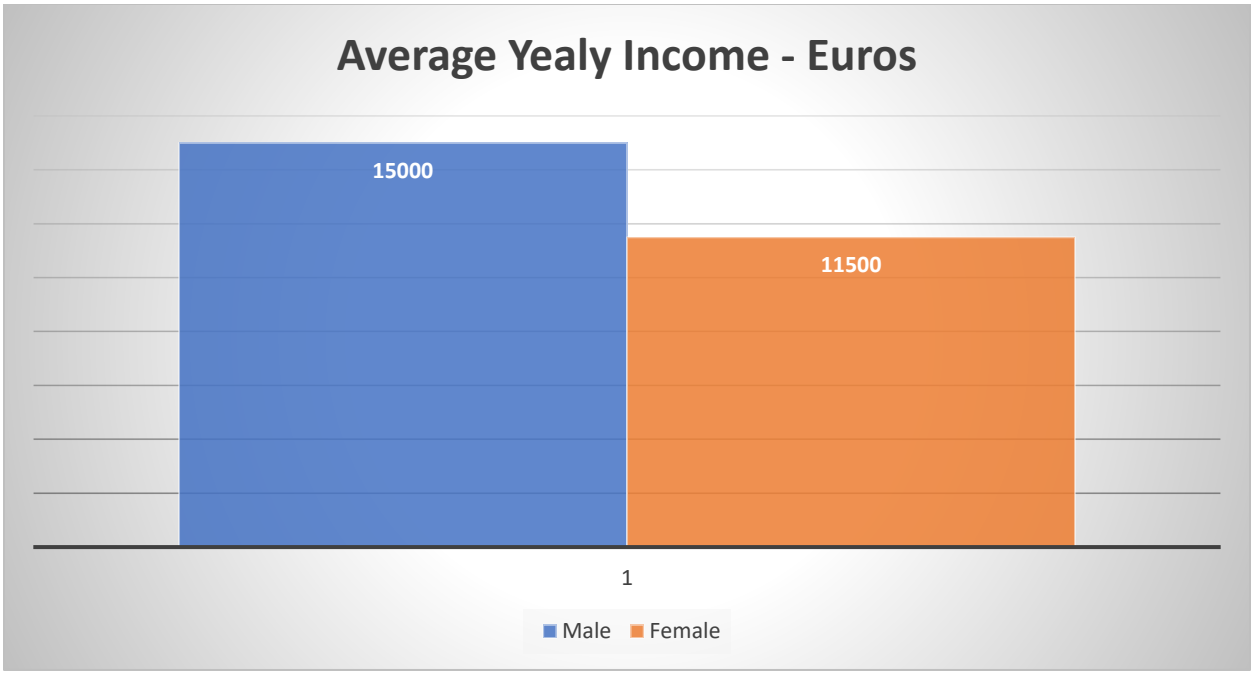


*Table 8 - Gender wise participant income*




## 2.11. Semi Structured Interviews:

The semi-structured interview guide is prepared with due diligence and profuse literature review (Felzensztein et al., 2019; Nemkova et al., 2012) pertaining to UGC, 3Cs of the signaling theory, underlying factors of moral intensity, customer involvement and customer engagement in terms of motivation to create or engage with the user generated content for the brand.

## 2.12. Interview Guide

An interview guide was prepared and re-prepared in alignment with the objectives of the research objectives. This semi-structured interview guide consists of four main themes: 1) Individuals use of social media and interaction with user generated content; 2) The perception of the content creator; 3) Views about the content; 4) Moral dilemmas behind the user generated content and its underlying assumptions. Individuals were asked about their recent behavior towards different

types of content they interacted on the social media, their interaction with ethical and unethical content, moral and immoral content, and their reaction towards different appeals for donations and charity by social media influencers, brands, and celebrities over social media to help Ukraine.

### 2.13. Interview Guide Execution:

The Interview guide was designed with most of the questions open ended. Participants were informed about the video and audio recording beforehand, and they agreed for the video recording. 02 female participants were uncomfortable with the video recording, but they agreed for audio recording therefore, their interview was recorded in audio only. In an attempt to reduce the bias, the semi-structured interviews were divided into several sections, so that it did not appear that researcher is focused and concerned about the user generated content, brand involvement or even engagement as the research areas and topic. Our Interview guide is mainly divided into four themes.

The first theme is focused on finding out about the general engagement pattern. Participants level of involvement with social media and their preferred social media platforms. We discussed social media functionalities. We also focused on the variety of pages, local influences, or celebrities that our participant is involved with, in terms of content. The objective is to initially screen participants who are not highly involved with social media or are not extensive users.

The second theme is focused on the involvement of the participants with social media celebrities or social media influencers along with intriguing about the 3Cs (Credibility. Consistency, and Clarity) which are the mediating variables in our research. Our objective is to dig deep and

understand the level and pattern of involvement of our participants. We want to explore how these brand pages, influencers, celebrities alter the attitude, emotions, and purchase behavior of the participants. Our focus is on how global citizens from different cultures, age groups, even professions are being influenced.

The third theme is involvement and engagement with different types of content that include brand generated and user generated content. Some of our participants are budding influencers themselves and they revealed some new findings and consumption and engagement patterns. To our expectations these data patterns reveal a lot about the involvement and engagement pattern over social media which is to be discussed in the later sections.

## 2.14. Pilot Study:

In order to further strengthen the validity and quality of the analysis a pilot study was conducted with 6 participants. These participants were not included in the final sample. Pilot studies in qualitative investigations are used to ensure that researchers are asking questions that participants will be knowledgeable enough to answer, will not be uncomfortable discussing, and any other peripheral issues that might not have been considered when designing such qualitative methods (Alam, 2005; Bryman, 2016; Perry, 1998). Based on the findings from these pilot interviews a few changes were made to the semi structured interview guide to ensure that it encompasses every possible aspect of the underlying concepts. According to (Crick, 2015; Kim, 2011) pilot studies help researchers find out if they are speaking with the right kind of sample audience and most importantly if the tool is right.

## 2.15. Interview guide for qualitative studies.

**Theme 1: You and social media platforms**

1. Do you use social media?
2. Which social media platforms do you use most of the time?
3. Do these platforms allow you to post your own content?
4. What type of content can you post? Like pictures, audios, or videos?
5. Can you go live on these social media platforms?
6. Do you follow any such people or pages that create content?
7. What sort of user generated content do you usually watch and follow?

**Theme 2: You and social media celebrities**

8. Do you follow any celebrities on social media?
9. Which ones do you follow?
10. Why do you follow these celebrities? (Let interviewees respond spontaneously and then suggest words below and ask for explanations)
    a. because of their area of expertise
    b. because of your admiration
    c. because of their lifestyle
    d. Because of some good deals they propose
    e. other reasons?
11. What are the best adjectives to describe the celebrities you follow? (Let interviewees respond spontaneously and then suggest words below and ask for explanations)
    f. Credible

g. Extrovert
h. Sophisticated
i. Kind
j. Sympathetic
k. Jealous
l. Creative
m. Imaginative

12. How would you depict the content of these influencers? (Suggest words below and ask for explanations)
    n. Consistent
    o. Clear
    p. Entertaining
    q. Interesting
    r. Knowledgeable
13. Do they promote brands? Which ones?
14. How do you feel about these brand promotions?

**Theme 3: You and content engagement**

15. What sort of content do you usually enjoy? Why?
16. Do you enjoy content with brand promotion? Why?
17. Do you interact with the content creator in terms of comments likes or engagement in the actions they promote? How often? When? Why?

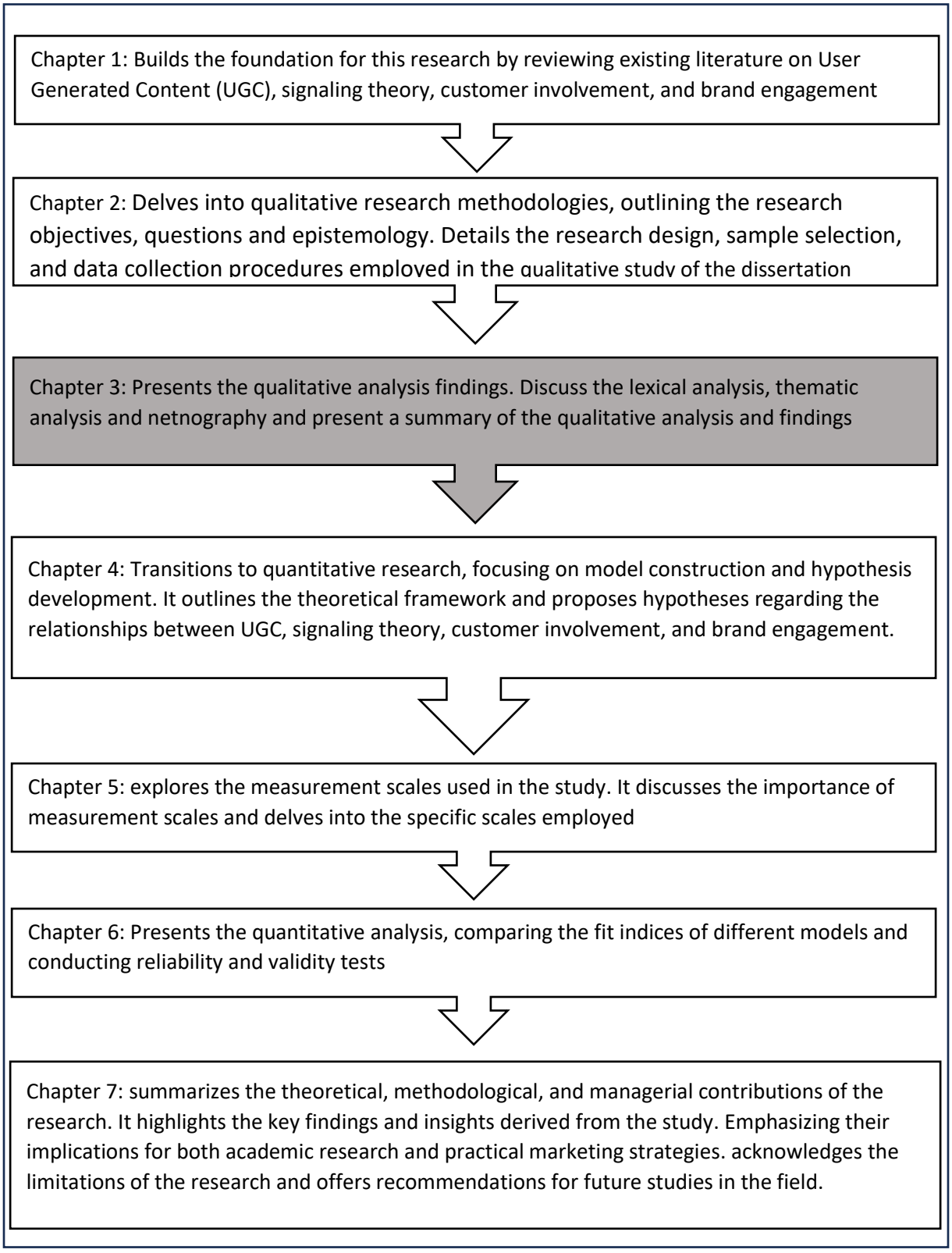
18. Have you ever engaged with user generated content about a brand? Which 1?
19. For instance, GoPro camera company promotes the user generated content on its official social and mainstream media channels, have you ever seen any such content of GoPro or any other brand?
20. What is your perception (how do you feel) about such content?
21. Have you ever engaged in such activities whereby you promote the usage of a certain brand? Directly or indirectly? When? Why? How did you experience it? What did you think about it?
22. What sort of content have you created or posted?
23. For instance, have you ever posted a picture of a T-shirt that you bought from your favorite brand and posted a picture of you enjoying the comfort or the luxury of that brand?
24. Which brand?
25. Do you think if your friends post a picture of such content or make a movie clip and it appears on the brand official page or group will make you feel good?
26. Will you after seeing that engage in such activity?

**Theme 4: You, social media, and moral intensity**

27. Do you believe there is a moral binding on what you post on social media? What kind of binding? Why? Give an example of a post or an action that was very unethical? A very ethical post or action on the contrary.
28. Would you follow such appeals to donate? By celebrities whose main purpose is to do what they are famous for?
    a. For example: Is it ethical for a non-political celebrity to post political content to gain a few extra likes or comments?

29. Globally how do you feel when there is a mix between different subjects: politics, beauty, ecology, child labor…
30. What sort of unethical content do you see on social media?
31. Do you think there is control over the availability of content over social media?
32. Does it seem ethical because of the proximity?
    b. For example: is it ok to use war-postings to get empathy?
33. Does it affect you because of global social consensus?
    c. For example: What do you think of celebrity posting about the current war situation between Ukraine and Russia?
34. Or is the magnitude of such war like actions and their consequences that make you believe that everyone from every race of life should be in for Ukraine?

Participants were somewhat reluctant at first but once they completed the first theme, they started enjoying it. It was more of a discussion, and they were very expressive. They felt excited while talking about their favorite celebrities and influencers. They were involved in the discussion like for instance one of the participants talked about immoral behaviors and bullying that made her quit social media for almost a year. Although at the end during the questions pertaining to the fourth theme some participants were a little uncomfortable because they had a fear that they might be judged, but the participants were assured of non-disclosure of their reals names instead proxy names were used to make sure their identity remains anonymous. In order to ensure maximum data protection all, the data in stored only on laptop and not on cloud or any other device.


Chapter 1: Builds the foundation for this research by reviewing existing literature on User Generated Content (UGC), signaling theory, customer involvement, and brand engagement
Chapter 2: Delves into qualitative research methodologies, outlining the research objectives, questions and epistemology. Details the research design, sample selection, and data collection procedures employed in the qualitative study of the dissertation
Chapter 3: Presents the qualitative analysis findings. Discuss the lexical analysis, thematic analysis and netnography and present a summary of the qualitative analysis and findings
Chapter 4: Transitions to quantitative research, focusing on model construction and hypothesis development. It outlines the theoretical framework and proposes hypotheses regarding the relationships between UGC, signaling theory, customer involvement, and brand engagement.
Chapter 5: explores the measurement scales used in the study. It discusses the importance of measurement scales and delves into the specific scales employed
Chapter 6: Presents the quantitative analysis, comparing the fit indices of different models and conducting reliability and validity tests
Chapter 7: summarizes the theoretical, methodological, and managerial contributions of the research. It highlights the key findings and insights derived from the study. Emphasizing their implications for both academic research and practical marketing strategies. acknowledges the limitations of the research and offers recommendations for future studies in the field.

# 3. Chapter 3: Qualitative Analyses

## 3.1. Lexical Analysis

### 3.1.1. Lexical Analysis –Words' frequency

In order to perform the lexical analysis, we used NVIVO 20 plus. The 20 words that are referred to most frequently by the participants are displayed below in table 9. The repetition of these words is an indication that the participants are concerned about these phenomena. In order to make more sense of the findings, we include words along with the number of letters (letter count) which is referred to as length, count (number of times the words were used by the participant), and in the last column similar words with stemmed meanings:

*Table 9 - Most referred words*

| Word | Length | Count | Similar Words |
|---|---|---|---|
| Content | 7 | 823 | content, contents |
| Brand | 5 | 764 | brand, branded, branding, brands, brands' |
| Engage | 6 | 584 | engage, engaged, engagement, engagements, engager, engages, engaging |
| Promotions | 9 | 430 | promote, promoted, promotes, promoting, promotion, promotional, promotions |
| Influencers | 11 | 388 | influence, influenced, influencer, influencers, influences, influencing |
| Involving | 9 | 328 | involve, involved, involvement, involvements, involves, involving |
| Credible | 8 | 310 | credibility, credible |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Celebrity | 9 | 305 | celebrate, celebrated, celebrities, celebrity |
| Instagram | 9 | 199 | Instagram |
| Consistently | 12 | 178 | consistence, consistency, consistent, consistently |
| Facebook | 8 | 167 | Facebook |
| Morally | 7 | 114 | moral, morality, morally, morals, ethical, ethicality, ethically, ethics |
| Funny | 5 | 94 | Funny |
| Unethical | 9 | 72 | unethical, unethically |
| Control | 7 | 68 | control, controllable, controlled, controlling, controls |
| Entertainment | 13 | 64 | entertain, entertaining, entertainment, entertains |
| Motivational | 12 | 64 | motivate, motivated, motivates, motivating, motivation, motivational, motive, motives |
| YouTube | 7 | 61 | YouTube, youtuber, youtubers |
| Knowledgeable | 13 | 53 | knowledge, knowledgeable |
| Emotions | 08 | 51 | Emotion, emotional, emotional response, emotional intelligence |

In a lexical analysis, it is always of great importance and crucial to strike a balance between depth and breadth. An analysis should be comprehensive and must aim to capture a wide range of related terms to provide a comprehensive overview of a specific topic. However, the list can't be exhaustive due to practical limitations.

A lexical analysis often involves selecting a representative sample of words that encompass the main categories and dimensions of the topic under investigation. This approach allows for a manageable scope while still providing meaningful insights into the subject matter. As explained

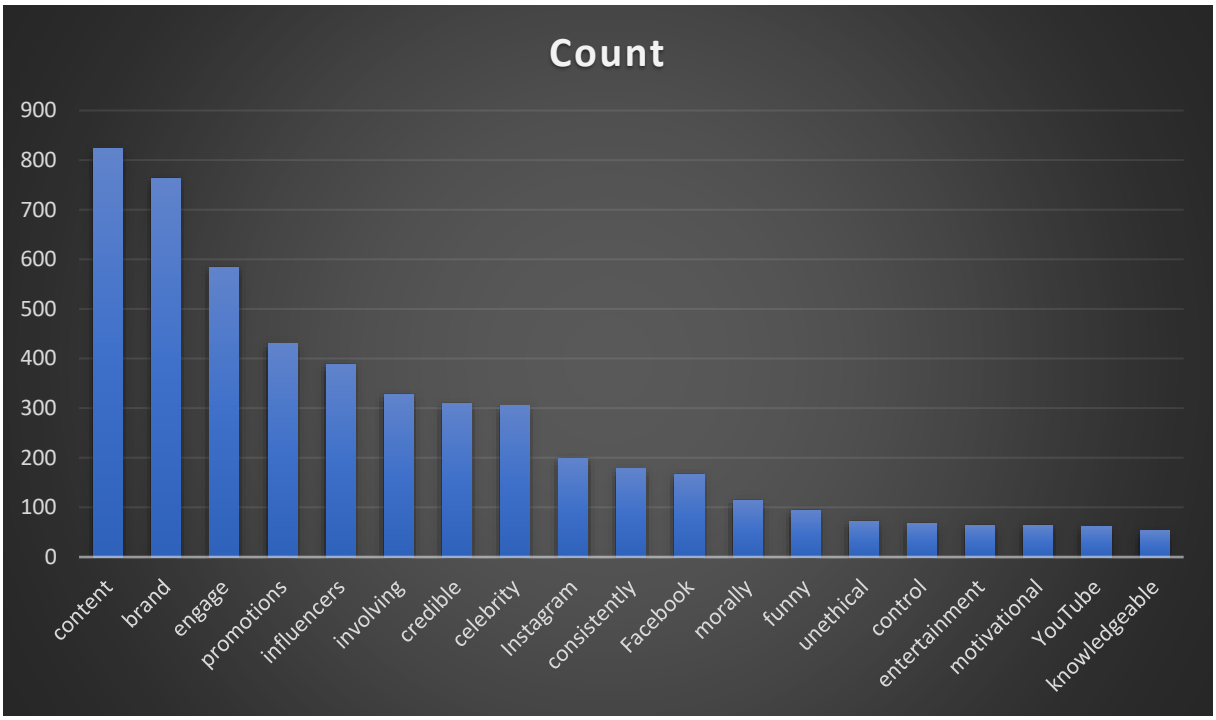
by Tognini-Bonelli (2001), lexical analysis involves "sampling" words and phrases from a corpus to study language patterns within specific contexts. Researchers typically select a subset of words that exemplify key concepts within the larger domain being studied.

In the context of this analysis, the provided list of words offers a representative sample across various categories, allowing for a meaningful exploration of emotional language and its nuances. Expanding the list beyond a certain point could lead to diminishing returns in terms of new insights gained, while also becoming more difficult to manage and synthesize.

*Figure 15 - Word Cloud of the Lexical Analysis - Most Frequent Words*



*Table 10 - Graphical Representation of Lexical Analysis - Most Frequent Words*




### 3.1.2. Lexical data analysis of words' frequency

As per our initial lexical analysis we have found that social media is mainly concerned about the type of content that is posted. For instance, the word "content" has been used 823 times by the participants and this depicts that while surfing on social media the most important aspect for a common user is the content itself. Content is of greatest importance, and this is why most of the brands are focused on improving the quality of the content and trying to match the type of content with their target group. For a brand to have maximum reach they have to focus on the content. Bands is the second most used word from the participants depicting that brands that focus on ensuring the right kind of content will have an upper hand over the brands which are not focused on the content. Participants are then focused on brands and their own engagement. If we sum up the words engage, engaging and engaged this sum up 584 times the word has been used in the

terminology of creating engagement over the social media. This clearly links up that brands that want to have user engagement must focus on the type of content that they put up on the social media.

According to our analysis if the content matches with the taste and preferences of the audience then they further interact involve and engage with the content and the brand that is creating that content. Our findings also suggest that participants prefer different types of social media networks. Instagram and Facebook are the leading ones. Participants said they prefer to express themselves on social media. This expression can be in terms of involvement and engagement with a particular type of content and brand. In order to further explore and understand the rich data from our interviews we further extended our lexical analysis, by finding out about the most preferred social media networks, type of content that participants prefer to follow and emotional sentiments over social media.

### 3.1.3. Lexical Analysis - Most Preferred Social Media Network

In order to further investigate the levels of involvement and engagement, and most preferred social media platform we did a lexical analysis. Table 11 below that summarizes our findings:

*Table 11 - Lexical Analysis - Most Preferred Social Media Network*

| Word | Length | Count | Similar Words |
|---|---|---|---|
| Instagram | 9 | 199 | Instagram |
| Facebook | 8 | 167 | Facebook |
| YouTube | 7 | 61 | YouTube, youtuber, youtubers |
| Twitter | 7 | 41 | Twitter |

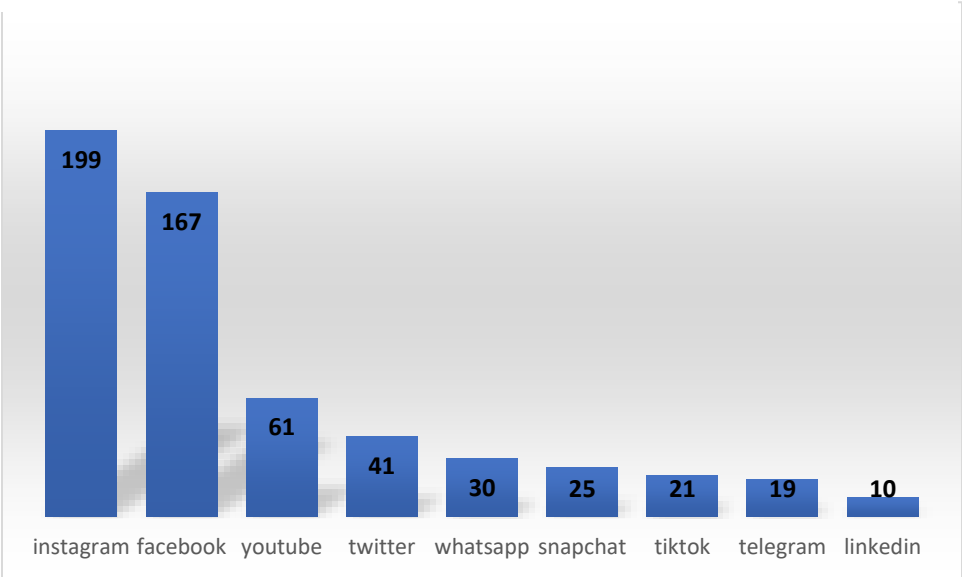
| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| WhatsApp | 8 | 30 | WhatsApp |
| snapchat | 8 | 25 | snapchat |
| TikTok | 6 | 21 | TikTok |
| Telegram | 8 | 19 | Telegram |
| LinkedIn | 8 | 10 | LinkedIn |

*Figure 16 - Word Cloud*




According to our findings, Instagram is referred to most of the time. Instagram is referred to 199 times by the participants. Second after Instagram is Facebook, which is referred to 167 times. In addition to Instagram and Facebook, YouTube emerged as the third most preferred social media network. Although it is not a traditional social media platform, participants put a great emphasis on showing that YouTube is much more important. YouTube has been referred to 61 times followed by Twitter 51 times, WhatsApp 30, Snapchat 25, TikTok 21 times, Telegram 19, and LinkedIn just 10 times. Since our research is aimed at UGC and branding, participants referred to LinkedIn the least because according to the participants LinkedIn is a more professional social media platform.

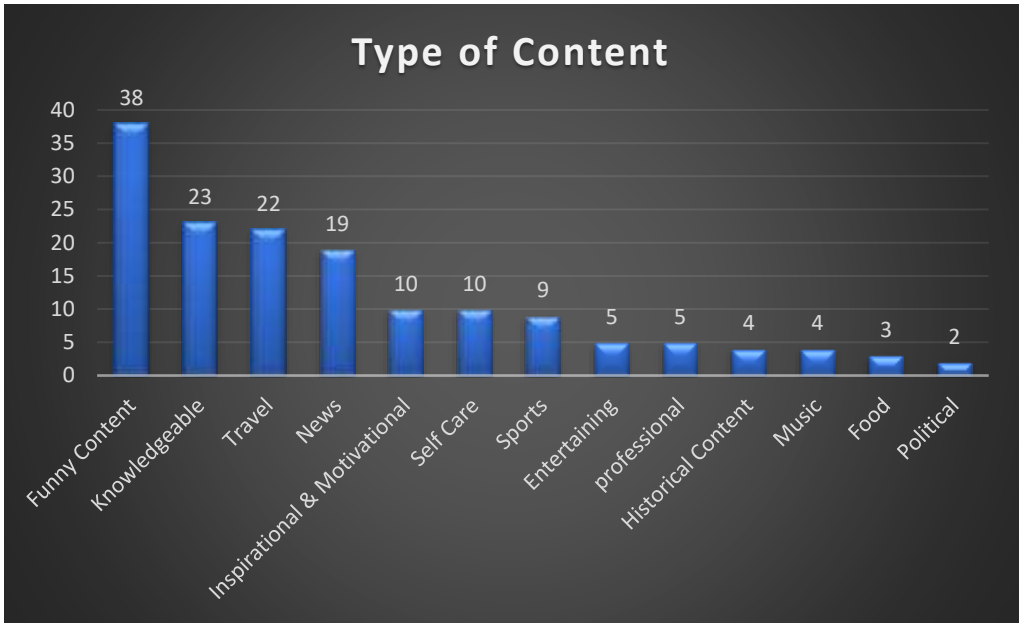
*Figure 17 - Most Preferred Social Media Networks*




As per our findings Instagram and Facebook are the two most important mediums that cannot be ignored by researchers today. In order to reach the maximum number of people and create awareness these two platforms are of greater importance. Researchers must focus on these 2 platforms whenever they are trying to study social media related phenomenon. Our findings and data are so rich that it encourages us to keep exploring further. In addition, we did a lexical analysis for the most preferred type of content and below are our findings:

### 3.1.4. Lexical Analysis - Type of Content

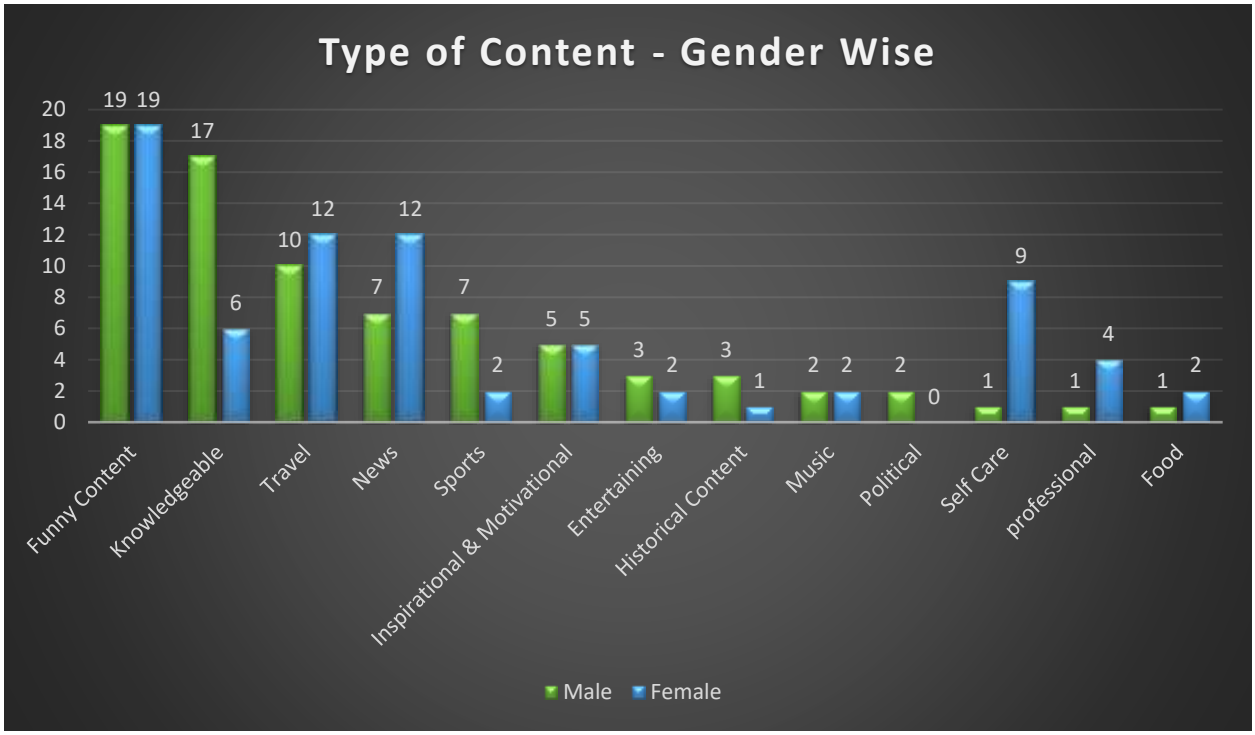
*Figure 18 - Lexical Analysis - Type of Content*




As per our lexical analysis, participants over social media are most interested in funny and entertaining content. The second most preferred type of content is knowledgeable. Respondents show a clear preference to engage with content that is knowledgeable. Travel, being third, is the most obvious type of content post covid. We further segregated these findings and tried to find out about the difference in preference based on gender.

### 3.1.5. Lexical Analysis – Type of Content (Gender Based)

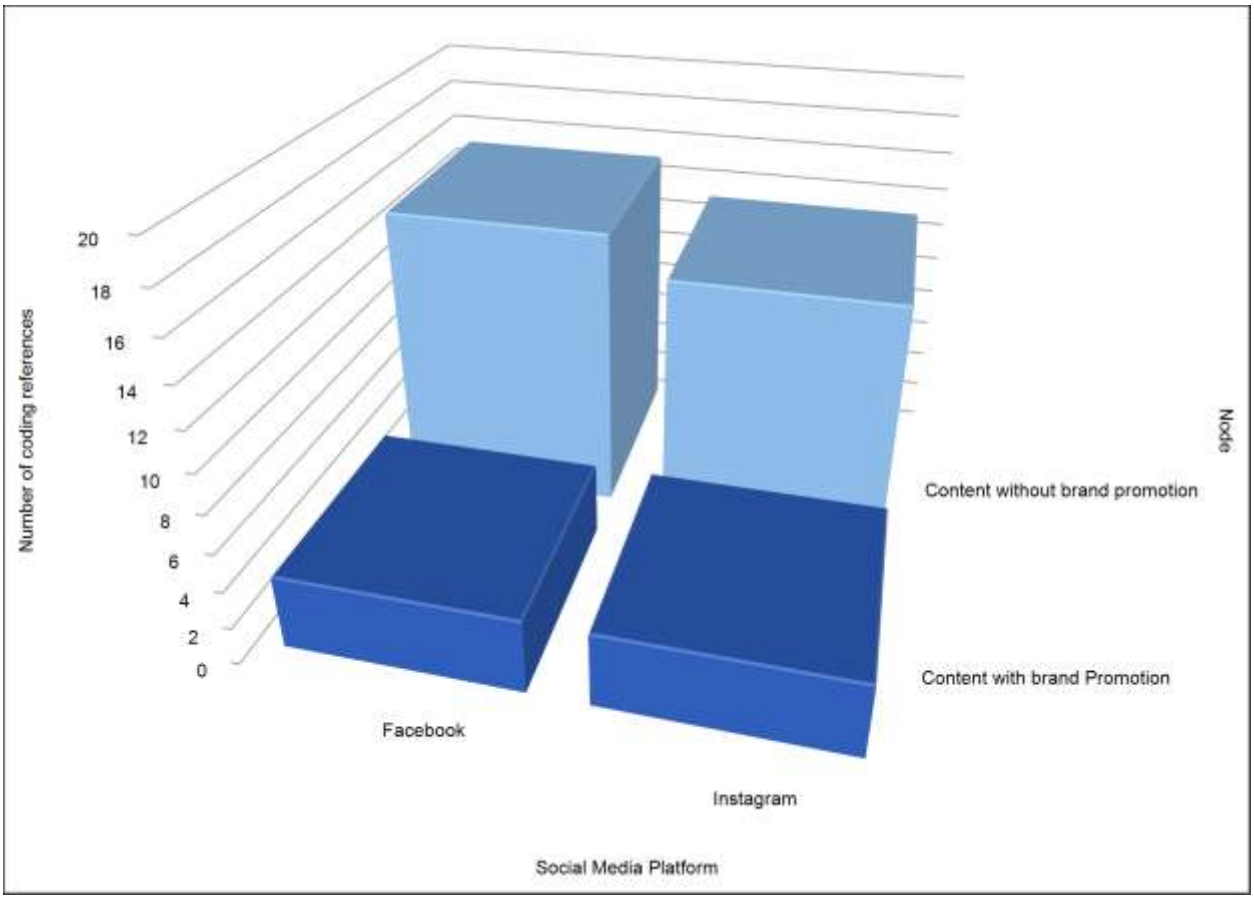
*Figure 19 - Lexical Analysis – Type of Content (Gender Based)*




There is no difference based on gender when it comes to funny content. Males, although are more interested in knowledgeable content whereas females lead in self-care content. Our analysis also shows the changing trend whereby females are more leaned towards news and professional content. These findings pave the way for thematic analysis. In order to further enrich our understanding,

### 3.1.6. Lexical Analysis – Brand Promotions

*Figure 20 - Lexical Analysis – Brand Promotions*




Lexical data analysis of Brand promotions

We preferred lexical analysis to find out whether participants prefer content that has brand promotion in it or prefer it without brand promotion. As per our lexical analysis, respondents prefer the content without brand promotion which can also be seen in the table below:

### 3.1.7. Lexical Analysis for Emotions:

Emotion being one of the most prominent elements of behavior (Lench et al., 2011), we preferred lexical analysis to find out how respondents expressed different emotions. As per literature, an overview of the researchers with emotion being their main variable is given below:

*Table 12 - SEP (Literature Review)*

| Reference | Emotion measure used | Resulting structure |
|---|---|---|
| Edell and Burke (1987) | Edell and Burke (1987) | Upbeat, negative, and warm Pleasure, arousal, and domination |
| Holbrook and Batra (1987) | Holbrook and Batra (1987) | Positive and negative affect |
| Westbrook (1987) | Izard (1977) | Pleasure and arousal |
| Olney et al. (1991) | Mehrabian and Russell (1974) | Pleasure and arousal |
| Holbrook and Gardner (1993) | Russell et al. (1989) | Upbeat, negative and warm |
| Mano and Oliver (1993) | Watson et al. (1988); Mano (1991) | Positive and negative |
| Oliver (1993) | Izard (1977) | Positive and negative affect |
| Derbaix (1995) | Derbaix (1995) | Positive and negative affect |
| Steenkamp et al. (1996) | Mehrabian and Russell (1974) | Arousal |
| Nyer (1997) | Shaver et al. (1987) | Anger, joy/satisfaction, and sadness |
| Richins (1997) | Richins (1997) | Anger, discontent, worry, sadness, fear, shame, envy, loneliness, romantic love, love, peacefulness, contentment, optimism, joy, excitement, and surprise |
| Dube and Morgan (1998) | Watson et al. (1988) | Positive and negative affect |
| Phillips and Baumgartner (2002) | Edell and Burke (1987) | Positive and negative affect |
| Ruth et al. (2002) | Shaver et al. (1987) | Love, happiness, pride, gratitude, fear, anger, sadness, guilt, uneasiness, and embarrassment |
| Smith and Bolton (2002) | Smith and Bolton (2002) | Anger, discontent, disappointment, self-pity, and anxiety |

*Source: Fleur J.M. Laros, Jan-Benedict E.M. Steenkamp, Emotions in consumer behavior: a hierarchical approach, Journal of Business Research, 58 (2005), 1437 – 1445.*

The Standardized Emotional Profile (SEP) methodological framework was initially proposed by Holbrook and Batra (1987). SEP has a capacity to dig deep and unravel the underlying emotional dimensions of the attitude, emotions, and behavior of a customer. It has been used by many research scholars to gain insights into emotional responses and their implications. Batson, C. D., & Shaw, L. L. (1991) employed the SEP methodological framework to investigate the role of emotions in altruistic behavior, exploring the emotional underpinnings of helping behaviors and prosocial actions. Guivarch et al., (2017) implied SEP in their study, to dig deep and learn about the effectiveness of the implicit social skills training group for children with ASD. Richins, (1997) applied the SEP framework in order to investigate and understand the emotional dimensions of consumption experiences, specifically focusing on material possessions.

These researchers have chosen to utilize the SEP framework due to its efficacy in capturing and dissecting emotional responses in consumer contexts. SEP's capacity to unravel the emotional

fabric underlying diverse consumer behaviors and attitudes has rendered it a valuable tool in a multitude of research inquiries spanning altruism, material possessions, retail environments, and brand relationships. Given the asymmetry with our research objectives we decided to use Standardized Emotional Profile (SEP) by Holbrook & Batra, (1987) to understand the emotions of our participants using lexical analysis.

*Table 13 - Standardized Emotional Profile (SEP) by Holbrook & Batra, (1987)*

| Dimensions | Subdimensions | Items |
|---|---|---|
| Pleasure | Faith | Reverent |
| | | Worshipful |
| | | Spiritual |
| | Affection | Loving |
| | | Affectionate |
| | | Friendly |
| | Gratitude | Grateful |
| | | Thankful |
| | | Appreciative |
| Arousal | Interest | Attentive |
| | | Curious |
| | | Interested |
| | Activation | Aroused |
| | | Active |
| | | Excited |
| | Surgency | Playful |
| | | Entertained |
| | | Light-hearted |
| Domination | Sadness | Sad |
| | | Distressed |
| | | Sorrowful |
| | Fear | Fearful |
| | | Afraid |
| | | Anxious |
| | Skepticism | Skeptical |
| | | Suspicious |
| | | Distrustful |

SEP (Holbrook & Batra, 1987)

Standardized Emotional Profile (SEP) framework by (Holbrook & Batra, 1987), has three dimensions with 3 Sub-dimensions under each dimension. Each sub-dimension further has 3 items. Therefore, we performed the lexical analysis for 27 items in total. As per our lexical analysis participants showed a variety of emotions.

Below is the lexical analysis for emotions under the SEP Framework by (Holbrook & Batra, 1987):

*Table 14 - lexical analysis for emotions under the SEP Framework*

| Dimension | Sub-Dimension | Item | Files | References | Words/Verbatims |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1st Dimension – Pleasure** | | | | | |
| Pleasure | Faith | Reverent | 28 | 117 | God, Trust, Enjoy, Joyful, Pleasure, Admiring |
| Pleasure | Faith | Worshipful | 26 | 96 | Adore, Pleasure, Thanks, Devotion |
| Pleasure | Faith | Spiritual | 28 | 478 | Spiritual, Glorify, Mystical, Influence, Follow |
| **2nd Dimension – Pleasure** | | | | | |
| Pleasure | Affection | Loving | 30 | 309 | Love, Harmony, Tranquil, Touch, Caring |
| Pleasure | Affection | Affectionate | 22 | 61 | Warmth, Heart, Fond, Like, Respect |
| Pleasure | Affection | Friendly | 22 | 62 | Ally, Sociable, Communicative, Buddy |
| **3rd Dimension – Pleasure** | | | | | |
| Pleasure | Gratitude | Grateful | 17 | 41 | Appreciate, Thankful, Obliged |
| Pleasure | Gratitude | Thankful | 17 | 39 | Thank, Glad, Pleased |
| Pleasure | Gratitude | Appreciate | 19 | 53 | Appreciate, Reward, Value, Cherish, Admire |
| **1st Dimension – Arousal** | | | | | |
| Arousal | Interest | Attentive | 28 | 97 | Focused, Care, Observe, Aid |
| Arousal | Interest | Curious | 29 | 136 | Strange, Eager, Find out, |
| Arousal | Interest | Interested | 30 | 623 | Interested, Keen, Observe, engage, Knowledgeable |
| **2nd Dimension – Arousal** | | | | | |
| Arousal | Activation | Aroused | 19 | 40 | Excited, Provoked, Raised, cause, inspire |
| Arousal | Activation | Activated | 16 | 28 | Start, turn on, Initiate |
| Arousal | Activation | Excited | 29 | 162 | Excitement, Thrilled, Delighted, Involve |
| **3rd Dimension – Arousal** | | | | | |
| Arousal | Surgency | Playful | 30 | 153 | Fun, Play, Game, Jolly, Funny, Humorous |
| Arousal | Surgency | Entertained | 30 | 167 | Entertaining, Amuse, enjoyed |
| Arousal | Surgency | Light-hearted | 15 | 42 | Casual, Light, lively, cheerful |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1st Dimension – Domination** | | | | | |
| Domination | sadness | Sad | 22 | 58 | sad, heart-breaking, Sorry, Pity, |
| Domination | sadness | Distressed | 24 | 63 | Disturbed, Hurt, Pain, Pity, Stressed, Trouble, Upset |
| Domination | sadness | Sorrowful | 17 | 33 | Unhappy, sad, Depressed, Regretful, unethical |
| **2nd Dimension – Domination** | | | | | |
| Domination | Fear | Fearful | 24 | 157 | Fear, Horrendous, Horrific, Terrible |
| Domination | Fear | Afraid | 26 | 87 | Nervous, uneasy, Tensed |
| Domination | Fear | Anxious | 21 | 56 | Worried, Concerned, Bothered |
| **3rd Dimension – Domination** | | | | | |
| Domination | Skepticism | Skeptical | 23 | 61 | Doubt, dubious |
| Domination | Skepticism | Suspicious | 24 | 87 | Suspicious, suspected, mistrust |
| Domination | Skepticism | Distrustful | 22 | 59 | unsure, distrust, fear |

### 3.1.8. Lexical analysis discussion

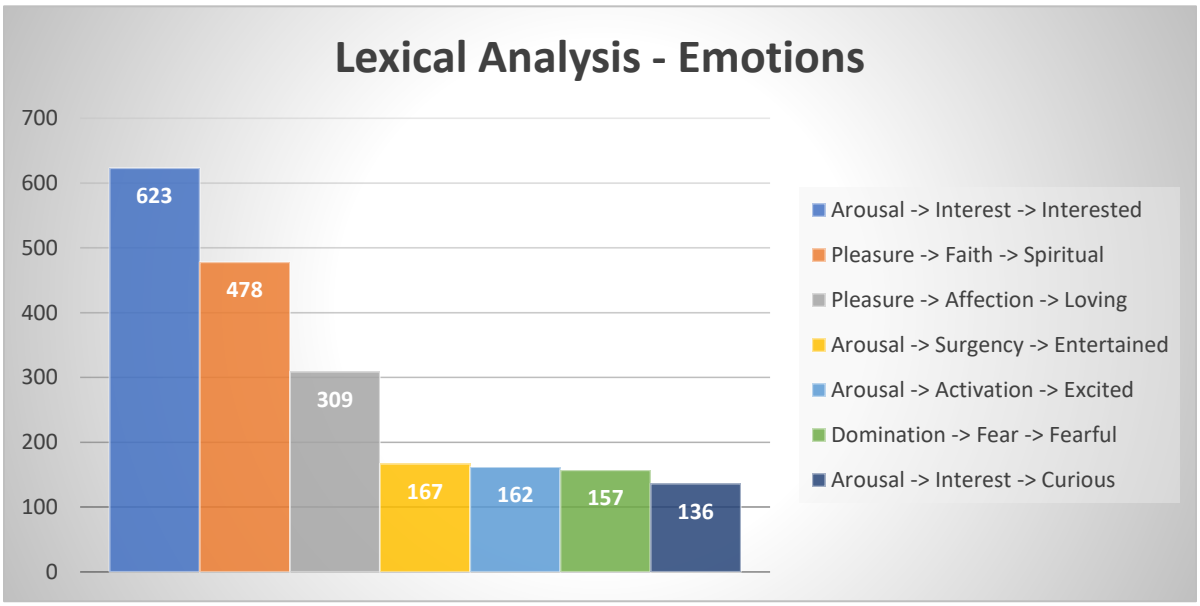
In order to investigate and understand emotions we performed a lexical analysis. NVIVO 20 plus was used to execute lexical analysis. Amongst these emotions, the domination is found of Arousal progressing into Interest and culminating in the state of being Interested. This emotional pattern is prominently found, resulting in a total of 623 mentions within the participant responses. The participants, in articulating their engagement, evinced their interests through the employment of words such as (interested, keen, observe, engage, knowledgeable) to show their interests. This underscores the importance and dominance of interest as a foundational element. Social media empowers the users to selectively involve, engage, and interact with content that elicits their interest, diverging from conventional platforms like radio or television, where audiences were obliged to consume content indiscriminately.

Subsequently, the second sequence of emotional states that emerge is characterized by Pleasure progressing into Faith, ultimately converging into a sense of Spirituality. This pattern is documented with a frequency of 478 occurrences. Participants expressed this feeling by using words (Spiritual, Glorify, Mystical, Influence, Follow). This shows that users of social media consume content that has some connection with their faith and spirit. Faith has always been a driving force for masses (Converse, 2006). The participants conveyed an emotional trajectory marked by Pleasure evolving into Affection, culminating in a sentiment of Love, a pattern that is cited 309 times by using words (Love, Harmony, Tranquil, Touch, Caring). After interest and spiritual content participants expressed their emotions towards affection and love.

Following these emotions, they ensue emotional experiences characterized by Arousal transitioning into Surgency, culminating in a state of feeling Entertained by using words (Entertaining, Amuse, enjoyed). The participants articulated their emotional states in a manner where Arousal progressed into Activation, ultimately resulting in a sense of Excitement by using words (Excitement, Thrilled, Delighted, Involve). Furthermore, the participants prominently exhibited emotional responses marked by Domination leading to Fear, ultimately manifesting as a prevailing sense of being Fearful, this was expressed by using words (Fear, Horrendous, Horrific, Terrible). Our participants showed emotions that are in line with our lexical analysis that discusses the content that participants are engaging with. It is Interest that drives all their involvement and engagement. Participants are looking for knowledge that can enhance their experience and that they are being dominated by emotion. These findings are in line with our previous findings and

correspond to our research objectives, thus this paves the way for further research. Our findings are summarized in the chart below:

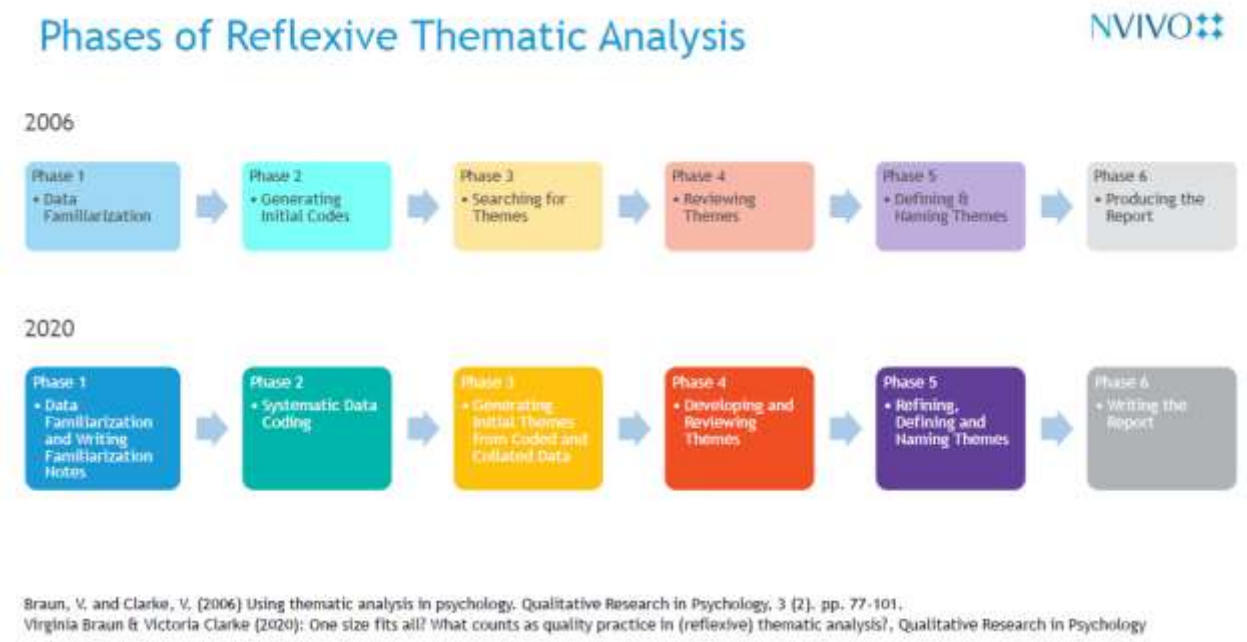
*Figure 21 - Lexical Analysis Emotion*



## 3.2. Thematic Analysis:

In order to do the reflective thematic analysis we followed the guidelines provided by Braun & Clarke, (2006, 2020). They suggested a few upgrades in their 2020 version, and we adapted and followed the six steps suggested in the updated version of Reflexive Thematic Analysis. Both the earlier and updated versions of steps to perform reflective thematic analysis are given below. In order to do Reflective Thematic Analysis NVIVO 20 plus is used, which is the most recommended software for the qualitative analysis (Woods et al., 2016).

*Figure 22 - Phases of Reflexive Thematic Analysis*




Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3 (2). pp. 77-101.
Virginia Braun & Victoria Clarke (2020): One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis?, Qualitative Research in Psychology

### 3.2.1. Phases of Thematic Analysis:

The reflexive thematic analysis includes six phases (Braun & Clarke, 2020):

1. Data Familiarization and Writing Familiarization Notes

2. Systematic Data Coding

3. Generating Initial Themes from Coded and Collated Data

4. Developing and Reviewing Themes

5. Refining, Defining and Naming Themes

6. Writing the Report

Following these six phases, in phase one (data familiarization and writing familiarization notes) all the interviews, which are video, and audio recorded, are transcribed into word format. These interviews are transcribed partially by using automated transcriptions software (such as NVIVO Transcriptions) and manually. Afterwards to ensure no words or even their sense is lost in the transcription each transcription is re-reviewed (See appendix for the interviews). Once the data is transcribed, and familiarization notes are created the word files are imported in NVIVO 20 plus for further analyses.

Phase two (systematic coding) is done using NVIVO 20 plus software. During the coding, memos and other field notes are referred in order to get the latent meanings and develop the understanding. Following these six phases, in phase three, 200+ themes are initially developed from the 30 interviews that are coded previously. We then reviewed and re-reviewed these themes. After multiple reviews themes are merged with other themes based on the similarity in their context. Following phase four (developing and reviewing the themes) and phase five (refining, defining, and naming themes) themes are further refined, named, and renamed and after a rigorous exercise that lasted about 30 days, we finally come up with five major themes. These five major themes consist of several sub-themes. These themes and sub-themes emerged from the data are deemed necessary to explain our analysis.

As a result of thematic analysis, the following thematic framework emerged:

*Table 15 - Thematic Analysis*

| Theme | Sub theme | Files | References | Verbatims/examples |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Theme 1: Motivations to Use social media** | | | | |
| **Motivations to Use social media** | Self-Expression | **30** | **192** | "*Social Media has become a part of our daily life and it is a way to express our personality*" (P27, Valeria, F26) "*On Instagram like, I mean I engaged in posting my stories like wherever I go, where the new things I find I posted and normally when I take a good picture mine, so I post it*" (P2, Adil Samo, M24) ; "*I really want people to know what is my opinion that how we need it*" (P4, AQSA, F22); "*We do this on daily basis because you know this is what social media is all about we , we express ourselves*" (P5, Bareera, F27) "*we were live streaming on our Instagram that was from my personal thing and that is my self-expression*" (P8, Hasan, M36) |
| | Content is Engaging | **30** | **139** | "*Basically, their content is very engaging. My friends post videos like re-enactments of different music videos and pictures that are posted by celebrities*" (P1, Aaron, M24) "*I am involved by this means, I follow content most of the times so for instance there is a page called Startup Pakistan they create content about success stories of entrepreneurs so I follow these stories I learn about their business model and their ideas*" (P3, AR Gilal, M2) "*they create, uh, interesting or funny content more than others and their content is very engaging*" (P9, Jean, M26) |
| | Professional Development | **26** | **75** | "*Facebook, yes that is where I share mostly my work progress, on Facebook*" (P3, AR Gilal, M32 "*brands are using it (…) For its marketing purposes*" (P5, Bareera, F27) "*to be very honest this is how I started my business*" (P8, Hasan M36) |
| | Stay up to date | **26** | **66** | "*Just to stay with the trending topics and just to stay with the trends*" (P5, Bareera, F27) "*I have really liked a one page and visit it every day, they have like 10 information about what's happening in the world*." (P9, Jean, M26) "*Most of the times I use it for casually checking things around me in the world and sort of keeping myself updated and engaged*" (P10, Junaid, M30) "*as such stay updated both personally and professionally" (P27, Valeria, F26)* |
| | Necessity | **13** | **18** | "*Ah, Yes I do, I mean uh who does not ah these days, these days it's a most common, ah common activity of everyone*" (P16, Noman, M30) "*Yes I do use social media Ah, (…) um come on I mean who does not, it is an obligatory part nowadays*" (P22, Sanam, F31) "*Yes, very often sort of a part of my life uh uhm more like mandatory part I am kind of involved with Social Media*" (P26, Tuba, F25) "*it has become a necessity today*" (P27, Valeria, F26) |
| **Theme 2 Engagement Because of Content** | | | | |
| **Engagement Because of Content** | User Generated Content | **28** | **109** | "*I Prefer content by the users over the brand owing to the fact that user is closer to me*" (P24, Suhand, F18) "*Local influences the content creators like content creators from Pakistan his name is Mooro and Ukano and I mean I find Ali Gul Pir very entertaining*" (P2, Adil, M24) "*if you talk about influencers so like I told you before I engage with local influencers in a whole* |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | *different way*" (P4, Aqsa, F22) *" I feel their content is very interesting and that interest uh will lead to involvement and that involvement will lead to more engagement*" (P11, Kaneez, F34) "*I engage with such user generated content because I like them actually*" (P12, Maira, F24) |
| | Engagement because of Proximity | **29** | **99** | *"So if I'm looking at local influencers, like if I if there's a brand that kind of interests me, I'll always look at who's promoting those brands I'll see how much proximity they have with me*" (P13, Marienelle, F24) "*Some I follow because of proximity like Pakistani*" (P30, Yasir, M31) "*I think it highly depends upon the fact that I can relate with them like I told you before I feel proximity with them they are uh like they are*" (P29, Yashma, F17) |
| | Brand Generated Content | **25** | **59** | *"I am big brand fan and I prefer content by brands*" (P6, Farwa, F24) "*Brand one is more clarity In terms of cinematography In terms of in terms of the message that they want to convey in terms of the message that they want to convey*" (P12, Maira, F24) "*I'm a whole Nike girl and I will only purchase Nike products (…) I am involved with this brand No matter who's the ambassador of Nike*" (P13, Marienelle, F24) "*like you asked about preferred engagement I would say Brand Generated content*" (P16, Noman, M30) |
| **Theme 3: Brand Image** | | | | |
| **Brand Image** | UGC is Credible | **30** | **134** | **"***I always trust the content that is created and posted by these budding and young influencers because they feel credible and clearer to me in comparison to that of branded content*" (P29, Yashma, F17) "*If she says something, I will take that blindly, for me she is the most credible celebrity and I follow her because of her authenticity and credibility*" (P1, Aaron, M24) "*User generated I think is more credible (…) more credible yes User generated because of user generated contents would be created in such a way that they have been going through their own experiences*" (P4, Aqsa, F22) "*these local influencers like Toto is the most credible one for me*" (P7, Hamza, M25) |
| | Over Branding is Negative | **27** | **63** | "*if it's the video where it's like 50 to 50 like uh, 50% of brand promotion and 50% of I don't know explaining the characteristics I didn't I didn't like it It's no, obviously*" (P28, Vlad, M26) "*The advertisement in even user generated content that is not subtle, It doesn't make any sense to me*" (P25, Tahira, F29) "*I am Involved because of the content not because of the promotions it's the other way around like you know, I stop following such content with over branding*" (P24, Suhand, F18)) "*some influencers over do the branding which just makes me unfollow these*" (P29, Yashma, F17) |
| | UGC Branding is more effective | **21** | **54** | "*Like really influenced by the fact that Toto is promoting it I mean it is the only thing that makes any brand more credible I mean otherwise I don't have any feeling*" (P7, Hamza, M25) "*I mean it depends so first time maybe I give it a try because of the influencer first time*" (P2, Adil, M24) "*I prefer interacting with the content generated by a user. Uh, so yeah. That's the user experience content and user generated content. Like from example of GoPro*" (P10, Junaid, M30) |
| | UGC is Clear | **24** | **36** | *"I think his content is very much clear and very informative*" (P30, Yasir, M31) "*his content has such clarity that it really start with smaller involvements and shapes out to be enthusiasm the clarity I mean I would say definitely*" (P28, Vlad, M26) "*if they want to convey* |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | *something, their message is clearly conveyed their message For sure*" (P27, Valeria, F26) "*yeah I can see that they are clear, because we can see the link or something or the on the explaining actions so they explain*" (P23, Stella, F19) "*clarity I think it is also influencer so yeah*" (P18, Renato, M18) |
| | UGC is Consistent | **22** | **36** | "*Yeah, it's pretty cool she is I mean you say consistent the most consistent, consistent in terms of posting the same things posting in the same genre, promoting the same brand Uh, that girl that I have recently followed regarding hair and skin care routine*" (P4, Aqsa, F22) "*for consistency I mean this is one reason I engage with Nadia Hussain the model because she is consistent*" (P5, Bareera, F27) "*they are more uh consistent because they are doing it on uh on themselves first they're experimenting on themselves first and then they are recommending us something*" (P6, Farwa, F24) "*if you ask about consistency I would again say that a user generated content is more consistent for me … on so for me consistent is always influencer*" (P18, Renato, M18) |
| **Theme 4: Moral & Ethical Considerations** | | | | |
| **Moral & Ethical Considerations** | Unethical Content SM | **30** | **125** | "*Social media today is full of crap and unethical videos people are exposing their body to get the fame, there is stupid content over social media that for no reason gets all the viewership and this actually encourages people to create such content*" (P13, Marienelle, F24) "*like there are so many unethical and provoking videos like I have seen so much of religious hatred*" (P24, Suhand, F18) "*people at times uh I mean people at times troll you without you know realizing that a simple joke or immoral comment can have a serious magnitude of consequences but I uh have been trolled a lot of times*" (P4, Aqsa, F22) "*I have seen people loosing life for something as silly as making viral things without prior confirmation*" (P5, Bareera, F27) "*I often see people beating their You know, servants that are under 18 people, misusing them, abusing them, not considering them equal treating them like animals*" (P6, Farwa, F24) |
| | Moral Intensity – Proximity | **27** | **75** | "*Oh, I must tell you it's always about proximity and people just worry about morality when its close proximity*" (P1, Aaron, M24) "*I would rather give it in my own circle, uh, so yeah, uh, that's my personal preference. So proximity matters to me rather than donating for Madagascar, I would prefer donating for my neighbor who is in much need*" (P10, Junaid, M30) "*I should be careful or I should Yeah, I should have sympathy for the people in Ukraine, but for me my country comes first other than me my proximity is my country*" (P16, Noman, M30) "*Obviously people of Pakistan speakers, uh, proximity, proximity*" (P21, Samita, F33) "*People just because of our proximity think that we are all killers and bad and they just rebuke us*" (P23, Stella, F19) |
| | Ethical Content | **22** | **50** | "*Sometimes they are posting videos of people helping other people helping a dog, so that's something very ethical*" (P30, Yasir, M31) "*social consensus is building upon education, no war and equality. Social consensuses are building for no racism. So yeah there are a lot of good things as well*" (P23, Stella, F19) "*there was a post promoting religious harmony and tolerance ah it calls (…) for humanity like you know OK, OK, uh, no one cares about religion be human*" (P16, Noman, M30) "*Like accepting part of population, whatever who they hahahaha so it's kind of inverse of the previous one*" (P1, Aaron, M24) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Moral Intensity – Magnitude of Consequences | **20** | **35** | "*These things are issues with greater magnitude of consequences and that we are ignoring*" (P1, Aaroon, M24) "*who is feeling for Baluchistan? Who fears the magnitude of destruction magnitude of consequences of the people of Baluchistan*" (P4, Aqsa, F22) "*you know we always should be worrying about the magnitude of consequences there's going to be because you know there is a ripple effect if you throw a stone in the water there is going to be a ripple effect so this thing can you know affect and this thing can cause a lot of trouble for many people*" (P14, Naveed, M30) "*it's sometimes because of the magnitude of the consequences Like if your people need help, it's you who is going to be affected It's not like if there's a war in Ukraine we are not affected by it simply Exactly*" (P19, Saeed, M33) |
| | Moral Intensity – Social Consensus | **13** | **18** | "*The general opinion would not go for Russia. So Russia in not getting the global consensus like you mentioned in the question*" (P1, Aaron, M24) "*I think it's how they have procreated in uh, news on news channels and on social media and it has become a global social consensus like you know world just feels for Ukraine and It should but that never means*" (P5, Bareera, F27) "*But yes if you talk of global consensus I have been shaped to believe that Putin is a pure evil and Ukraine is a good country suffering atrocities for no reason*" (P10, Junaid, M30) "*on the contrary there are a lot of things that have now been developed as global social consensus and people say it just because of that*" (P13, Marienelle, F24) |
| **Theme 5: social media is Controlled/ Uncontrolled** | | | | |
| **Social media is Controlled/ Uncontrolled** | Social media is controlled | **30** | **106** | **"***Do you know social media is all fake, all propaganda and is controlled by people to create such fake propaganda*" (P28, Vlad, M26) "*For me social media is never a free medium*" (P14, Naveed, M30) "*there is control highly controlled…I was like blocked on Twitter for posting in the favor of Palestine*" (P4, Aqsa, F22) "*there are the people who are controlling the contents*" (P3, AR Gilal, M32) "*It's controlled, I told you it controls your mind It's control your brain It influence you Consciously and unconsciously*" (P11, Kaneez, F34) "*Social media is all controlled, this is what if there should be some freedom of speech as well*" (P15, Nazish, F29) |
| | Social media is a Propaganda | **26** | **77** | "*Social media has never been free there are controversies there are theories about this*" (P8, Hasan, F36) "*why are they so upset and concerned about what's happening in Ukraine and what's happening in Afghanistan?*" (P9, Jean, M26) "*Uh, for instance yesterday I think Israel bombed Palestine OK, but there was no news in social media there was no news in mainstream media you don't see the covering*" (P12, Maira, F24) "*…reading this research publication and it had an effect on an American president election*" (P18, Renato, M18) |
| | Social media is Free (Uncontrolled) | **19** | **36** | "*I strictly believe there is no control over social media No, not at all Yes, they do have policies, but I think still there is no control*" (P5, Bareera, F27) "*Just that, uh social media and these mediums have empowered the customer equally, so it has given us that kind of a control over our buying decisio*n" (P20, Safdar, F32) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | *"see the Internet is for everyone and every country has her own legislation"* (P27, Valeria, F26) [12] |

Our study delves into the motivations behind individuals' involvement and engagement over social media and explores various moral considerations associated with content engagement and platform control. Interviews were conducted with a diverse group of participants to gather insights and verbatims.

Amongst the five major themes the first one is Motivations to Use social media. Participants discussed their basic motivations for extravagant involvement and engagement over different and diverse sets of social media platforms. One of the basic motivations is it provides them with an easy and safe way of expressing themselves. They view it as a means of sharing their opinions and expressing themselves. They do so by posting different kinds of posts, stories and even live streams. Another reason for the extensive social media engagement is the type of content that includes videos that are posted by other fellow users, re-enactments. The content posted is humorous and interesting in a relatable way.

Participants described it not just entertaining, but also help them develop professionally. These platforms offer connectivity for personal and professional development. Users highlight their work progress, share their success, and research related work and even publicize their businesses amongst their social circle and other communities as well. Social media keeps them up to date with real time developments that at times are being undermined by the mainstream media. These updates pertain to business, politics, and daily life hacks. Given its importance and its immersive role, participants deemed social media as a necessity in today's world. It is termed as a part of routine; some even proclaim it to be an obligation.

The second theme that we generated highlights the reasons for the engagement, that in our case is Content. Participants highlighted the fact that content is the reason social media is so engaging. Content includes content generated by other users which is also termed as user generated content. UGC is taking over all types of content because of it being relatable and credible. Local influencers are emerging as the next big thing in the world of social media. Another reason that UGC is more engaging is the proximity that users feel with the peer local influencers. This proximity garners

[12] A detailed version of the table is given in the appendix 1.

more attention and emotional connection that results in higher level of involvement and engagement.

Brand generated content is liked for its clarity and professional appeal. This leads to a connection between the brand and its follower that goes beyond the identity that promotes the brand, rather it has a direct affection and connection with the brand.

The third theme that we generated concerns brand image. Participants discussed how different types of content can help brands build an image that is credible, consistent, and clear. Participants consider UGC to be credible because of the fact that they can engage and relate with the content creator. But these local influencers at times kill this credibility if let brands overshadow their content and credibility. Participants appreciate it when the brand is promoted in a more subtle manner. Participants expressed their views about UGC, and they believe that branding done through UGC is more effective in comparison to traditional advertising because it is more direct and tailored for a particular audience. UGC is getting clearer and more consistent each day and thus UGC is gaining traction. UGC is considered more effective when it comes to conveyance of message.

Fourth theme generated discusses about the moral and ethical implications of social media and content that is being consumed by users every day. Participants highlighted that there is an abundance of unethical content over social media that includes bullying and hatred based on any sort of discrimination. Participants expressed their feelings about how proximity plays its role in the type of reaction to unethical content. Participants shared their opinion about how the ones that are in close proximity may react in a more active manner in comparison to other groups of users. Despite several unethical aspects, there is an abundance of morally and ethically appreciable content that ranges from helping fellows and even animals stuck in some sort of danger or trouble.

Participants highlighted that another major source for the retaliation is the expected magnitude of consequences. They highlighted the fact that in case if the expected magnitude of consequences is going to be big social media users combine together to become the voice and this voice grows over certain issues and become a global social consensus.

Fifth and final theme that we generated highlights the long discussed and rather controversial aspects of social media. They discuss about the fact that whether social media is controlled, or it

is free, in terms of freedom of expressions. They highlighted certain biases towards a group of people, issues or even some regional politics. While some participants believed it to be part of a propaganda making militia that spreads misinformation and fake news, few believed it to be free and highlighted its role in the empowerment of users and varying legislative perspectives contribute to this perception.

### 3.2.2. Thematic analysis conclusion

This comprehensive exploration of motivations and ethical considerations within social media engagement sheds light on the multifaceted nature of online interactions. Participants' perspectives reflect the complex interplay between personal motivations, ethical concerns, and platform control, highlighting the evolving dynamics of social media in contemporary society.

### 3.2.3. Thematic analysis results and discussion

After rigorously following the six phases proposed by (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2020) back and forth, we generated five major themes; reasons to use social media, engagement because of content, brand image, moral and ethical considerations and social media is controlled or uncontrolled (free). With each theme we found several sub-themes that are briefly discussed above. Each sub theme is supported by the verbatims that are used by the participants during their interviews. Each statement is mentioned in the inverted commas along with the participant detail in the brackets.

Our findings extend the previous findings on the importance of social media, user generated content, brand involvement and brand engagement (Kaplan, 2012; A. N. Smith et al., 2012; Yadav et al., 2013). It validates the findings that even within these social media platforms, platforms with more hybrid features are more popular (Roma & Aloini, 2019). In this study Roma and Aloini found that companies can effectively manage their brand related UGC on different social media platforms to enhance their brand image and engagement with their customers. Our findings are going to add valuable insights in the current literature that will help brands understand the importance of user generated content, impact of credible, consistent, and clear communications in generating involvement that leads to brand engagement.

Building upon the findings from our thematic analysis we are going to discuss the motivations behind involvement and engagement on social media, importance of the content and its role in creating the social media engagements. We then elaborate the characteristics of brand image and moral and ethical implications behind the social media engagement. In the end we conclude our findings by discussing the perception of different social media platforms as being an independent or a bias platform that is manipulative and just helps build propaganda.

### *3.2.4.Motivation to use social media:*

The first theme that we generated from our data explores different motivations of our participants to engage with social media platforms on a daily basis. Our first theme has five sub-themes: self-expression, content is engaging, professional development, stay up to date and necessity. Self-expression has always been a key phenomenon when it comes to branding (J. L. Aaker, 1999). This has always been a reason that consumers prefer brands, and they believe that this is a way for them to express themselves. The need to express oneself has always been there (H. S. Kim & Drolet, 2003) but this varies across cultures, for instance they found that marketers should emphasize the social benefits of consuming a particular product or brand when targeting collectivistic cultures, while emphasizing the unique features and benefits of a product or brand when targeting individualistic cultures (Han & Shavitt, 1994; Hofstede, 1984; Mooij, 2003; Nayeem, 2012; Roth, 1995).

Our findings show that one of the major motivations for engagement on social media is self-expression. Multiple academic studies have investigated the motivations behind why people use social media. This is line with  Papacharissi & Mendelson, (2011) findings. In their study they found that the motivations to express oneself, to establish and maintain connections with others, and to receive feedback from others are important drivers of social media use. Tufekci, (2014) explored the relationship between social media use and self-expression and concluded that social media provides unprecedented opportunities for individual self-expression and creativity, as well as for collective expression, organization, and mobilization. Our findings support numerous other studies and suggest that the desire to express oneself and connect with others is a significant factor in why people use social media.

"*Social Media has become a part of our daily life, and it is a way to express our personality, it has become a necessity today*" (P27, Valeria, F26)

"*I really want people to know what is my opinion that how we need it*" (P4, AQSA, F22)

In this content, a user's way of self-expression is the reason for engagement for many others. Social media users express themselves by creating different sorts of content that include pictures, videos, and their success stories and this makes social media a viable platform to engage. Other social media users find these content engaging and this becomes their reason to engage on social media (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). Some success stories become motivation for others. Participants expressed that one of the reasons to engage on social media is content itself.

Kwak et al., (2010) investigated the relationship between user engagement and the structure of online networks and found that the more friends and ties a user has in a social network, the higher the level of engagement. These findings are supported by numerous other studies and suggest that social media content that elicits strong emotions and is able to spread through online networks is more likely to be engaging and popular among users. This content at times is not just personal but is professional as well. Social media networks have extended as being an exclusive platforms for connectivity not just personal but on professional level (Donelan, 2016).

"*Basically, their content is very engaging. My friends post videos like re-enactments of different music videos and pictures that are posted by celebrities*" (P1, Aaron, M24)

"*I am involved by this means, I follow content most of the times so for instance there is a page called Startup Pakistan they create content about success stories of entrepreneurs, so I follow these stories I learn about their business model and their ideas*" (P3, AR Gilal, M2)

"*They create, uh, interesting or funny content more than others and their content is very engaging*" (P9, Jean, M26)

"*To be very honest this is how I started my business, so I run an events management company, and I started my business from creating a face Facebook page*" (P8, Hasan M36)

Similarly, social media has brought the world together and with the huge amount of content that is being created and shared in real time. Features like going live have made social media one of the major sources of news and updates (Gruber et al., 2015; Knoll, 2016). Gottfried & Shearer, (2016) found that social media has become a key source of news for many Americans, particularly for those who are younger and more digitally savvy. Our findings support those studies and suggest that staying informed and up to date is a common motivation for social media use, especially among younger, more digitally savvy individuals. Participants found quick and more credible information on social media according to them as some media channels might not broadcast the real information.

"*I have really liked a one page and visit it every day, they have like 10 information about what's happening in the world*." (P9, Jean, M26)

Altogether, given the current scenario globally social media has a key role to play. Power of social media has made it a necessity as it had a major role to play even is US presidential elections (Ferrara et al., 2020). As described by (Stephen, 2016) social media has become a necessity of life. According to our participants, social media has become a necessity, and they can barely make it through their day without social media interactions. This highlights the importance of social media in our daily life. Rosen et al., (2013) found that for many users, social media has become a necessary part of their daily routines and a primary source of communication and information. Kuss & Griffiths, (2011) explored the addictive nature of social media use and concluded that for some individuals, social networking sites have become an indispensable aspect of their daily routines and a necessary means of fulfilling their need for social connectedness. Our findings

support numerous other studies and suggest that for many, social media has indeed become a necessity in terms of communication, connection, and access to information.

"*Earlier it used to be a like once every now and then but nowadays its more of a necessity*" (P14, Naveed, M30)

#### *3.2.5.Engagement because of content*

The second theme that we generated as a result of our thematic analysis is engagement with social media because of its content. This theme has three sub-themes: user generated content, engagement because of proximity and brand generated content. This highlights the reason why social media is overflowing with skyrocketing numbers of users each passing day (Yadav et al., 2013). The majority of the participants believe that their engagement is because of content that is created by the local influencer or a random user. UGC can be a result of individual production or it can be created, modified, shared and consumed collaboratively, and "can be seen as the sum of all ways in which people make use of social media," (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61) but regardless it is because of UGC. Participants prefer to follow and engage with the content of local influencers and fellow users.

*"I feel their content is very interesting and that interest uh will lead to involvement and that involvement will lead to more engagement*" (P11, Kaneez, F34)

"*Some I follow because of proximity like Pakistani*" (P30, Yasir, M31)

In comparison to user generated content, participants believed that brand generated content is more professional and has better cinematography thus it makes it look attractive and engaging. But as discussed in the later sections, when it comes to credibility user generated content is perceived as more credible. As per our participants UGC can serve as a form of "social proof" that can enhance

the credibility of marketing messages, as consumers are more likely to trust the opinions and experiences of their peers rather than those of a brand.

"*I am big brand fan and I prefer content by brands*" (P6, Farwa, F24)

"*Brand one is more clarity in terms of cinematography in terms of in terms of the message that they want to convey in terms of the message that they want to convey*" (P12, Maira, F24)

### *3.2.6. Brand Image*

Our third theme that emerged as a result of thematic analysis is Brand Image. There are five sub-themes within this theme, UGC is credible, overbranding is negative, UGC branding is more effective, UGC is clear and UGC is consistent. Qiu et al., (2009) explored the role of user-generated content in the coverage of news events and found that UGC can be more credible, timely, and comprehensive than professional media, but its credibility is often determined by the reputation and trustworthiness of the sources. Thus, our research gives a way forward for future research in supporting UGC over brand generated content because as per our participants local influencers with credible reputation are more effective. Our findings are supported by literature (Afify et al., 2019; Ayeh et al., 2013; Herrero et al., 2015). UGC is less cluttered in comparison to the brand generated content which is also supported by Bahtar & Muda, (2016). They found that that UGC is particularly influential because it is perceived as more credible and trustworthy than traditional advertising or promotional content. In order to better understand their potential target customers marketers, need to develop more effective strategies for managing and leveraging UGC to enhance their brand image and increase sales.

**"***I always trust the content that is created and posted by these budding and young influencers because they feel credible and clearer to me in comparison to that of branded content*" (P29, Yashma, F17)

*"I feel their content is very interesting and that interest uh will lead to involvement and that involvement will lead to more engagement*" (P11, Kaneez, F34)

In another statement one of the participants highlights the key factor behind UGC being more engaging and he links it with the newness, creativity, and freshness of the UGC.

"*Do you know what keeps me so engaged and involved with Sadh Guru's content, it's the fact that so those contents are, you know, not repeated contents*" (P3, AR Gilal, M32)

One key fact here to highlight is that at times these new influencers and content generators get driven by some opportunities that brands offer them but these in long runs turns ugly for them as they overdo it. Participants categorically disliked the UGC when there is an overdose of branding in the content. This disliking is to the point that they eventually unfollow such content creators. Our proposition is also supported Kohli et al., (2015) that when brands overdo it, it eventually backfires. Kohli et al., (2015) argue that effective branding in the social media era requires a more nuanced and strategic approach, one that considers the unique characteristics of social media and the changing consumer landscape. Similarly, Lou & Yuan, (2019) pointed out the importance of the credibility in building or breaking the customer trust in any content. The findings suggest that influencers who are able to provide valuable and credible content are more likely to be effective at promoting branded content, and that disclosures regarding sponsorship are unlikely to significantly impact consumer trust.

"*I am Involved because of the content not because of the promotions it's the other way around like you know, I stop following such content with over branding*" (P24, Suhand, F18)

"*Some influencers over do the branding which just makes me unfollow these*" (P29, Yashma, F17)

#### *3.2.7.Moral and ethical considerations*

Fourth theme that we generated from our thematic analysis is moral and ethical considerations which has five sub-themes, unethical content on social media, moral intensity – proximity, ethical content, moral intensity – magnitude of consequence and moral intensity – social consensus.

Participants expressed a great deal of emotions while discussing the unethical content over the social media. Unethical content can be defined as any type of content that is harmful, abusive, discriminatory, or offensive. This can include, but is not limited to, sexual content, hate speech, racism, ethnically motivated violence, bullying, insults, and content that is unintelligent or idiotic. This definition is supported by a number of academic authors and experts in the field of ethics and online communication (Kuss & Griffiths, 2011; Rosen et al., 2013).

Social media bullying is one of the growing concerns of 21st century (Amedie, 2015; Craig et al., 2020; Xu & Liu, 2019). Zannettou et al., (2018) found that sexual, hateful, and racist content is prevalent on social media and can have a significant impact on individuals and society. Another study by (X. Wang et al., 2017) explored the impact of online bullying on adolescents and found that experiencing cyberbullying was associated with a range of negative outcomes, including lower self-esteem, increased depression, and higher levels of anxiety. These studies demonstrate the harmful effects of unethical content on social media and highlight the need for continued research and action to address these issues.

Our findings are in line with these research findings. Participants feel disgrace and eventually stop interacting and engaging over social media because of the unethical content and social media bullying.

"*Social media today is full of crap and unethical videos people are exposing their body to get the fame, there is stupid content over social media that for no reason gets all the viewership and this actually encourages people to create such content*" (P13, Marienelle, F24)

"*Like there are so many unethical and provoking videos like I have seen so much of religious hatred*" (P24, Suhand, F18)

Another interesting finding from our thematic analysis is that moral intensity varies based on the circumstances, situations and perceptions as poised by (Jones, 1991). The characteristics of the ethical issue that make an agent or a decision maker to imply ethical reasoning is referred as Moral Intensity (Jones 1991). According to (Jones) the degree of the moral imperative linked with any issue is represented by Moral Intensity. These are co-related as with the increase in the intensity, imperative or urgency of the issue there is increased motivation for an agent or actor to engage in ethical decision making. In this context our participants expressed a similar kind of response as for them they believed that with proximity, magnitude of consequences and social consensus, moral intensity increases. These three factors were proposed by McMahon & Harvey, (2006) to study the moral intensity and our findings extend this showing their implications in the digital world as well.

"*Oh, I must tell you it's always about the proximity and people just worry about morality when its close proximity*" (P1, Aaron, M24)

"*If I have two options, either to donate for Ukraine or to donate for Pakistan I would go for Pakistan, certainly it is because of my proximity with Pakistan*" (P2, Adil, M24)

"*What if someone self-harms someone loses confidence people don't even realize the magnitude of the consequences, they are simply doing it because everyone else is doing*" (P6, Farwa, F24)

"*Always, because there are going to be consequences and there is going to be people in our close proximity that might be exposed to the consequences of such immoral postings or anything*" (P13, Marienelle, F24)

"*Just because everyone is doing you know it's human psychology It's human nature, We, being a human, we do follow others we do think about social consensus*" (P11, Kaneez, F34)

"*On the contrary there are a lot of things that have now been developed as global social consensus and people say it just because of that*" (P13, Marienelle, F24)

Participants also discussed the good and ethical content that is available and been consumed over social. They believe it to be a medium that has a great potential to shape the future generation and that there is a lot of good motivational content that ranges from helping not only humans but animals in trouble. This is a medium that is spreading good content as well. Majority of the discussion around ethical content over social media is related to the healthcare and disclosure of information on social media (Chretien & Kind, 2013; Denecke et al., 2015). Our findings add a new dimension in a way that non-medical ethical content can also be a good way of creating involvement and generating engagement on a social media platform.

#### *3.2.8.Social media is controlled/uncontrolled.*

Our fifth theme is social media as controlled or uncontrolled. This theme has three sub-themes: social media is controlled; social media is propaganda and social media is free. The majority of the participants believed that social media and all such digital media are fully controlled, and they work with a certain algorithm to achieve an agenda. It is a commonly held belief that social media is controlled, with various stakeholders exerting influence over the content that is distributed and the way that it is perceived by users. However, there is no single author or group of authors that can be cited in support of this idea. Rather, it is the result of a complex interplay between technology companies, governments, advertisers, and users themselves and this is a new finding as per our thematic analysis.

"*There is control highly controlled…I was like blocked on Twitter for posting in the favor of Palestine*" (P4, Aqsa, F22)

"*There are the people who are controlling the contents*" (P3, AR Gilal, M32)

The idea that social media can be used as a tool for propaganda and manipulation of public opinion is not a new one and has been the subject of much research and analysis by various authors and organizations. For example, scholar and media critic Noam Chomsky has written about the ways in which corporate media can be used to manipulate public opinion and advance the interests of power and privilege (MacLeod & Chomsky, 2019). Other authors, such as Zuboff, (2020), have written about the ways in which digital technology and the data economy are being used to manipulate and control consumer behavior. While there is no single author or group of authors who have definitively established the role of social media in the dissemination of propaganda, the topic is an active area of inquiry and debate, and this is another interesting finding from our thematic analysis. Our participants believe social media to be the hub and central place of propaganda.

"*Social media has never been free there are controversies there are theories about this*" (P8, Hasan, F36)

"*Why are they so upset and concerned about what's happening in Ukraine and what's happening in Afghanistan?*" (P9, Jean, M26)

As proposed earlier; in order to strengthen the quality of our analysis we are opting for triangulation of methods. Lexical analysis and thematic analysis being the first and second, we will now proceed with netnography.

## 3.3. Netnography

We followed the guidelines laid down by (Kozinets, 2002, 2009), his general protocols and procedures and strictly adhered to the process. Kozinets, (2009) prescribed six overlapping steps to conduct the netnography. These six steps are:

1. Research planning (Definition of the research field)
2. Entrée (Community identification and selection)
3. Data collection
    - data directly retrieved from consumer statements and conversations as well as
    - data from the personal observation of the researcher
4. Interpretation (Data Analysis)
5. Ensuring ethical standards
6. Research representation.

Our objective is to find out the general user's perception about user generated content and how does it differ when it comes to brand generated content. UGC is considered as the most promising source to understand customer behaviors (Timoshenko & Hauser, 2019). Our objective includes finding out which type of content is considered as more credible, consistent and has more clarity thus which is more efficient. People prefer user generated content (Müller & Christandl, 2019) over brand generated content. According to the Stackla survey dan, (2017), 86% of people consider the authenticity and sincerity of content when choosing a brand and 60% of consumers base their purchasing decisions on content from friends or family. Even if there is a brand in such content, users like it more than advertising publications. Such content is emotional, lively, and understandable to the audience.

As a next step in our netnographic research we had to choose the social media platform. In order to choose the social media platform, we did our research. As per our findings, in 2022, the most popular social media platform, Facebook, had 2.93 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2022) in comparison to a 2 billion users in 2017 (Social Bakers, 2017).

Considering the massive number of people using it and looking at the gigantic growth in its number of users, Facebook is currently leading other social media platforms like Twitter or Instagram. Companies also see this as a great opportunity and that is a reason that almost 92% companies in the US are supposed to be advertising in 2022 (*U.S. Social Media Marketing Reach 2022*) which earlier stood at 72.5% (Moorman, 2016). Evidently, Facebook delivers the best ROI and this is the reason that almost every big or small business has such social media platforms in its marketing strategy (M. Martin, 2022) as it is termed as one of the most important and established channels of marketing (Marina Choi, 2011) and therefore its inevitable to ignore. As a part of our research, we decided to go for all big social media platforms that include Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter. These are the major platforms whereby users engage and communicate with each other.

We then identified the communities and groups that are the source for our netnographic data. In order to collect our data, we built our online sources, and we started to hunt for several communities and pages that were exclusively talking about user generated content, user reviews, brand generated content, product reviews, customer reviews, local influencers, budding influencers, social media engagement, and celebrity followership. We also started to join local communities and pages mostly French and Pakistani with few American and British origin as well.

### 3.3.1. Netnography data collection, analysis and representation

Once we had established our source for data collection, we then had to decide about the instrument. As per Kozinets, (2002, 2009) netnographic data has three types. The first type of netnographic data is Archival data. This type of data is something that is already available and that can be readily collected from pre-existing online sources. The second type of netnographic data is elicited data. This is the data that is a result of co-creation. A co-creation between researchers and the community personnel whereby they have a discussion, and interesting findings emerge. The third type of netnographic data is called field note data which is also known as lurker. In this data the researcher is just a silent observer and observes discussions taking place (Kozinets, 2002). Researchers then download and analyze these conversations to generate meaningful insights.

While doing our research we have decided to collect data by observational method on Facebook, Instagram, and twitter meanwhile for the WhatsApp we will go with elicited data. Our aim is to minimize research bias and observational netnography means to unobtrusively observe the discussions of the members as a non-participant observer or a lurker. This is most preferred way to reduce the researcher bias because a lurker tries his best to observe a discussion in its most natural and authentic form and has this data has minimum or no fabrication (Kozinets, 2002).

### 3.3.2. Data collection process

We obtained our information from 26 groups/communities in total from different social media platforms that include 19 Facebook groups/communities, 21 Instagram pages, 3 twitter accounts, and 5 WhatsApp groups. The admins of these groups were informed, and due permissions were taken before collecting the data. In order to maintain the secrecy, the real names are not used to show the research findings. We included WhatsApp for our netnography as there have been several studies that have included it as a social media platform (Dahdal, 2020; Kamel Boulos et al., 2016).

We started collecting data in the beginning of February 2023 and finished collecting data by mid-March 2023, approximately 45 days of continuous observation. We also took some professional help for this and three fellow researchers who are also working on netnography helped us gather the data. Al-together we observed 12,890 posts in several groups/communities on Facebook, Instagram. Apart from this we also had initiated social media and user generated content related discussions in several WhatsApp communities/groups that were from both from France and Pakistan. We analyzed 5900 such messages from these WhatsApp communities.

The data collected was then organized, labeled, and analyzed using NVIVO 20 plus software. Which is the most suitable and powerful software with the latest features and add-ons. One such feature is N-Capture. We captured the majority of posts with the help of NVIVO N-Capture. We modified the process of data analysis to include coding, taking notes (memo), abstracting & comparing (organizing identified sequences, similarity, relationship), verifying & refinement, generalizing and theorizing. Since this study dealt with personal opinions and point of views which are delicate matters at times, all comments cited or quoted in results were given pseudonyms.

Table 16 below summarizes the details of these communities.

*Table 16 - Details of the Communities for Netnographic data collection*

| Name | Type Community / Page | Country of Origin | Number of Members | Platform | Purpose of Community |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Free Items on the Côte d'Azur** | **Community** | **France** | **10900** | **Facebook/Instagram** | This group is for FREE items only; for all those things you can't sell or are fed up with them hanging around your home Welcome everyone to Free on the Cote d'Azur! |
| **User Generated Content Creation 2023** | **Community** | **America** | **6200** | **Facebook/Instagram** | This group is for user generated content (UGC) creators all around the world to network & connect with brand owners |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | and agency owners. This is the largest UGC group on Facebook! |
| **UGC- User Generated Content - Find brands + Creators** | **Community** | **America** | **2500** | **Facebook/Instagram** | Welcome to all brands and users. We want to create opportunities for brands to show off their products, and we want to create more work opportunities for those looking for side hustle! This group will feature brands looking for users to test or make ads for their products. |
| **Voice of Customer** | **Community** | **Pakistan** | **492,000** | **Facebook/Instagram/twitter** | Helping customers voice their experiences, expectations, preferences, and feedback. |
| **Seeker** | **Community** | **Pakistan** | **34000** | **Facebook/Instagram** | Seekers group is meant for only & only guidelines and information for higher education (MS/PHD and beyond). |
| **ChatGPT** | **Community** | **Serbia** | **190,000** | **Facebook/Instagram** | Welcome to the ChatGPT community! This group is for individuals interested in utilizing, understanding, and discussing the ChatGPT model developed by Open AI. We encourage members to share advice, ask questions, and share their ChatGPT experiences. |
| **Wharachi - Loving Karachi** | **Community** | **Pakistan** | **47100** | **Facebook/Instagram** | Wharachi has grown into an aspiring community where members feel safe to share their creativity, talent and opinions. We promote the positives of Karachi, its citizens and encourage our members to respect each other's opinions. |
| **Expats Living in France** | **Community** | **France** | **37800** | **Facebook/Instagram** | This group is for all English-speaking Expats! If you are currently living in France or intend to move to France, here is a place to meet up and make new friends and offer/give advice or just have a laugh!! This Group has been created for the sole idea of creating an English-speaking support network in France. No strings attached!! |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sindh Vision** | **Community** | **Pakistan** | **220,000** | **Facebook/Instagram** | SINDH VISION social media group is launched to strive for our common causes covering Sindh, Sindhis, Sindhi and Sindhyat. Let us Network Sindhis globally and pool our talents for a better future of our nation |
| **The Travel Diary** | **Community** | **UAE** | **143,000** | **Facebook/Instagram** | This is a fun, interactive community for travelers!! With this group I aim to provide a platform were travelling to a group anything related to it is the only objective. One place that can help solve all your travel problems and answer your travel related questions |
| **Foodies of the World** | **Community** | **England** | **189,000** | **Facebook/Instagram** | It's a light family group based on food and food for the soul. The main purpose of the group is to connect the world under one forum for the love of food and family. |
| **Moving to Aix-en-Provence** | **Community** | **France** | **5500** | **Facebook/Instagram** | We support each other with questions about life in the AIX AREA - recommendations on best areas to live in, housing, int'l and public schools, doctors, tradesmen, shops, events, things for kids, markets, workshops. Also, to tell others about new businesses and restaurants or to promote your own activities or businesses |
| **PhD Support Group** | **Community** | **England** | **58000** | **Facebook/Instagram** | 1. To provide a friendly environment to all research students for sharing the knowledge<br>2. To share the essential information of academic events (e.g., conferences, seminars, workshops and etc.) |
| **PETA** | **Community** | **USA** | **6 million** | **Facebook/Instagram/twitter** | PETA is the largest animal rights organization in the world, and PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters globally |
| **Baich Dey! - (The Selling Spree)** | **Community** | **Pakistan** | **15000** | **Facebook/Instagram** | Instantly buy, sell, and swap products! P.s.: We have no affiliation with OLX. This is a private group consisting of |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | members who are friends of friends and known |
| **Pakistan Startup** | **Community** | **Pakistan** | **125,000** | **Facebook/Instagram** | The Pakistan Startups group is a place for people involved in, or interested in, tech startups in Pakistan. |
| **AIXCHANGE** | **Community** | **France** | **2500** | **Facebook/Instagram** | AIXCHANGE is an open group for people living in and around Aix-en-Provence. Members are welcome to offer and ask for the exchange of goods (either for money or for free), but no COMMERCIAL/business listings please |
| **English Speakers in Aix en Provence** | **Community** | **France** | **3800** | **Facebook/Instagram** | I have started this group for English speakers in or around Aix en Provence who want to meet up, ask for advice and/ or share information, especially those who have just arrived and are feeling a little home sick and need a bit of reassurance that they have done the right thing |
| **Living in France** | **Community** | **France** | **25000** | **Facebook/Instagram** | A group for English-speaking people living in France or planning to move to France. A place to ask questions, share advice and chat to fellow expats. |
| **atfrenchies** | **Page** | **France** | **670,000** | **Instagram** | two French guys lost in US - Learn French with us |
| **Nike** | **Brand Page** | **Nike Headquarters** | **266 million** | **Instagram/twitter** | Official Brand Page of Nike |
| **International Marketing** | **Students Group** | **France** | **68** | **WhatsApp** | Group of L3 Students - International Marketing Discussing about social media and User Generated Content |
| **Corporate Strategy** | **Students Group** | **Pakistan** | **45** | **WhatsApp** | Group of Final Year master's Students - Discussed why they use social media and how does it affect their purchase decision making |
| **Research Methods** | **Students Group** | **France** | **39** | **WhatsApp** | Group of Master 1 Students - discussed about different aspects of social media engagement and Influencers |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **SIBAU Employees** | **Faculty Members** | **Pakistan** | **87** | **WhatsApp** | Seniors Faculty members and researchers point out why they use social media groups and Communities |
| **HEC Scholars in France** | **Fellow PhD aspirants** | **Pakistan** | **84** | **WhatsApp** | Fellow PhD students discuss the importance of social media in their journey and how it helps them learn new things and meet new people here in France |

### 3.3.3. Netnography results and discussions

Based on the observation of multiple discussions on several Facebook communities and pages, twitter hashtags, Instagram posts and celebrity pages, as mentioned in table 16, we have been able to categorize our netnographic findings in four major themes that we will further shed light on. We will discuss the basic motivations behind the involvement and engagement with social media itself. What makes these social media platforms such an attraction. Afterwards, we will delve into the features that make it more involving and the type of content that usually keeps people so hooked. We will then highlight some of the key moral and ethical implications of using these social media platforms, focusing on the role of moral intensity and unethical aspects highlighted by the people. In the end we will draw a comparative between UGC and brand generated content and discuss how people perceive UGC to be more credible, consistent, and clear. We will conclude by examining the type of content that is preferred by both users and brands.

#### *3.3.4.Motivations for social media engagement:*

The first theme that emerged after an in-depth analysis of netnographic verbatims is motivations for social media engagement. This theme comprises of five sub-themes: self-representation, source of Income, share reviews, proximity socialization and community building. We refer to the individuals who posted these comments on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp as

"netizens". These also include admin or moderators who started the discussion on the online social media platform. Some of the sub-themes that emerged from our netnographic analysis are not mutually exclusive, for instance people who engage on social media platform to represent themselves may also be thinking of earning from this self-representation as discussed in (van Dijck, 2013). In this article, Jose van Dijck examines the ways in which individuals perform self-sufficient on social media platforms like Facebook and LinkedIn. She argues that while these platforms encourage individuals to present a coherent and consistent identity to their followers, they also allow for strategic self-presentation as a means of generating income and building a personal brand. Van Dijck suggests that this has implications for the way we think about identity and self-representation in the digital age.

Netizens expressed self-representation as the most important motivation to engage on social media. Our findings validates the previous findings (Joinson, 2008; Q. Wang et al., 2011). In order to represent themselves netizens discuss their expertise, passions, hobbies and even post visual content such as pictures, video clips and montages. The importance of self-expression was highlighted by Utz, (2015). He explores the function of self-disclosure on social media platforms and investigates how different types of self-disclosure affect the feeling of connection among users. The author argues that self-disclosure is a key element in building and maintaining social relationships, and social media platforms provide new opportunities for individuals to disclose information about themselves in various ways. According to Utz, (2015), social media platforms offer individuals new opportunities to disclose information about themselves, and that positive and entertaining self-disclosures can also have a significant impact on the feeling of connection among users. They express their ideas, and show off their personalities, which our findings validate for instance:

*I just wanted to introduce myself and share a photo I took (Kathryn) (Facebook Community)*

The respondent (Kathryn) is hereby trying to show herself as a new person in the community and engage with other fellow community members around in close proximity. The motive is to represent a good and positive self and express one's emotions and feelings. Likewise, another netizen posted:

*Hi, I just arrived in Aix, I felt like introducing myself. I would really like to have a gathering around yoga this weekend, DM for details. (Alex) (Facebook Community)*

The netizen here expresses his interests and shows a willingness to hang out and offers a healthy hangout option suggesting that he prefers a healthy lifestyle and thus offering the gather around the same.

The second sub-theme that emerged is the source of income. Although this has been discussed by many on the academic literature (Hajli, 2014; Jin & Phua, 2014) but still there is a dearth of literature on this aspect. Our findings pave the way for researchers to further explore this area. According to our analysis the majority of netizens these days are looking to earn extra money with the power of social media while just representing themselves. Social media has given an opportunity with ease. People are creating content around small hobbies and making it a source of income.

*We are the first and only digitally women led Honey brand in Pakistan (Nausheen) (Facebook & Instagram Community)*

*If you are a brand, online shop or a service provider and you want to promote your product on Meta and/or TikTok, you need content you get an ad creative for little money I am your best choice (Mary) (Facebook Community)*

Our findings are supported with these verbatims whereby netizens show off their talents and offer such content creation to different brands to cash on their engagements and make it a source of their income. Social media has become one of the professional platforms to earn money.

The third sub-theme that emerged is share reviews. Sharing reviews is an old term and has been discussed long before social media. Customers' reviews are considered to be more credible and authentic. Reviews are been termed as one of the major type of content that is created over social media (Baek et al., 2010; Hajli, 2014; Kawaf & Istanbulluoglu, 2019). Our findings validate the previous findings and extends that one of the major motivations of engagement over social media is to share and post reviews. This is also a way of expression, an expression of anger, frustration or pleasure. There have been several studies that discuss the role of emotions for instance (C. M. K. Cheung et al., 2008; Jin & Phua, 2014; Timoshenko & Hauser, 2019). Netizens express their feelings as reviews for instance:

*Pathetic, Pathetic service from Jazz Cash - I am trying to send money home and it is not working (Sajjad) (Facebook Community)*

*It's been two months since I got my refund. It is pathetic application do not use it Jazz Cash because they literally are pathetic (Babar) (Facebook Community)*

*I paid extra for a window seat and there is a no window I am totally devasted (Anirudh) (Twitter Page)*

These findings pave the way for managers to focus on such social media platforms to better understand their customers and come up with better products or services that meet the need of their potential customers. The fourth theme that we generated is proximity socialization. This validates previous findings (Donelan, 2016; Kuss & Griffiths, 2011; X. Wang et al., 2012). Socialization

was the core purpose of social media platforms. Although it has been revolutionized but still, core functionality remains the same. The motive behind all the engagement is to socialize with people around. Netizens showed interest in joining a number of local communities to get to know people and socialize with the people in close proximity. Our findings add a new perspective and that is the perspective of proximity, its role, and its importance as a motivation for social media engagement. Netizens expressed their motivation for instance:

*I would really like to hang out and have a glass of vine I am new in aix (Stuart) (Facebook community)*

*I want to practice my French in return I can help with English (Ravi) (Facebook Community)*

The fifth sub-theme generated under the theme motivations for social media engagement is community building. This has always been a human need to be a part of local communities, build communities of people with similar views and interests and this is further validated by our findings. Our findings extend previous findings and suggest that communities are a stronghold whereby people engage and share their feelings, emotions, reviews, and views. These communities are termed as "networked publics" (Bazarova & Choi, 2014; Choi & Shin, 2017). Netizens spend a great deal of time around these communities to socialize and create a sense of belongingness and empowerment for instance:

*What kind of camera would you suggest recording high quality fitness videos indoor (Monica) (Facebook Community)*

*I am posting my first ever vlog that will help you know all things about to board a flight for France (Asif) (Facebook Community and Instagram Page)*

### 3.3.5. Engagement and leisure

The second theme that emerged from our netnographic analysis is entertainment and leisure. We are going to discuss the importance of funny and humorous content, and we also delve into the important features of social media platforms that include virtual events and live streaming. These features make it more attractive, appealing, and engaging. Netizens discussed their preferred type of social media content. The importance of using funny content and memes has also been highlighted by other researchers. Yang, (2022) explores the use of humorous memes in social media marketing and the moderating role of bandwagon cues. The author conducted an experimental study involving 259 participants who were shown different types of memes in a Facebook ad for a fictional brand of energy drinks. Yang, (2022) concludes that humorous memes can be an effective tool for social media marketing. Thus, our findings validate these findings and highlights the importance of funny content, for instance:

*Your wit is the only reason I follow you and your humor makes me forget the frustrations of real life (Shruti) (Facebook page)*

*Damn, whenever I am sad, I watch your videos online, although I waste a lot of time, but it relaxes me (Dheeraj) (Facebook)*

Similarly, the newly added features and functionalities also make social media an attraction for both personal and professional use. For instance, the capability of hosting live events provides a great opportunity for many young artists to showcase their talent. As discussed above that these are overlapping themes because these live streaming events and virtual events also become a source of income for many, for instance:

*I follow Black Gold on Facebook; he goes live every year on Facebook and hosts a gaming competition and all the money that he generates he gives away to a cause (Julian) (Facebook Community)*

*During covid I hosted three virtual events, one of them was a music festival and it was very successful and since then there has been no looking back (Hasan)*

Our study validates the findings by Chung et al., (2010). In this study, the authors explore the factors that influence non-users' perceptions of online community participation, including social media. They find that one of the cool features of social media that appeals to younger people is live streaming, which allows them to share their experiences in real time and interact with others in a more immediate and spontaneous way. The authors suggest that the perceived coolness of social media features can be an important factor in motivating people to adopt and use these technologies.

### *3.3.6.Moral and Ethical Implications*

This theme has six sub-themes that we are going to discuss. These five sub-themes include: Moral Intensity – Proximity, Moral Intensity – Magnitude of Consequences, Moral Intensity – Global Social Consensus, fake news, and bullying and harassment. We will discuss how moral intensity varies according to the netizens under certain circumstances.

As per our findings, individuals react with more intensity when they see that the effected person is in some kind of proximity. As per our analysis, we found that proximity could be of various types that include geographical, temporal, social, professional, and religious proximity. Our research analysis validates previous findings and extends their implications in the modern-day social media context that has not been discussed much about. In a study Frey, (2000), found that

managers were more likely to make ethical decisions when the moral issue involved a personal harm. The study examined responses from 150 German managers in various industries. The results indicate that moral intensity has a significant impact on decision-making in a business context. In the context of proximity netizens reacted to the recent havoc and destruction caused by the earthquake in Turkey differently based on the proximity, for instance:

*Pakistan stands firm in this hour of need with its brothers from Turkey, we will not rest until unless everybody is rehabilitated (Shahbaz Sharif)*

In his tweet, premier of Pakistan expressed greater concerns and expressed how devastated he is. He further expressed his rock-solid intention about helping their brothers both in faith and hard times for a complete and quick restoration. This shows that the moral intensity is further intensified when its proximity. In another study Barnett & Valentine, (2004), found that personal involvement of an ethical issue, has a significant impact on the recognition of ethical issues, ethical judgments, and behavioral intentions of marketers

Similarly, the second sub-theme is how magnitude of consequences affect the level of moral intensity. As per our netnographic analysis, whenever netizens thought that the repercussions are going to be cumulative, and stakes are high they reacted in a more intense way in comparison so the other scenario, for instance:

*Children in Somalia are dying from hunger, donate now to save lives, we can't give up on Somalia (Charles) (Facebook Community and Instagram Page)*

*All gods' animals are precious, including fish, Christians should leave them off their plate for #lent & Beyond (Peta) (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)*

Individuals react when they fear the magnitude of consequences, and this validates the previous findings by (Barnett & Valentine, 2004; Jones, 1991; Singhapakdi et al., 1996). Our study adds on to this by highlighting the fact the effect has been further intensified with the advent of social media and people have started to fight for human rights everywhere and it is becoming a global voice. This phenomenon of global citizen and global good, advocates and validates our third sub-theme that says moral intensity increases if the issue is of global consensus. For instance:

*looking at the draughts in African countries we all must stand against wastage of water everywhere - water wasted anywhere is water wasted everywhere (Ngubo) (Facebook Community)*

*Human rights are universal and non-negotiable. We must stand together and demand justice for all, regardless of race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. Let's create a world where everyone is free to live with dignity and respect. #HumanRightsForAll #GlobalConsensus (Julian) (Facebook Community)*

In another series of event world witnessed how everyone around the globe reacted to recent murder of Iranian women by the Iranian moral police and how that ignited a global moment. Our findings validate the findings by Tufekci, (2014). In their study, authors examine the role of social media in facilitating collective action and participation in political protests, using the case of the 2011 Egyptian revolution and the protests in Tahrir Square. The authors argue that social media played a critical role in facilitating the organization and mobilization of participants in the protests, by providing a platform for communication, coordination, and dissemination of information. They highlight the ways in which social media helped to overcome the barriers of censorship, surveillance, and fear that had previously limited political expression and activism in Egypt.

While discussing the power of social media, there are costs associated with this power. Along with the increase in global social consensus for globally acknowledged goods, there has been a rise in the unethical content over social media that ranges from, fake news to bullying and harassment. No limited to this, social media itself has turned into an addiction that is proving to be quite dangerous. We begin with the fake news and its impact. Our findings validate the fact social media is full of fake news and that people at times are scammed or face a series of losses based on their action on this fake news.

*The number of casualties is more than just 2, A woman and a kid also dies in the recent bombing by Israel - Shame of social media for spreading wrong and fake information (Eisa) (Twitter)*

*Do not follow the news on fan pages its 90% of the times fake same happened with me when they posted Abida Parveen is no more (Shahida) (Facebook community)*

It has been witnessed that these sorts of fake news are not limiting to causing harm to individuals only. Their impact has been seen by many brands, as found in a study by (Di Domenico et al., 2021) that the spread of fake news has significant implications for marketers, as it can lead to negative brand perceptions and damage trust in the marketplace.

The fifth sub-theme that we generated, bullying and harassment. Bullying and harassment is not a new concept, and the world has witnessed how it has been involved in ruining individuals, their state of mind, both physically and psychologically. The effect has been carried on over social media.

*I remember that the kid who lived next to our place committed suicide just because he was bullied for one of his pictures that he uploaded on Facebook #spreadcare #stopbullying (Derek)(twitter)*

*"I was bullied in my high school, and I understand the pain because I am still suffering it even though I'm an adult, I still cannot go to the parties and try new things I fear going to new places meeting new people #NoMoreBullying #YouAreNotAlone" (Andrew)(Twitter)*

Our findings partially validate the previous research findings that social media has a significant amount of bullying and harassment incidents. In a study (Al-Rahmi et al., 2018) authors note that cyberbullying is a significant problem, particularly among young people, and can have serious consequences for both victims and perpetrators. But the new findings that we have uncovered is the fact that nowadays people are reporting these sorts of bullying and harassment cases thus there has been a significant decrease. Netizens came open about their past experiences and expressed their feelings and have showed willingness to stand against this heinous act. Previously research has explored the reasons why such behaviors were not reported for instance (Fitzgerald et al., 1995) explore why many women do not report incidents of sexual harassment in the workplace, even when they believe that they have been victimized. The authors argue that this failure to report can be attributed to a range of factors, including fear of retaliation, concerns about not being believed, and a lack of confidence in the ability of the legal system to provide a fair and just outcome. This phenomenon has been changed with the social media as we have seen people coming up publicly and sharing their experiences about bullying and harassment just like the #metoo trend on twitter that shocked and changed the workplace environment in totality.

Alaggia & Wang, (2020), examine the phenomenon of individuals disclosing their experiences of sexual abuse and assault through social media, particularly in the wake of the #MeToo movement. Through a review of existing literature, the authors explore the reasons why individuals may choose to disclose their experiences through social media, the potential benefits, and drawbacks of doing so, and the implications of these disclosures for survivors, practitioners, and

policymakers. The authors highlight the potential benefits of social media disclosures, including increased awareness of the pervasiveness of sexual violence, the creation of supportive networks and communities, and the potential for survivors to take control of their narratives. However, they also caution that social media disclosures may have negative consequences, including re-traumatization, victim-blaming and shaming, and the potential for legal and ethical complications. The authors conclude by discussing the importance of providing survivors with a range of options for disclosure and support, and the need for more research to better understand the implications of social media disclosures for survivors and their communities.

#### *3.3.7. User versus brand generated content:*

The fourth and final theme that emerged from our netnographic analysis is most important and critical to our area of research. In this theme, we discuss how netizens differentiate between UGC and brand generated content. Netizens also emphasize which type of content is more credible, consistent, and clearer. We generated 4 sub-themes; UGC is credible, UGC is consistent, UGC is clearer, and brands even prefer UGC.

Our research results show that netizens prefer UGC over brand generated. They believe that UGC is more credible since it comes from people who either are not paid by the brands or that these content creators have higher stakes. Netizens consider UGC to me mor authentic and credible. This validates previous research findings by (Bahtar & Muda, 2016). As per Bahtar and Muda, (2016) they identified three main factors that influence the impact of UGC on product reviews and online purchasing behavior: the characteristics of the UGC, the characteristics of the consumers, and the characteristics of the products. The characteristics of the UGC include the credibility and informativeness of the content, as well as the sentiment expressed in the content. The authors argue that UGC that is more credible and informative, and expresses a positive sentiment towards the

product, is more likely to influence consumers' purchasing decisions. Netizens expressed their confidence in UGC for instance:

*UGC gives a realistic perspective about life, it is not all fantasy like brands, have a red bull and start flying even in funny way (Ghafoor) (WhatsApp)*

*UGC is created by the people who are trusted by the society (Saman) (WhatsApp)*

A study by (Christodoulides et al., 2011) also found that UGC has become a powerful tool in shaping brand identity, as it provides a direct and authentic expression of the voice of the consumer. Consumers are more likely to trust and be influenced by UGC than traditional marketing messages, as it is perceived as more genuine and unbiased. According to our analysis UGC has become an essential component of brand identity and smart marketers need to embrace it as a valuable source of insights and a tool for building trust with consumers. They suggest that businesses should invest in tools and processes to manage UGC effectively and use it to inform their marketing strategies.

The second sub-theme that emerged discusses the consistency of the content found over social media. As per netizens UGC is comparatively more consistent in comparison to brand generated content or brand generated commercials but netizens found brand generated content to be equally consistent. As per our analysis UGC is more niche and focused and this is where the preferences switch back to UGC For instance:

*Brands and UGC both are consistent for me, but I would vote for UGC because it is too focused (Saima) (WhatsApp)*

*One of the reasons I follow the local influencers in terms of make-up tutorial is the fact that she is consistently using products of a brand that is affordable and she is consistent about affordability (Mubeena)(WhatsApp)*

These are new findings as per our literature review as brands are considered to be more consistent and focused since they have bigger teams and bigger budgets. According to our analysis netizens believe UGC has taken over brand generated content in terms of consistency. This proves to be a useful insight for the marketers to take a dive deep and understand where they lack consistency. According to netizens brand generated content lacks local touch thus is not consistent across global border, similar idea was put forth by Bengtsson, (2016). In their study they found that global brands often face challenges in maintaining consistency in their brand image and meaning across different countries, they are able to overcome these challenges by adapting to local cultural norms and values while still maintaining their core brand identity.

The authors suggest that global brands can maintain consistency and meaning across national boundaries by adopting a "Glocal" approach, which involves adapting to local contexts while still maintaining a consistent brand identity. They also suggest that global brands can benefit from engaging in co-creation with local stakeholders, such as local content creators, consumers, and employees, to help ensure that their brand meanings are aligned with local cultural norms and values.

The third sub-theme that emerged revolves around the clarity of the content. At times the clarity of the brand is lost in the message for instance:

*Brands target masses and they have to have everything, UGC or local influencer is for local like Zong's advertisement of local content featuring Sukkur that has clarity (Adnan) (WhatsApp)*

*I cannot find the clarity in big celebrities' advertisements where they are running through trains and flying jets rather, I can follow a local kid who is doing real life tricks with his skateboard (Sameer) (WhatsApp)*

As can be accumulated from the netizens response that brands miss out on the local touch thus at times loses clarity because of the differences in the cultures and sub-cultures and they categorically need to connect with local partners and co-create as found by (Bengtsson, 2016).

The fourth and final sub-theme that emerged is rather a reality in today's world. We are seeing that brands have realized the fact the UGC is more effective and efficient. Instead of investing higher number of budgets with content that lacks credibility consistency and clarity brands have now switched to UGC that can be witnessed, for instance:

*We're looking for active gym-goers who might be interested in being a face for an Aussie supplement brand (Martin)*
*looking for UGC creators to shoot high quality content for pain products - Patches, massagers, compression sleeves, etc. (Brandon)*

It is visible from Martins' or Brandon's post that brands too are looking for UGC realizing the fact it is more efficient and effect. In a study (Timoshenko & Hauser, 2019) found that the topics and concepts discussed in UGC are often different from those identified through traditional market research methods. They also find that the needs and preferences identified through UGC are often more specific and nuanced than those identified through traditional methods. There is a dearth of literature on this area, and we believe that our study paves a way forward for the marketers to delve into the UGC and work with "Glocal" approach in order to achieve efficiency and effectiveness.

### 3.3.8. Netnography analysis conclusion

This study extends previous findings on the efficiency of UGC in influencing the levels of customer involvement and brand engagement (Dessart et al., 2015; Verhoef et al., 2010, 2017). It extends the findings that social media and its virtual communities effect our decision making at large as these communities are effective tool (Dessart et al., 2015; J. Park et al., 2021). This study validates the previous findings by (Erdem et al., 2006, 2008; Erdem & Swait, 1998a) that brands work as a quality signal. This study offers a new perspective by adding one of the most discussed phenomena these days and that is UGC. Our findings validate that UGC works as a quality signal thus increasing the trust of consumers. This study extends previous findings and supports that moral intensity affects our decision making (Frey, 2000; Jones, 1991), our study adds more value to it by adapting it in a modern day social media perspective. Our study highlights the importance of UGC, and how its credibility, consistency, and clarity affects customers involvement and engagement with a brand as validated by (Baek et al., 2010). The observation on UGC and discourse on social media are expected to provide valuable contribution on the development of a better understanding about the role of credibility, consistency, and clarity in UGC and its effects on customers involvement and brand engagement literature, primarily to give better understanding the effect of UGC, its credibility consistency and clarity, customer's involvement, and brand engagement.

This study also provides perspective that has not been discussed extravagantly and rather there is a dearth of literature on the role of Moral intensity when it comes to UGC being credible and consistent. Although, in a study by (Bazarova & Choi, 2014), the authors found that individuals' moral concerns and perceived social norms play a significant role in their decisions to disclose personal information on social media platforms. While this study does not directly address the credibility and consistency of UGC, it highlights the importance of moral considerations in social

media behavior. This suggests that exploring the role of moral intensity in UGC credibility and consistency is a promising avenue for future research.

### 3.3.9. Results Summary of Netnographic Study

*Table 17 - Results Summary of Netnographic Study*

| Theme | Sub-theme | Verbatims, Pseudonym | Community/Group, SM Portal |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Motivation for Social Media Engagement** | **Self-representation** | *I just wanted to introduce myself and share a photo I took (Kathryn)* | Expats living in France - Facebook |
| | | *I believe I am best at Karaoke nights - I play guitar as well, I hope you will like my video (James)* | Moving to aix - Facebook |
| | | *Hi, I just arrived in Aix, I felt like introducing myself. I would really like to have a gathering around yoga this weekend, DM for details (Alex)* | Moving to aix - Facebook |
| | **Source of Income** | *Once we manage to earn our followers' trust, they will be more willing to reward us (Papadouri)* | Social Media Expert - Facebook |
| | | *I'm subletting a room from March to June in a large house (Marjo)* | Colocation in Aix - Facebook |
| | | *I paid extra for a window seat and there is a no window I am totally devasted (Anirudh)* | British Airways Official Handle - Twitter |
| | **Share reviews** | *Pathetic, Pathetic service from Jazz Cash - I am trying to send money home and it is not working (Sajjad)* | Voice of Customer - Facebook |
| | | *I don't remember what century my broadband service provider lives. Internet is so slow never ever go for storm fiber (Saqib)* | Wharachi - Loving Karachi - Facebook |
| | **Proximity Socialization** | *I would really like to hang out and have a glass of vine I am new in aix (Stuart)* | Expats in Aix - Facebook |
| | | *if anyone wants to live in Islamabad for a day for his official purpose, he can stay with me without any charge (Ahtisham)* | Seekers - Facebook |
| | | *What kind of camera would you suggest recording high quality fitness videos indoor (Monica)* | Content creator Community - Facebook |
| | | *I am posting my first ever vlog that will help you know all things about to board a flight for France (Asif)* | Travel Diary - Instagram |
| | | *You can have a creative funny UGC which will probably work well - and a boring brand generated content - probably not working well (Mary)* | User Generated Content Creation 2023 - Facebook |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Entertainment & Leisure** | **Funny Content** | *Hi @imsrk I have seen your movie 5 times, it has earned 70 billion at least give me 10 million it is nothing to you* | Twitter - SRK |
| | | *Dear math I am unable to find your X please move on (Frank)* | life is wholesome - Instagram |
| | | *Your wit is the only reason I follow you and your humor makes me forget the frustrations of real life (Shruti)* | Kapil Sharma - Facebook |
| | | *Damn, whenever I am sad, I watch your videos online, although I waste a lot of time, but it relaxes me (Dheeraj)* | Comedy Nights - Instagram |
| | **Virtual events** | *Virtual is the new reality - Join me on my live cast where I will unveil my latest app (Junaid)* | Junaid Khan - Instagram |
| | | *I see you and I still cannot believe you are not real all those parties and every event you host how can that not be real I am a big fan of yours I wish you were in real (Taraba)* | Lil Miquela - Instagram |
| | **live streaming** | *Live streaming is my new gig - I am going live soon with my cover album original one (Xavier)* | Music for Soul - Facebook |
| | | *Thanks to live streaming my friends made me see the whole concert as if a was there (Shalim)* | Soul Brothers - Facebook |
| | | *I am live streaming my journey from Calais to Geert it is going to be an adventure (Wavell)* | Living in France - Facebook |
| **Moral & Ethical Implications** | **Moral Intensity - Proximity** | *Pakistan stands firm in this hour of need with its brothers from Turkey, we will not rest until unless everybody is rehabilitated (Shahbaz Sharif)* | PM Pakistan - Twitter |
| | | *I am outraged at the new dam built of the river Indus; we will start the protest river Indus is like mother to us (Amin)* | River Indus Forum - Facebook |
| | | *Children in Somalia are dying from hunger, donate now to save lives, we can't give up on Somalia (Charles)* | World Food Programme |
| | | *All gods' animals are precious, including fish Christians should leave them off their plate for #lent & beyond* | Peta official - Instagram |
| | | *there should be a legal complaint against the fake news on social media. I just read Kayne west and Kim are back together (Amber)* | Kim Kardashian unofficial - Instagram |
| | | *Do not follow the news on fan pages its 90% of the times fake same happened with me when they posted Abida Parveen is no more (Shahida)* | Abida Parveen Lovers - Facebook |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Bullying & harassment** | *I remember that the kid who lived next to our place committed suicide just because he was bullied for one of his pictures that he uploaded on Facebook #spreadcare #stopbullying (Derek)* | Bullying Awareness - Facebook |
| | | *There is no place for acid attacks in India anymore - we will stand with all the victims #staystronstaytogether (Shruti)* | Acid Attack Victims - Instagram |
| **User Generated Content / Brand Generated Content** | **UGC is Credible** | *We consider UGC to be authentic and realistic (Yusuf)* | WhatsApp Group Conversation - Mediated by Researcher |
| | | *UGC is created by the people who are trusted by the society (Saman)* | |
| | **UGC is Consistent** | *I prefer to follow the advice of youtuber when it comes to buying any tech gadget because of the fact that he is consistent, he talks about the resale, repair and reach (Ahmed)* | |
| | | *Brands and UGC both are consistent for me, but I would vote for UGC because it is too focused (Saima)* | |
| | **UGC is Clear** | *Influencers have a clarity in terms of the target audience their budget and their problems that is why people follow them (Zahoor)* | |
| | | *Brands target masses and they have to have everything, UGC or local influencer is for local like Zong's advertisement of local content featuring Sukkur that has clarity (Adnan)* | |
| | | *Required a person who will create a video for my products (Graeme)* | Fiver Guru - Facebook |
| | | *we are looking for a team of content creators to create content for our new product (Amina)* | Brands and Content Creators - Facebook [13] |

## 3.4. Qualitative research analyses chapter summary

This chapter beings with a detailed discussion around several qualitative research methods. These research methods are then compared and based on the relevance three primary methods are finalized to conduct an extensive qualitative study: Lexical Analysis, Thematic Analysis, and Netnography. Lexical Analysis, rooted in linguistics and information technology, provided a rapid and efficient way to process large text corpora (Krippendorff, 2018). By generating a lexicon of words and applying filters, we identified key terms and their context, bridging

[13] A detailed version of the table is given the appendix 2.

quantitative and qualitative research (Silverman, 2020). This method was instrumental in pinpointing language patterns, measuring sentiment, and comparing different texts, providing insights that would be challenging to obtain manually (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

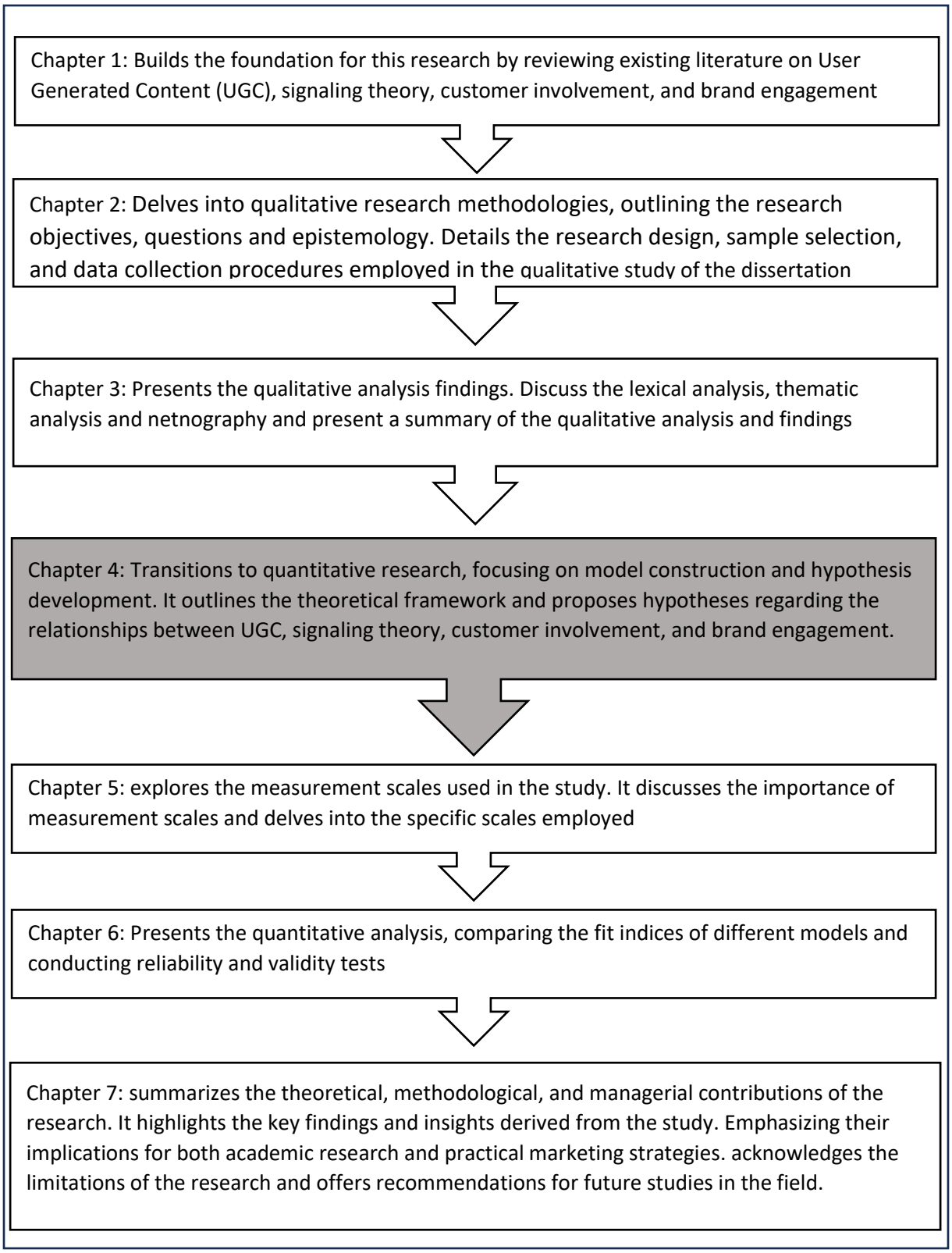
Thematic Analysis was employed to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following a rigorous six-phase process—data familiarization, systematic coding, theme generation, theme development and review, theme refinement, and report writing—we systematically explored the data to uncover key concepts and relationships (Clarke & Braun, 2014). This method allowed us to deeply understand participant experiences and uncover new ideas, ensuring thorough data analysis (Nowell et al., 2017).

Netnography, a digital adaptation of ethnography, involved studying online communities and cultures (Kozinets, 2015). By observing naturally occurring communications in online environments, we gained authentic insights into community interactions (Costello, McDermott & Wallace, 2017). This method was advantageous due to its unobtrusiveness and ability to gather voluntary information from participants, covering a broader participant range compared to traditional ethnography (Kozinets, 2010).

To achieve the research objective of delving into the everyday attitudes, feelings, and actions of social media users, we conducted 30 semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2016). These interviews, lasting between 45 to 90 minutes each, provided rich qualitative data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The participants, averaging 32 years old and hailing from diverse backgrounds, offered varied perspectives on social media engagement. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using NVivo 20 Plus software, which facilitated both Lexical and Thematic Analyses (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

Lexical Analysis helped identify frequent words and themes (Krippendorff, 2018), while Thematic Analysis involved coding and categorizing the data to reveal deeper insights into user-generated content's impact on brand involvement and engagement (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Netnography complemented these methods by providing context through the observation of online interactions (Kozinets, 2010). This comprehensive approach allowed us to compare the effectiveness of user-generated content against brand-generated content, highlighting which type of content was more effective in terms of consumer involvement and engagement. Through these

methods, the research provided a thorough understanding of social media behaviors and the role of user-generated content in brand engagement.


Chapter 1: Builds the foundation for this research by reviewing existing literature on User Generated Content (UGC), signaling theory, customer involvement, and brand engagement
Chapter 2: Delves into qualitative research methodologies, outlining the research objectives, questions and epistemology. Details the research design, sample selection, and data collection procedures employed in the qualitative study of the dissertation
Chapter 3: Presents the qualitative analysis findings. Discuss the lexical analysis, thematic analysis and netnography and present a summary of the qualitative analysis and findings
Chapter 4: Transitions to quantitative research, focusing on model construction and hypothesis development. It outlines the theoretical framework and proposes hypotheses regarding the relationships between UGC, signaling theory, customer involvement, and brand engagement.
Chapter 5: explores the measurement scales used in the study. It discusses the importance of measurement scales and delves into the specific scales employed
Chapter 6: Presents the quantitative analysis, comparing the fit indices of different models and conducting reliability and validity tests
Chapter 7: summarizes the theoretical, methodological, and managerial contributions of the research. It highlights the key findings and insights derived from the study. Emphasizing their implications for both academic research and practical marketing strategies. acknowledges the limitations of the research and offers recommendations for future studies in the field.

# 4. Chapter 4: Quantitative Research

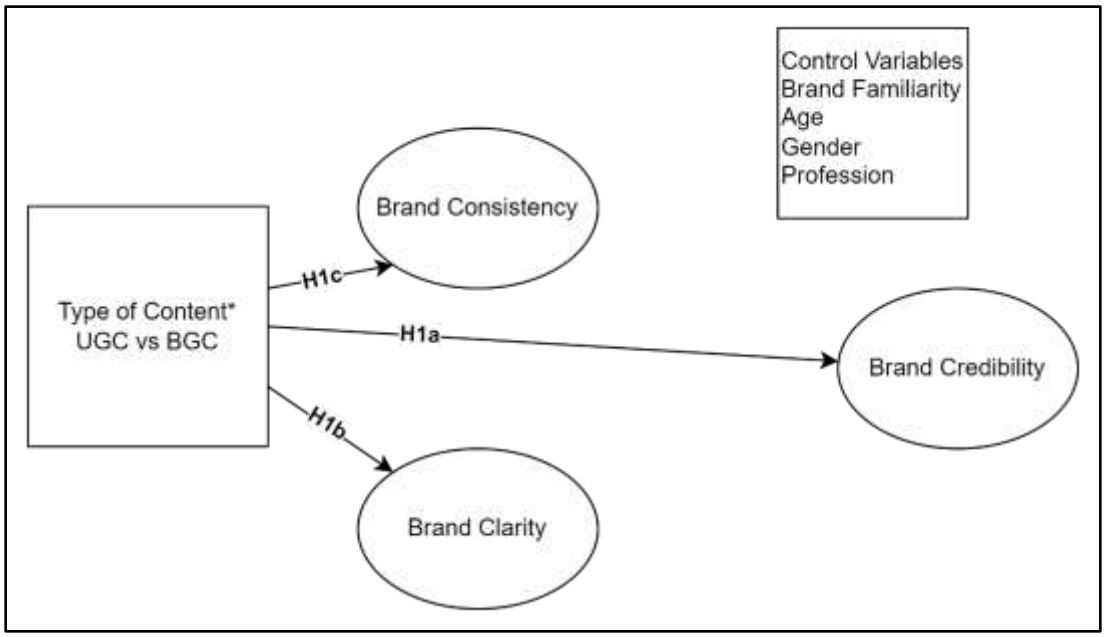
Building upon the qualitative research and its findings, research model and hypothesis are presented in this chapter. It includes the development and execution of a pre-test to validate the efficacy of the distinct scenarios for the research study.

## 4.1. Model Construction and Research Hypothesis

### 4.1.1. Model Construction

Our research employs a sequential mixed methods approach, using the findings from the qualitative phase, these findings will serve as preliminary information for the quantitative phase. In this section, the findings from our qualitative phase, in the aid of existing theories from the literature review to further develop and construct a model and form our research hypothesis. In order to achieve our goal, the focus will be on elucidating the underlying theoretical framework and examine the connection between previously found relevant themes. Afterwards, establish theories or related constructs. In order to exhibit the relationship between variables visually in a research model diagram to providing a comprehensive understanding of how user-generated content influences customer involvement and brand engagement from the signaling theory perspective, while also studying the moderating effect of moral intensity. Ultimately, this framework serves as a crucial foundation for designing the research methodology, conducting the main study, and drawing conclusions from the empirical investigation drawn from our quantitative study.

*Figure 23[14] – Development of Proposed Model*




### 4.1.2. Development of Hypothesis:

After the introduction of the variables under study, a modeling of the path has been suggested and in correspondence the hypotheses are being developed.

1. Impact of UGC and BGC on brand credibility:

The style of the content of the advertisement play a vital role because at times the receiver, a customer, is not persuaded just by the information but rather is attracted towards the way the message has been portrayed or even the what is been said in terms of content of the advertisement itself which works as a signal (Dunham, 2011). Similarly, the source of the signal also plays an important part in bringing effectiveness. According to (Hui, 2017; A. J. Kim & Ko, 2012), perceived credibility and effectiveness is directly relying upon the source of the signal. Marketers can use multiple sources in terms of brand signal. In the context of social media, the two major categories are user generated content which is also termed and referred to as UGC and brand generated content, which is referred to as BGC.

Contrary to this a newer, more engaging type of content is taking over the center stage and is under the limelight. This newer type of content is referred to as user generated content or UGC. User-

[14] This is not the final model. This is a partial model, and we will develop the model step by step before the final model and list of hypotheses in the end of the chapter are presented in Figure 29.

generated content (UGC) is any type of content be it pictures, videos, reviews, views, and comments that are generated and shared by customers or in other words users of the product or services of a brand. UGC is different than the content that is generated by the company or brand itself. UGC includes content that is generated or created by the customers, to discuss their interactions with a product or services of a particular brand. UGC entails social media postings, blog comments, reviews, videos, and other types of content that is generated outside the official channels of brand (Ayeh et al., 2013; Jeong & Jang, 2011; Kozinets, 2009). Multiple studies on the type of content and functionalities of social media platforms have revealed the importance of UGC (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Bacile et al., 2018; Chukwuere & Chukwuere, 2017). According to the research in the field customers consider posts and reviews made by other fellow social media users as more credible (MacKinnon et al., 2021). UGC has become the most popular type of content over the internet. Some of the most popular are UGC such as vlogs, performances, and reviews. This implies the fact that UGC may have a greater impact on engagement levels than BGC (Blythe & Cairns, 2009). Credibility works as a heart for a brand in a market that is uncertain (Erdem & Swait, 1998, 2004). For instance, a signal is only perceived to be authentic if its credible, thus credibility is the foundation stone (Morhart et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014).

Building upon the previous research studies it is hypothesized that UGC will have a stronger effect on brand credibility as a signal compared to BGC. The hypothesis is supported by the notion that consumers tend to place higher trust and credibility in content generated by their fellow peers rather than content produced and disseminated by the brand itself.

**H1a: UGC has a greater impact on brand credibility than BGC. (Figure 23)**

2. Impact of UGC and BGC on brand clarity

User-generated content (UGC) is a powerful driver of brand clarity, its contribution towards a clear brand image can never be undermined (Dhar & Chang, 2009; Kuang et al., 2019; Xie et al., 2020). Liu and Park (2015) found that UGC enhances brand clarity by providing diverse perspectives and real-life examples of the products and services offered by the brand in action. It reflects the actual usage and interpretation of the brand by customers, making it more relatable and understandable.

This aligns with the concept of consumer interpretation, where consumers construct meanings based on their experiences with the brand (Arvidsson, 2005).

UGC, being created by consumers themselves, represents their interpretations and experiences, helping to clarify the brand's message and positioning (Naeem & Ozuem, 2022; Roma & Aloini, 2019). Through their active involvement, consumers contribute their own content and perspectives, leading to a clearer understanding of the brand and its value proposition (L. D. Hollebeek et al., 2014; Hui, 2017). According to the existing literature myths and stories create confusions rather than clarity and therefore brands should avoid such messages to avoid ambiguity in the message (Adorisio, 2014; Brown et al., 2013). Similar to credibility and consistency, the degree of clarity of a signal is also linked with information cost, perceived risk, and resultantly linked with expected utility. In case the message propagated by the brand signal is clear it will not only decrease the information cost, uncertainty, and perceived risk but will also increase the utility expected by the consumer thus creates a positive image and position of the brand (Aaker, 1991).

Considering these theoretical perspectives, it can be posited that UGC has a greater impact on brand clarity compared to brand-generated content (BGC). UGC's authenticity, diverse perspectives, and consumer interpretation contribute to a clearer brand image and messaging, fostering a better understanding among consumers.

**H1b: UGC has a greater impact on brand clarity than BGC. (Figure 23)**

3. Impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency:

User-generated content (UGC) plays an important and vital role when it comes to influencing brand consistency (Müller & Christandl, 2019; Roma & Aloini, 2019). Across several platforms and touchpoints, UGC has contributed significantly to maintaining a consistent brand image for the products and/or services offered. UGC plays a facilitating role in signaling a brand’s consistency by constantly providing a unified and coherent message about the brand across the platforms on social media (Chen & Berger, 2016; A. N. Smith et al., 2012). Consistency has a direct influence on consumers perceptions as it portrays the seriousness, willingness, and ability of the firm to deliver the promised quality of service or products over a course of time (Erdem &

Swait, 1998). Consistency is one of the key marketing principles (Park et al., 2008) and plays a pivotal role in brand management.

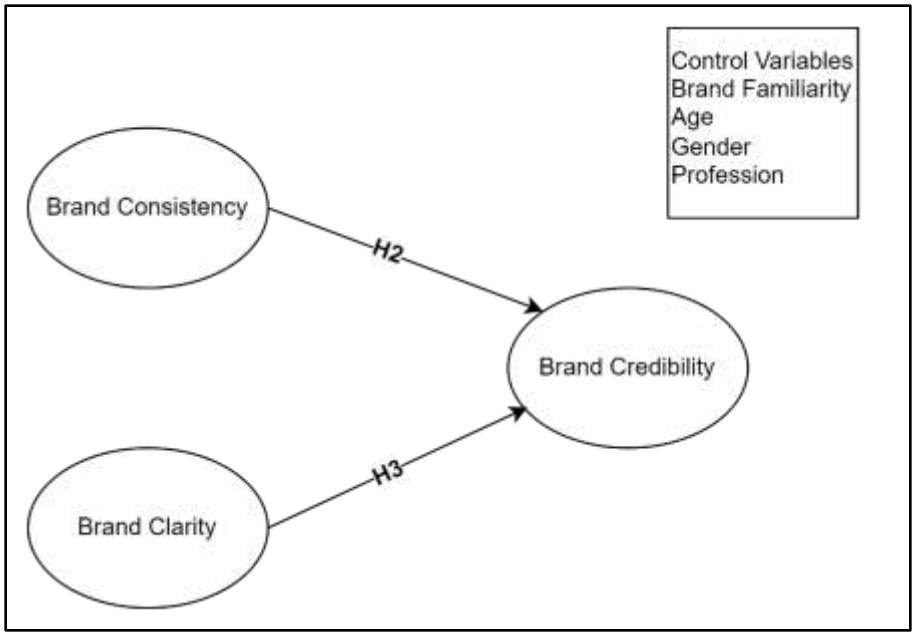
As UGC is created by customers, who are not simply using the product but rather walk an extra mile for the brand. These customers share another common trait about the product or service of the brand. These customers share a passion about the brand, this most of the time brings in a close alignment with the brand's core values and messaging. The consistency of the type of content thus portrays and reinforces a positive image of the brand in the mind of the customer (Erdem et al., 2008) and this in connection with the fact that customers find the content generated by fellow users as more credible builds up to the level that a customer starts believing the claims made by the brand (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). According to (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), UGC, being consistent, helps in reiterating and reinforcing to the potential customers that the brand stands for what it proclaims. Furthermore, UGC is a way to encourage brand engagement and participation, enabling customers to actively contribute to the brand narrative. This active involvement enhances brand consistency by creating a sense of community and shared brand identity (Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014).

Consistency in branding within UGC not only fosters a sense of trust and reliability among consumers but also reinforces the brand's core values (Erdem & Swait, 2004). It acts as a guiding force, aligning diverse user contributions to a unified narrative, which in turn strengthens brand recall and loyalty (Müller & Christandl, 2019; Roma & Aloini, 2019). A consistent brand presence in user-generated content facilitates the creation of a collective brand story, reinforcing the overall brand equity and influencing consumer perceptions positively (Naeem & Ozuem, 2022). As brands navigate the ever-evolving landscape of user-generated content, a steadfast commitment to brand consistency emerges as a strategic imperative for sustained success and resonance in the minds of the audience.

Based on the research rhetoric and theoretical perspectives outlined above, it can be posited that UGC has a greater impact on brand consistency than brand-generated content (BGC). UGC's ability to convey a unified brand message, its authenticity, and its capacity to foster brand engagement and participation all contribute to its effectiveness in enhancing brand consistency.

**H1c: UGC has a greater impact on brand consistency than BGC. (Figure 23)**

*Figure 24 - Development of Proposed Model*




4. Impact of brand consistency on brand credibility

Digital marketing content includes various forms of content created and shared through digital channels such as websites, social media, email marketing, and online advertising (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993). UGC and BGC are the two major types of digital marketing content. In the context of this research, it has been discussed how it influences the signal credibility of a brand. Brand credibility, on the other hand, means to the extent to which consumers perceive a brand as trustworthy, reliable, and competent (Oliver, 1999). Brand credibility is the believability of customers in the claims made by the brand (Erdem & Swait, 2004)

The overall uniformity and similarity in brand's message, its visual identity and brand experience across the touchpoints is termed as brand consistency. Similarly, this consistency is the key element, that if remains similar across all mediums and channels makes a customer believe in the claims made by the brand through any medium, in our case the digital medium. When a brand maintains consistency in its marketing content, it ensures that its messaging, visual elements, and tone of voice align with its overall brand identity and values (Aaker, 1996).

The notion that brands consistency can influence brand credibility has been supported by many theoretical frameworks. One of those several frameworks is the signaling theory. According to

signaling theory, brands use various signals or cues to communicate their attributes and qualities to consumers (Erdem & Swait).

These signals are a way to communicate brand offerings. Similarly, if a brand maintains consistency in digital marketing content, this acts as a signal to consumers that the brand is reliable, committed, and capable of delivering consistent experiences (Lu & Liao, 2007). When consumers perceive a brand as consistent, this generates a feeling of reliability and they develop a sense of belonging, familiarity, and trust, which enhances the overall brand credibility. Based on this extensive literature analysis following hypothesis is formulated:

**H2: There is a positive direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility. (Figure 24)**

In addition to the above posited hypothesis, it must be discussed idea that the direct effect between brand consistency and brand credibility is more definite and higher for user-generated content (UGC) than for brand-generated content (BGC), as this highlights the ever-evolving dynamics of consumer perceptions and trust in the social media networking space (Sawaftah et al., 2021). Although this is a relatively new phenomenon, and this is what interests this study. The concepts of brand consistency and credibility have been under limelight for instance in their research studies Sawaftah et al., (2021); Tyrväinen et al., (2023) have empirically demonstrated this trend, highlighting the significance of consistency in UGC as a key driver of enhanced brand credibility. This finding aligns with the broader discourse on the credibility and believability associated with user-generated content, particularly when it operates independently of brand influence (Aljarah et al., 2022).

A deeper exploration into the literature reveals that the heightened credibility attributed to consistent UGC, as compared to BGC, can be attributed to the perceived impartiality and sincerity of user-generated contributions (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Roma & Aloini, 2019). Aljarah et al., (2022) argue that UGC gains credibility precisely because it is not directly affiliated with the brand, fostering a sense of genuine, unbiased expression. Moreover, Müller & Christandl, (2019) and Sawaftah et al., (2021) posit that UGC serves as a stronger predictor of brand credibility, further emphasizing the influential role that consumer-generated content plays in shaping perceptions of brands.

BGC is simply not limited to the content that is generated by the brand but there are several types of BGC. One such example is sponsored content, this content is created by the users but categorically distinguished as sponsored content (Müller & Christandl, 2019). Diwanji & Cortese, (2020) underscore the nuanced impact of sponsored content on brand credibility, revealing a potentially more negative effect on the believability of brand claims. It has been evident that sponsored content, a subset of BGC, may make the claims less credible. This finding reinforces the assertion that UGC, with its inherent credibility, stands out as a more potent force in shaping brand credibility. As user-generated content continues to redefine communication landscapes, its impact has been particularly transformative in industries such as travel and hospitality (Baka, 2016; Ferraz, 2015). Tham et al., (2013) underscore the pivotal role played by UGC reviews in influencing the decisions of prospective travelers, marking a paradigm shift in how consumers engage with and trust brands within the travel industry.

In conclusion, the evident trend wherein the direct effect between brand consistency and brand credibility is more pronounced for UGC than for BGC is substantiated by a growing body of empirical evidence (Aljarah et al., 2022; Baka, 2016; Müller & Christandl, 2019; Tham et al., 2013). This phenomenon underscores the important and crucial role of user-generated content in shaping consumer perceptions, emphasizing the need for brands to strategically leverage the consistency and credibility inherent in UGC for enhanced brand credibility. Based on this it is proposed that:

**H2a: The direct effect between brand consistency and brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC.(Figure 24)**

5. Impact of brand clarity on brand credibility

When a brand ensures clarity in its content, it provides clear and concise information about its products, services, and brand promise, allowing consumers to easily understand and grasp the brand's value proposition (Van Dijk, 2006). In this regard there are several theories that propagate the idea that brand clarity can influence brand credibility. One such perspective is given in the signaling theory. Signaling theory posits that if a signal for a brand is clear enough it helps build credibility (Erdem & Swait, 1998b, 2004). Accordingly, consumers engage in cognitive processes

to understand and evaluate information (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and when the content either UGC or BGC present clear and unambiguous information, customers can process the information more effectively and form a coherent understanding of the brand's offerings and attributes. This leads to a more credible image of the brand. Moreover, when the message is clear, consumers are more likely to engage in systematic information processing, leading to stronger beliefs and attitudes towards the brand. In this case, clear digital marketing content can positively shape consumer perceptions of brand credibility (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

Furthermore, research on cognitive psychology suggests that consumers prefer cognitive fluency, which refers to the ease with which information can be processed (Schwarz, 2004). Clear and concise digital marketing content enhances cognitive fluency, making it easier for consumers to comprehend and evaluate the brand's messaging and offerings. This, in turn, contributes to the perceived credibility of the brand. Based on this following hypothesis is proposed:

**H3: There is a positive direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility. (Figure 24)**

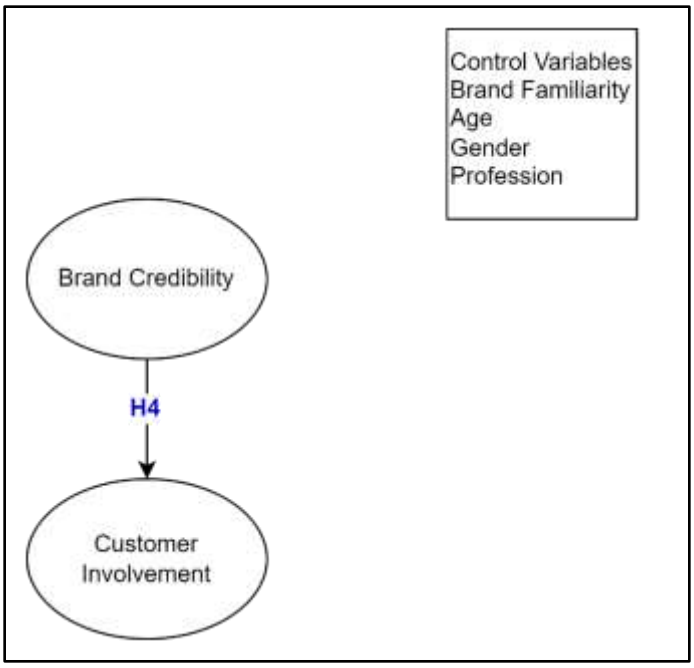
The hypothesis posits that the direct effect between brand clarity and brand credibility is higher in the context of user-generated content (UGC) compared to brand-generated content (BGC). Although, it has been consistently emphasized in the literature, the crucial and important role of brand clarity in influencing brand credibility, establishing a strong foundation for understanding consumer perceptions (Hansen et al., 2014; Hui, 2017). With the advanced tools and social media platforms the significance of consumer-driven narratives is stronger than before (Zhou et al., 2010). Social media platforms are indeed focusing on user-generated content (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). UGC plays a key role in social networking, allowing for active participation, socialization, and collaboration among users (Seixas Pereira et al., 2022). According to Smith and Johnson (2019), UGC often reflects authentic consumer experiences, contributing to enhanced brand transparency and clarity (Busser & Shulga, 2019; Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). As consumers increasingly seek genuine connections with brands, UGC becomes a powerful tool in shaping brand credibility by fostering a sense of trust and relatability (Bahtar & Muda, 2016; Berger & Milkman, 2012).

On the contrary, the hypothesis suggests that the impact of brand clarity on brand credibility may be less pronounced when considering brand-generated content. Traditional marketing literature, such as Keller, (1993) work on brand knowledge, underscores the importance of consistent and clear brand messages. However, in the realm of BGC, where brands maintain control over the narrative, there may be a perceived risk of bias or manipulation, potentially diminishing the direct link between clarity and credibility. This aligns with the findings of (Lee et al., 2020; Mathur et al., 2022; Robinson et al., 2019), who highlight that consumers often view user-generated content as more authentic and trustworthy, potentially influencing the strength of the clarity-credibility relationship in UGC scenarios.

Moreover, the hypothesis prompts exploration into the dynamics of consumer engagement with UGC and BGC. Park & Lee, (2021) argue that consumers actively engage with UGC due to its perceived authenticity, leading to a more direct and influential relationship between brand clarity and credibility. On the other hand, the controlled nature of BGC may create a psychological distance, wherein consumers approach brand messages with a degree of skepticism. This perspective echoes the works of (Bahtar & Muda, 2016; Mazzucchelli et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2020), who assert that UGC plays a vital role and highlights the importance of UGC in enhancing the overall consumer engagement which is a key factor in shaping brand credibility. Thus, the hypothesis proposed sheds light on the nuanced interplay between brand clarity, credibility, and the type of content:

**H3a: The direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC (Figure 24).**

*Figure 25 - Development of Proposed Model*




6. Brand credibility affects the level of customer involvement.

Brand credibility is the perceived trustworthiness, reliability, and expertise of a brand in the eyes of its customers (Erdem & Swait, 2004). The concept mostly pertains to the assessment of the degree of confidence that a consumer places in a certain brand. Brand credibility refers to the degree to which people hold the belief that a brand will fulfill its commitments and satisfy their expectations satisfactorily.

Numerous academic studies have continuously shown a favorable correlation between brand credibility and consumer participation (Baek et al., 2010; Morhart et al., 2015). When consumers consider a brand to possess credibility, they are inclined to actively interact with the brand and its products or services. An investigation conducted by Rindell and Rajala (2018) examined the impact of brand credibility on consumer engagement within the realm of online reviews. The results of the study indicated that the way consumers perceive the legitimacy of a brand has a favorable impact on their degree of engagement, which includes their desire to write reviews, provide feedback, and participate in online conversations relating to the brand.

Moreover, many study investigations have similarly shown that brand credibility leads to increased consumer engagement through influencing trust and the perceived value of the company and its products. According to Jain and Singh (2002), the perception of brand credibility by consumers leads to the development of confidence in the brand, hence increasing their inclination to actively interact with the brand's offers and activities. Moreover, the credibility of a brand has a significant impact on consumers' perception of the anticipated value they would get from their interactions with the company, resulting in heightened customer engagement (Gupta & Zeithaml, 2006).

Furthermore, empirical studies have provided evidence to support the notion that there exists a positive correlation between brand credibility and both brand loyalty and brand advocacy. According to Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), when consumers perceive a brand to possess credibility, they are inclined to establish a strong emotional bond with the brand. This emotional connection leads to increased customer loyalty, as seen by recurrent interactions with the brand and the act of promoting it to others.

In summary, academic research supports the hypothesis that brand credibility has a positive effect on customer involvement. Higher levels of brand credibility led to increased customer involvement through enhanced trust, perceived value, loyalty, and advocacy.

**H4: Brand Credibility has a positive effect on customer involvement. (Figure 25)**

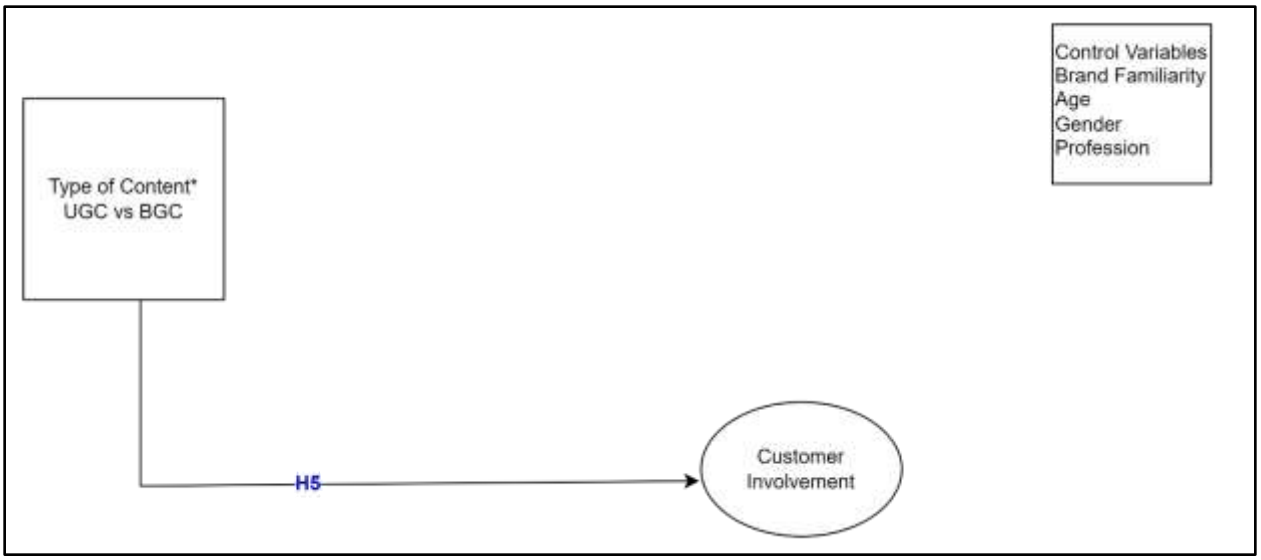
The hypothesis posits that brand credibility exerts a more pronounced influence on customer involvement in user-generated content (UGC) compared to brand-generated content (BGC). The central role of brand credibility in consumer behavior and engagement is supported thoroughly throughout the literature. According to Erdem & Swait, (1998), customers often rely on brand credibility as a heuristic cue when evaluating information, especially in the context of online content. This heuristic processing is in particular relevant in the age of social media, where the credibility and source of information play pivotal roles in shaping consumer perceptions. Furthermore, in the studies by Lafferty & Goldsmith, (1999) and Smith & Wheeler, (2002) highlight that brand credibility significantly impacts customer’s trust and loyalty, underscoring its relevance in the broader landscape of customer-brand relationships.

In the context of UGC, brand credibility becomes even more crucial as customers themselves actively participate in content creation and dissemination. As highlighted by Chevalier & Mayzlin, (2006), consumers often view UGC as more credible and involving than the content that is generated by brands themselves. This credibility is closely tied to the perceived credibility of the brand associated with the UGC. On the contrary, BGC, being under the direct control of the brand, may be perceived with a certain level of skepticism by consumers. This aligns with the findings of S. Chatterjee & Kar, (2020), who assert that consumers exhibit higher engagement and trust in content that appears to be independently generated (P. Chatterjee, 2011). Consequently, the hypothesis positing a stronger influence of brand credibility on customer involvement in UGC is grounded in established theories and empirical evidence within the fields of marketing and consumer behavior (Erdem et al., 2006, 2008; Hollebeek, 2011).

Furthermore, recent developments in the digital marketing landscape are also evidence of the proposed relation. As highlighted by (Gupta & Harris, 2010), the accessibility to customers in terms of content creation has empowered customers, making them a central key stake holder in shaping brand narratives. In this context, brand credibility emerges as a critical factor influencing customers involvement in the co-creation of content (Piller et al., 2011; Thompson & Malaviya, 2013). Additionally, the hypothesis finds support in the works of Hennig-Thurau et al., (2004), who argue that customer engagement is heightened when individuals perceive themselves as active contributors rather than passive recipients of brand messages. Thus, the proposition that brand credibility has a more substantial impact on customer involvement in UGC aligns with both theoretical frameworks and contemporary trends in consumer-brand interactions and therefore it is proposed that:

**H4a: Brand credibility has a higher effect on customer involvement for UGC than for BGC.**

*Figure 26 - Development of Proposed Model*




7. UGC and BGC affect customer involvement.

Customer involvement stands for the level of interest, attention, and willingness for the engagement that customers show toward a product or service offered by the brand (Chen & Berger, 2016; Dhar & Chang, 2009). Within the scope of digital marketing content, UGC entails multiple formats that include text, images, videos, interactive elements, and brands utilize this new phenomenon to communicate with their target audience (Blythe & Cairns, 2009; Müller & Christandl, 2019). Digital marketing content is majorly of two types, UGC and BGC. It can significantly impact levels of customer involvement. Different content types evoke different emotional, cognitive, and sensory responses, influencing how customers engage with the brand's message (L. D. Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Academic research provides insights into the effects of various content types on customer involvement. For example, research has shown that the use of interactive digital marketing material, including quizzes, polls, games, and augmented reality experiences, may effectively boost consumer engagement. The use of interactive information fosters an environment that promotes active involvement, effectively immersing clients in the brand experience and stimulating their interest (Li et al., 2019). Visual information, including photos and videos, has a significant influence on client engagement. Visual stimuli are absorbed expeditiously and possess a significant emotional allure, effectively captivating the attention of consumers and evoking

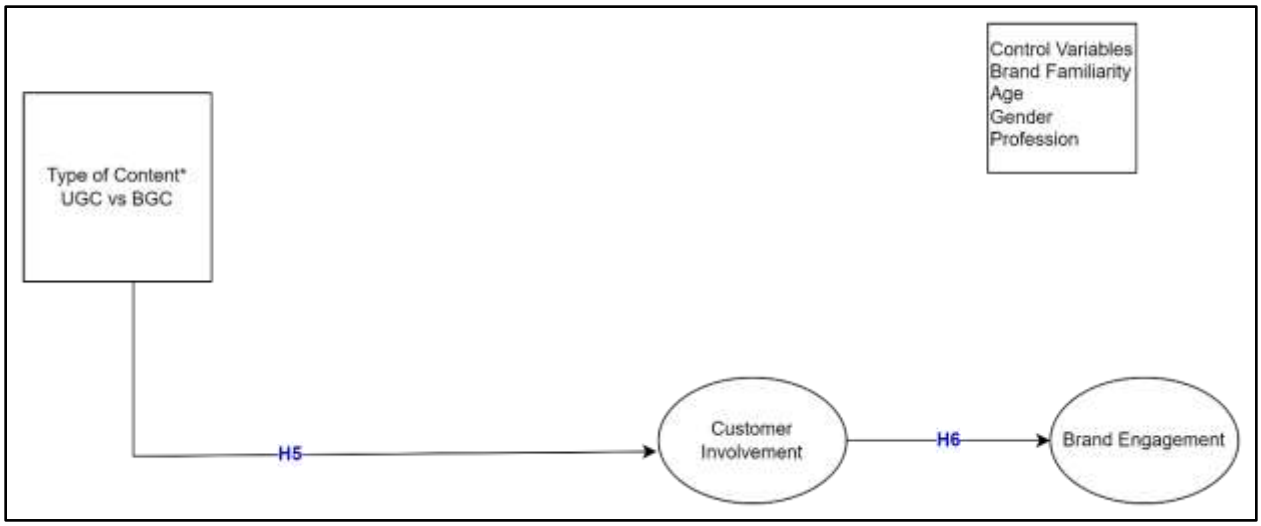
robust reactions. According to Chattopadhyay et al. (2018), empirical evidence suggests that the use of visually captivating material has the potential to augment consumer engagement and promote brand retention.

According to Verhoef et al. (2017), the use of customization strategies may foster a perception of relevance and personalized attention among consumers. This, in turn, enhances their feeling of value and drives them to actively interact with the provided material. Hence, the implementation of customized digital marketing material, which is specifically designed to cater to the unique interests and features of particular customers, has the potential to augment consumer engagement. The impact of textual material on consumer engagement may be influenced by several elements, including the contextual setting, the quality and pertinence of the language, and even the origin of the information. Research has shown that well-constructed, informative, and convincing written material has the ability to engage and captivate clients, especially when it offers significant insights or answers to their specific requirements (Van Vaerenbergh et al., 2014).

In conclusion, the use of user-generated content (UGC) and/or brand-generated content (BGC) in digital marketing strategies may have a substantial influence on consumer engagement. Interactive content, visual content, personalized content, and well-crafted textual content have shown to be effective in enhancing customer involvement, each with its unique mechanisms and effects.

**H5: UGC has a greater impact on customer involvement than BGC. (Figure 26)**

*Figure 27 - Development of Proposed Model*




8. Impact of customer involvement brand engagement according to different type of content

Brand engagement is the extent to which customers actively interact with and share an emotional bond with the brand. It comprises of behaviors such as repeat purchases, talking positively about the brand through word-of-mouth, loyalty towards the brand, and being an active participant in all brand related activities. Similarly, customer involvement, as has been discussed earlier, means the level of interest, attention, and engagement shown towards the brand and its offerings by its customers.

It has been found throughout academic research that customer involvement is positively related with brand engagement (Gummerus et al., 2012; L. Hollebeek, 2011; L. D. Hollebeek et al., 2014; C. W. Park et al., 2008; Verhoef et al., 2010). Customers, when highly involved with a brand and its offerings, have higher chances of the conversion of this involvement, to engage in various brand-related activities, thus strengthening their connection and bond with the brand.

In this context Bowden (2009) examined the relationship between customer involvement and brand engagement in the context of online brand communities. As per the findings it was evident that the higher levels of customer involvement were positively associated with greater brand engagement, including higher levels of participation, commitment, and loyalty to the brand community.

Furthermore, other studies have also shown that customer involvement positively influences brand engagement through its impact on customer satisfaction and brand loyalty (Keller, 1993; Pozón-López et al., 2020). A customer's satisfaction is enhanced when it engages with a brand and gets involved in its offerings. The enhanced satisfaction further strengthens their emotional connection to the brand, leading to higher levels of brand engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

Highly involved customers tend to be more passionate and knowledgeable about the brand, making them more likely to actively recommend and promote the brand to others, thereby increasing brand engagement in the broader market (Gummerus et al., 2012). Thus, it is evident that customer involvement plays a crucial and vital role in fostering brand advocacy and positive word of mouth.

In summary, academic research supports the hypothesis that customer involvement has a positive effect on brand engagement. Higher levels of customer involvement led to increased brand engagement through enhanced participation, commitment, loyalty, satisfaction, and advocacy.

**H6: Customer involvement positively affects brand engagement. (Figure 27)**

Throughout the literature it has been highlighted that the positive effect of customer involvement on brand engagement is more pronounced in the context of user-generated content (UGC) compared to brand-generated content (BGC). Building on existing literature, Matute et al., (2019) highlight the influential role of UGC in shaping customer brand involvement within user-initiated online brand communities (OBCs). The study emphasizes that UGC fosters community and brand identification, establishing a foundation for enhanced customer brand engagement. Matute et al., (2019)'s findings indicate that UGC contributes to stronger emotional connections and commitment to both the brand and the community. UGC plays a vital and important role in cultivating favorable outcomes for brands within user initiated OBCs (Dessart et al., 2015).

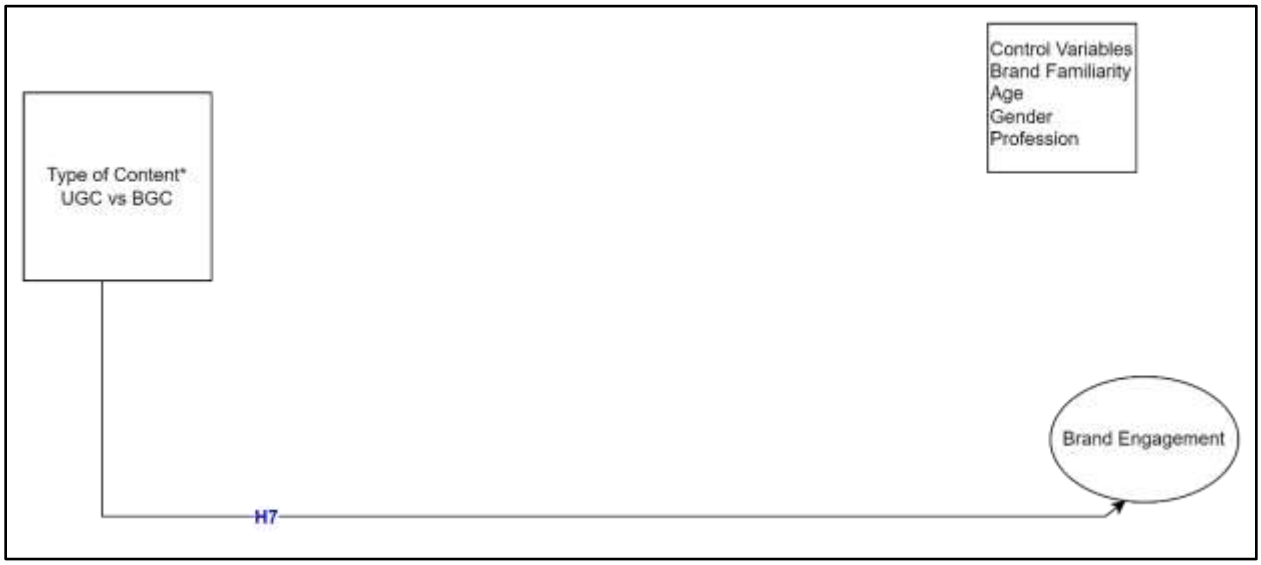
Moreover, the study by Mohammad et al., (2020) accentuates the multi-dimensional impact of UGC on customer brand engagement by considering both functional and emotional values. The functional values of UGC, such as informational content, and the emotional values, encompassing sentiments and expressions, collectively contribute to a positive and significant influence on customers' brand engagement. This dual impact underscores the richness of UGC in resonating with consumers on both cognitive and emotional levels, suggesting that UGC has the capacity to

foster a more comprehensive and robust brand engagement compared to BGC (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

The theoretical framework established by (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Matute et al., 2019; Mohammad et al., 2020) collectively supports the hypothesis that UGC amplifies the positive relationship between customer involvement and brand engagement. By offering insights into the emotional connections, commitment, and functional values associated with UGC, these studies provide a robust foundation for understanding the enlightening dynamics at play in the digital realm. Therefore, it is proposed that:

**H6a: The positive effect of customer involvement on brand engagement is higher for UGC than for BGC.**

*Figure 28 - Development of Proposed Model*



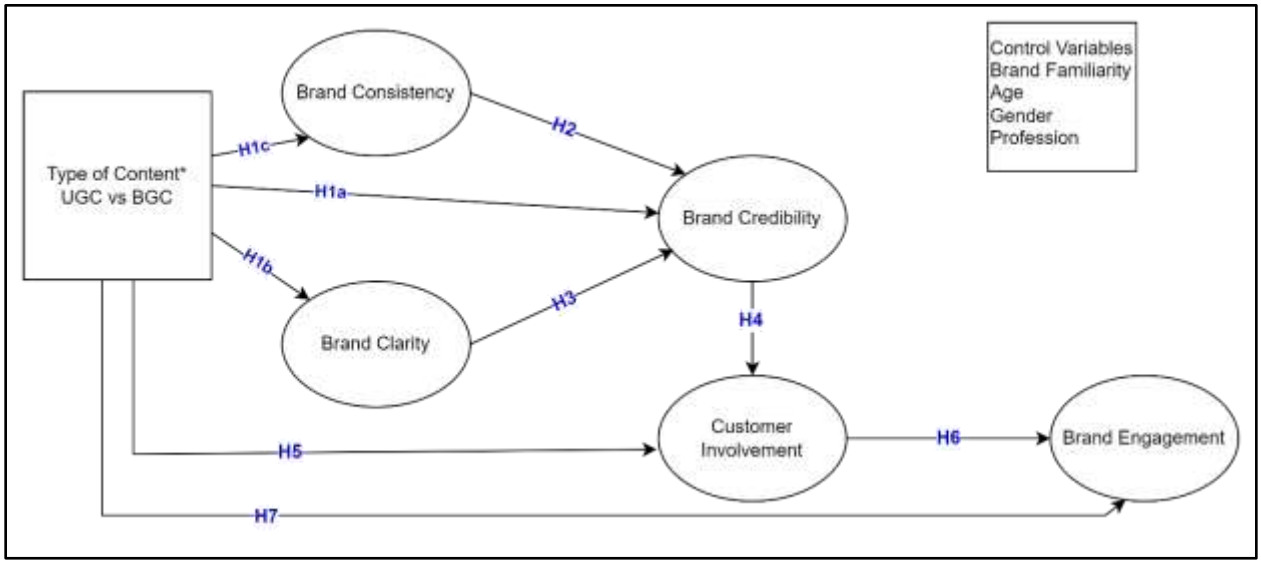

The next hypothesis posits that User-Generated Content (UGC) exerts a more substantial influence on brand engagement compared to Brand-Generated Content (BGC). This assertion aligns with contemporary research indicating the rising significance of UGC in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. Recent studies such as Lee and Lee (2021) have demonstrated that UGC, characterized by its credibility, and relatability, tends to foster stronger emotional connections between consumers and brands. This heightened emotional resonance prompts increased

engagement levels as consumers actively participate in discussions, share experiences, and contribute content themselves, thereby strengthening brand-consumer relationships (Li et al., 2020). Furthermore, UGC's interactive nature facilitates a sense of community among consumers, fostering a deeper sense of belonging and loyalty toward the brand (Vivek et al., 2020).

Contrarily, while BGC serves as a strategic tool for brand communication and narrative control, it often lacks the genuineness and spontaneity inherent in UGC. Research by Gupta et al. (2020) suggests that BGC may encounter skepticism from consumers due to its perceived promotional intent, potentially resulting in reduced engagement levels. Additionally, the proliferation of ad-blocking technologies and consumer resistance to overt advertising further diminishes the efficacy of BGC in driving brand engagement (Pham et al., 2021). Thus, while BGC remains integral to brand marketing strategies, its impact on brand engagement may pale in comparison to the authentic and community-driven dynamics facilitated by UGC, as supported by recent empirical evidence (Yadav et al., 2022). Based on this we propose:

**H7: UGC has a greater impact on brand engagement than BGC (Figure 28).**

*Figure 29 - Final Proposed Model*




15

[15] - Complete Model

### 4.1.3. Hypothesis:

1. H1a: UGC has a greater impact on brand credibility than BGC.
2. H1b: UGC has a greater impact on brand clarity than BGC.
3. H1c: UGC has a greater impact on brand consistency than BGC.
4. H2: There is a positive direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility.
5. H2a: The direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC.
6. H3: There is a positive direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility.
7. H3a: The direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC.
8. H4: Brand Credibility has a positive effect on customer involvement.
9. H4a: Brand credibility has a higher effect on customer involvement for UGC than for BGC.
10. H5: UGC has a greater impact on customer involvement than BGC.
11. H6: Customer involvement positively affects brand engagement.
12. H6a: The positive effect of customer involvement on brand engagement is higher for UGC than for BGC.
13. H7: UGC has a greater impact on brand engagement than BGC.

## 4.2. Pretest of scenario and questionnaire

### 4.2.1. Objective of pretests:

Pretests have an important and a crucial role in academic research. Pretests provide an essential baseline for evaluating the impact of interventions in experimental studies. It is important because by measuring variables prior to any interventions, researchers can find out about the genuine effects of the treatment and also take into consideration the pre-existing differences or confounding variables (McDermott et al., 2014; M. A. Smith & Karpicke, 2014). This whole process results in higher internal validity. Additionally, pretests aid in the validation of measurement instruments, contribute to participant selection, and enhance the credibility of research outcomes. For example, Rothman, Greenland, and Lash (2008) in "Modern Epidemiology" emphasize the significance of pretests in establishing baseline health measurements to analyze the impact of interventions. In another study Smith and Johnson (2020) underscored the role of pretests in their study on educational interventions, highlighting how pretests' baseline data enhanced the rigor of their analyses. Although these references are specific to their fields, the fundamental principles resonate across diverse research domains.

Our objective of undertaking the pre-test is to statistically test the validity and reliability of the scenarios that we have designed. Our objective is to verify whether or not the participants are able to grasp the gist of the underlying phenomenon. We want to test whether the scenarios that we have designed using the brands LEGO and GoPro are completely understood by the participants in terms of the source of the content, who has posted the content, what is being offered in the content and whether the content is involving and engaging. To summarize, we have following objectives for the pretests:

1. Manipulation Check, we want to check whether the scenarios that we have designed for the UGC and BGC content are differentiable and distinguishable.
2. Whether the participants are able to easily and clearly identify the source of the content based on the scenarios we present to them.
3. Choose the most effective brand for the final test.
4. Verify the clarity of the scenarios.
5. Compare the responses between UGC and BGC scenarios for the same brand.

### 4.2.2. Choice of the brand

After an extent literature and based on the objectives of our research study we have to select 2 brands that can be compared based on the level of involvement and functionalities. We followed the Latin square technique and based on the 4 possibilities we designed 4 scenarios, 2 for each brand, LEGO, and GoPro. Amongst these 2 scenarios, we built a brand generated content scenario and a user generated content scenario. These scenarios were then shared with an expert of the field and the suggested changes were incorporated accordingly. After a rigorous process which involved back and forth steps, we decided to go for two brands: LEGO and GoPro.

LEGO brand is a good example of a high-involvement brand. It combines traditional appeal with emotional attachments across generations. It has been involving its customers throughout its corporate processes, from branding to product manufacturing and designing it is a very high involvement brand (Schultz & Hatch, 2003). Similarly, LEGO represents the products that are more traditional in nature and have low technological orientation. The brand maintains its status as a cherished brand due to the strong emotions and attachments it fosters. Consumers often engage in careful consideration when selecting and building Lego sets, reflecting the attributes of a high-involvement brand. This emotional connection is attributed to the brand's ability to evoke nostalgic feelings and personal connections through shared play experiences.

GoPro is a relatively new brand. It is known for its technologically advanced action cameras designed for capturing fun and adventurous outdoor activities, indicating a high-tech orientation. Due to its utility-driven nature, the purchase decision might be less involved compared to more emotionally driven brands.

*Table 18 - Comparison of selected brand*

| | Involvement | |
|---|---|---|
| Technology Orientation | High Involvement | Low Involvement |
| Low Tech Orientation (Traditional) | LEGO | - |
| High Tech Oriented | - | GoPro |

Pre-test Questionnaire

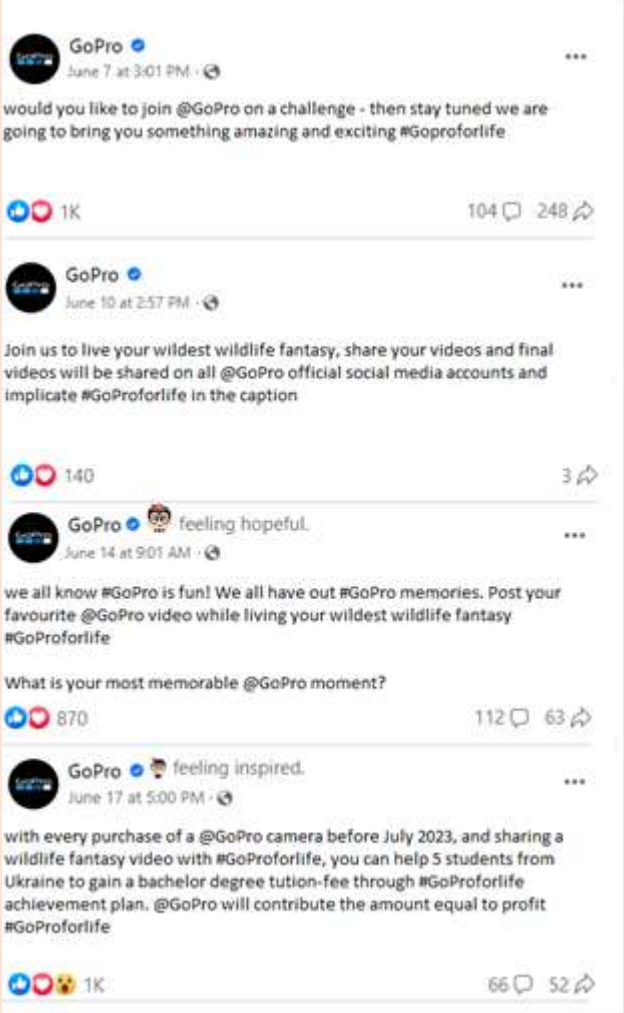
| Academic Research Study | | |
|---|---|---|
| This survey is part of an international academic research regarding the impact of digital marketing content (UGC VS BGC) on the attitude towards brand.<br><br>There are no requirements for taking part in this study, simply answer the question as honestly as you can. The research objective is to understand group phenomena apart from individual data. The collected data will remain totally anonymous.<br><br>Your participation will be used exclusively for academic communications and will not be shared with third parties or for any commercial purpose.<br><br>Thank you for your participation. | | |
| Email ID | Please insert your email ID | |
| Do you know the brand GoPro? | Yes (continue questionnaire)<br>No end of the questionnaire | |
| **What do you think of the GoPro Brand?**<br><br>**Brand Familiarity scale**<br>Zhou, Yang, and Hui (2010) | 1. This brand is very unfamiliar to me<br>2. I'm not at all knowledgeable about this brand<br>3. I have never seen advertisements about this brand in the mass media | This brand is very familiar to me.<br><br>I'm very knowledgeable about this brand.<br><br>I have seen many advertisements.<br>about this brand in the mass media. |
| **Attitude towards the brand** | | |
| **Attitude towards the brand**<br>(Goodstein, Edell and Moore (1990) | I am in favor of this brand.<br><br>It's a good brand.<br><br>I really like the brand. | 7-point Likert scale<br><br>1 Strongly Disagree – 7 Strongly agree |
| You just evaluated the brand. Please indicate your degree of agreement with the following statements: | I felt comfortable evaluating this brand.<br><br>I'm sure I made a good evaluation of this brand. | 7-Point Likert Scale<br><br>1 Strongly disagree.<br>7 Strongly agree. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | It was easy for me to evaluate this brand.<br><br>I think it is safe to buy a product of this brand. | |

**Stimulus A**

Dear Participants, now you will see a Facebook post from the famous brand GoPro.

Please take a few minutes to read it carefully and thoroughly as we will ask you questions about it.



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Attitude towards the ad (Barnier, 1999; Gardner, 1988; Mitchell & Olson, 1981)<br><br>About this GoPro Facebook post you can say: | This Facebook post is very good.<br><br>I really like this Facebook post.<br><br>This Facebook post is interesting. | This Facebook post is very bad.<br><br>I don't like this Facebook post at all.<br><br>This Facebook post is interesting. |
| Credibility of the ad<br><br>Chang (2011) | This Facebook post is.<br><br>1. believable<br>2. trustworthy<br>3. credible<br>4. reasonable<br>5. convincing<br>6. unbiased | 7-point Likert scale<br><br>1 Strongly Disagree – 7 Strongly agree |
| **Attitude towards the brand** (Goodstein, Edell and Moore (1990)<br><br>What do you think of the brand promoted in the Facebook post? | I am in favor of this brand.<br><br>It's a good brand.<br><br>I really like the brand. | 7-point Likert scale<br><br>1 Strongly Disagree – 7 Strongly agree |
| **Validity Test** | Is it important that you pay attention to each question? | 1. Strongly Disagree<br>7. Strongly Agree |

**Manipulation check**

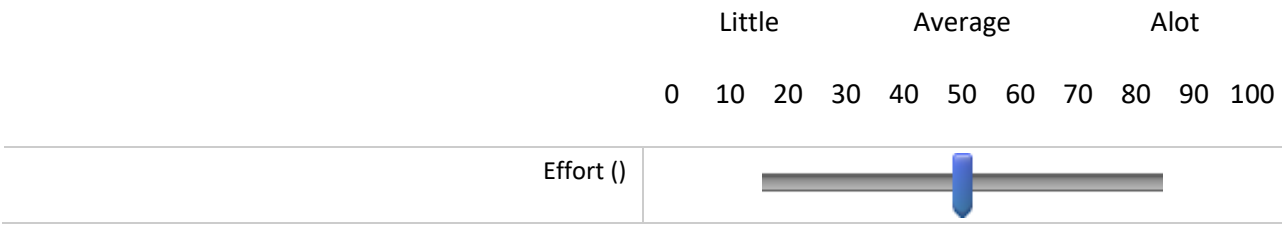
Can you recall the name of the brand promoted in the Facebook post?

Who do you think has posted this post: A. Customer B. The official brand C. I am not sure.

The Facebook post described a special offer linked with every purchase; can you describe it?

The Facebook post described that with every purchase a donation would be given to help.
- what kind of donation?
- To help who?
- In which country?

Please indicate the effort you have made in answering this questionnaire




| | |
|---|---|
| **Demographic data** | **Age**<br>❑ 18–29 years old<br>❑ 30–39 years old<br>❑ 40–49 years old<br>❑ 50–59 years old<br>❑ 60–69 years old<br>❑ 70 and above<br><br>**Gender**<br>❑ Female<br>❑ Male<br>❑ Non-binary<br><br>**Nationality**<br><br>**Marital status/ relationship**<br>❑ Single<br>❑ Married<br>❑ Divorced<br>❑ Widow / Widower<br>❑ In a civil partnership/civil union or similar<br>❑ It's complicated!<br><br>**Profession**<br>❑ Pensioner<br>❑ CEO, senior official or manager (more than 10 employees), intellectual or liberal profession<br>❑ Intermediate profession, middle manager, technician<br>❑ Skilled workers<br>❑ Independents, managers (10 employees or less)<br>❑ Employee, clerk<br>❑ Farmer<br>❑ Student |

| | |
|---|---|
| | ❑ Unemployed<br>❑ Retired<br><br>**Income**<br>❑<br><br>**Nationality** |

### 4.2.3. Total pretest sample

In total we are going to test 2 different brands in 2 different scenarios, altogether making it 4 scenarios. We have a sample of N=25 for each scenario and in total we have a sample of N=100 for our pretests. Our objective is to have a different set of participants, but these participants have insignificant differences in terms of their age, gender, and profession. These are different participants in each sample to avoid any bias or influence of information shared with them earlier.

*Table 19 - Experiment Groups*

| Brand | Experiment Group 1 | Experiment Group 2 |
|---|---|---|
| LEGO | New Social Media Campaign<br>BGC<br>Education for Ukraine Student<br>N=25 | New Social Media Campaign<br>UGC<br>Education for Ukraine Student<br>N=25 |
| | Experiment Group 3 | Experiment Group 4 |
| GoPro | New Social Media Campaign<br>BGC<br>Education for Ukraine Student<br>N=25 | New Social Media Campaign<br>UGC<br>Education for Ukraine Student<br>N=25 |

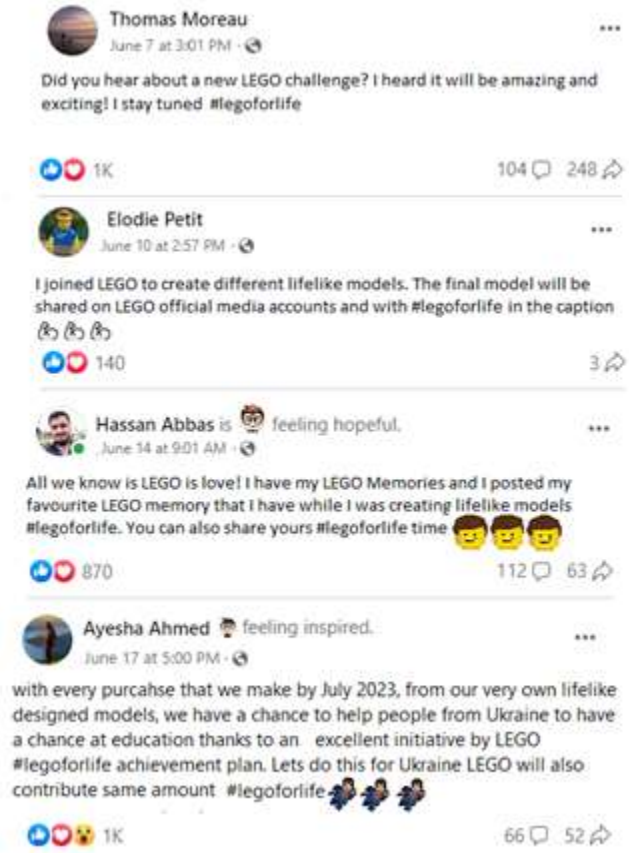
### 4.2.4. Pretest 1: Scenario 1 LEGO UGC

#### *4.2.4.1. Scenario Details: Scenario 1 LEGO UGC*

LEGO brand has taken an initiative to support 5 students from Ukraine in their pursuit to higher education. This initiative is linked with the purchase of a LEGO set and posting of videos on social media with #Legoforlife. An equal amount of the purchase will be donated to the fund and the videos will be posted on the official social media channels of the LEGO brand. This scenario encourages the users (customers) to be involved and engaged with the brand with a moral and

ethical dilemma as well. They are indirectly helping the people from the war-struck region. We chose Ukraine because it has been one of the most recent and most catastrophic events in the recent human history. The sufferings and war-crimes have been shared on social media and has drawn a global social consensus. During our exploratory studies we found that not just participants from Europe but participants from across the globe felt similar sort of emotions for Ukrainian people. The scenario shows that the content is been posted by the random users of the brand. These users are also encouraging and explain the whole process to others. In contradiction to the brand scenario, we are not using the official blue tick. These posts resonate with the accounts of random customers or users of the brand who have found an interesting new initiative taken by the brand and thus they are promoting a good initiative with the same community of the brand users.

*Figure 30 - LEGO UGC Pretest Scenario*



#### 4.2.4.2. Sample Details: Scenario 1 LEGO UGC

In our first scenario we are testing the scenario of LEGO UGC. The majority of our sample, in terms of age, falls within the 18-29 years age range. 20 out of 25 (80%) participants fall within this range. Among them, 16 (64%) are male, and 09 (36%) are female. The largest represented nationality is French, 11 participants that make (44%) of the sample are French nationals, followed by 4 (16%) Turkish nationals, 03 (12%) Mexicans, and others. In terms of profession, the majority are students 14 (56%), while a notable portion are engaged in independent work or managerial roles with 10 employees or less (20%). When considering income levels, the majority of individuals earn 500 euros (60%). However, some individuals experience higher incomes, particularly among Turkish individuals, with 1200 euros (4%) or 1600 euros (4%). Below table summarize the details of our sample for the first pretest scenario:

*Table 20 - Demographic details of Pre-test scenario 1 LEGO UGC*

| Sr. No | Age | **Gender** | Nationality | Profession | Income |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 18-29 Years old | Male | French | Student | 500 |
| 2 | 18-29 Years old | Male | French | Student | 500 |
| 3 | 18-29 Years old | Male | Mexican | Student | 500 |
| 4 | 18-29 Years old | Male | tunisien | Student | 500 |
| 5 | 18-29 Years old | Male | Turkish | Independents, managers (10 employees or less) | 1200 |
| 6 | 30-39 Years old | Male | France | Student | 500 |
| 7 | 18-29 Years old | Male | French | Student | 500 |
| 8 | 18-29 Years old | Male | Mexican | Student | 500 |
| 9 | 30-39 Years old | Male | Turkish | Independents, managers (10 employees or less) | 1400 |
| 10 | 18-29 Years old | Male | France | Student | 500 |
| 11 | 18-29 Years old | Male | French | Student | 500 |
| 12 | 18-29 Years old | Male | tunisien | Student | 500 |
| 13 | 18-29 Years old | Male | French | Student | 500 |
| 14 | 30-39 Years old | Male | Mexican | Employee, clerk | 1200 |
| 15 | 18-29 Years old | Male | Turkish | Student | 500 |
| 16 | 18-29 Years old | Male | France | Student | 500 |
| 17 | 18-29 Years old | Female | Georgian | Student | 500 |
| 18 | 18-29 Years old | Female | France | Student | 500 |
| 19 | 18-29 Years old | Female | Polish | Student | 500 |
| 20 | 18-29 Years old | Female | French | Student | 500 |
| 21 | 18-29 Years old | Female | France | Student | 500 |
| 22 | 18-29 Years old | Female | Georgian | Student | 500 |
| 23 | 30-39 Years old | Female | Polish | Skilled Worker | 1000 |
| 24 | 18-29 Years old | Female | Turkish | Employee, clerk | 1600 |
| 25 | 18-29 Years old | Female | French | Student | 500 |

#### 4.2.4.3. Data Analysis: Scenario 1 LEGO UGC

Our data analysis of the variables measuring Brand Familiarity, Attitude towards the brand, Attitude towards the ad and Credibility shows acceptable normality of the data (kurtosis and skewness between -3 and +3), no outlier is identified with Mahalanobis distance. In order to check the possible gender bias in the brand attitude before the exposure to the scenario we did the checks. There is no gender bias for the overall score of attitudes towards the brand: male (M=3.93, SD=.68)

and female (M=3.63, SD=.48) do not show significant difference in their attitude towards the brand (t (25) =1.194, p>.245).

We checked for the mean difference in attitude towards the brand before and after the exposure to the scenario. As per our analysis, the results suggest that there is a change in attitude towards the brand after watching the brand generated content. The mean difference is (M=.60, p<.000). The difference is not significant. Below table summarizes the analysis:

*Table 21 - Mean comparison Att. towards brand before and after Pre-test scenario 1 LEGO UGC*

| Variable | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean Difference | t-value (24) | *Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attitude towards brand ([16]Before) | 25 | 3.826 | .625 | .60 | 4.025 | .000 |
| Attitude towards brand ([17]After) | 25 | 4.426 | .557 | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

#### 4.2.4.4. Manipulation Check: Scenario 1 LEGO UGC

We did a manipulation check to make sure that our participants were able to identify the source of the content. Either the content is UGC or BGC. Our findings strongly suggest that the participants were able to categorically distinguish between the options. In order to do our statistical analysis, we labelled UGC as 1, BGC as 2 and not sure as 3. As per our results, (M=1.16, SD=.554), (t=10.47, p<.000), M value shows that participants were clearly able to identify who posted the content. Below tables summarize the findings:

*Table 22 - Manipulation check Pre-test scenario 1 LEGO UGC*

| Variable | N | M | Std. Deviation | t-value (24) | *Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Who do you think has posted this post | 25 | 1.16 | .554 | 10.474 | .000 |

*Sig – (2 tailed)

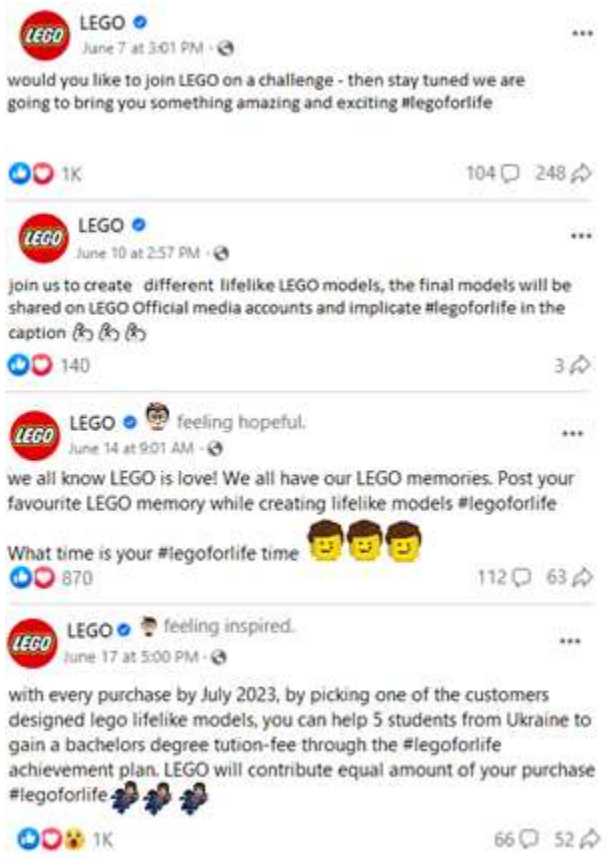
[16] Before – before the exposure to the tested scenario
[17] After – After the exposure to the tested scenario

### 4.2.5. Pretest 2: Scenario 2 LEGO BGC

#### *4.2.5.1. Scenario Details: Scenario 2 LEGO BGC*

LEGO brand has taken an initiative to support 5 students from Ukraine in their pursuit to higher education. This initiative is linked with the purchase of LEGO sets and posting of videos on social media with #Legoforlife. An amount equal to the equal amount of the purchase will be donated to the fund and the videos will be posted on the official social media channels of the brand. This scenario encourages the brand customers to be involved and engaged with the brand with a moral and ethical dilemma as well. They are indirectly helping the people from the war-struck region. The scenario shows that the content is been posted by the brand itself from its official brand account. This has been implicated by showing a blue tick in front of the account which is only awarded after a verification.

*Figure 31 - Pre-test scenario 2 LEGO BGC*



#### 4.2.5.2. Sample Details: Scenario 2 LEGO BGC

In our second pretest we are testing the scenario of LEGO BGC. We observe a diverse group of individuals categorized by age, gender, nationality, profession, and income. The majority of our participants, in terms of age, fall within the age group of 18 to 29 years, constituting 19 (76%) of the sample. Among them, 11 (44%) identify as male, while 14 (56%) are female. In terms of nationality, Mexican individuals make up the largest portion at 11 (44%), followed by Germans at 4 (16%). The primary profession reported is "student," with 15 (60%) of respondents pursuing this status. However, the dataset also includes professionals, such as a CEO, senior official, or manager 1 (4%), and employees or clerks 1 (4%). Regarding income levels, 13 (52%) of respondents earn 500, while smaller percentages earn incomes ranging from 820 to 1800. Below given table summarizes the sample details:

*Table 23 - Demographic details of Pre-test scenario 2 LEGO BGC*

| Sr. No | Age | Gender | Nationality | Profession | Income |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 18 - 29 years Old | Male | Mexico | Student | 1000 |
| 2 | 18 - 29 years Old | Male | Swiss | Student | 500 |
| 3 | 18 - 29 years Old | Male | Mexican | Student | 820 |
| 4 | 18 - 29 years Old | Male | Mexican | Student | 500 |
| 5 | 18 - 29 years Old | Male | English | Student | 500 |
| 6 | 18 - 29 years Old | Male | mexico | Student | 500 |
| 7 | 30 -39 years Old | Male | Mexican | Student | 500 |
| 8 | 30 -39 years Old | Male | Iraq | Student | 999 |
| 9 | 18 - 29 years Old | Male | Mexican | Student | 500 |
| 10 | 40 - 49 years Old | Male | Mexicane | CEO, senior official or manager | 1800 |
| 11 | 18 - 29 years Old | Male | mexico | Student | 500 |
| 12 | 18 - 29 years Old | Female | Mexican | Student | 500 |
| 13 | 18 - 29 years Old | Female | Mexican | Student | 500 |
| 14 | 18 - 29 years Old | Female | German | Student | 500 |
| 15 | 18 - 29 years Old | Female | Greek | Student | 500 |
| 16 | 18 - 29 years Old | Female | mexican | Student | 500 |
| 17 | 18 - 29 years Old | Female | German | Student | 1000 |
| 18 | 30 -39 years Old | Female | Russian | Employee, clerk | 1400 |
| 19 | 18 - 29 years Old | Female | Vietnamese | Student | 500 |
| 20 | 18 - 29 years Old | Female | Irish | Student | 500 |
| 21 | 18 - 29 years Old | Female | German | Student | 500 |
| 22 | 18 - 29 years Old | Female | Mexico | Student | 500 |
| 23 | 18 - 29 years Old | Female | Mexican | Student | 500 |
| 24 | 18 - 29 years Old | Female | German | Student | 500 |
| 25 | 18 - 29 years Old | Female | Irish | Student | 500 |

#### 4.2.5.3. Data Analysis: Scenario 2 LEGO BGC

Our data analysis of the variables measuring Brand Familiarity, Attitude towards the brand, Attitude towards the ad and Credibility shows acceptable normality of the data (kurtosis and skewness between -3 and +3), no outlier is identified with Mahalanobis distance. In order to

check the possible gender bias in the brand attitude before the exposure to the scenario we did the checks. There is no gender bias for the overall score of attitudes towards the brand: male (M=4.27, SD=.51) and female (M=4.19, SD=.42) do not show significant difference in their attitude towards the brand (t (25) =1.194, p>.245).

We checked for the mean difference in attitude towards the brand before and after the exposure to the scenario. As per our analysis, the results suggest that there is a change in attitude towards the brand after watching the brand generated content. The mean difference is (M=.253, p<.015). The difference is not significant. Below table summarizes the analysis:

*Table 24 - Mean comparison Att. towards brand before and after Pre-test scenario 2 LEGO BGC*

| Variable | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean Difference | t-value (24) | *Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attitude towards brand (Before) | 25 | 4.187 | .409 | .253 | 2.618 | .000 |
| Attitude towards brand (After) | 25 | 4.440 | .30 | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

#### 4.2.5.4. Manipulation Check: Scenario 2 LEGO BGC

We did a manipulation check to make sure that our participants were able to identify the source of the content. Either the content is UGC or BGC. Our findings strongly suggest that the participants were able to categorically distinguish between the options. In order to do our statistical analysis, we labelled UGC as 1, BGC as 2 and not sure as 3. As per our results, (M=2.04, SD=.20), (t=51.00, p<.000), M value shows that participants were clearly able to identify who posted the content. Below tables summarize the findings:

*Table 25 - Manipulation check Pre-test scenario 2 LEGO BGC*

| Variable | N | M | Std. Deviation | t-value (24) | *Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Who do you think has posted this post | 25 | 2.04 | .200 | 51.0 | .000 |

*Sig – (2 tailed)

### 4.2.6. Pretest 3: Scenario 3 GoPro UGC

#### *4.2.6.1. Scenario Details: Scenario 3 GoPro UGC*

GoPro is a brand that is primarily focused on manufacturing outdoor action cameras and other related accessories. The brand is known for its durable, compact, reliable, and state of the art cameras in terms of technological advancements. GoPro has taken an initiative to support 5 students from Ukraine in their pursuit to higher education. This initiative is linked with the purchase of a GoPro camera and posting of videos on social media with #GoProforlife. An equal amount of the purchase will be donated to the fund and the videos will be posted on the official social media channels of the brand. This scenario encourages the brand customers to be involved and engaged with the brand with a moral and ethical dilemma as well. They are indirectly helping the people from the war-struck region. We chose Ukraine because it has been one of the most recent and most catastrophic events in the recent human history. The sufferings and war-crimes have been shared on social media and has drawn a global social consensus. During our exploratory studies we found that not just participants from Europe but participants from across the globe felt similar sort of emotions for Ukrainian people. The scenario shows that the content is been posted by the random users of the brand. These users are also encouraging and explain the whole process to others. In contradiction to the brand scenario, we are not using the official blue tick. These posts resonate with the accounts of random customers or users of the brand who have found an interesting new initiative taken by the brand and thus they are promoting a good initiative with the same community of the brand users.

*Figure 32- Pre-test scenario 3 GoPro UGC*




#### *4.2.6.2. Sample Details: Scenario 3 GoPro UGC*

Our second sample includes the participants (N-=25), who were administered the same questionnaire but with the scenario of GoPro Camera brand with user generated content. In terms of age distribution, the majority of 23 participants (92%) fall within the 18-29 years bracket, with a smaller proportion 02 participants (8%) aged between 30-39 years. Our sample has a balanced gender representation. It includes 16 (64%) male respondents, and 09 (26%) female participants. The majority of sample is French 09 and Moroccan 10, while 04 are from Pakistan and 02 Indians. In relation to professions, the largest segment 18 (72%) identifies as students, with smaller portions being intermediate professionals 4 (16%), 2 employees (8%), and 1 CEOs (4%). Turning to income, respondents have diverse earnings, with the most common income levels being 1300 Euro (40%), 500 Euro (40%), and 1000 Euro (8%), while a smaller percentage report earning 300 Euro (8%) and 2500 Euro (4%).

For the user generated content, we chose 2 names from the French culture and 2 names from the Middle eastern Arab and Pakistani region. In order to select the names, we google searched the famous names in 1990's so that it meets our target populations age today. Our aim is to create a scenario that young adults can connect with. Thomas Moreau and Elodie Petit are the names google found as most common names in 1990's along with Hassan Abbas and Ayesha. We are using these names just to make sure our participants are able to connect and can empathize with each other.

*Table 26 - Demographic details of Pre-test scenario 3 GoPro UGC*

| S No. | Age | **Gender** | Nationality | Profession | Income |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 18–29 years old | Male | Pakistani | Student | 500 Euro |
| 2 | 18–29 years old | Male | Moroccan | Student | 1000 Euro |
| 3 | 18–29 years old | Male | Morocco | Student | 1300 Euro |
| 4 | 18–29 years old | Male | Moroccan | Student | 500 Euro |
| 5 | 18–29 years old | Male | Morocco | Student | 300 Euro |
| 6 | 18–29 years old | Male | Pakistani | Student | 500 Euro |
| 7 | 18–29 years old | Male | France | Student | 1300 Euro |
| 8 | 18–29 years old | Male | France | Student | 500 Euro |
| 9 | 18–29 years old | Male | Pakistani | Student | 500 Euro |
| 10 | 18–29 years old | Male | Moroccan | Student | 1000 Euro |
| 11 | 18–29 years old | Male | Morocco | Student | 1300 Euro |
| 12 | 18–29 years old | Male | Moroccan | Student | 500 Euro |
| 13 | 18–29 years old | Male | Morocco | Student | 300 Euro |
| 14 | 18–29 years old | Male | Pakistani | Student | 500 Euro |
| 15 | 18–29 years old | Male | France | Student | 1300 Euro |
| 16 | 18–29 years old | Male | France | Student | 500 Euro |
| 17 | 30–39 years old | Female | Indian | Student | 500 Euro |
| 18 | 18–29 years old | Female | Moroccan | Student | 1300 Euro |
| 19 | 18–29 years old | Female | France | Student | 1300 Euro |
| 20 | 18–29 years old | Female | France | Student | 1300 Euro |
| 21 | 30–39 years old | Female | Indian | Student | 500 Euro |
| 22 | 18–29 years old | Female | Moroccan | Student | 1300 Euro |
| 23 | 18–29 years old | Female | France | Student | 1300 Euro |
| 24 | 18–29 years old | Female | France | Student | 1300 Euro |
| 25 | 18–29 years old | Female | France | Student | 1300 Euro |

#### *4.2.6.3. Data Analysis Scenario 3 GoPro UGC*

Our data analysis of the variables measuring Brand Familiarity, Attitude towards the brand, attitude towards the ad and credibility shows acceptable normality of the data (kurtosis and skewness between -3 and +3), no outlier is identified with Mahalanobis distance. We also checked for the differences in means between gender in the brand attitude before the exposure to the scenario we did the checks. There is a difference between the attitudes towards the brand when it

comes to gender: male (M=3.68, SD=.412) and female (M=3.25, SD=.14) show significant difference in their attitude towards the brand (t (25) =2.98, p<.007)

Furthermore, in order to check whether the scenarios had an impact in terms of change in attitude towards the brand we conducted paired sample t-test. As per our findings there is a mean difference (M=.77, SD=0.73), with (t=5.289, p<.000). This shows that the scenario had a significant impact on the participants attitude towards the brand.

*Table 27 - Mean comparison Att. towards brand before and after Pre-test scenario 3 GoPro UGC*

| Variable | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean Difference | t-value (24) | *Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attitude towards brand (Before) | 25 | 3.53 | .397 | .773 | 5.289 | .000 |
| Attitude towards brand (After) | 25 | 4.31 | .109 | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

#### 4.2.6.4. Manipulation Check: Scenario 3 GoPro UGC

In order to check the clarity of the underlying scenario and to confirm if it is clear enough for the participants to differentiate between who posted the content in terms of a customer (user), the official brand channel or if the participant is unable to differentiate between the options. Our findings strongly suggest that the participants were able to categorically distinguish between the options. In order to do our statistical analysis, we labelled UGC as 1, BGC as 2 and not sure as 3. As per our results, (M=1.16, SD=.473), (t=12.27, p<.000), M value shows that participants were able to identify who posted the content. Below table summarizes the findings:

*Table 28 - Manipulation check Pre-test scenario 3 GoPro UGC*

| Variable | N | M | Std. Deviation | t-value (24) | *Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Who do you think has posted this post | 25 | 1.16 | .473 | 12.273 | .000 |

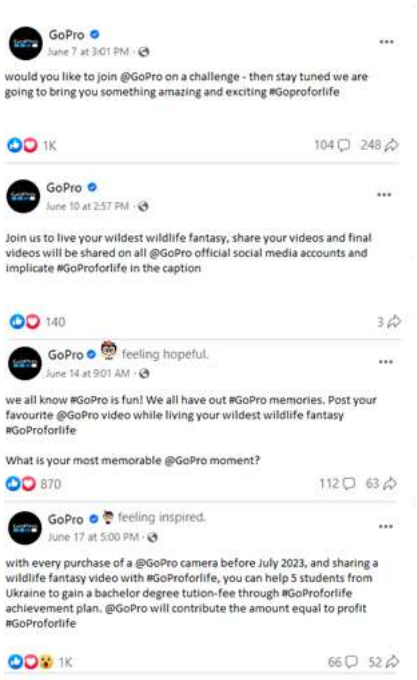
*Sig – (2 tailed)

### 4.2.7. Pretest 4: Scenario 4 GoPro BGC

#### *4.2.7.1. Scenario Details: Scenario 4 GoPro BGC*

GoPro has taken an initiative to support 5 students from Ukraine in their pursuit to higher education. This initiative is linked with the purchase of a GoPro camera and posting of videos on social media with #GoProforlife. An amount equal to the equal amount of the purchase will be donated to the fund and the videos will be posted on the official social media channels of the brand. This scenario encourages the brand customers to be involved and engaged with the brand with a moral and ethical dilemma as well. They are indirectly helping the people from the war-struck region. We chose Ukraine because it has been one of the most recent and most catastrophic events in the recent human history. The sufferings and war-crimes have been shared on social media and has drawn a global social consensus. During our exploratory studies we found that not just participants from Europe but participants from across the globe felt similar sort of emotions for Ukrainian people. The scenario shows that the content is been posted by the brand itself from its official brand account. This has been implicated by showing a blue tick in front of the account which is only awarded after a verification.

*Figure 33 - Pre-test scenario 4 GoPro BGC*



#### 4.2.7.2. Sample Details: Scenario 4 GoPro BGC

In our fourth pretest, we are testing the scenario of brand GoPro with BGC below table summarizes the details of the sample. Our sample in terms of age, the majority, 21 out of 25 participants (84.0%) fall within the 18-29 years old range, with a smaller proportion of 04 participants (16.0%) being aged 40-49. Gender-wise, the participants are fairly balanced, with 14 (56.0%) identifying as male and 11 (44.0%) as female. Regarding nationality, a diverse group is represented, with the most common nationalities being French 7, Moroccan 6, and Pakistani 6. The participants' professions encompass a majority of students (72.0%), individuals in CEO or managerial roles (20.0%), and those in various other roles. Income ranges vary, with the most prevalent being 1600 euros monthly (24.0%), and notable proportions falling within 1400 euros and 1600 euros ranges (12.0% each).

*Table 29 - Demographic details of Pre-test scenario 4 GoPro BGC*

| S.No | Age | Gender | Nationality | Profession | Income |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 18–29 years old | Male | Moroccan | Student | 1600 euros |
| 2 | 18–29 years old | Male | Algerian | Student | 1600 euros |
| 3 | 18–29 years old | Male | Pakistani | Student | N/A |
| 4 | 18–29 years old | Male | Moroccan | Student | 1600 euros |
| 5 | 18–29 years old | Male | Moroccan | Student | 2400 euros |
| 6 | 18–29 years old | Male | Lebanese | Student | 1600 euros |
| 7 | 18–29 years old | Male | Ivorian | Student | 1900 euros |
| 8 | 18–29 years old | Male | Moroccan | Student | 1600 euros |
| 9 | 18–29 years old | Male | Algerian | Student | 1600 euros |
| 10 | 18–29 years old | Male | Pakistani | Student | N/A |
| 11 | 18–29 years old | Male | Moroccan | Student | 1600 euros |
| 12 | 18–29 years old | Male | Moroccan | Student | 2400 euros |
| 13 | 18–29 years old | Male | France | Student | 1600 euros |
| 14 | 18–29 years old | Male | Ivorian | Student | 1900 euros |
| 15 | 40–49 years old | Female | Pakistani | Independents, managers (10 employees or less) | 4000 euros |
| 16 | 18–29 years old | Female | Panama | Student | 1600 euros |
| 17 | 18–29 years old | Female | French | Student | 1650 euros |
| 18 | 18–29 years old | Female | French | CEO, senior official or manager | 1400 euros |
| 19 | 40–49 years old | Female | Pakistani | CEO, senior official or manager | 1800 euros |
| 20 | 40–49 years old | Female | Pakistani | Independents, managers (10 employees or less) | 4200 euros |
| 21 | 18–29 years old | Female | France | Student | 1600 euros |
| 22 | 18–29 years old | Female | French | Student | 1650 euros |
| 23 | 18–29 years old | Female | French | CEO, senior official or manager | 1400/mo |
| 24 | 40–49 years old | Female | Pakistani | CEO, senior official or manager | 1800/Month |
| 25 | 18–29 years old | Female | French | CEO, senior official or manager | 1400/mo |

#### 4.2.7.3. Data Analysis Scenario 4 GoPro BGC

Our data analysis of the variables measuring Brand Familiarity, Attitude towards the brand, attitude towards the ad and credibility shows acceptable normality of the data (kurtosis and skewness between -3 and +3), no outlier is identified with Mahalanobis distance. In order to check the possible gender bias in the brand attitude before the exposure to the scenario we did the checks. There is no gender bias for the overall score of attitudes towards the brand: male (M=3.74, SD=.749) and female (M=3.27, SD=.68) do not show significant difference in their attitude towards the brand (t (25) =1.522, p>.14).

We checked for the mean difference in attitude towards the brand before and after the exposure to the scenario. As per our analysis, the results suggest that there is a change in attitude towards the brand after watching the brand generated content. The mean difference is (M=.3733, p<.015). The difference is not insignificant. Below table summarizes the analysis:

*Table 30 - Mean comparison Att. towards brand before and after Pre-test scenario 4 GoPro BGC*

| Variable | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Mean Difference | t-value (24) | *Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attitude towards brand (Before) | 25 | 3.52 | .739 | .373 | 2.608 | .000 |
| Attitude towards brand (After) | 25 | 3.89 | .567 | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

#### 4.2.7.4. Manipulation Check: Scenario 4 GoPro BGC

We did a manipulation check to make sure that our participants were able to identify the source of the content. Either the content is UGC or BGC. Our findings strongly suggest that the participants were able to categorically distinguish between the options. In order to do our statistical analysis, we labelled UGC as 1, BGC as 2 and not sure as 3. As per our results, (M=2.04, SD=.351), (t=29.04, p<.000), M value shows that participants were clearly able to identify who posted the content. Below tables summarize the findings:

*Table 31 - Manipulation check Pre-test scenario 4 GoPro BGC*

| Variable | N | M | Std. Deviation | t-value (24) | *Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Who do you think has posted this post | 25 | 2.04 | .351 | 29.04 | .000 |

*Sig – (2 tailed)

### 4.2.8. Demographic (Between groups mean comparison)

In order to make sure that we have a similar sample, we did ANOVA to confirm the mean difference between the 04 groups of N=25 participants. We compared their age, gender, and profession. There is no significant difference between the age, gender, and profession of these participants. The presented one-way ANOVA table assesses the impact of age, gender, and profession across four groups of 25 participants each, totaling 100 participants. The results indicate that neither age nor gender significantly contribute to the observed variability among these groups, with p-values of 0.343 and 0.445, respectively. However, there is a borderline suggestion that profession might play a role, as its p-value is 0.070, just below the conventional threshold of significance. Although there is a slight difference when it comes to the profession, this is not significant at a 95% confidence level. Below table summarizes the findings:

*Table 32 - ANOVA - (Demographic between groups mean comparison)*

| Variable | Sum of Square | F Value (df=3) | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | .840 | 1.124 | .343 |
| Gender | .670 | .899 | .445 |
| Profession | 23.84 | 7.947 | .070 |

[18]Note: All the values are non-significant.

[18] Non-significant values show that there is non-significant difference between the group's age, gender and profession.

### 4.2.9. Pretest quantitative analysis chapter summary

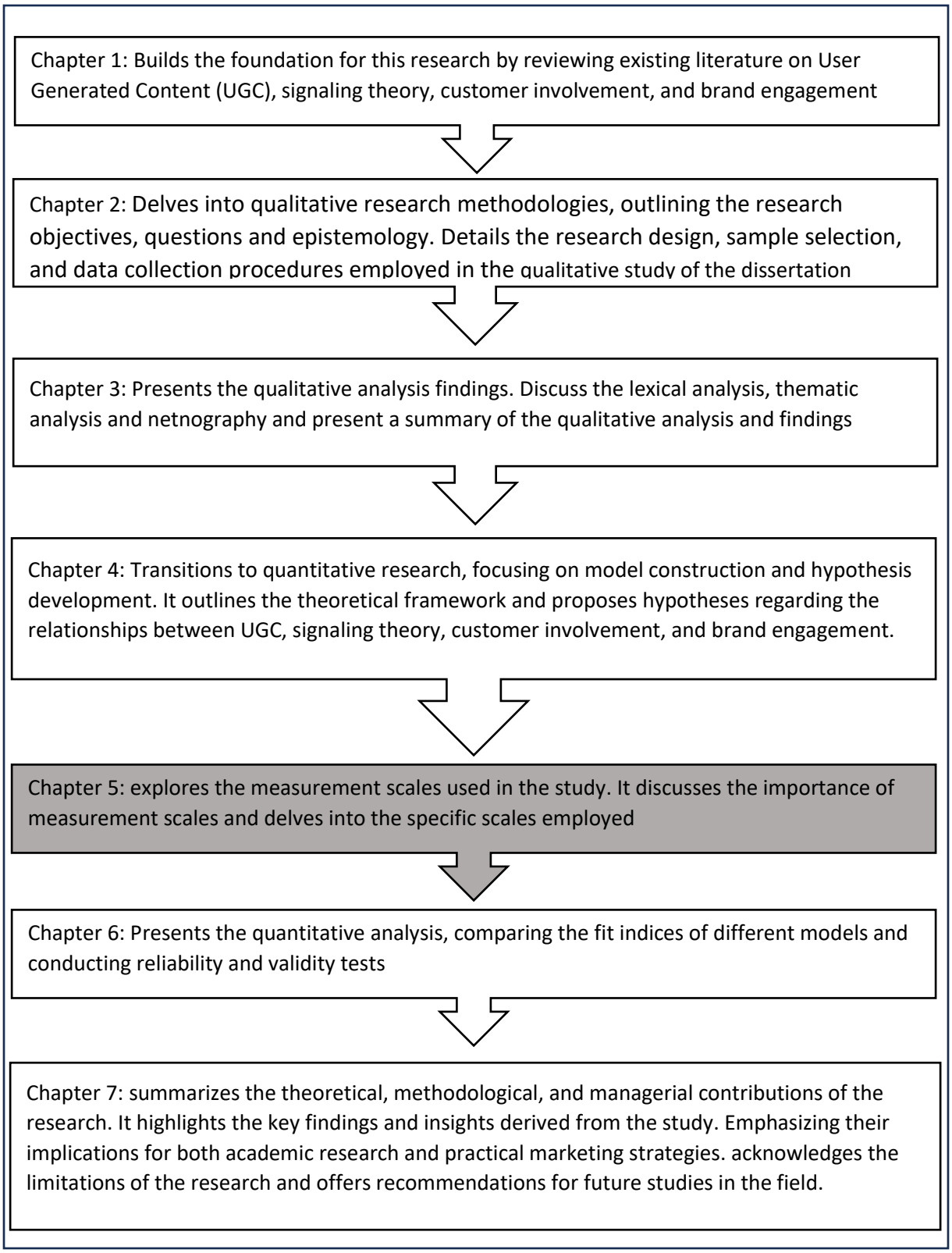
The quantitative chapter of this research focuses on validating and expanding upon findings from the qualitative phase by statistically testing hypotheses related to user-generated content (UGC) and brand-generated content (BGC). The chapter begins with the construction of a theoretical model to explore the impact of UGC and BGC on brand credibility, clarity, consistency, customer involvement, and brand engagement. The research hypotheses include predictions that UGC has a greater impact on these variables compared to BGC, among other interrelationships.

The pre-test aimed to validate scenarios designed to test these hypotheses. LEGO and GoPro were chosen as brands for their distinct levels of consumer involvement and technological orientation. LEGO, with its traditional, emotionally engaging products, represents a high-involvement, low-tech brand. Conversely, GoPro, known for its advanced action cameras, exemplifies a high-involvement, high-tech brand.

Four scenarios were developed: two for each brand, one with UGC and one with BGC. Each scenario was thoroughly crafted to ensure clarity and relevance, and then shared with field experts for feedback. The pre-test included 100 participants, divided into four groups (N=25 each), to evaluate the scenarios' effectiveness in conveying the source of the content and its engagement level.

Statistical analyses confirmed that the scenarios were clearly understood and effectively differentiated between UGC and BGC. For LEGO, participants showed a significant change in attitude towards the brand after exposure to both UGC and BGC scenarios, with UGC having a slightly higher impact. Similarly, GoPro's UGC scenario led to a more substantial positive shift in brand attitude compared to its BGC scenario. Manipulation checks revealed that participants could accurately identify the content source, reinforcing the scenarios' validity.

Overall, the pre-test established a solid foundation for the main quantitative study, demonstrating that the scenarios effectively manipulated the independent variable (content source) and provided preliminary support for the hypothesized relationships between UGC, BGC, and brand-related outcomes.


Chapter 1: Builds the foundation for this research by reviewing existing literature on User Generated Content (UGC), signaling theory, customer involvement, and brand engagement
Chapter 2: Delves into qualitative research methodologies, outlining the research objectives, questions and epistemology. Details the research design, sample selection, and data collection procedures employed in the qualitative study of the dissertation
Chapter 3: Presents the qualitative analysis findings. Discuss the lexical analysis, thematic analysis and netnography and present a summary of the qualitative analysis and findings
Chapter 4: Transitions to quantitative research, focusing on model construction and hypothesis development. It outlines the theoretical framework and proposes hypotheses regarding the relationships between UGC, signaling theory, customer involvement, and brand engagement.
Chapter 5: explores the measurement scales used in the study. It discusses the importance of measurement scales and delves into the specific scales employed
Chapter 6: Presents the quantitative analysis, comparing the fit indices of different models and conducting reliability and validity tests
Chapter 7: summarizes the theoretical, methodological, and managerial contributions of the research. It highlights the key findings and insights derived from the study. Emphasizing their implications for both academic research and practical marketing strategies. acknowledges the limitations of the research and offers recommendations for future studies in the field.

# 5. Chapter 5: Measurement Scales

In this chapter, the crucial role of measurement scales is emphasized. All the measurement scales are discussed in depth and based on the relevance and validity the final scales are chosen for the studied variables.

## 5.1. Importance of measurement scales:

Importance of measurement scales can never be undermined in a research study. The selection and application of appropriate measurement scales constitutes a fundamental aspect of rigorous research methodology, underpinning the validity and reliability of scientific investigations. According to Babbie (2016), measurement scales serve as the language through which researchers quantify abstract concepts, facilitating the transition from theoretical constructs to empirical observations. The choice of a specific scale demands careful consideration, as it not only dictates the statistical techniques that can be employed (Churchill, 1979) but also influences the overall quality of the research findings (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The literature underscores the importance of aligning the chosen measurement scale with the nature of the construct under investigation to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the study outcomes (DeVellis, 2016).

Moreover, selection of an appropriate Likert scale is also paramount in research design, as it directly influences the precision and interpretability of data that has been collected. Likert scales offer a range of response options, allowing researchers to capture the responses of participants' opinions and attitudes (Likert, 1932). The choice between various Likert scale formats, such as 3-point, 5-point, 7-point, or even higher, depends on the study's objectives and the desired level of details in responses. Researchers often argue and struggle with the decision of scale length,

and researchers like Carifio and Perla (2007) emphasize the need to balance length with the ability to discern subtle distinctions in participants' viewpoints.

In this study, the decision to employ a 5-point Likert scale aligns with recommendations by Jamieson (2004) and Krosnick and Presser (2010), who argue that a moderate number of scale points strike a balance between capturing meaningful distinctions in responses and preventing respondent fatigue. The 5-point Likert scale provides sufficient variability for participant feedback while avoiding excessive complexity, ensuring a manageable survey instrument, and enhancing respondent comprehension (Dawes, 2008). By adopting the 5-point Likert scale, this study aims to optimize data quality and participant engagement, as supported by these scholarly perspectives in survey methodology.

This chapter delves into the intricacies of measurement scales, their theoretical underpinnings, drawing on insights from these seminal works in the field to explain why a measurement scale has been chosen for this study.

## 5.2. Customer involvement:

### 5.2.1. Definition and interests of customer involvement:

According to the conceptualization of involvement by Zaichkowsky (1985) and Bloch and Richins (1983) involvement has three major antecedents; first is related to characteristics of the person, the second factor related to the characteristics of the stimulus, and the third factor related to the characteristics of the situation. One or more than one of these factors may affect the involvement with the stimulus in context of involvement with products (Hupfer and Gardner 1971) with advertisements (Krugman 1965) or with purchase situations (Clarke and Belk 1979). In all these three domains, the basic concept of involvement and its meaning did not change as it was always referred as personally relevant to stimulus object (Clarke and Belk 1979, Petty and Cacioppo

1981). In the similar context, Zaichkowsky (1985) devised a context-free 20 item scale and named it the personal involvement inventory, (PH) which measures the motivational state of involvement. The reason the PH measures the state of involvement rather than involvement as a stable trait is that the antecedents may cause involvement to change. This contrasts with the consumer involvement profile measure by Laurent and Kapferer (1985) which measures the antecedents of involvement.

### 5.2.2. Discussion and choice of customer involvement measurement scale

Four scales exists to measure the consumer involvement with a brand product that can be used for this research; (Zaichkowsky, 1985), (Beatty & Talpade, 1994), (Fang, 2008) and (C. M. Cheung et al., 2011). Each scale is discussed before the final summary in the table 33:

Cheung et al., (2011), aimed to explore the relationship between customer involvement, co-production of service, and perceived service performance in the context of retail banking[19]. The Cronbach alpha value of the customer involvement scale was found to be .78, indicating a high level of internal consistency (C. M. Cheung et al., 2011, p. 271). The study sample consisted of 349 respondents, out of the 500 randomly selected customers, resulting in a response rate of 69.8% (Cheung and To, 2011, p. 271). The respondents were predominantly female (60%) and had a bachelor's degree or above (40%). Their mean age was between 20 and 29, and their average monthly salary was US$1,250 (Cheung and To, 2011, p. 271). When asked about their major activities, the majority of the respondents (63.20%) selected cash withdrawal and deposit services (Cheung and To, 2011, p. 271).

[19] The scale was an adaption of item originating from (Zaichkowsky, 1985)

The measurement scale Fang, (2008) used to assess customer involvement in the study was a four-item, seven-point Likert scale. The reliability of this scale was assessed using the coefficient alpha, which was found to be .773. The study employed a variety of measurement scales to assess different constructs, including customer involvement, process interdependence, process complexity, and various control variables. The specific scale used to measure customer involvement was a four-item, seven-point Likert scale, which evaluated the degree of connectivity between the OEM customer's distributors and retailers. The reliability of this scale was found to be .773.

Beatty & Talpade, (1994), used scale for customer involvement in the context of family purchases. It's used as a two-stage process. The first stage is the "Initiation Stage," which involves activities such as "bringing up the idea to buy the product" and "getting people to realize that this product was needed." The second stage is the "Search/Decision Stage," which includes actions like "realizing that this product would be useful to have" and "getting others to start thinking about buying the product."

To gauge the perceived influence of teenagers in these stages, respondents answered questions on a seven-point scale, ranging from "I did not contribute at all" (0) to "The entire contribution was mine" (6). The midpoint (3) represented equal contribution. The composite scores for the two influence stages were calculated by averaging the scale items, resulting in coefficient alphas of .95 and .94 for family and teenager purchases, respectively. The study was conducted on 429 students from two freshmen orientation sessions at a southeastern university, with a 90 percent response

rate. The main study focused on durable purchases, such as televisions, video cassette recorders, stereo systems/components, telephones, answering machines, and furniture.

However, there were some limitations to the scale. Firstly, the factor structures provided two stages instead of the expected three, with most search items being eliminated during item refinement. This resulted in a greater emphasis on the decision stage. Secondly, there were concerns regarding the endpoints of the scale, indicating a need for further refinement.

Finally, (Zaichkowsky, 1985), The measurement scale used to assess involvement is the "Personal Involvement Inventory" (PII), which is a "bipolar adjective scale" designed to capture the concept of involvement for products. This scale was developed through a rigorous process, involving multiple data sets and populations. Specifically, it was developed over four data sets of 268 undergraduate psychology students, two data sets with 49 MBA students, and two data sets with 57 clerical and administrative staff members. The scale's content validity was established through expert judges' evaluation of item selection and classification of open-ended responses from subjects. Its reliability or stability over time was assessed through a test-retest correlation, which yielded an average correlation of 0.90. The criterion-related validity of the scale was demonstrated by its agreement with the order of various products found in previous studies. Finally, the construct validity of the scale, which refers to its alignment with theoretical propositions, was also tested.

The PII scale is designed to measure involvement across different product categories and is not limited to a specific context. However, it is important to note that the construct validity of the scale has only been supported for products. The scale can be adapted to measure involvement with advertisements or purchase decisions by modifying the instructions and the object of

judgment. For instance, to measure involvement with advertisements, the scale's instructions would be adjusted to focus on "the advertisements you have just seen (read)." Similarly, to measure involvement with purchase decisions, the instructions would be modified to reflect "various purchase decisions people make."

*Table 33 - Summary Comparison of Customer Involvement scales*

| Scale | Strength | Limitations |
|---|---|---|
| (Zaichkowsky, 1985)[20]<br>10 Items (α= 0.90) | Not limited to specific context<br>Measure Involvement across different product categories<br>Test re-test correlation .90 | Repetitive items. |
| (Beatty & Talpade, 1994)[21]<br>4 Items & 5 Items (α=.94, α=0.95) | coefficient alphas of .95 and .94<br>Widely tested validity | Factor structures provided two stages instead of the expected three.<br>concerns regarding the endpoints of the scale, indicating a need for further refinement |
| (Fang, 2008)<br>4 items (α=.773) | high level of internal consistency<br>Formulation emphasizes the a priori judgement | Not focused on the products |

[20] Its reliability or stability over time was assessed through a test-retest correlation.
[21] The coefficient alphas are respectively for the two-stage analysis.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (C. M. Cheung et al., 2011)<br>4 items (α=.78) | high level of internal consistency<br>Formulation emphasizes the a priori judgement | Adaptation of the (Zaichkowsky, 1985) scale |

In summary, the personal involvement inventory (PII) by (Zaichkowsky, 1985) is a comprehensive and validated measurement scale that captures the concept of involvement for products. Its development involved multiple data sets and populations, and it has been shown to have content validity, reliability, criterion-related validity, and construct validity. While the scale's construct validity has only been established for products, it can be adapted to measure involvement in other contexts, such as advertisements or purchase decisions, by modifying the instructions and the object of judgment. As a consequence, this scale is chosen for the quantitative questionnaire of this research.

Measurement : Customer Involvement (Zaichkowsky 1985)

1. Important – Unimportant*[22]
2. Boring – Interesting
3. Relevant – Irrelevant*
4. Exciting – Unexciting*
5. Mean nothing – Means a lot to me.
6. Appealing – Unappealing*
7. Fascinating – Mundane*

[22] Indicates item is reverse scored.

8. Worthless – Valuable
9. Involving – Uninvolving*
10. Not needed – Needed

## 5.3. Brand credibility:

### 5.3.1. Definitions and interest of brand credibility:

Brands as a signal increase the confidence of a consumer in a product or service being offered and this results in reduced uncertainty at a lower information cost and lower levels of perceived risk, and collectively these factors work in a way that increases the expected utility of a consumer (Erdem & Swait, 1998). Credibility works as a heart for a brand in a market that is uncertain (Erdem & Swait, 1998, 2004). For instance, a signal is only perceived to be authentic if its credible, thus credibility is the foundation stone for authenticity (Morhart et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014).

Brand credibility is a cognitive concept introduced by Erdem and Swait (1998) as part of their approach of brand equity as a signal[23]. Brand credibility is rooted in signaling theory and information economics: the brand equity corresponds to a signal added to a product, on which the consumer relies to reduce information asymmetry (Erdem and Swait, 1998). Brand credibility is a key concept of the model, defined as "the believability of the product position information contained in a brand, which entails consistently delivering what is promised, and it represents the cumulative effect of the credibility of all previous marketing actions taken by that brand" (Erdem et al., 2002, p.3).

[23] It is related but different from source credibility developed in the 1950's in psychology to study the reaction of audiences towards communicators (Hovland and Weiss, 1951). Source credibility is widely used in persuasion and endorsement (de Barnier, 2006; Dean, 1999; Ohanian, 1990).

### 5.3.2. Discussion and choice of brand credibility measurement scale:

Three scales exist to measure the brand credibility[24] and are relevant to this research study; (Erdem & Swait, 1998a), (Kirmani, 1997) and (Morhart et al., 2015). Each measurement scale is discussed before table 34 synthesis the findings.

Erdem et al., (2006), (1998) operationalize brand credibility as a characteristic of a brand's signal made of two dimensions: expertise and trustworthiness. The scale has seven items measured on a 9-points scale: two items measure expertise, and five items measure trustworthiness. As for perceived quality, they do not detail a formal scale development process, but the same studies across product categories and international replication testify of their validity and generalizability.

The 2004 paper provides Cronbach's alphas: .77 for expertise, and .89 for trustworthiness. A unidimensional version where six items exist has been successfully put to use in different cultural contexts with good results (Erdem et al., 2006). This scale shows very good convergent validity based on 2592 brand evaluations from six countries (construct squared multiple correlations are statistically significant at a 95% level for all items).

Kirmani, (1997) while discussing about the impact of advertising repetition on quality perceptions, considers the manufacturer's credibility as a mediator. She defines credibility as trustworthiness and confidence in the manufacturer's ability to produce quality goods. She does not specify the origin of the items. The measurement scale of perceived brand quality in the study involves several items. Perceived brand quality was measured as an average of three items with high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$). Two of the items were comparative measures of the relative quality and

[24] Scales that are built on the source credibility literature are not reviewed, that includes Celebrity Endorsers' credibility (Ohanian, 1990) and corporate credibility (Newell and Goldsmith, 2001).

prestige of the target brand compared to other brands of sparkling water, while the third item was on a 7-point absolute scale ranging from low quality to high quality. The study investigates the inverted-U relationship between repetition and perceived brand quality in the color and black and white conditions, and the author discusses the implications of these findings in the context of advertising repetition as a signal of quality. This scale has recently been adapted to a brand-level of analysis (Napoli et al., 2014) to assess the construct validity of their consumer-based authenticity scale. They tested it on a sample of 206 adult consumers recruited by a professional survey company and found similar internal consistency score ($\alpha = .76$). Both scales survey the confidence in the quality of the brand, although it is consistent with the definition of the concept, the mention of quality could infer circularity bias in the model as brand credibility is expected to impact perceived quality.

Morhart et al., (2015) developed an integrative framework of the concept of brand authenticity and reported the development and validation of a scale measuring consumers' perceived brand authenticity (PBA). A multi-phase scale development process resulted in a 15-item PBA scale measuring four dimensions: credibility, integrity, symbolism, and continuity. This scale is reliable across different brands and cultural contexts. The measurement scales showed sufficient reliability and validity (composite reliabilities > .6, Cronbach 's $\alpha > .7$) In a principal component exploratory factor analysis with oblimin rotation, a four-factor solution emerged (eigenvalues > 1). These factors were labelled credibility (eigenvalue = 49.61), continuity (eigenvalue = 3.69), symbolism (eigenvalue = 1.98), and integrity (eigenvalue = 1.21).

The final set of 15 items reflect the dimensions continuity (a brand with a history, a timeless brand, a brand that survives times, a brand that survives trends), credibility (apeople 'that will not betray you, a brand that accomplishes its value promise, an honest brand), integrity (a brand that gives

back to its consumers, a brand with moral principles, a brand true to a set of moral values, a brand that cares about its consumers) and symbolism (a brand that adds meaning to people‘s lives, a brand that reflects important values that people care about, a brand that connects people with their real selves, a brand that connects people with what is really important.

Examination of a series of measurement models indicated that a four-factor correlated model fit the data best (NNFI = .97, CFI = .98, GFI = .92, SRMR =.03, RMSEA = .07, $\chi 2(84) = 175.56$, $p < .01$, $\chi 2/df < 3$; (Bollen, 1989). Although This model was accepted as the best structural representation of PBA. The scale does not directly measure credibility.

*Table 34 - Summary Comparison of measurement scales for brand credibility*

| Scale | Strength | Limitations |
|---|---|---|
| (Erdem et al., 2006)[25]<br>6 Items[26] (α= 0.89) | Not limited to specific context<br>Very robust across contexts (product category, cultural backgrounds).<br>Consistent with the dependent variable of the model. | Repetitive items.<br>Parsimony is least in comparison to the other 2 scales |
| (Kirmani, 1997)<br>3 items (α=.82) | High internal consistency<br>Multi-dimensional | Circulatory bias[27] |

[25] The scale is adapted from (Erdem & Swait, 2004)
[26] It is a 6-item scale, but we dropped one item – As brand credibility is supposed to measure an assumption about the brand, regardless of prior experience, the following item was removed from the original scale: “Over time, my experiences with this brand have led me to expect it to keep its promises, no more and no less.”
[27] mention of quality could infer circularity bias in the model as brand credibility is expected to impact perceived quality.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | High reliability | |
| (Morhart et al., 2015)<br>3 items (α=.7) | Best structural representation of PBA.<br>Parsimonious | Does not measure credibility directly.<br>Authenticity is considered as credibility |

Based on an extensive literature review and relevance of our study we choose to go with the scale of (Erdem et al., 2006). Erdem & Swait's, (2006) scale is a widely used measurement tool in marketing research to assess brand credibility. Given its remarkably robust results, (Erdem et al., 2006) scale for brand credibility is chosen for this research. The scale has been found to be a reliable and valid measure of brand credibility, which means that it accurately measures what it is intended to measure. The scale is applicable to a wide range of products and services and is useful for assessing brand signals across a variety of contexts. The scale allows for comparative analysis across brands, which is important for understanding how different brands are perceived by consumers and for identifying areas of strength and weakness in brand messaging. Therefore, the scale is chosen for this study.

(Erdem et al., 2006)

Brand Credibility

- This brand delivers what it promises.
- This brand's product claims are believable.
- This brand is committed to delivering on its claims, no more and no less.

- This brand has a name you can trust.
- This brand has the ability to deliver what it promises.

## 5.4. Brand consistency:

### 5.4.1. Definition and Interests of Brand Consistency

Consistency is one of the key marketing principles (Park et al., 2008) and plays a pivotal role in brand management. The term consistency also referred to the fact that brand has been stable (low variation) in terms of its attributes over time (e.g., "Mercedes-Benz always produces high-quality cars"). Consistency can be termed as the amount of convergence and harmony between the marketing mix elements and its stability over the time. Credibility is directly dependent on the consistency of the marketing mix strategy of a brand. Consistency has a direct influence on consumers perceptions as it portrays the seriousness, willingness, and ability of the firm to deliver the promised quality of service or products over a course of time (Erdem & Swait, 1998).

Consistency has a direct effect on perceived brand quality, and it further strengthens the perception of signal (brand) being credible (Boulding & Kirmani, 1993; Erdem & Swait, 2004). A brand must always avoid deliberate or undeliberate discrepancies between the actual offerings and the ones promised because this will result in erosion of credibility. According to the literature of signaling theory, a signal that is consistent with it claims over a longer run would eventually result in higher levels of credibility and results in an enhanced brands equity. In a more concise manner, managing a brand is simply managing the credibility and consistency of the claims made under the name of the brand (Erdem & Swait, 1998). Studies have used consistency for the measurement of brand authenticity alongside credibility (Diamantopoulos et al., 2005).

### 5.4.2. Discussion and choice of brand consistency measurement scale

There are 2 measurements scales that deem relevant with this study; (Erdem & Swait, 1998a) and (Bruhn et al., 2012). Each of these scales are discussed before the final summary in table 35.

Erdem and Swait in 1998 tested a measurement scale and tested it on a branded product. Although there has not been any detailed description about the origins of the items, but overall scale was successfully tested in multiple contexts to prove its validity empirically. A group of 890 students from America were provided juices and jean brand to evaluate in order to test the model and show the validity of the scale (Erdem and Swait, 1998). Consistency is measured using 4 items.

Overall scale was successfully tested in multiple contexts to prove its validity empirically. A group of 890 students from America were provided juices and jean brand to evaluate in order to test the model and show the validity of the scale (Erdem and Swait, 1998). Further research evaluates athletic shoes (n=83), cellular phones (n=84), headache medication (n=83), juice (n=83), personal computers (n=82), and shampoo (n=83), exhibiting a Cronbach Alpha of .77 (Erdem & Swait, 2004). In the later studies (Erdem et al., 2006) which is a cross-country validation of the scale: Brazil (n=126), Germany (n=57), India (n=161), Japan (n=114), Spain (n=155), Turkey (n=126), and the United States (n=143) shows Alpha superior to .70.

Bruhn et al., (2012) developed a scale after a thorough literature review with studies focusing on different consumers and different brands. Brand authenticity is measured by four main dimensions, these dimensions include continuity (consistency), reliability (credibility), originality and naturalness that can also be termed as its clarity in terms of perception. The advantage of their scale is that they are focused towards measuring the brands by these four dimensions rather than

just measuring the particular component of the brand (e.g., whether the brand's advertisement is credible and likely to be true).

Bruhn et al., (2012) developed a 15 item, 4 factor scale after testing its reliability and validity with several steps. They later conducted a factor analysis using varimax rotation limiting the number of factors to four. The factor analysis with a strict loading condition (> .7) reveals a solution with eigenvalues greater than 1 (the variance explained shows a value of 70.33%). The identified four factors confirm the theoretical assumption of a four-factor structure. Additionally, they tested the derived items regarding their reliability using Cronbach's alpha (Nunally & Bernstein, 1978). The Cronbach's alphas are in line with the required minimum value regarding all items of the four factors: continuity (.90), originality (.90), reliability (.96), and naturalness (.95). The four-factor model fits the data very well: $\chi 2(84) = 457.63$, $p < .001$, normed fit index (NFI) = .97, the comparative fit index (CFI) = .98, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = .93, the root means square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .07. Although their work has seminal importance, they have not extensively built a scale to measure consistency of a brand in signaling phenomenon but rather have measured the consumers perceived brand authenticity.

*Table 35 - Summary comparison of measurements scale for brand consistency*

| Scale | Strength | Limitations |
|---|---|---|
| (Erdem & Swait, 1998a)[28]<br>4 Items ($\alpha$= 0.70) | Not limited to specific context | Internal consistency is weak in comparison to other scales. |

[28] The scale is the base for the adaptation in later research for (Erdem et al., 2006; Erdem & Swait, 2004)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Very robust across contexts (product category, cultural backgrounds).<br>Parsimonious<br>Consistent with the dependent variable of the model. | |
| (Bruhn et al., 2012)<br>3 items (α=.90) | High internal consistency<br>Multi-dimensional<br>High reliability | Circulatory bias[29] |

In summary most of the studies (Baek et al., 2010; Karanges et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2008) have used (Erdem & Swait, 1998a) as their base, taking items from this study and further validating the items. Erdem & Swait's, (1998,2006) scale is a widely used measurement tool in marketing research to assess the consistency of a brand as a signal and it best matches the objective of this study therefore the scale has been chosen.

(Erdem & Swait, 1998a)

Brand Consistency

- This brand's image in commercials and ads has been consistent for many years.
- The quality of this brand has been consistent for many years.

[29] mention of quality could infer circularity bias in the model as brand credibility is expected to impact perceived quality.

- This brand's ads, prices, specials, and products match its overall image.
- Everything is consistent about this brand: fit, quality, price, ads, variety, specials, etc.

## 5.5. Brand clarity:

### 5.5.1. Definition and interests of brand clarity:

Signals clarity is the second process variable that captures the extent and amount of vagueness in the message or information provided by the brand. Similar to credibility and consistency, the degree of clarity of a signal is also linked with information cost, perceived risk, and resultantly linked with expected utility. In case the message propagated by the brand signal is clear it will not only decrease the information cost, uncertainty, and perceived risk but will also increase the utility expected by the consumer thus creates a positive image and position of the brand (Aaker, 1991).

Clarity is also considered to be antecedents of brand credibility so in order to achieve the credibility a signal must be clear along with being consistent (Erdem & Swait, 1998). A signal can only be termed clear when the consumers are able to grasp the intended message behind the brand (Erdem & Swait, 1998). According to the existing literature myths and stories create confusions rather than clarity and therefore brands should avoid such messages to avoid ambiguity in the message (Adorisio, 2014; Brown et al., 2013).

### 5.5.2. Discussion and choice of brand clarity measurement scale:

There are 3 measurements scales that deem fit with the objectives of this study; (Erdem & Swait, 1998a), (Rao et al., 1999) and (Xie et al., 2020) . Each of these scales are discussed before the final summary in table 36.

Erdem and Swait in 1998 tested a measurement scale and tested it on a branded product. Although there has not been any detailed description about the origins of the items, but overall scale was successfully tested in multiple contexts to prove its validity empirically. A group of 890 students from America were provided juices and jean brand to evaluate in order to test the model and show the validity of the scale (Erdem and Swait, 1998). Clarity is measured using 2 items. The second item is reverse coded to validate the first item.

Overall scale was successfully tested in multiple contexts to prove its validity empirically. A group of 890 students from America were provided juices and jean brand to evaluate in order to test the model and show the validity of the scale (Erdem and Swait, 1998). Further research evaluates athletic shoes (n=83), cellular phones (n=84), headache medication (n=83), juice (n=83), personal computers (n=82), and shampoo (n=83), exhibiting a Cronbach Alpha of .77 (Erdem & Swait, 2004). In the later studies (Erdem et al., 2006) which is a cross-country validation of the scale: Brazil (n=126), Germany (n=57), India (n=161), Japan (n=114), Spain (n=155), Turkey (n=126), and the United States (n=143) shows Alpha superior to .70.

Rao et al., (1999) in their study used the 3 factors to measure the brand signal clarity. Measurement of brand signal clarity involved the manipulation of three factors: the observability of quality, the nature of the signal communicated by the brand ally, and its credibility. In the first study, a traditional between-subjects multifactor experiment was conducted to directly manipulate the impact of the credibility of the two types of signals as well as the observability of the product's performance. The key dependent variable was the perception of product quality for the jointly branded product.

The measurement of the impact of credible information on perceptions of quality for attributes that are not observable presented a challenge, but a multidimensional scale of overall quality was

constructed based on prior literature and pretests. This scale included measures of global quality as well as specific attribute-relevant evaluations appropriate for the product under examination. The scale used for quality perceptions had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85.

Xie et al., (2020) measured the clarity of the brand image using BUIC scale. The measurement scale used to measure brand user imagery clarity (BUIC) consists of five items. The confirmatory factor analysis on the 5-item BUIC scale indicated satisfactory model fit statistics, with all five items significantly loaded onto one factor, indicating convergent validity. The scale also demonstrated internal consistency with a Cronbach's α of 0.93 and an average variance extracted (AVE) of 0.67, exceeding the threshold level of 0.50.

Furthermore, the discriminant validity of the BUIC scale from brand user imagery favorability and brand quality was supported through significant chi-square difference tests, indicating that the BUIC scale is different from brand user image favorability and brand quality. This indicates that the BUIC scale has been rigorously evaluated for its validity and reliability, and the measurement scale used for clarity has been detailed along with its items and performance across surveys.

*Table 36 – Summary of comparison of measurement scale for Brand clarity*

| Scale | Strength | Limitations |
|---|---|---|
| (Erdem & Swait, 1998a)[30]<br>2 Items (α= 0.77) | Not limited to specific context | Internal consistency is weak in comparison to other scales. |

[30] The scale is the base for the adaptation in later research for (Erdem et al., 2006; Erdem & Swait, 2004)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Very robust across contexts (product category, cultural backgrounds).<br>Parsimonious<br>Consistent with the dependent variable of the model. | |
| (Rao et al., 1999)[31]<br>3 Factors (α= 0.85) | Multi-Dimensional<br>Includes measures of global quality<br>Includes specific attribute-relevant evaluations appropriate for the product under examination | Less parsimonious |
| (Xie et al., 2020)<br>5 items (α= 0.93) | High convergent validity<br>Parsimonious | Focused on the image of the brand |

In summary most of the studies (Baek et al., 2010; Karanges et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2008) have used (Erdem & Swait, 1998) as their base, taking items from this study and further validating the items. Erdem & Swait's, (1998,2006) scale is a widely used measurement tool in marketing research to assess the consistency of a brand as a signal and it best matches the objective of this study therefore the scale has been chosen.

[31] We couldn't find specific information about the clarity and number of items in the provided document.

(Erdem & Swait, 1998a)

Brand Clarity

- I know what this brand stands for.
- I have trouble figuring out what image this brand is trying to create[32].

## 5.6. Brand engagement

### 5.6.1. Definition and interests of customer brand engagement:

Engagement with a brand as a concept and terminology will also be helpful in predicting the behavior of a customer beyond just rational decision-making behavior (Schau, Muñiz Jr, & Arnould, 2009). Brand has been defined by Brown, Dacin, Pratt, and Whetten (2006, pp. 99-106) as the "totality of all stakeholders' mental associations about the organization" and related. So, the real question lies what Brand engagement is. Accordingly, one of the pioneers of modern-day research about brand engagement defines customer engagement with a brand as "a psychological state that occurs by virtue of interactive, co-creative customer experiences with a focal agent/object (e.g., a brand)." (Brodie et al., 2011, pp. 252-271).

Engagement is viewed as behavioral motivation and thus leads to certain behaviors that are of great importance to any stakeholder (Schultz, 2007). It is an individual-specific motivation that also depends on the context of the interaction that emerges from two-way interaction between a

[32] Reverse Coded

subject and object and in the example of brand, the object is the brand whereas the subject is the customer that is exerting an engaging behavior.

Engagement acts as one of the most important phenomena as evidently with higher levels engagement with a brand, an organization becomes closer to achieving its goals in terms of growing sales, reduced costs, positive word of mouth and higher number of referrals, consumers created or consumer co-created content thus resulting in higher long-term benefits and ultimately the profits (Bijmolt et al., 2010). Customer brand engagement has also been used as a new and key emerging criterion used to measure the performance of a brand (Bowden, 2009; Vita Kumar et al., 2010).

### 5.6.2. Discussion and choice of brand engagement measurement scale:

There are four scales that measure the brand engagement in multi-dimension that can be used for this research study; (L. D. Hollebeek et al., 2014), (Sprott et al., 2009), (So et al., 2014) and (Dwivedi, 2015). Each scale is discussed in detail before the final summary in table 37.

Hollebeek et al., (2014) developed the scale to measure customer brand engagement. The development and validation of the CBE scale has been a multi-step process, involving several studies and statistical analyses. This scale consists of three dimensions: cognitive processing, affection, and activation. The results showed acceptable fit ($\chi 2\ 32 = 82.02$, $\chi 2/df = 2.56$, $p < .001$, goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = .97, normed fit index (NFI) = .98, confirmatory fit index (CFI) = .99, Tucker–Lewi's index (TLI) = .97, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .056), in support of construct reliability. The scale is validated and shown to have an acceptable fit in the study's specific context. However, further validation in different contexts and settings is recommended.

The three dimensions of the CBE scale; cognitive processing, this dimension consists of three items, which loaded onto factor 3. The Cronbach's alpha for this dimension is .753. Affection, this dimension comprises of four items, which loaded onto factor 1. The Cronbach's alpha for this dimension is .839. The third dimension is activation. This dimension includes three items, which loaded onto factor 2. 5 Cronbach's alpha for this dimension is .776. The overall customer brand engagement (CBE) scale consists of ten items, with three items for Cognitive Processing, four items for Affection, and three items for Activation. The Cronbach's alpha for the overall CBE scale is .823.

Sprott et al., (2009) discusses the customer brand engagement in the self-concept. The development and validation of the brand engagement with the self-concept (BESC) scale is a crucial step in understanding the impact of brand engagement on consumer behavior. The scale was developed through a rigorous process, ensuring its reliability and validity. The initial item generation for the BESC scale was based on a comprehensive review of relevant branding and self-concept literature streams, resulting in a pool of 36 scale items. These items were then evaluated for content validity by nine scholars, leading to a modified set of 32 items. The scale was then administered to an undergraduate student sample of 430 individuals, and item purification using conventional factor analytical iterations resulted in a final BESC scale comprising of eight items.

The reliability of the BESC scale was assessed using conventional standards of internal consistency and intertemporal reliability. The scale demonstrated high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .94, indicating that the items in the scale consistently measure the same construct. The intertemporal reliability of the scale, ranging between .62 and .78, further supports its stability over time.

To establish the nomological validity of the BESC scale, its relationship with other constructs was examined. The scale was found to be distinct from global assessments of self and overall well-being, indicating that brand engagement is a unique dimension of the self-concept. The correlation between BESC and material values, with a coefficient of .42, was further analyzed through confirmatory factor analyses, confirming the distinct theoretical constructs measured by the BESC and material values scales.

(So et al., 2014) put forth the measurement scale for the brand engagement in the context of services. The development and validation of the customer brand engagement scale involved several key steps, including item generation, content validity assessment, and reliability and validity testing. The initial item pool for the scale was generated through a review of existing literature, resulting in a pool of 28 items, 26 of which were drawn from the literature and developed specifically for the study.

This item pool was then subjected to a content validity assessment, involving two separate panels. The first panel, consisting of 11 graduate students, was asked to assign each item to the construct it best indicated. The majority of items were sorted correctly, with the exception of four absorption items, which were subsequently reverse worded for improved clarity. The items were then reviewed by a second panel of six faculty members, who rated the representativeness of each item on a 3-point scale.

The reliability and validity of the customer brand engagement scale were assessed through various statistical tests. The reliability of the scale was evaluated using composite reliability values, which ranged from .92 to .97, exceeding the recommended level of .70. The validity of the scale was assessed through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), comparing different models. The five-factor model, which was the initial conceptualization of customer brand engagement, provided a

significantly better fit than the one-factor model, indicating that the five-factor model was the more appropriate conceptualization. A four-factor model was also tested, combining the two most highly correlated factors into one, but this model did not provide a better fit than the five-factor model.

The dimensionality of the customer brand engagement scale was further confirmed through factor analysis, which resulted in a final five-factor model with 25 items, explaining 79.17% of the total variances. All five dimensions exceeded the recommended Cronbach's alpha criterion of .70, and all items loaded on the intended factor, with no cross-loadings in excess of .40.

Finally, Dwivedi, (2015), put forth a three dimensional scale with 17 items. The three-dimensional scale consisted of vigor, dedication, and absorption. This model was found to have a significant chi-square value, indicating that it was statistically significant. However, other fit indices, such as the Normed $\chi 2$, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), suggested an acceptable fit to the data, thus indicating construct validity.

All item loadings were found to be greater than 0.50, indicating adequate convergent validity. This finding was further supported by AVE scores greater than 0.50. Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability estimates were above 0.80 for all constructs, indicating acceptable reliability. Discriminant validity was also supported, although the specific details were not provided in the document extracts. In terms of the scale's dimensions and items, the researchers used a multi-item 7-point Likert scale, with fully labeled scale points, to measure the constructs. The measures for consumer brand engagement were adapted from (Menguc et al., 2013) literature other constructs, such as vigor, dedication, and absorption, were operationalized using items derived from the literature.

*Table 37 - Summary of comparison of measurement scale for brand engagement*

| Scale | Strength | Limitations |
|---|---|---|
| (L. D. Hollebeek et al., 2014)<br>10 Items (α= 0.823) | Multi-Dimensional<br>3 Factor model<br>Higher internal consistency<br>Test re-test validity | Moderate levels of convergent and discriminant validity<br>It's a 3-factor model but this study is focused on the emotional dimension. |
| (Sprott et al., 2009)<br>8 Items (α=.94) | Intertemporal reliability of the scale, ranging between .62 and .78 | Limited to Unique dimension of Self-Concept |
| (So et al., 2014)<br>25 items (α=.70) | high level of internal consistency<br>Five factor Model – 79.17% variance explained | Not focused on the products |
| (Dwivedi, 2015)[33]<br>17 items (α=.80) | high level of internal consistency<br>3 Factor model with robust internal validity | Adaptation of the (Menguc et al., 2013) scale<br>Repetition of the items |

The literature on engagement reveals a lack of consensus regarding its dimensionality. Some propose a unidimensional perspective, emphasizing a single aspect of engagement, such as

[33] Items are adopted from (Menguc et al., 2013)

cognitive, emotional, or behavioral. For instance, Guthrie and Cox (2001) emphasize the cognitive aspect, while Catteeuw et al. (2007) and Pomerantz (2006) highlight the emotional and behavioral aspects, respectively. On the other hand, a multidimensional perspective suggests that engagement encompasses a combination of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects. For example, Marks and Printy (2003) propose a two-dimensional cognitive/emotional engagement, while Bejerholm and Eklund (2007) advocate a cognitive/behavioral view. A three-dimensional view, incorporating cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement aspects, appears to have found widespread acceptance in the literature (Bakker et al., 2007; Bakker et al., 2008; Handelsman et al., 2005; Ili´c, 2008; Jennings & Stoker, 2004; Klem & Connell, 2004; Salanova et al., 2005).

In summary, the CBE scale by (L. D. Hollebeek et al., 2014), is a measurement tool that aims to capture the level of engagement customers have with a brand. It is designed to provide insights into various aspects of consumer-brand interactions as it is a three-dimensional scale that captures the cognitive processing, affection and activation behaviors. This study is focused on the emotional aspect of engagement with brand and hence the affection dimension of the scale has been adapted in this study. The development and validation of the CBE scale has been a multi-step process, involving several studies and statistical analyses. This scale has been widely used by researchers, (M. L. Cheung et al., 2020; Dessart et al., 2015; Dolan et al., 2016; Leckie et al., 2016). The scale matches with this research study and therefore is selected for this study.

(L. D. Hollebeek et al., 2014)

Customer brand engagement scale:

Affection

- I feel very positive when I use [Brand X].
- Using [Brand X] makes me happy.
- I feel good when I use [Brand X].
- I'm proud to use [Brand X].

## 5.7. Control variable brand familiarity:

### 5.7.1. Definition and interests of brand familiarity:

Brand familiarity has long been regarded as an important factor influencing product evaluations and preferences. When testing the customer involvement and brand engagement, it is desirable to control potential exogenous influences of brand familiarity (Batra et al. 2000). Brand familiarity is an indication of a consumer's direct and indirect interactions with a brand, as highlighted by Alba and Hutchinson (1987) and Kent and Allen (1994). It encompasses the brand associations stored in a consumer's memory, distinguishing between products that are well-known and those that are unfamiliar, possibly due to their recent introduction to the market or consumers' lack of exposure to the brand (Stewart 1992).

Differences between familiar and unfamiliar brands lie in the depth of brand knowledge stored in a consumer's memory. Familiar brands often evoke a range of associations, as defined by Alba and Hutchison (1987) as the cumulative experiences related to the product or service. These experiences encompass various aspects, including direct encounters, advertising exposure, interactions with salespersons, word-of-mouth communications, trial, and consumption. Johnson and Russo (1984) equate familiarity with knowledge, while Johnson and Kellaris (1988) emphasize the contribution of experience to familiarity.

A comprehensive review of literature underscores the interconnectedness of knowledge, experience, and familiarity. Brand familiarity, following Alba and Hutchison's (1987) perspective, is construed as the compilation of experiences associated with a brand. Research indicates that familiarity plays a pivotal role in shaping consumers' decision-making processes (Bettman and Park, 1980; Park and Lessig, 1981), influencing the relationship between price and quality (Johnson and Kellaris, 1988), and impacting advertising effectiveness (Campbell and Keller, 2003). In experimental conditions, Derlund (2002) demonstrated distinct differences in satisfaction and behavioral intentions between customers with high and low familiarity, especially in extreme performance scenarios.

### 5.7.2. Discussion and choice of brand familiarity measurement scale:

There are three scales that measure brand familiarity in the product category that are objectively fit for this research study; (Zhou et al., 2010), (Tam, 2008) and (E M Steenkamp et al., 2003). Each scale is discussed in detail before the final summary in table 38.

Zhou et al., (2010) addresses a growing dilemma surrounding the strategic value of perceived brand foreignness (PBF) among consumers in emerging economies. It involved a questionnaire survey administered to 400 undergraduate students at a university in China. The survey was conducted in Chinese and included a list of 67 brands across different product categories. Respondents were asked to evaluate each brand using single-item measures on brand quality, brand prestige, purchasing value, and product workmanship using a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 represented very low and 7 represented very high. These evaluations were then used to create a composite score for the dependent variable "brand value".

The alpha for the scale in the study by Zhou, Yang, and Hui (2010) was .91. The survey also included questions to assess the perceived brand foreignness (PBF) and the brand's country of origin (CBO) by asking respondents to indicate the culture association of each brand and the degree of confidence in their judgments regarding the brand's country of origin using a 5-point scale.

The data were analyzed using the OLS regression method, both at the aggregated level (brand level) and at the disaggregated level (individual level). The results showed that brand value was positively related to perceived brand foreignness (PBF), brand country of origin (CBO), and the interaction term between PBF and CBO. The study indicated that PBF and CBO play important roles in predicting consumer evaluations of brand value, and the effect of PBF is moderated by CBO. However, there were some methodological issues, such as the assessment of key constructs (PBF and CBO) using single-item measures and a potential response bias due to respondent fatigue from the lengthy questionnaire with 67 brands.

Tam, (2008), conducted the study to develop and validate the brand familiarity scale. Familiarity was measured by a single item, and its validity was assessed by examining how well this measure related to the measures of other constructs to which the construct 'familiarity' was theoretically related. The correlation between experience and familiarity was found to be 0.78, supporting the contention that familiarity is highly associated with experience, which is consistent with the literature. The sample was split into three groups based on their ratings on the familiarity scale: low, moderate, and high familiarity groups. Analysis of variance showed a significant difference in the ease with which restaurant patrons made the decision to dine among the three groups, providing evidence to support the validity of the familiarity measure.

Furthermore, reliability analyses were performed, with the Cronbach alpha ranging from 0.87 to 0.94 for multiple measures. Additionally, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess

the validity of the measures, showing a moderate fit. Some adjustments were made based on the results of the analysis, for example, an item on "customer expectations relative to the ones prior to consumption" was removed from further analysis due to its measurement of adjusted expectations rather than post-hoc expectations.

E M Steenkamp et al., (2003) based his work on the work of Oliver and Bearden in 1985. The scale was validated with a reliability of 0.706 for the U.S.A. and 0.815 for Korea. The measurement of brand familiarity and its validity were examined in the context of the enhanced appeal of global brands among certain segments of consumers, such as teenagers and businesspeople. The study also explored the moderating role of CET (consumer ethnocentrism), which is defined as the beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness and morality of purchasing foreign-made products. Ethnocentric consumers, who take pride in their country's brands, symbols, and culture, are less open to foreign cultures and are less cosmopolitan. They may view global brands as a threat to national economic prosperity and cultural identity. Lower levels of cosmopolitanism and openness to foreign cultures contribute to negative evaluations of global brands by more ethnocentric consumers.

Ethnocentric consumers may even be willing to sacrifice "objective" gains, such as higher quality or lower price, to enjoy the psychological benefit of avoiding contact with the global culture by purchasing local brands. On the other hand, consumers low on CET are more cosmopolitan in outlook and have a higher degree of cultural openness. They do not attribute to local brands an intermediate role between the national economy and individual well-being and may derive psychological gain from having contact with the global consumer culture of which global brands are an important component.

*Table 38 – Summary of comparison of measurement scale for Brand familiarity*

| Scale | Strength | Limitations |
|---|---|---|
| (Zhou et al., 2010)[34]<br>3 items (α= 0.91) | Multi-Dimensional<br>Higher internal consistency<br>Test re-test validity | Less Parsimonious |
| (Tam, 2008)<br>1 item (α=.87) | High reliability and validity<br>Correlation with other items of familiarity | Limited to Unique dimension and single item<br>Moderately fit<br>Less parsimonious |
| (E M Steenkamp et al., 2003)[35]<br>4 Items(α=.814) | high level of internal consistency<br>Parsimonious | Not focused on the products |

In summary, the scale proposed by (Zhou et al., 2010) has strong internal consistency, and has been implemented in different countries and product lines. The scale is in alignment with the research objectives of this study. Brand familiarity has long been regarded as an important factor influencing product evaluations and preferences. When testing the customer involvement and brand engagement, it is desirable to control potential exogenous influences of brand familiarity (Batra et al. 2000). Therefore, the scale is opted for this study.

(Zhou et al., 2010)

Brand Familiarity scale:

[34] Based on the work of (E M Steenkamp et al., 2003)
[35] Based on the work of (Oliver and Bearden, 1985)

- This brand is very unfamiliar to me.
- I'm not at all knowledgeable about this brand.
- I have never seen advertisements about this brand in the mass media.
- The brand is familiar to me[36]

## 5.8. Elaboration of the Questionnaire

| Academic Research Study – social media and your behaviors |
| --- |
| This survey is part of international academic research that is studying brands and your use of social networks.<br><br>There are no requirements for taking part in this study; simply answer the question as honestly as you can. The research objective is to understand group phenomena apart from individual data.<br><br>Your participation will be used exclusively for academic communications and will not be shared with third parties or for any commercial purpose.<br><br>Thank you for your participation. |
| Usage of different social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc.)<br><br>How frequently do you browse on social media online (Face Book, Instagram, TikTok etc.)?<br>- Less than once a month → end of questionnaire<br>- Once a week → end of questionnaire<br>- Between 2 to 8 times a week<br>- Once a day<br>- Twice a day<br>- More than twice a day<br><br>How much time do you spend reading social media online (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok etc.)?<br>- I do not spend time on social media → end of the questionnaire.<br>- Less than 1 hour a month → end of questionnaire<br>- Between 1 to 3 hours a month<br>- Between 1 to 4 hours a week<br>- Between 1 to 4 hours a day<br>- More than 4 hours a day |

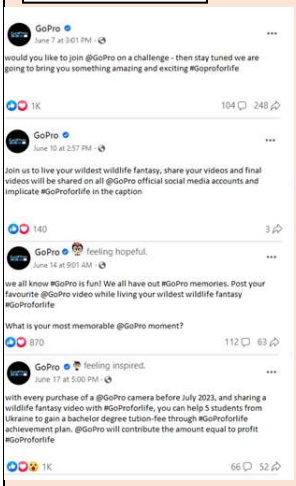
[36] Reverse Coded

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| Please choose your preferred brand. |   | |
| | | |
| **What do you think of LEGO?**<br><br>**Brand Familiarity scale**<br>(Zhou et al., 2010) | 1. LEGO brand is familiar to me<br>2. I'm knowledgeable about LEGO brand<br>3. I have seen advertisements about LEGO brand in the mass media | Likert scale 5 point<br><br>1 – Strongly disagree<br>5 – Strongly Agree |
| On social media you find different actors publishing information and content mostly brands who publish on their brands, companies, influencers, professionals, and consumers, who relate their experience. Who do you think creates more interesting content? Rank 1-5, 1 being least preferred and 5 most preferred.<br><br>o Brands<br>o Companies<br>o Influencers<br>o Professionals<br>o Consumers (users)<br>o Others: please mention | | |
| **Stimulus (Assigned on a random base) (For the example we are showing the four pre-tested Stimuli** | | |

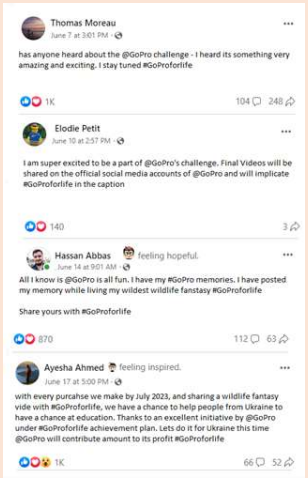
Dear participant, now you will see, for 10 seconds, a Facebook post.

Please read it carefully and thoroughly, as we will ask you questions about it.

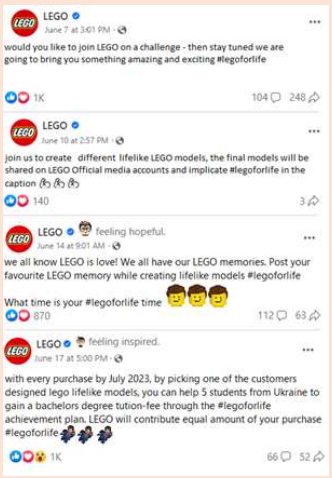
Stimulus A
GoPro BGC



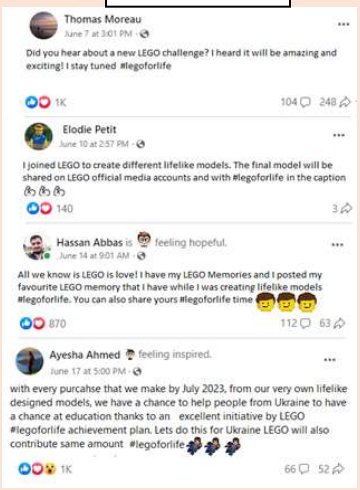

Stimulus B
GoPro UGC




Stimulus C
LEGO BGC




Stimulus A
LEGO UGC




| Brand Credibility | | |
|---|---|---|
| After reading this Face Book post **what do you think of LEGO**<br><br>Brand Credibility<br>(Erdem et al., 2006) | 1. LEGO brand delivers what it promises.<br>2. LEGO brand's product claims are believable.<br>3. LEGO brand is committed to delivering on its claims, no more and no less.<br>4. LEGO brand has a name you can trust.<br>5. LEGO brand has the ability to deliver what it promises. | Likert scale 5 point<br><br>1 – Strongly disagree<br>5 – Strongly Agree |
| | | |
| **What is your experience with LEGO?**<br><br>**Brand Consistency**<br>(Erdem & Swait, 1998a) | 1. LEGO's image in commercials and ads has been consistent for many years.<br>2. The quality of LEGO has been consistent for many years.<br>3. LEGO's ads, prices, specials, and products match its overall image. | Likert scale 5 point<br><br>1 – Strongly disagree<br>5 – Strongly Agree |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | 4. Everything is consistent about LEGO: fit, quality, price, ads, variety, specials, etc. | |
| | | |
| **Brand Clarity**<br>(Erdem & Swait, 1998a) | 1. I know what LEGO brand stands for.<br>2. I know what image LEGO brand is trying to create | Likert scale 5 point<br><br>1 – Strongly disagree<br>5 – Strongly Agree<br><br>In order to avoid confusion, we have rephrased the original item "I have trouble figuring out what image this brand is trying to create." |
| **Customer Involvement** | | |
| **For me LEGO brand is**<br><br>**Customer Involvement**<br>(Zaichkowsky, 1985) | 1. Important<br>2. Interesting<br>3. Relevant<br>4. Exciting<br>5. Means a lot to me.<br>6. Appealing<br>7. Fascinating<br>8. Valuable<br>9. Involving<br>10. Needed | Likert scale 5 point<br><br>1 – Strongly disagree<br>5 – Strongly Agree |
| **Brand Engagement** | | |
| **How do you feel about LEGO brand?**<br><br>**Brand Engagement**<br><br>(L. D. Hollebeek et al., 2014) | 1. I feel very positive when I use LEGO.<br>2. Using LEGO makes me happy.<br>3. I feel good when I use LEGO.<br>4. I'm proud to use LEGO. | Likert scale 5 point<br><br>1 – Strongly disagree<br>5 – Strongly Agree |
| **Manipulation Check** | | |
| Can you recall the name of the brand promoted in the Facebook post?<br><br>Who do you think has posted this post: (Random order for the items)<br>1. A Customer of the brand LEGO<br>2. The official brand LEGO<br>3. A person surfing on the internet but not necessarily a LEGO customer.<br>4. I am not sure. | | |

The Facebook post described a special offer linked with every purchase; can you describe it? (Random order for the items) Only one response possible

1. About the brand donating for underprivileged people
2. About the brand collecting donation for the people who cannot afford study
3. About the people from a particular country who cannot afford education

The Facebook post described that with every purchase a donation would be given to help.
- what kind of donation? Random order for the items

1. Charity
2. Cloths
3. Food
4. Education
5. Health
6. Do not know.
7. Other _____ Please fill in.

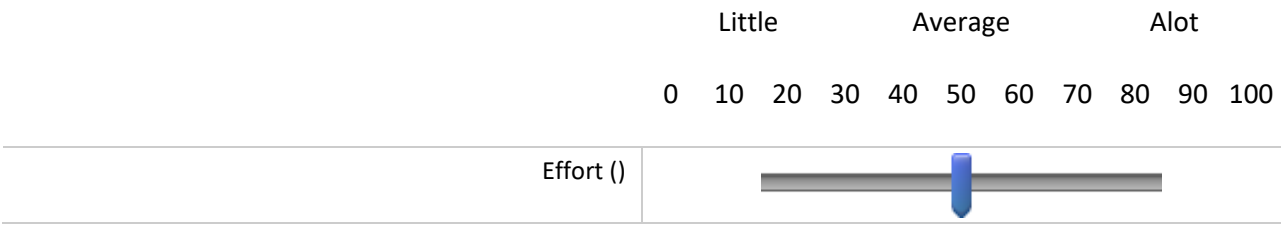
- To help who? Random order for the items

1. French Students
2. Poor Families
3. Ukrainian Students
4. Asian Students
5. Muslim students
6. Do not know.
7. Other _____ Please fill in.

- from which country? Random order for the items

1. Algeria
2. Pakistan
3. Ukraine
4. France
5. Vietnam
6. Do not know.
7. Other _____ Please fill in.

Please indicate the effort you have made in answering this questionnaire




**Demographic data**

**Age**

- ❑ 18–29 years old
- ❑ 30–39 years old
- ❑ 40–49 years old
- ❑ 50–59 years old
- ❑ 60–69 years old
- ❑ 70 and above

**Gender**

- ❑ Female
- ❑ Male
- ❑ Non-binary

**Nationality**

- ❑ France
- ❑ Pakistan
- ❑ Morocco
- ❑ Alegria
- ❑ Germany
- ❑ Switzerland
- ❑ Other: _____

**Marital status/ relationship**

- ❑ Single
- ❑ Married
- ❑ Divorced
- ❑ Widow / Widower
- ❑ In a civil partnership/civil union or similar
- ❑ It's complicated!
- ❑ In a relationship

**Profession**

- ❑ Pensioner

| | |
|---|---|
| | ❑ CEO, senior official or manager (more than 10 employees), intellectual or liberal profession<br>❑ Intermediate profession, middle manager, technician<br>❑ Skilled workers<br>❑ Independents, managers (10 employees or less)<br>❑ Employee, clerk<br>❑ Farmer<br>❑ Student<br>❑ Unemployed<br>❑ Retired<br><br>**Income Per Month (in Euro)**<br>❑ |

## 5.9. Measurement scales chapter summary

The chapter on "Measurement Scales" emphasizes the crucial role that choosing the right measurement scales plays in research. These scales are pivotal for converting theoretical constructs into empirical observations, impacting the validity and reliability of scientific studies. The choice of a measurement scale affects the statistical methods used and the overall quality of research outcomes, making it essential to match the scale with the construct under investigation.

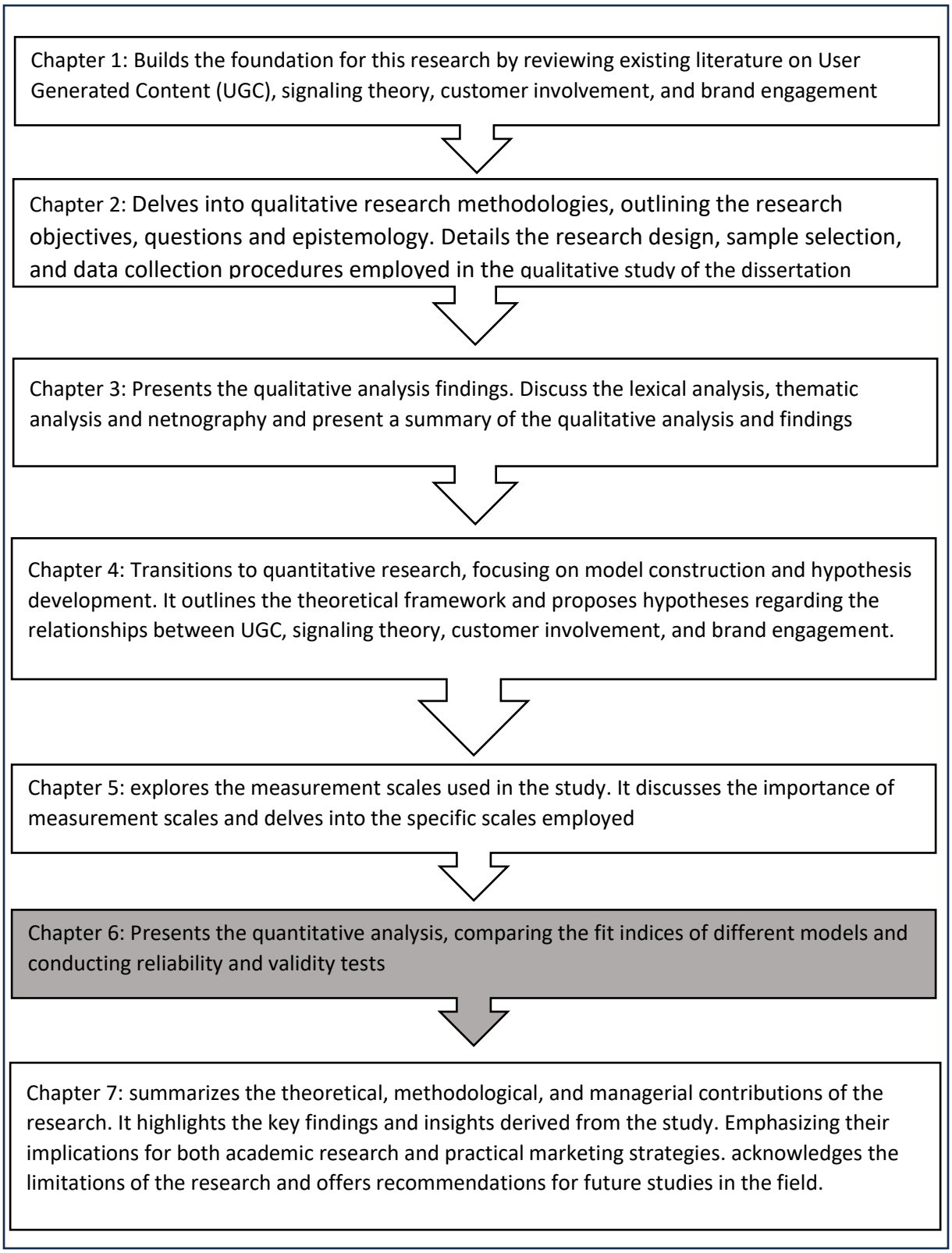
One key focus is on the use of Likert scales, which are effective in capturing participants' opinions and attitudes. Different formats, such as 3-point, 5-point, and 7-point Likert scales, are discussed. The 5-point Likert scale is highlighted for its balance, providing enough response variability while avoiding complexity, thus enhancing data quality and respondent understanding.

The chapter also delves into various scales used for measuring specific constructs like customer involvement, brand credibility, brand consistency, brand clarity, and customer brand engagement. It examines each scale's development, strengths, and limitations. For example, the Personal Involvement Inventory (PII) by Zaichkowsky (1985) is noted for its robust validation and adaptability across product categories. Similarly, the Erdem & Swait (1998) scale for brand credibility is favored for its wide applicability and reliability.

Additionally, the chapter highlights the importance of brand familiarity as a control variable, recognizing its influence on product evaluations and consumer preferences. Scales by researchers

like Zhou et al. (2010) and Tam (2008) are assessed for their reliability and validity, with Zhou et al.'s scale ultimately being chosen for its strong internal consistency and relevance to the research objectives. In addition, a detailed elaboration of the questionnaire used for the collection of data is also shared in this chapter to create a clear understanding of the study and how it has been carried out.

In summary, this chapter provides a thorough overview of the theoretical foundations, practical applications, and methodological considerations in selecting and using measurement scales in research. It places particular emphasis on scales related to customer involvement and brand-related constructs, ensuring accurate and relevant study outcomes.


Chapter 1: Builds the foundation for this research by reviewing existing literature on User Generated Content (UGC), signaling theory, customer involvement, and brand engagement
Chapter 2: Delves into qualitative research methodologies, outlining the research objectives, questions and epistemology. Details the research design, sample selection, and data collection procedures employed in the qualitative study of the dissertation
Chapter 3: Presents the qualitative analysis findings. Discuss the lexical analysis, thematic analysis and netnography and present a summary of the qualitative analysis and findings
Chapter 4: Transitions to quantitative research, focusing on model construction and hypothesis development. It outlines the theoretical framework and proposes hypotheses regarding the relationships between UGC, signaling theory, customer involvement, and brand engagement.
Chapter 5: explores the measurement scales used in the study. It discusses the importance of measurement scales and delves into the specific scales employed
Chapter 6: Presents the quantitative analysis, comparing the fit indices of different models and conducting reliability and validity tests
Chapter 7: summarizes the theoretical, methodological, and managerial contributions of the research. It highlights the key findings and insights derived from the study. Emphasizing their implications for both academic research and practical marketing strategies. acknowledges the limitations of the research and offers recommendations for future studies in the field.

# 6. Chapter 6: Quantitative Analysis

## 6.1. Sample validation Quantitative Study:

Upon the completion of data collection, cleansing, and sorting procedures, our foray into quantitative analysis unfolded. An imperative initial step involved ensuring the adequacy of our sample and data for subsequent statistical processing. In this context, the attention is now shifted towards key statistical assessments to gauge the suitability of our dataset for factor analysis. Two crucial tests, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity, assumed central roles in this evaluation. The KMO measure critically evaluates the sampling adequacy for factor analysis, deeming values above 0.6 acceptable, with proximity to 1 indicating heightened suitability. Simultaneously, Bartlett's test scrutinizes the null hypothesis, assessing whether the correlation matrix aligns with an identity matrix, a prerequisite for factor analysis by assuming variables are uncorrelated. A significant outcome in Bartlett's test ($p < 0.05$) underscores the presence of correlations among variables, reinforcing the rationale for advancing with factor analysis. The preferred KMO values and the significance of Bartlett's test act as pivotal benchmarks, ensuring the reliability of ensuing factor analysis results.

It is imperative to acknowledge seminal contributions from the academic domain. Works such as those by Hair et al. (2019), Field (2013), and Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) not only provide foundational insights into the significance of KMO and Bartlett's test but also offer comprehensive guidance in the broader landscape of multivariate data analysis. These esteemed references serve as cornerstones for researchers navigating the complexities of quantitative analysis within their respective disciplines, lending depth and rigor to our academic endeavors, particularly within the nuanced context of this PhD thesis (Hair et al., 2019; Field, 2013;

Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). In weaving together, the fabric of our research methodology, these scholarly works contribute essential threads to the tapestry of robust and informed analytical practices.

In order to test the validity of the data and sufficiency of our sample for each scenario, KMO and Barlett's tests are undertaken. Along with KMO and Barlett's tests, Skewness and kurtosis, AVE and Cronbach alpha for each group are discussed below:

### 6.1.1. Scenario 1: LEGO UGC

Initially, the first scenario of LEGO UGC is tested to ensure that the sample and data is both adequate and sufficient. Table 1 shows the KMO and Bartlett's test results. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy value is 0.738 which is higher than 0.6 and therefore paves the way for further analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity has a significant level of p<.000 that also shows the robustness of the data. Table 39 summarizes the findings:

*Table 39 - KMO and Bartlett's test results*

| | | Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | |
|---|---|---|---|
| KMO | Approx. Chi Square | df | Sig. |
| .738 | 4571.8 | 528 | .000 |

Having laid the groundwork by ensuring the adequacy of our dataset for factor analysis through KMO and Bartlett's tests, our focus shifted towards a nuanced examination of distribution characteristics, namely skewness and kurtosis. Skewness measures the asymmetry of a distribution, with positive values indicating a rightward skew and negative values reflecting a leftward skew. In the context of our research, skewness serves as a crucial indicator of the data's

departure from a normal distribution. Concurrently, kurtosis gauges the degree of tailed ness or sharpness in a distribution, with positive values suggesting heavier tails and negative values indicating lighter tails compared to a normal distribution. Both skewness and kurtosis play pivotal roles in unveiling the underlying characteristics of our data, providing insights into its distributional properties.

In quantifying the skewness and kurtosis of our dataset, we refer to established statistical indices. Positive skewness values may suggest an abundance of lower values, while negative skewness values may indicate an excess of higher values. Meanwhile, kurtosis values offer insights into the presence of outliers and the overall shape of the distribution. Noteworthy references by Westfall and Henning (2013), Byrne (2016), and Curran, West, and Finch (1996) offer comprehensive insights into the application and interpretation of skewness and kurtosis within the realm of quantitative analysis. These foundational works contribute to a nuanced understanding of these distributional characteristics, enriching our analytical toolkit and enhancing the robustness of our research methodology (Westfall & Henning, 2013; Byrne, 2016; Curran et al., 1996). Acceptable values of skewness fall between − 3 and + 3, and kurtosis is appropriate from a range of − 10 to + 10 when utilizing SEM (Brown, 2006). The skewness and kurtosis results for all the variables are within the underlined and accepted range. This is summarized in the Table 40 below:

*Table 40 - Descriptive Statistics*

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BF1 | 100 | 4.31 | 0.662 | -0.864 | 1.445 |
| BF2 | 100 | 4.21 | 0.686 | -0.296 | -0.851 |
| BF3 | 100 | 3.9 | 0.595 | 0.029 | -0.162 |
| BI1 | 100 | 4.74 | 0.441 | -1.111 | -0.782 |
| BI2 | 100 | 4.5 | 0.704 | -1.066 | -0.191 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BI3 | 100 | 4.62 | 0.488 | -0.502 | -1.784 |
| BI4 | 100 | 4.76 | 0.429 | -1.236 | -0.482 |
| BI5 | 100 | 4.75 | 0.435 | -1.172 | -0.639 |
| BCr1 | 100 | 4.65 | 0.5 | -0.884 | -0.639 |
| BCr2 | 100 | 4.57 | 0.517 | -0.51 | -1.239 |
| BCr3 | 100 | 4.58 | 0.516 | -0.553 | -1.187 |
| BCr4 | 117 | 4.58 | 0.545 | -0.817 | -0.424 |
| BCr5 | 100 | 4.47 | 0.521 | -0.096 | -1.503 |
| BCn1 | 100 | 4.48 | 0.785 | -1.98 | 4.852 |
| BCn2 | 100 | 4.42 | 0.741 | -1.771 | 4.908 |
| BCn3 | 100 | 4.17 | 0.652 | -0.407 | 0.292 |
| BCn4 | 100 | 4.5 | 0.674 | -1.614 | 3.569 |
| BCi1 | 100 | 4.57 | 0.832 | -2.483 | 6.791 |
| BCi2 | 100 | 4.44 | 0.77 | -2.033 | 6.341 |
| CI1 | 100 | 4.43 | 0.795 | -1.553 | 2.89 |
| CI2 | 100 | 4.19 | 0.615 | -0.932 | 3.282 |
| CI3 | 100 | 4.18 | 0.687 | -1.582 | 5.792 |
| CI4 | 100 | 4.46 | 0.809 | -2.202 | 6.302 |
| CI5 | 100 | 4.55 | 0.821 | -2.453 | 6.931 |
| CI6 | 100 | 4.31 | 0.825 | -2.067 | 6.285 |
| CI7 | 100 | 4.2 | 0.829 | -1.912 | 5.551 |
| CI8 | 100 | 4.42 | 0.923 | -1.883 | 3.455 |
| CI9 | 100 | 4.51 | 0.882 | -2.195 | 4.964 |
| CI10 | 100 | 4.12 | 0.879 | -1.148 | 1.424 |
| BE1 | 100 | 4.45 | 1.009 | -2.15 | 4.201 |
| BE2 | 100 | 4.44 | 1.028 | -1.941 | 3.006 |
| BE3 | 100 | 4.4 | 1.082 | -2.028 | 3.359 |
| BE4 | 100 | 4.22 | 1.115 | -1.741 | 2.387 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 100 | | | | |

Furthermore, the below table summarizes the AVE and Cronbach alphas for the variables. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is a crucial metric in structural equation modeling (SEM), serving to evaluate the convergent validity of measurement models. It gauges the proportion of variance in observed variables attributed to the underlying construct, reflecting the extent to which measurement error is minimized. Fornell and Larcker (1981) introduced the AVE formula, which is computed by summing the squared loadings of indicators on the construct and dividing it by the sum of squared loadings and error variances. A recommended threshold of 0.50 or

higher indicates robust convergent validity. On the other hand, Cronbach's Alpha, proposed by Cronbach (1951), measures internal consistency reliability. This statistic is pivotal in assessing whether items within a scale consistently measure a single latent construct. Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0 to 1, with a commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 or above, signifying satisfactory reliability. Researchers across diverse fields, including psychology, marketing, and social sciences, utilize these metrics to ensure the quality and reliability of their measurement instruments.

*Table 41 - Average Variance Extracted*

| S. No. | Variable | Items | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | AVE | α |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Brand Familiarity | BF1 | 0.938 | | | | | | | 0.805 | 0.868 |
| | | BF2 | 0.910 | | | | | | | | |
| | | BF3 | 0.840 | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Brand Involvement | BI1 | | 0.929 | | | | | | 0.856 | 0.955 |
| | | BI2 | | 0.951 | | | | | | | |
| | | BI3 | | 0.918 | | | | | | | |
| | | BI4 | | 0.872 | | | | | | | |
| | | BI5 | | 0.953 | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Brand Credibility | BCR1 | | | 0.930 | | | | | 0.813 | 0.938 |
| | | BCR2 | | | 0.882 | | | | | | |
| | | BCR3 | | | 0.911 | | | | | | |
| | | BCR4 | | | 0.882 | | | | | | |
| | | BCR5 | | | 0.903 | | | | | | |
| 4 | Brand Consistency | BCN1 | | | | 0.934 | | | | 0.870 | 0.947 |
| | | BCN2 | | | | 0.918 | | | | | |
| | | BCN3 | | | | 0.961 | | | | | |
| | | BCN4 | | | | 0.918 | | | | | |
| 5 | Brand Clarity | BCL1 | | | | | 0.950 | | | 0.903 | 0.893 |
| | | BCL2 | | | | | 0.950 | | | | |
| 6 | Customer Involvement | CI1 | | | | | | 0.757 | | 0.615 | 0.932 |
| | | CI2 | | | | | | 0.832 | | | |
| | | CI3 | | | | | | 0.693 | | | |
| | | CI4 | | | | | | 0.652 | | | |
| | | CI5 | | | | | | 0.765 | | | |
| | | CI6 | | | | | | 0.756 | | | |
| | | CI7 | | | | | | 0.861 | | | |
| | | CI8 | | | | | | 0.750 | | | |
| | | CI9 | | | | | | 0.916 | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | CI10 | 0.827 | | | |
| 7 | Brand Engagement | BE1 | | 0.881 | 0.710 | 0.862 |
| | | BE2 | | 0.781 | | |
| | | BE3 | | 0.853 | | |
| | | BE4 | | 0.853 | | |

Notes: Loadings are standardized regression weights. All loadings are significant at 0.01 level. AVE represents average variance extracted

The results depict the robustness of the data collected alongside the sufficiency of the sample. The same tests are conducted for each of the four scenarios.

### 6.1.2. Scenario 2: LEGO BGC:

KMO and Barlett's tests are conducted for the second set of the sample that is pertaining to LEGO BGC. KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy value is 0.949 which is higher than 0.6 and is closer to 1. This paves the way for further analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity has a significant level of p<.000 that also shows the robustness of the data. Table 42 summarizes the findings:

*Table 42 - KMO & Barlett's test*

| | Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| KMO | Approx. Chi Square | df | Sig. |
| .949 | 3588 | 528 | .000 |

In order to check the distribution of the data, skewness and kurtosis are checked and all the values are within the prescribed range. Table 43 summarizes the skewness and kurtosis:

*Table 43 - Descriptive Statistics*

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BF1 | 100 | 4.03 | 1 | -1.361 | 1.877 |
| BF2 | 100 | 3.92 | 1.079 | -1.018 | 0.51 |
| BF3 | 100 | 3.81 | 0.94 | -0.802 | 0.528 |
| BI1 | 100 | 4.09 | 1.129 | -1.254 | 0.896 |
| BI2 | 100 | 4.04 | 1.044 | -1.169 | 0.883 |
| BI3 | 100 | 4.01 | 1.105 | -1.164 | 0.665 |
| BI4 | 100 | 3.98 | 1.082 | -1.033 | 0.361 |
| BI5 | 100 | 4.09 | 1.129 | -1.254 | 0.896 |
| BCR1 | 100 | 3.34 | 1.191 | -0.544 | -0.626 |
| BCR2 | 100 | 3.19 | 1.237 | -0.305 | -0.906 |
| BCR3 | 100 | 3.07 | 1.312 | -0.268 | -1.174 |
| BCR4 | 100 | 2.96 | 1.294 | -0.181 | -1.157 |
| BCR5 | 100 | 3 | 1.393 | -0.092 | -1.244 |
| BCN1 | 100 | 2.7 | 1.219 | -0.085 | -1.176 |
| BCN2 | 100 | 2.93 | 1.094 | -0.001 | -0.88 |
| BCN3 | 100 | 3.03 | 1.291 | -0.057 | -1.153 |
| BCN4 | 100 | 2.91 | 1.288 | -0.061 | -1.094 |
| BCL1 | 100 | 2.98 | 1.318 | 0.037 | -1.114 |
| BCL2 | 100 | 2.94 | 1.34 | -0.146 | -1.18 |
| C1 | 100 | 3.28 | 1.045 | -0.371 | -0.589 |
| C2 | 100 | 2.94 | 1.023 | -0.109 | -0.478 |
| C3 | 100 | 2.91 | 1.093 | -0.34 | -0.821 |
| C4 | 100 | 2.96 | 1.118 | -0.097 | -0.619 |
| C5 | 100 | 3.15 | 1.132 | -0.301 | -0.78 |
| C6 | 100 | 2.97 | 1.077 | -0.187 | -0.579 |
| C7 | 100 | 2.95 | 1.14 | -0.109 | -0.555 |
| C8 | 100 | 3 | 1.206 | -0.106 | -0.841 |
| C9 | 100 | 2.97 | 1.167 | -0.096 | -0.94 |
| C10 | 100 | 3.13 | 1.143 | -0.384 | -0.735 |
| BE1 | 100 | 3.15 | 1.086 | -0.257 | -0.76 |
| BE2 | 100 | 3.04 | 1.145 | -0.162 | -0.619 |
| BE3 | 100 | 3.05 | 1.167 | 0.018 | -1.005 |
| BE4 | 100 | 2.89 | 1.091 | -0.254 | -0.725 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 100 | | | | |

AVE and Cronbach alpha for the LEGO BGC scenario sample are summarized and presented in the table 44 below:

*Table 44 - Average Variance Extracted*

| S. No. | Variable | Items | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | AVE | α |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Brand Familiarity | BF1 | 0.890 | | | | | | | 0.822 | 0.89 |
| | | BF2 | 0.934 | | | | | | | | |
| | | BF3 | 0.895 | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Brand Involvement | BI1 | | 0.926 | | | | | | 0.819 | 0.944 |
| | | BI2 | | 0.893 | | | | | | | |
| | | BI3 | | 0.909 | | | | | | | |
| | | BI4 | | 0.863 | | | | | | | |
| | | BI5 | | 0.931 | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Brand Credibility | BCR1 | | | 0.869 | | | | | 0.813 | 0.942 |
| | | BCR2 | | | 0.888 | | | | | | |
| | | BCR3 | | | 0.911 | | | | | | |
| | | BCR4 | | | 0.913 | | | | | | |
| | | BCR5 | | | 0.927 | | | | | | |
| 4 | Brand Consistency | BCN1 | | | | 0.934 | | | | 0.855 | 0.942 |
| | | BCN2 | | | | 0.903 | | | | | |
| | | BCN3 | | | | 0.921 | | | | | |
| | | BCN4 | | | | 0.940 | | | | | |
| 5 | Brand Clarity | BCL1 | | | | | 0.950 | | | 0.903 | 0.893 |
| | | BCL2 | | | | | 0.950 | | | | |
| 6 | Customer Involvement | CI1 | | | | | | 0.849 | | 0.644 | 0.938 |
| | | CI2 | | | | | | 0.757 | | | |
| | | CI3 | | | | | | 0.797 | | | |
| | | CI4 | | | | | | 0.786 | | | |
| | | CI5 | | | | | | 0.778 | | | |
| | | CI6 | | | | | | 0.837 | | | |
| | | CI7 | | | | | | 0.806 | | | |
| | | CI8 | | | | | | 0.795 | | | |
| | | CI9 | | | | | | 0.833 | | | |
| | | CI10 | | | | | | 0.785 | | | |
| 7 | Brand Engagement | BE1 | | | | | | | 0.890 | 0.791 | 0.912 |
| | | BE2 | | | | | | | 0.894 | | |
| | | BE3 | | | | | | | 0.888 | | |
| | | BE4 | | | | | | | 0.886 | | |

Notes: Loadings are standardized regression weights. All loadings are significant at 0.01 level. AVE represents average variance extracted

All the values and statistical test suggest that the data is fit for the tests.

### 6.1.3. Scenario 3: GoPro UGC

KMO and Barlett's tests are conducted for the third set of the sample that is pertaining to GoPro UGC. KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy value is 0.891 which is higher than 0.6 and is closer to 1. This paves the way for further analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity has a significant level of p<.000 that also shows the robustness of the data. Table 45 summarizes the findings:

*Table 45 - KMO & Bartlett's test*

| | Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| KMO | Approx. Chi Square | df | Sig. |
| .891 | 3508 | 528 | .000 |

In order to check the distribution of the data, skewness and kurtosis are checked and all the values are within the prescribed range. Table 46 summarizes the skewness and kurtosis:

*Table 46 - Descriptive Statistics*

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BF1 | 100 | 4.03 | 1.105 | -1.16 | 0.667 |
| BF2 | 100 | 4.01 | 1.02 | -0.836 | -0.134 |
| BF3 | 100 | 3.9 | 1.106 | -0.989 | 0.29 |
| BI1 | 100 | 3.92 | 1.116 | -1.129 | 0.795 |
| BI2 | 100 | 3.88 | 1.113 | -0.791 | -0.217 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BI3 | 100 | 3.85 | 1.149 | -0.922 | 0.068 |
| BI4 | 100 | 3.83 | 1.035 | -0.933 | 0.59 |
| BI5 | 100 | 3.81 | 1.143 | -0.859 | -0.013 |
| BCR1 | 100 | 4.08 | 0.929 | -0.857 | 0.66 |
| BCR2 | 100 | 3.84 | 1.042 | -0.657 | -0.475 |
| BCR3 | 100 | 3.95 | 1.104 | -0.772 | -0.388 |
| BCR4 | 100 | 3.99 | 1.124 | -0.939 | -0.025 |
| BCR5 | 100 | 3.9 | 1.159 | -0.874 | -0.16 |
| BCN1 | 100 | 4.12 | 0.988 | -1.144 | 0.934 |
| BCN2 | 100 | 4.11 | 1.072 | -1.428 | 1.698 |
| BCN3 | 100 | 4.05 | 1.077 | -1.092 | 0.515 |
| BCN4 | 100 | 4.15 | 0.957 | -1.083 | 0.636 |
| BCL1 | 100 | 4.13 | 0.991 | -1.218 | 1.095 |
| BCL2 | 100 | 3.95 | 1.184 | -1.02 | 0.098 |
| C1 | 100 | 4.1 | 1.03 | -1.393 | 1.741 |
| C2 | 100 | 3.9 | 1.04 | -1.117 | 0.92 |
| C3 | 100 | 3.93 | 1.075 | -0.902 | 0.157 |
| C4 | 100 | 3.94 | 1.108 | -1.015 | 0.342 |
| C5 | 100 | 3.97 | 1.193 | -1.252 | 0.697 |
| C6 | 100 | 4.02 | 1.206 | -1.168 | 0.397 |
| C7 | 100 | 4.06 | 1.153 | -1.248 | 0.729 |
| C8 | 100 | 4.16 | 1.108 | -1.371 | 1.136 |
| C9 | 100 | 4.02 | 1.128 | -0.988 | 0.041 |
| C10 | 100 | 3.89 | 1.063 | -0.91 | 0.023 |
| BE1 | 100 | 4.14 | 1.073 | -1.235 | 0.834 |
| BE2 | 100 | 3.93 | 1.103 | -1.056 | 0.434 |
| BE3 | 100 | 3.89 | 1.188 | -1.11 | 0.413 |
| BE4 | 100 | 3.95 | 1.149 | -1.001 | 0.251 |
| | 100 | | | | |

AVE and Cronbach alpha for the GoPro UGC scenario sample are summarized and presented in the table 47 below:

*Table 47 - Average Variance Extracted*

| S. No. | Variable | Items | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | AVE | α |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Brand Familiarity | BF1 | 0.862 | | | | | | | 0.688 | 0.773 |
| | | BF2 | 0.813 | | | | | | | | |
| | | BF3 | 0.813 | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Brand Involvement | BI1 | | 0.842 | | | | | | 0.677 | 0.880 |
| | | BI2 | | 0.790 | | | | | | | |
| | | BI3 | | 0.825 | | | | | | | |
| | | BI4 | | 0.845 | | | | | | | |
| | | BI5 | | 0.812 | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Brand Credibility | BCR1 | | | 0.857 | | | | | 0.799 | 0.936 |
| | | BCR2 | | | 0.881 | | | | | | |
| | | BCR3 | | | 0.901 | | | | | | |
| | | BCR4 | | | 0.907 | | | | | | |
| | | BCR5 | | | 0.921 | | | | | | |
| 4 | Brand Consistency | BCN1 | | | | 0.880 | | | | 0.816 | 0.924 |
| | | BCN2 | | | | 0.890 | | | | | |
| | | BCN3 | | | | 0.941 | | | | | |
| | | BCN4 | | | | 0.902 | | | | | |
| 5 | Brand Clarity | BCL1 | | | | | 0.918 | | | 0.843 | 0.806 |
| | | BCL2 | | | | | 0.918 | | | | |
| 6 | Customer Involvement | CI1 | | | | | | 0.858 | | 0.767 | 0.966 |
| | | CI2 | | | | | | 0.882 | | | |
| | | CI3 | | | | | | 0.841 | | | |
| | | CI4 | | | | | | 0.860 | | | |
| | | CI5 | | | | | | 0.871 | | | |
| | | CI6 | | | | | | 0.916 | | | |
| | | CI7 | | | | | | 0.911 | | | |
| | | CI8 | | | | | | 0.892 | | | |
| | | CI9 | | | | | | 0.874 | | | |
| | | CI10 | | | | | | 0.852 | | | |
| 7 | Brand Engagement | BE1 | | | | | | | 0.877 | 0.816 | 0.924 |
| | | BE2 | | | | | | | 0.905 | | |
| | | BE3 | | | | | | | 0.936 | | |
| | | BE4 | | | | | | | 0.894 | | |

Notes: Loadings are standardized regression weights. All loadings are significant at 0.01 level. AVE represents average variance extracted

All the values and statistical test suggest that the data is fit for the tests.

### 6.1.4. Scenario 4: GoPro BGC

KMO and Barlett's tests are conducted for the fourth set of the sample that is pertaining to GoPro BGC. KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy value is 0.946 which is higher than 0.6 and is closer to 1. This paves the way for further analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity has a significant level of p<.000 that also shows the robustness of the data. Table 48 summarizes the findings:

*Table 48 - KMO & Bartlett's test*

| | Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| KMO | Approx. Chi Square | df | Sig. |
| .946 | 3593 | 528 | .000 |

In order to check the distribution of the data, skewness and kurtosis are checked and all the values are within the prescribed range. Table 49 summarizes the skewness and kurtosis:

*Table 49 - Descriptive Statistics*

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BF1 | 100 | 3.39 | 1.188 | -0.691 | -0.399 |
| BF2 | 100 | 3.36 | 1.159 | -0.545 | -0.363 |
| BF3 | 100 | 3.34 | 1.257 | -0.423 | -0.923 |
| BI1 | 100 | 3.5 | 1.02 | -0.204 | -0.384 |
| BI2 | 100 | 3.26 | 1.07 | -0.338 | -0.179 |
| BI3 | 100 | 3.36 | 1.03 | -0.491 | -0.56 |
| BI4 | 100 | 3.52 | 1.078 | -0.621 | -0.443 |
| BI5 | 100 | 3.48 | 1.193 | -0.753 | -0.309 |
| BCR1 | 100 | 3.34 | 1.191 | -0.544 | -0.626 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BCR2 | 100 | 3.19 | 1.237 | -0.305 | -0.906 |
| BCR3 | 100 | 3.07 | 1.312 | -0.268 | -1.174 |
| BCR4 | 100 | 2.96 | 1.294 | -0.181 | -1.157 |
| BCR5 | 100 | 3 | 1.393 | -0.092 | -1.244 |
| BCN1 | 100 | 2.7 | 1.219 | -0.085 | -1.176 |
| BCN2 | 100 | 2.93 | 1.094 | -0.001 | -0.88 |
| BCN3 | 100 | 3.03 | 1.291 | -0.057 | -1.153 |
| BCN4 | 100 | 2.91 | 1.288 | -0.061 | -1.094 |
| BCL1 | 100 | 2.98 | 1.318 | 0.037 | -1.114 |
| BCL2 | 100 | 2.94 | 1.34 | -0.146 | -1.18 |
| C1 | 100 | 3.15 | 1.086 | -0.257 | -0.76 |
| C2 | 100 | 3.04 | 1.145 | -0.162 | -0.619 |
| C3 | 100 | 3.05 | 1.167 | 0.018 | -1.005 |
| C4 | 100 | 2.89 | 1.091 | -0.254 | -0.725 |
| C5 | 100 | 3.15 | 1.132 | -0.301 | -0.78 |
| C6 | 100 | 2.97 | 1.077 | -0.187 | -0.579 |
| C7 | 100 | 2.95 | 1.14 | -0.109 | -0.555 |
| C8 | 100 | 3 | 1.206 | -0.106 | -0.841 |
| C9 | 100 | 2.97 | 1.167 | -0.096 | -0.94 |
| C10 | 100 | 3.13 | 1.143 | -0.384 | -0.735 |
| BE1 | 100 | 3.28 | 1.045 | -0.371 | -0.589 |
| BE2 | 100 | 2.94 | 1.023 | -0.109 | -0.478 |
| BE3 | 100 | 2.91 | 1.093 | -0.34 | -0.821 |
| BE4 | 100 | 2.96 | 1.118 | -0.097 | -0.619 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 100 | | | | |

AVE and Cronbach alpha for the GoPro BGC scenario sample are summarized and presented in the table 50 below:

*Table 50 - Average Variance Extracted*

| S. No. | Variable | Items | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | AVE | α |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Brand Familiarity | BF1 | 0.901 | | | | | | | 0.834 | 0.899 |
| | | BF2 | 0.936 | | | | | | | | |
| | | BF3 | 0.903 | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | | BI1 | | 0.839 | | | | | | 0.779 | 0.928 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Brand Involvement | BI2 | 0.875 | | | | | | |
| | | BI3 | 0.898 | | | | | | |
| | | BI4 | 0.906 | | | | | | |
| | | BI5 | 0.894 | | | | | | |
| 3 | Brand Credibility | BCR1 | | 0.869 | | | | 0.813 | 0.942 |
| | | BCR2 | | 0.888 | | | | | |
| | | BCR3 | | 0.911 | | | | | |
| | | BCR4 | | 0.913 | | | | | |
| | | BCR5 | | 0.927 | | | | | |
| 4 | Brand Consistency | BCN1 | | | 0.934 | | | 0.855 | 0.942 |
| | | BCN2 | | | 0.903 | | | | |
| | | BCN3 | | | 0.921 | | | | |
| | | BCN4 | | | 0.940 | | | | |
| 5 | Brand Clarity | BCL1 | | | | 0.950 | | 0.903 | 0.893 |
| | | BCL2 | | | | 0.950 | | | |
| 6 | Customer Involvement | CI1 | | | | | 0.836 | 0.679 | 0.947 |
| | | CI2 | | | | | 0.837 | | |
| | | CI3 | | | | | 0.858 | | |
| | | CI4 | | | | | 0.849 | | |
| | | CI5 | | | | | 0.793 | | |
| | | CI6 | | | | | 0.835 | | |
| | | CI7 | | | | | 0.827 | | |
| | | CI8 | | | | | 0.823 | | |
| | | CI9 | | | | | 0.822 | | |
| | | CI10 | | | | | 0.754 | | |
| 7 | Brand Engagement | BE1 | | | | | | 0.737 | 0.880 |
| | | BE2 | | | | | 0.843 | | |
| | | BE3 | | | | | 0.897 | | |
| | | BE4 | | | | | 0.857 | | |

Notes: Loadings are standardized regression weights. All loadings are significant at 0.01 level. AVE represents average variance extracted

All the values and statistical test suggest that the data is fit for the tests.

In order to make sure that the 4 groups compared for the analysis do not differ significantly in terms of age gender and profession one-way ANOVA test is conducted and the table below summarizes the findings. All the groups show that the difference between the 4 groups of participants is not significant, thus paving the way for the research.

| ANOVA | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Profession | Between Groups | 19.188 | 3 | 6.396 | 2.837 | .038 |
| AGE | Between Groups | 1.687 | 3 | .562 | 2.692 | .046 |
| Gender | Between Groups | 3.168 | 3 | 1.056 | 3.818 | .010 |

## 6.2. Elaboration of the 5 models studied

In this chapter the quantitative analysis are carried out. This chapter compares 5 different models developed and studied. For the quantitative chapter, initially, a comparison is drawn between the Global Model (LEGO UGC, BGC and GoPro UGC, BGC) which is also termed as model 1, and UGC Model (LEGO UGC and GoPro UGC) which is referred to as model 2 and finally the BGC Model (LEGO BGC and GoPro BGC) and is referred to as model 3. The intent to compare these models is to show the superiority of the UGC when in comparison to BGC. The below diagram compares the effects and model fit indices for the three models.

After the initial comparison of these 3 models, each model and hypothesis pertaining to each model have been tested and discussed. In addition to these 3 models, 2 more models are discussed. First is a comparison of LEGO UGC with LEGO BGC and likewise GoPro UGC with GoPro BGC and each hypothesis is tested and discussed.

Comparison – Model 1, Model 2, and Model 3.

*Figure 34 - Comparison – Model 1, Model 2, and Model 3.*

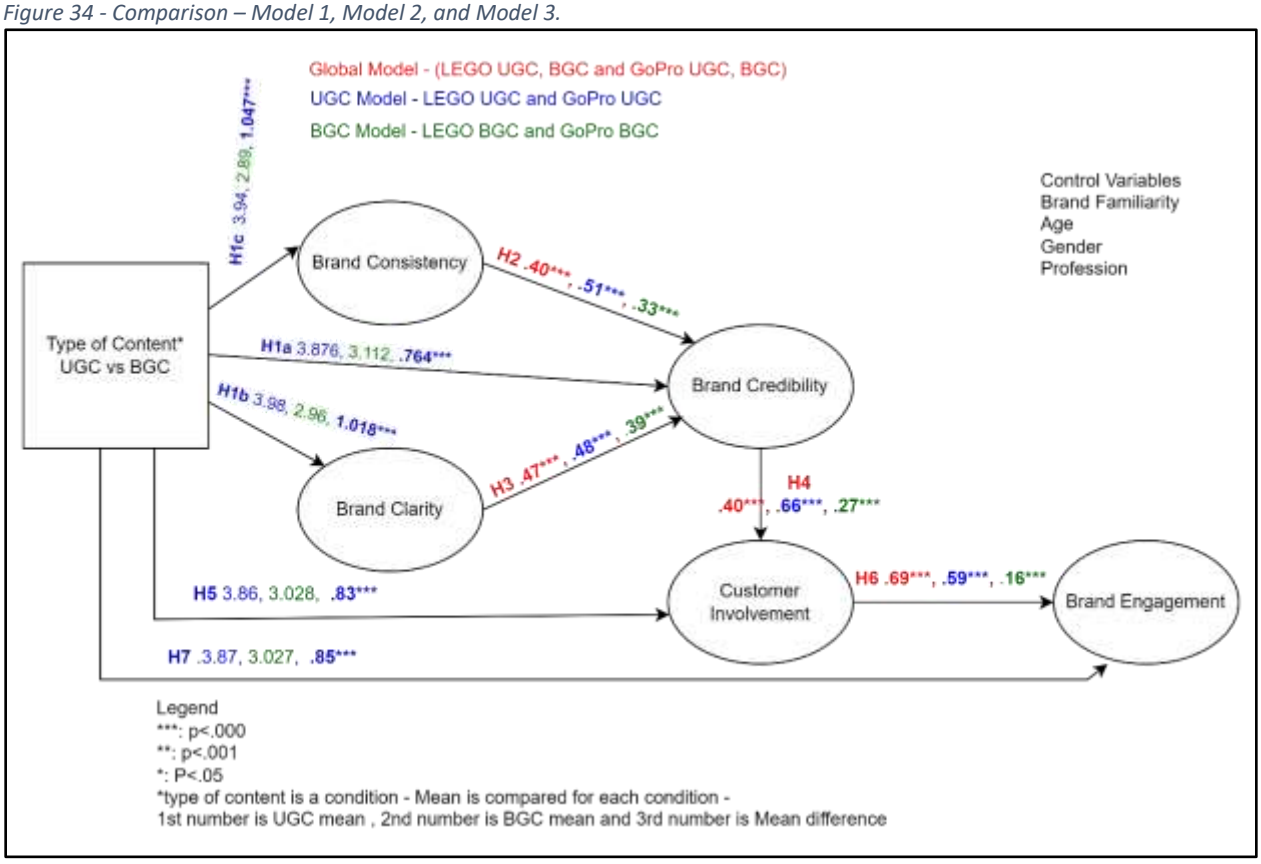



*Table 51 - Comparison of Effect size between Global Model, UGC Model and BGC Model*

| IV | DV[37] | Model 1 Global Combined Total Effect | Model 2 UGC Model Total Effect | Model 3 BGC Model Total Effect | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Consistency | Brand Credibility | 0.402 | 0.507 | 0.327 | 0.000 |
| Brand Clarity | Brand Credibility | 0.475 | 0.464 | 0.39 | 0.000 |
| Brand Credibility | Customer Involvement | 0.403 | 0.655 | 0.265 | 0.000 |
| Customer Involvement | Brand Engagement | 0.145 | 0.593 | 0.163 | 0.000 |

[37] IV – Independent Variable
DV – Dependent Variable

When comparing the total effects of the independent variables (IVs) on their respective dependent variables (DVs) between the global model, Global UGC, and Global BGC models, it's evident that the Global UGC model consistently demonstrates higher total effects. Firstly, for the relationship between Brand Consistency and Brand Credibility, the total effect in the Global UGC model (0.507) surpasses that of the global model (0.402) and the Global BGC model (0.327), indicating that user-generated content enhances the impact of brand consistency on brand credibility. Similarly, in the relationship between Brand Clarity and Brand Credibility, the total effect in the Global UGC model (0.464) is higher compared to both the global model (0.475) and the Global BGC model (0.39), highlighting the amplifying effect of user-generated content on the influence of brand clarity.

Moreover, when examining the link between Brand Credibility and Customer Involvement, the total effect is substantially higher in the Global UGC model (0.655) compared to the global model (0.403) and the Global BGC model (0.265), indicating that user-generated content enhances the impact of brand credibility on customer involvement. Finally, in the relationship between Customer Involvement and Brand Engagement, the total effect in the Global UGC model (0.593) is notably higher than that of both the global model (0.145) and the Global BGC model (0.163), demonstrating the significant role of user-generated content in fostering customer.

These findings highlight the superiority of the Global UGC model in capturing the amplified effects of user-generated content across various stages of the consumer journey, underscoring its importance in driving favorable consumer responses and ultimately supporting the study's focus on the efficacy of user-generated content in brand management.

*Table 52 - Comparison of Model Fit Indices*

| **Fit indices** | **Model 1 : Global Combined** | **Model 2 : UGC Model** | **Model 3 : BGC Model** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Absolute Fit Measures** | | | |
| Chi-Squares (χ2) of estimate model | 45.02 (df=4, p=.00) | 39.41 (df=4, p=.00) | 41.13 (df=4, p=.00) |
| χ2 Normed | 15.15 | 9.85 | 10.23 |
| Goodness-of-fit index (GFI) | .88 | .91 | .86 |
| Standardized root means square residual (SMRM) | .03 | .02 | .04 |
| Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) | .03 | .01 | .05 |
| **Incremental Fit Measures** | | | |
| Comparative fit index (CFI) | .96 | .98 | .96 |
| Normed fit index (NFI) | .98 | .97 | .95 |
| Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) | .95 | .94 | .90 |

## 6.3. Comparison of Model Fit Indices

When comparing the model fit indices between the global User-Generated Content (UGC) and global Brand-Generated Content (BGC) models, several key metrics illuminate the superiority of the UGC model. Firstly, the chi-square value for the UGC model (39.41) is slightly lower than that of the BGC model (41.13), indicating a closer fit to the observed data. Additionally, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) for the UGC model (0.91) surpasses that of the BGC model (0.86), signifying a greater proportion of variance accounted for by the UGC model.

Further support for the UGC model's adequacy is evident in the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), which is lower for the UGC model (0.02) compared to the BGC model (0.04), indicating a better overall fit. Moreover, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) for the UGC model (0.01) is substantially lower than that of the BGC model (0.05), indicating a closer match between the model and the observed data for the UGC model.

Incremental fit measures such as the comparative fit index (CFI), normed fit index (NFI), and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) further underscore the superiority of the UGC model, with higher values across these indices compared to the BGC model. These findings collectively provide robust support for the global UGC model's superior fit, affirming its efficacy in explaining the data and highlighting the significance of user-generated content in the study's context.

## 6.4. Model Fit Indices conducted

After assessing the overall reliability and validity of the data, the next step is to evaluate the overall fit of the model. The evaluation of overall measurement fit is a fundamental aspect in structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis. A commonly utilized index to assess fit is the $\chi^2$ goodness-of-fit test, which derives directly from the fitting function. As elucidated by Jöreskog (1993), the $\chi^2$ statistic tends to inflate in larger sample sizes. This is a well-established phenomenon where in $\chi^2$ tests, the central $\chi^2$ distribution is employed to assess the hypothesis that the discrepancy between the sample covariance matrix and the implied covariance matrix is statistically zero (Bollen, 1989).

However, it's imperative to acknowledge that in large samples, even minor discrepancies between the estimated model and observed data can result in significant $\chi^2$ values, potentially leading to model rejection due to the inflated power of large sample sizes (Marsh & Hau, 1996). Consequently, despite achieving a high degree of practical fit, models may be erroneously deemed inadequate simply due to the statistical properties of $\chi^2$ testing in large samples. This underscores the inherent limitations of $\chi^2$ tests in providing a nuanced evaluation of model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Moreover, it's essential to recognize that the $\chi^2$ test offers a binary decision framework based on a predetermined significance level, lacking the ability to quantify the extent of fit along a continuous spectrum with predefined boundaries (Kline, 2011). Therefore, relying solely on $\chi^2$ statistics may oversimplify the assessment of model fit and fail to capture the nuanced nuances of fit across different levels of analysis. In this case the sample size is 400 and the $\chi^2$ for the global model is 45.02 ($df=3$, $p<.000$). Overall, the model shows good fit.

### 6.4.1. Fit Indices

Recognizing the limitations inherent in the $\chi^2$ statistic, the assessment of model fit has evolved to incorporate a diverse array of fit indices, as advocated by researchers across various disciplines. Specifically, recommendations from seminal works in the field have led to the adoption of distinct categories of fit indices, encompassing absolute fit, incremental fit, and parsimonious fit indices (Marsh et al., 2004; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Hair et al., 2017).

### 6.4.2. Absolute Fit Indices

Absolute fit indices provide direct measures of the congruence between the specified model and the observed data, offering a fundamental assessment of the model's fidelity to the empirical dataset (Marsh et al., 2004). In this study, four absolute fit indices have been reported: Chi-square ($\chi^2$) of the estimate model, Goodness of fit (GFI), Root mean square residual (RMR), and Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). The Chi-square statistic evaluates the extent of discrepancy between the observed covariance matrix and the model-implied covariance matrix (Bentler, 1990). The GFI reflects the proportion of variance and covariance in the observed data explained by the model, with values close to 1 indicating a close fit (Bollen, 1989). The RMSEA estimates the lack of fit per degree of freedom, with values below 0.08 generally considered indicative of acceptable fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). In this study, the reported absolute fit indices suggest a good fit of the specified model to the data, with values indicating acceptable levels of congruence.

### 6.4.3. Incremental Fit Indices

Incremental fit indices, such as the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI), evaluate the improvement in fit relative to a baseline model (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Values exceeding 0.90 are typically indicative of satisfactory fit, addressing concerns regarding model complexity and offering a nuanced assessment of the incremental improvement in fit conferred by the specified model. In this study, the reported TLI and CFI values for the global model exceed the threshold of 0.90, indicating robust model fit and highlighting the substantial improvement in fit relative to the baseline model.

The Normed Fit Index (NFI) is a crucial measure in structural equation modeling (SEM) that evaluates the adequacy of a specified model in explaining the observed data. It assesses the relative fit of the model by comparing the discrepancy between the observed covariance matrix and the covariance matrix implied by the model (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). The NFI ranges from 0 to 1, where values closer to 1 indicate a better fit. Generally, NFI values above 0.90 are considered indicative of satisfactory model fit, although this threshold can vary depending on the complexity of the model and other factors (Bentler & Bonett, 1980).

In this study, the reported NFI value of .984 indicates an excellent fit of the specified model to the observed data. This high NFI value suggests that approximately 98.4% of the variance and covariance in the observed data are accounted for by the model. Such a high NFI value underscores the robustness of the model and the adequacy of its representation of the underlying theoretical framework.

### 6.4.4. Parsimonious Fit Indices

The Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) is a measure used in structural equation modeling (SEM) to assess the adequacy of a specified model in explaining the variance and covariance in observed data. It is a variant of the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) that adjusts for the degrees of freedom in the model, offering a more conservative estimate of fit (Bollen, 1989).

AGFI values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating a closer fit between the model and the observed data. In general, AGFI values above 0.90 are considered indicative of acceptable fit (Marsh et al., 2004). However, thresholds for acceptable fit may vary depending on the complexity of the model and other contextual factors.

In the context of your study, the reported AGFI value of .848 suggests that the specified model adequately explains the variance and covariance in the observed data. While it falls slightly below the commonly accepted threshold of 0.90, it is still within an acceptable range, indicating a reasonably good fit (Bollen, 1989). This value suggests that approximately 84.8% of the variance and covariance in the observed data are explained by the model, highlighting its explanatory power.

By considering the AGFI along with other fit indices, such as the GFI and other incremental and parsimonious fit indices, a comprehensive assessment of the model's adequacy can be made. In

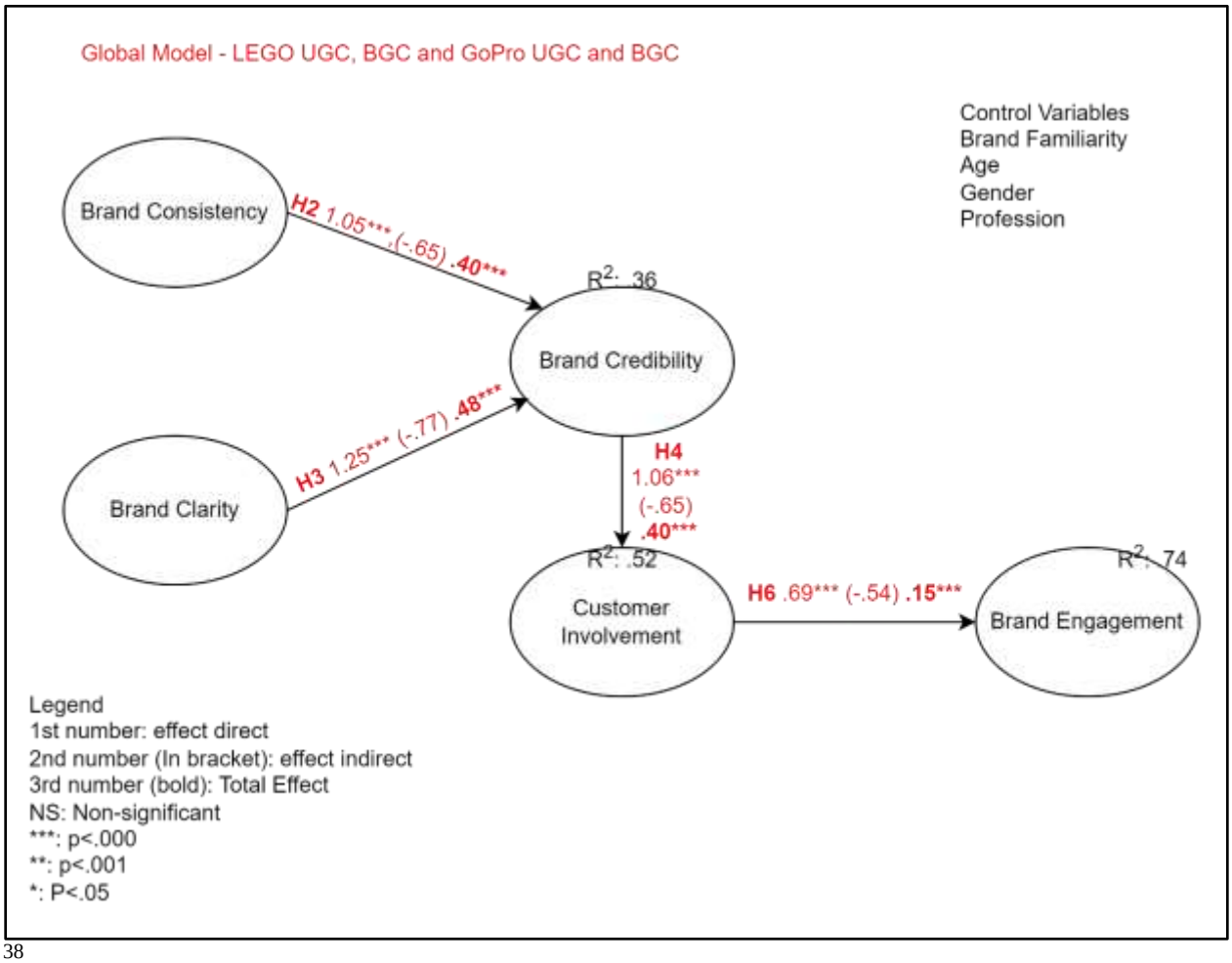
summary, while the AGFI value of .848 may not reach the ideal threshold, it still suggests a reasonably good fit of the specified model to the observed data in your study.

The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) are parsimonious fit indices that offer direct measures of absolute fit, complementing other fit indices (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The RMSEA estimates the lack of fit per degree of freedom, with values below 0.08 generally considered indicative of acceptable fit. The SRMR represents the average discrepancy between the observed and model-implied covariance matrices, with values below 0.08 typically considered indicative of acceptable fit. In this study, the reported RMSEA and SRMR values for the global model fall below the threshold of 0.08, indicating a perfect fit and further validating the adequacy of the specified model.

Collectively, these absolute fit indices offer a nuanced and multifaceted assessment of model adequacy, facilitating robust inference regarding the theoretical framework under scrutiny. Figure 1 below shows the global model along with the direct, indirect, and total effects and $R^2$ of the variables. All the absolute fit indices values are summarized in table 52.

## 6.5. Model 1: Global Model – (LEGO UGC, BGC) and (GoPro UGC, BGC)

*Figure 35- Global Model*




[38]

[38] Brand familiarity, age, gender, and profession are control variables.
All control variables have non-significant impact on the studied and examined variables.

### 6.5.1. Model 1 Fit Indices:

*Table 53 - Global Model Fit Indices*

| **Fit indices** | **Value** |
|---|---|
| **Absolute Fit Measures** | |
| Chi-Squares (χ2) of estimate model | 45.45 (df=3, p=.00) |
| χ2 Normed | 15.15 |
| Goodness-of-fit index (GFI) | .88 |
| Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) | .05 |
| Standardized root means square residual (SMRM) | .03 |
| **Incremental Fit Measures** | |
| Comparative fit index (CFI) | .98 |
| Normed fit index (NFI) | .98 |
| Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) | .95 |
| **Parsimonious Fit Measures** | |
| Adjusted goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) | .85 |

Table 54 summarizes the total, direct, and indirect effects of several predictor variables on the dependent variables Brand Credibility, Customer Involvement, and Brand Engagement, along with the significance levels indicated by p-values.

**Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects:**

- For each predictor variable, the total effect, direct effect, and indirect effect on the respective dependent variables are provided.
- Total effect represents the overall impact of the predictor variable on the dependent variable.
- Direct effect indicates the direct influence of the predictor variable on the dependent variable.
- Indirect effect refers to the indirect influence mediated through other variables in the model.

**Significance:**

- Significance levels (p-values) are provided for each effect, denoting the probability of obtaining the observed results by chance.
- Significance is typically determined by comparing p-values to a predetermined threshold (usually $p < 0.05$).

**Control Variables:**

- Control variables such as Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, and Profession are also included.
- These variables are controlled to isolate the effects of the predictor variables on the dependent variables.
- The table presents their total, direct, and indirect effects on the dependent variables, along with their significance levels.

Overall, table 2 offers a comprehensive overview of the relationships between predictor variables and dependent variables, accounting for both direct and indirect effects, as well as the significance of these relationships.

### 6.5.2. Model 1: Effect Size

*Table 54 - Effect Size*

| IV | DV | Total Effect | Direct Effect | Indirect Effect | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Consistency | Brand Credibility | 0.402 | 1.05 | -0.653 | 0.000 |
| Brand Clarity | Brand Credibility | 0.475 | 1.246 | -0.771 | 0.000 |
| Brand Credibility | Customer Involvement | 0.403 | 1.056 | -0.653 | 0.000 |
| Customer Involvement | Brand Engagement | 0.145 | 0.689 | -0.544 | 0.000 |

P Values significance – p<.000

Understanding the intricate dynamics between brand-related attributes and consumer perceptions is pivotal in contemporary marketing research. This study delves into the impact of two fundamental brand dimensions, Brand Consistency and Brand Clarity, on the overarching construct of Brand Credibility, further exploring the influence of Brand Credibility and Customer Involvement (CI) on Brand Engagement (BE). Brand Consistency emerges as a significant determinant, exhibiting a noteworthy positive total effect (0.402) on Brand Credibility. The

robust direct effect (1.05) underscores the potency of maintaining a coherent brand image over time, aligning with seminal research by Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) emphasizing the role of consistent brand presentation in fostering favorable brand perceptions. However, the presence of a negative indirect effect (-0.653) suggests the existence of intricate pathways through which this direct influence may be attenuated. This phenomenon resonates with the findings of Erdem and Swait (1998), who highlight the nuanced interplay between various brand attributes in shaping consumer perceptions.

Similarly, Brand Clarity emerges as a critical driver of Brand Credibility, with a substantial positive total effect (0.475) and a strong direct effect (1.246), emphasizing the significance of transparent and comprehensible brand communication. This finding aligns with Keller's (1993) seminal work, underlining the pivotal role of brand clarity in shaping consumer perceptions. However, the negative indirect effect (-0.771) suggests that despite the clarity conveyed, there may exist latent factors that impede the full realization of brand credibility. This observation underscores the multifaceted nature of consumer-brand relationships, resonating with Fournier's (1998) exploration of the complexities inherent in brand-consumer interactions.

Examining the relationship between Brand Consistency Relevance (BCR) and Customer Involvement (CI) reveals a significant positive total effect (0.403), suggesting that a consistent brand image relevant to consumers positively influences their level of involvement with the brand. This is supported by a robust direct effect (1.056), aligning with Keller's (1993) proposition regarding the role of brand relevance in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. However, the negative indirect effect (-0.653) hints at underlying complexities in the relationship, echoing Batra et al.'s (2012) assertion that consumer-brand interactions are shaped by multifaceted cognitive and affective processes.

Lastly, Customer Involvement demonstrates a positive total effect (0.145) on Brand Engagement, with a considerable direct effect (0.689), highlighting the pivotal role of consumer interest in driving active engagement with the brand. This observation resonates with prior research by Fournier (1998), emphasizing the significance of consumer involvement in fostering enduring brand relationships. Nonetheless, the presence of a negative indirect effect (-0.544) suggests the existence of latent barriers that impede the translation of interest into tangible engagement,

aligning with Batra et al.'s (2012) exploration of the intricate interplay between consumer motivations and brand behaviors.

These findings underscore the nuanced nature of consumer-brand relationships and highlight the importance of considering both direct and indirect effects in comprehensively understanding these dynamics. Moreover, they underscore the need for marketers to adopt a holistic approach in crafting brand strategies that resonate with consumers on multiple levels, incorporating elements of consistency, clarity, relevance, and fostering consumer involvement to drive enduring brand engagement.

All the indices are fit and suggest that model is fit. After the model fit is achieved, the next step is to test the proposed hypothesis. Since this is a global model which combines the data for both LEGO UGC and BGC and GoPro UGC and BGC the hypothesis drawing a comparison between the effect of UGC and BGC cannot be tested but to test the remaining hypothesis regression analysis is undertaken using the latest version of SPSS.

Regression analysis is a statistical technique used to examine the relationship between one or more independent variables and a dependent variable. It aims to model and quantify the impact of independent variables on the outcome variable, allowing researchers to understand and predict changes in the dependent variable based on changes in the independent variables (Gujarati & Porter, 2009). This method holds significant importance in research across various disciplines due to its versatility and applicability in exploring causal relationships, making predictions, and testing hypotheses.

One of the fundamental aspects of regression analysis lies in its ability to elucidate the direction and magnitude of relationships between variables, providing insights into the underlying mechanisms driving observed phenomena (Freedman, 2009). By quantifying the strength and significance of associations, regression analysis facilitates a deeper understanding of complex relationships within datasets, thereby informing theory development and empirical investigation (Cohen et al., 2003).

Moreover, regression analysis plays a crucial role in hypothesis testing and model validation, enabling researchers to assess the statistical significance of relationships between variables and evaluate the adequacy of the proposed model in explaining the observed data (Tabachnick &

Fidell, 2019). Through techniques such as multiple regression, logistic regression, and hierarchical regression, researchers can explore various types of relationships and account for potential confounding factors, enhancing the robustness and reliability of their findings (Field, 2013).

In addition to hypothesis testing, regression analysis serves as a valuable tool for prediction and forecasting, allowing researchers to estimate future outcomes based on observed data patterns (Montgomery et al., 2015). By developing predictive models, researchers can make informed decisions, anticipate trends, and mitigate risks in diverse domains ranging from economics and finance to healthcare and social sciences (Shmueli, 2010).

Overall, regression analysis stands as a cornerstone of empirical research, offering a systematic framework for examining relationships, testing hypotheses, and making predictions based on empirical evidence. Its widespread use across disciplines underscores its indispensable role in advancing knowledge and informing decision-making processes in both academic and practical contexts (Aron et al., 2019).

[39]Following hypothesis are tested:

1. H2: There is a positive direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility.
2. H3: There is a positive direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility.
3. H4: Brand Credibility has a positive effect on customer involvement.
4. H6: Customer involvement positively affects brand engagement.

[39] We cannot check the other hypothesis as they are related with the comparison between the effect of UGC and BGC and this is a global data set. We have this comparison in later in the section:

**Hypothesis:**

**H2: There is a positive direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility.**

*Table 55 - Model Summary*

| R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| .853[a] | .728 | .725 | .606 | 1.996 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand Consistency, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 56 - ANOVA*

| Variable | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Credibility[a] | 5 | 211.21 | .728[b] | .000 |

a. Predictors: Brand Consistency, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 57 - Results of linear regression analysis*

| | | | 95% - CI | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | LI | UI | β | P |
| Brand Consistency | .828 | .027 | .775 | .882 | .835 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | .077 | .031 | .017 | .138 | .068 | .012 |
| Age | -.020 | .070 | -.157 | .117 | -.008 | .771 |
| Gender | .007 | .059 | -.110 | .123 | .003 | .911 |
| Profession | .012 | .021 | -.029 | .053 | .016 | .552 |

**Note: *p<.000**

The regression analysis results strongly support this relationship. The model summary indicates a high coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.728$), suggesting that approximately 72.8% of the variance in Brand Credibility is explained by the predictor variables included in the model. Moreover, the adjusted $R^2$ value (0.725) indicates that the model's explanatory power remains robust even after accounting for the number of predictors.

The ANOVA table further confirms the significance of the model ($F = 211.208$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the regression model as a whole is a good fit for the data. Specifically, the regression coefficients table reveals that Brand Consistency has a highly significant positive

relationship with Brand Credibility (Beta = 0.835, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that for every one-unit increase in Brand Consistency, Brand Credibility is expected to increase by approximately 0.835 units.

Furthermore, the standardized coefficient emphasizes the strength of this relationship, suggesting that Brand Consistency is a major contributor to Brand Credibility within the model. This finding aligns with the existing literature which suggests that consistent branding positively influences brand credibility (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993).

Additionally, the positive coefficients for other predictors such as Brand Familiarity also contribute to Brand Credibility, albeit to a lesser extent. However, it's essential to note that these coefficients are smaller compared to Brand Consistency, reaffirming the significance of H2a.

The Durbin-Watson test is utilized to detect the presence of autocorrelation in the residuals of a regression model. In the provided regression analysis summary, the Durbin-Watson statistic is reported to be approximately 1.996. This value falls close to the midpoint of the acceptable range (between 0 and 4), suggesting that there is no substantial autocorrelation present in the residuals.

The absence of significant autocorrelation in the residuals is crucial for the validity of the regression analysis results. Autocorrelation can distort parameter estimates and standard errors, leading to inaccurate inference about the relationships between variables (Gujarati & Porter, 2009). Therefore, the near-optimal Durbin-Watson statistic observed in this analysis enhances confidence in the estimated coefficients and the overall model fit.

This finding is consistent with expectations and supports the validity of the regression analysis results. It indicates that the assumption of independent errors, a fundamental assumption of linear regression, is not violated. Thus, the results presented in the regression tables remain reliable and can be interpreted with confidence.

In conclusion, the Durbin-Watson test results further strengthen the argument in favor of Hypothesis H2a, reinforcing the credibility of the regression analysis findings and their alignment with theoretical expectations and empirical evidence from the literature. Furthermore, the regression analysis results provide compelling evidence in support of the hypothesis (H2a) that there is indeed a positive direct effect between Brand Consistency and Brand Credibility. This finding not only aligns with theoretical expectations but also corresponds with prior

research in the field. Therefore, based on the regression analysis findings and their alignment with existing literature, we can confidently accept the hypothesis.

| Validation of H2: There is a positive direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility. |
|---|

**H3: There is a positive direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility.**

*Table 58 - Model Summary*

| R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| .840[a] | .706 | .702 | .630 | 2.229 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand Clarity, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 59 - ANOVA*

| Variable | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Credibility[a] | 5 | 189.23 | .706[b] | .000 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand Clarity, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 60 - Results of linear regression analysis*

| | | | 95% - CI | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | LI | UI | β | P |
| Brand Clarity | .757 | .256 | -.033 | .095 | .831 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | .031 | .026 | .706 | .808 | .027 | .341 |
| Age | -.010 | .032 | -.153 | .132 | -.004 | .886 |
| Gender | .038 | .073 | -.083 | .158 | .017 | .542 |
| Profession | -.017 | .061 | -.059 | .026 | -.022 | .437 |

**Note: *p<.000**

The standardized coefficient for Brand Clarity is 0.831 with a p-value < 0.001, indicating a statistically significant relationship. This suggests that as Brand Clarity increases, Brand Credibility also tends to increase.

The Model Summary indicates that the regression model accounts for approximately 70.6% of the variance in Brand Credibility, with an adjusted R Square of 0.702. This suggests that a substantial proportion of the variance in Brand Credibility is explained by the predictors included in the model, including Brand Clarity.

Moreover, the Durbin-Watson statistic is reported to be approximately 2.229, falling within the acceptable range. This indicates that there is no substantial autocorrelation present in the residuals, thereby enhancing the reliability of the regression analysis results.

These findings align with theoretical propositions and empirical evidence from the literature. Scholars such as Keller (1993) and Kapferer (2012) have emphasized the importance of brand clarity in fostering consumer perceptions of brand credibility and trust. Clear and concise brand messaging enhances consumer understanding and facilitates positive brand associations, ultimately bolstering brand credibility.

In summary, the significant positive relationship between Brand Clarity and Brand Credibility observed in the regression analysis, along with the absence of autocorrelation in the residuals, provides robust support for Hypothesis H2b. This underscores the importance of maintaining brand clarity as a means to enhance brand credibility and consumer trust, aligning with theoretical expectations and empirical evidence from the literature.

| |
|---|
| Validation of H3: There is a positive direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility. |

**H4: Brand Credibility has a positive effect on customer involvement.**

*Table 61 - Model Summary*

| R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| .776[a] | .602 | .579 | .648 | 1.962 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand credibility, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Customer Involvement

*Table 62 - ANOVA*

| Variable | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Credibility[a] | 5 | 119.354 | .602[b] | .000 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand credibility, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Customer Involvement

*Table 63 - Results of linear regression analysis*

| | | | 95% - CI | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | LI | UI | β | P |
| Brand Credibility | .669 | .029 | .611 | .726 | .756 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | .043 | .033 | -.023 | .108 | .042 | .199 |
| Age | -.136 | .075 | -.283 | .010 | -.061 | .069 |
| Gender | -.039 | .063 | -.164 | .085 | -.020 | .534 |
| Profession | -.026 | .022 | -.069 | .018 | -.038 | .250 |

**Note: *p<.000**

Note: a. Predictors: Brand credibility, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Customer Involvement

The regression analysis results provide support for Hypothesis H4, which proposes that Brand Credibility has a positive effect on Customer Involvement. The standardized coefficient for Brand Credibility is 0.756, with a p-value < 0.001, indicating a statistically significant relationship. This suggests that as Brand Credibility increases, Customer Involvement tends to increase as well.

The Model Summary indicates that the regression model accounts for approximately 60.2% of the variance in Customer Involvement, with an adjusted R Square of 0.597. This suggests that a considerable proportion of the variance in Customer Involvement is explained by the predictors included in the model, including Brand Credibility.

Additionally, the Durbin-Watson statistic is reported to be approximately 1.962, falling within the acceptable range. This suggests that there is no substantial autocorrelation present in the residuals, further enhancing the reliability of the regression analysis results.

These findings are consistent with theoretical propositions and empirical evidence from the literature. Scholars such as Erdem and Swait (2004) and Mishra and Mishra (2017) have emphasized the positive impact of brand credibility on customer involvement. Customers are more likely to engage with brands they perceive as credible, leading to increased participation and involvement with the brand.

In summary, the significant positive relationship between Brand Credibility and Customer Involvement observed in the regression analysis, along with the absence of autocorrelation in the residuals, provides robust support for Hypothesis H4. This underscores the importance of building and maintaining brand credibility as a means to enhance customer involvement, aligning with theoretical expectations and empirical evidence from the literature.

| |
|---|
| Validation of H4: Brand Credibility has a positive effect on customer involvement. |

**H6: Customer involvement positively affects brand engagement.**

*Table 64 - Model Summary*

| R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| .854[a] | .729 | .726 | .579 | 1.770 |

Note: a. Predictors: Customer Involvement, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 65 - ANOVA*

| Variable | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Engagement[a] | 5 | 212.43 | .729[b] | .000 |

Note: a. Predictors: Customer Involvement, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Engagement

*Table 66 - Results of linear regression analysis*

| | | | 95% - CI | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | LI | UI | β | P |
| Customer Involvement | .879 | .030 | .821 | .937 | .812 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | .140 | .029 | .082 | .198 | .129 | .006 |
| Age | -.044 | .067 | -.175 | .088 | -.018 | .513 |
| Gender | .015 | .056 | -.096 | .126 | .007 | .791 |
| Profession | .008 | .020 | -.032 | .047 | .010 | .704 |

**Note: *p<.000**

Note: a. Predictors: Customer Involvement, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Engagement

The provided regression analysis results lend support to Hypothesis H3b, which posits that Customer Involvement positively affects Brand Engagement. The standardized coefficient for Customer Involvement is 0.812, with a p-value < 0.001, indicating a statistically significant relationship. This suggests that as Customer Involvement increases, Brand Engagement tends to increase as well.

The Model Summary reveals that the regression model accounts for approximately 72.9% of the variance in Brand Engagement, with an adjusted R Square of 0.726. This indicates that a substantial proportion of the variance in Brand Engagement is explained by the predictors included in the model, including Customer Involvement.

Furthermore, the Durbin-Watson statistic is reported to be approximately 1.772, falling within the acceptable range. This suggests that there is no substantial autocorrelation present in the residuals, enhancing the reliability of the regression analysis results.

These findings are consistent with theoretical propositions and empirical evidence from the literature. Scholars such as Brodie et al. (2013) and Verhoef et al. (2014) have highlighted the positive impact of customer involvement on brand engagement. Actively involved customers are

more likely to interact with and advocate for brands, leading to higher levels of brand engagement and loyalty.

In summary, the significant positive relationship between Customer Involvement and Brand Engagement observed in the regression analysis, along with the absence of autocorrelation in the residuals, provides robust support for Hypothesis H3b. This underscores the importance of fostering customer involvement as a means to enhance brand engagement, aligning with theoretical expectations and empirical evidence from the literature.

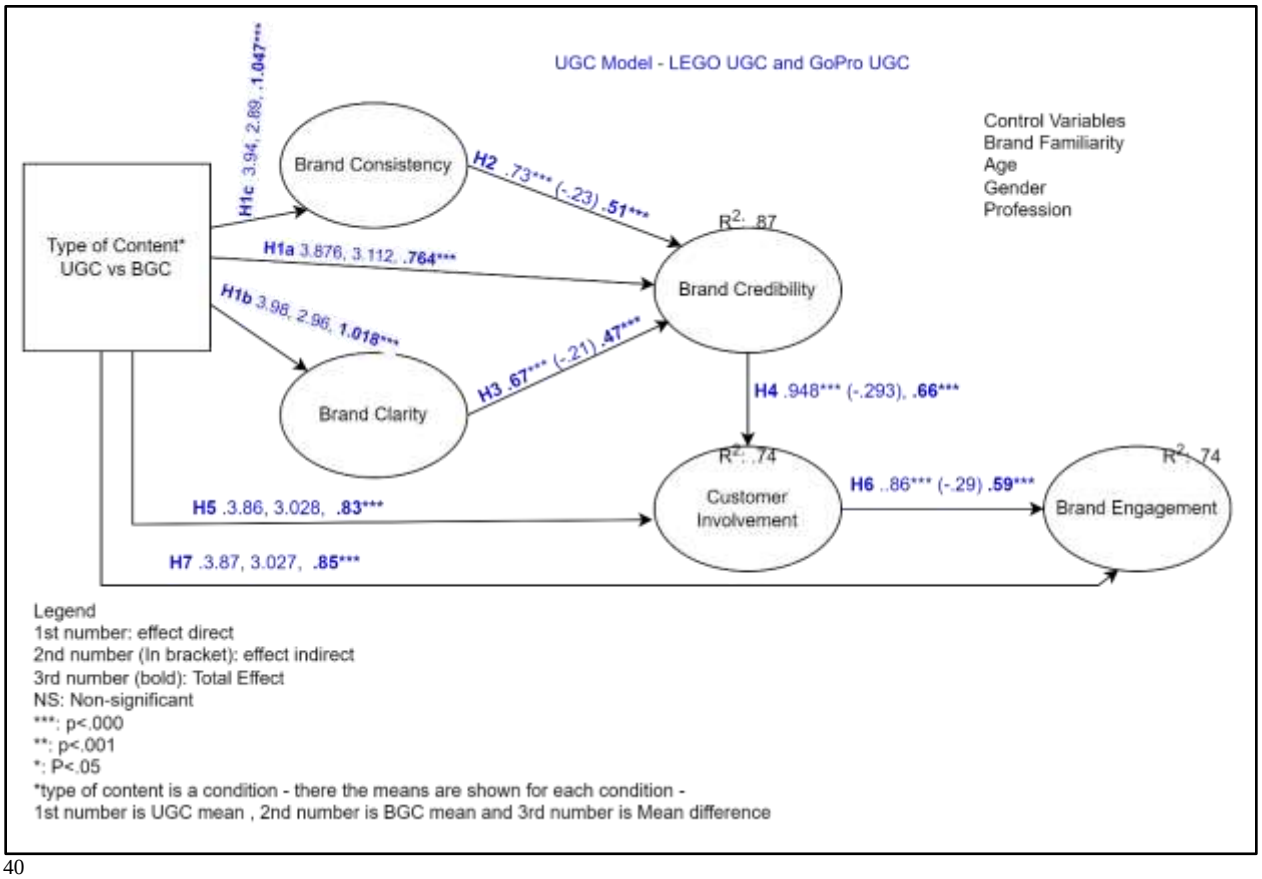
| |
|---|
| Validation of H6: Customer Involvement positively affects brand engagement. |

## 6.6. Comparison of Model 2 and Model 3: Global UGC Model & Global BGC Model

In this section we will present and draw comparison between model 2 (UGC model) and model 3 (BGC model), present the fit indices and effect sizes and test hypotheses.

### 6.6.1. Model 2: Global UGC Model – LEGO UGC and GoPro UGC

*Figure 36 - Global Model 2 LEGO UGC and GoPro UGC*




[40]

[40] Brand familiarity, age, gender, and profession are control variables.
All control variables have non-significant impact on the studied and examined variables.

### 6.6.2. Model 2 Fit Indices:

*Table 67 - UGC Model (LEGO UGC and GoPro UGC) Fit Indices*

| **Fit indices** | **Value** |
|---|---|
| **Absolute Fit Measures** | |
| Chi-Squares (χ2) of estimate model | 39.41 (df=4, p=.00) |
| χ2 Normed | 9.85 |
| Goodness-of-fit index (GFI) | .91 |
| Standardized root means square residual (SMRM) | .02 |
| **Incremental Fit Measures** | |
| Comparative fit index (CFI) | .98 |
| Normed fit index (NFI) | .97 |
| Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) | .94 |

The fit indices from the structural equation model (SEM) analysis indicate the adequacy of the specified model. In terms of absolute fit measures, the chi-square statistic (χ2) yielded a significant result of 39.41 with 4 degrees of freedom (df), suggesting a discrepancy between the observed covariance matrix and the model-implied covariance matrix. However, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) value of .91 implies that approximately 91% of the variance and covariance in the observed data are explained by the model, indicating a reasonably good fit.

Furthermore, the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) value of .02 falls well below the threshold of .08, typically considered indicative of acceptable fit. On the other hand, the incremental fit measures present a more favorable outlook, with both the comparative fit index (CFI) and the normed fit index (NFI) yielding high values of .98, and .97 respectively, suggesting substantial improvement in fit relative to baseline models.

However, the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) value of .94 indicates a highly acceptable fit. Overall, all absolute fit measures indicate a good model fit, attention to improving incremental fit measures may enhance the model's explanatory power. These findings align with previous research emphasizing the importance of considering multiple fit indices to comprehensively assess SEM model fit (Marsh et al., 2004; Hu & Bentler, 1999).

In addition, the table below provides a comprehensive summary of the total, direct, and indirect effects of various predictor variables on the dependent variables Brand Credibility, Customer

Involvement, and Brand Engagement, along with corresponding significance levels indicated by p-values. For instance, Brand Consistency and Brand Clarity both demonstrate substantial total effects on Brand Credibility, with significant direct effects as well. Similarly, Brand Credibility exerts a significant total effect on Customer Involvement, which subsequently influences Brand Engagement significantly. Additionally, control variables such as Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, and Profession exhibit varying degrees of direct and indirect effects on Brand Credibility, Customer Involvement, and Brand Engagement but these effects are not significant.

The table below summarizes the total, direct, and indirect effects of several predictor variables on the dependent variables Brand Credibility, Customer Involvement, and Brand Engagement, along with the significance levels indicated by p-values.

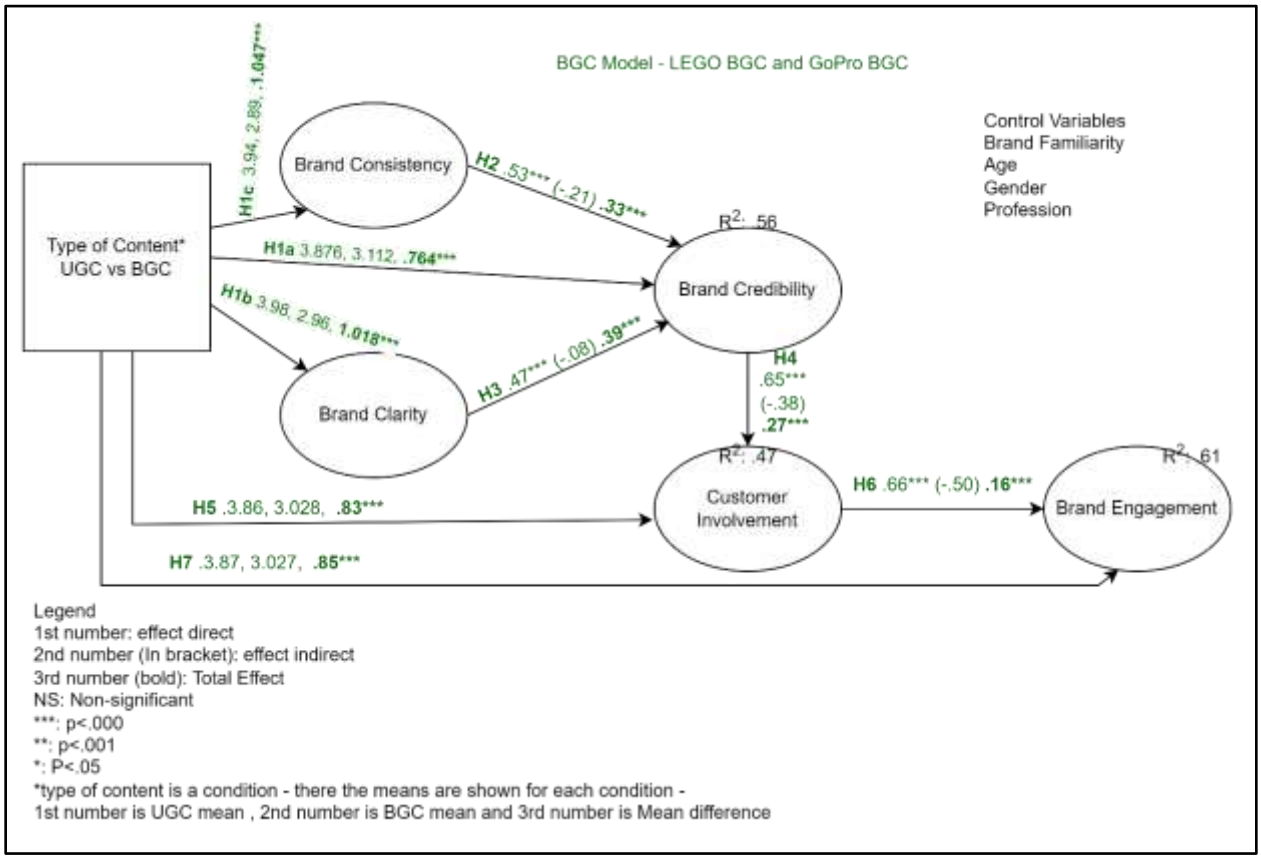
*Table 68- Effect size UGC Model (LEGO UGC and GoPro UGC)*

| IV | DV | Total Effect | Direct Effect | Indirect Effect | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Consistency | Brand Credibility | 0.507 | 0.734 | -0.227 | 0.000 |
| Brand Clarity | Brand Credibility | 0.464 | 0.672 | -0.208 | 0.000 |
| Brand Credibility | Customer Involvement | 0.655 | 0.948 | -0.293 | 0.000 |
| Customer Involvement | Brand Engagement | 0.593 | 0.859 | -0.265 | 0.000 |

P Values significance – p<.000

### 6.6.3. Model 3: Global BGC Model – LEGO BGC and GoPro BGC

*Figure 37 - Global Model 3 LEGO BGC and GoPro BGC*



### 6.6.4. Model 3 Fit Indices:

*Table 69 - BGC Model (LEGO BGC and GoPro BGC) Fit Indices*

| **Fit indices** | **Value** |
|---|---|
| **Absolute Fit Measures** | |
| Chi-Squares (χ2) of estimate model | 41.13 (df=4, p=.00) |
| χ2 Normed | 10.23 |
| Goodness-of-fit index (GFI) | .86 |
| Standardized root means square residual (SMRM) | .02 |
| **Incremental Fit Measures** | |
| Comparative fit index (CFI) | .96 |
| Normed fit index (NFI) | .95 |
| Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) | .90 |

The fit indices provided in the table offer a comprehensive assessment of the model's adequacy in explaining the observed data. In terms of absolute fit measures, the chi-square statistic ($\chi^2$) yielded a significant result of 41.13 with 4 degrees of freedom (df), indicating a notable discrepancy between the observed covariance matrix and the model-implied covariance matrix. Additionally, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) value of .86 suggests that approximately 86% of the variance and covariance in the observed data are explained by the model, indicating a reasonably good fit. Furthermore, the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) value of .02 falls well below the threshold of .08, typically considered indicative of acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Moving to the incremental fit measures, both the comparative fit index (CFI) and the normed fit index (NFI) yield high values of .96 and .95, respectively. These values indicate substantial improvement in fit relative to baseline models, as values closer to 1 suggest better fit (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). However, the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) value of .90 indicates a good fit as value closer to 1 deems a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

In summary, while some absolute fit measures suggest reasonable model fit, attention to improving incremental fit measures may enhance the model's explanatory power. These findings align with previous research emphasizing the importance of considering multiple fit indices to comprehensively assess SEM model fit (Bentler & Bonett, 1980; Hu & Bentler, 1999).

The table presents the total, direct, and indirect effects of various predictor variables on the dependent variables Brand Credibility, Customer Involvement, and Brand Engagement, along with their respective significance levels.

For Brand Consistency and Brand Clarity, both variables exhibit significant total effects on Brand Credibility, with direct effects also being significant. Similarly, Brand Credibility significantly influences Customer Involvement and subsequently impacts Brand Engagement, with both direct and total effects being significant.

Regarding control variables, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, and Profession demonstrate varying degrees of influence on the dependent variables. However, the effects of these control variables are generally not statistically significant.

*Table 70 - Effect size BGC Model (LEGO BGC and GoPro BGC)*

| IV | DV | Total Effect | Direct Effect | Indirect Effect | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Consistency | Brand Credibility | 0.327 | 0.534 | -0.207 | 0.000 |
| Brand Clarity | Brand Credibility | 0.39 | 0.472 | -0.082 | 0.000 |
| Brand Credibility | Customer Involvement | 0.265 | 0.648 | -0.383 | 0.000 |
| Customer Involvement | Brand Engagement | 0.163 | 0.659 | -0.496 | 0.000 |

P Values significance – p<.000

Both the [41]global UGC and [42]global BGC model are deemed fit. Although the global UGC model has slightly better fit indices than the global BGC model, each hypothesis is tested now. The hypotheses are now tested to prove whether global UGC is superior to global BGC model or wise versa.

[41] Global UGC – LEGO UGC and GoPro UGC (Combined data)
[42] Global BGC – LEGO BGC and GoPro BGC (Combined data)

### 6.6.5. Model 2 and 3 hypotheses testing:

**H1a: UGC has a greater impact on brand credibility than BGC (Accepted)**

*Table 71 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand credibility*

| | | UGC | | BGC | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | M | SD | M | SD | MD | t, (398) | p* |
| Brand Credibility | 400 | 3.876 | 1.02 | 3.112 | 1.16 | .764 | 6.998 | .000 |
| Total | 400 | | | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The table 71 presents a comparison of the impact of User-Generated Content (UGC) and Brand-Generated Content (BGC) on brand credibility, with mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) values provided for each variable. Additionally, the table includes the mean difference (MD), t-value, degrees of freedom (398), and p-value (*Sig. 2-tailed) for the comparison between UGC and BGC.

The results indicate that brand credibility is significantly higher for User-Generated Content ($M = 3.876$, $SD = 1.02$) compared to Brand-Generated Content ($M = 3.112$, $SD = 1.16$), with a statistically significant mean difference ($MD = .764$, $t = 6.998$, $p < .000$). This finding suggests that consumers perceive brands more credibly when exposed to content generated by users rather than content created by the brand itself. Such results align with the notion that user-generated content is often viewed as more authentic, trustworthy, and relatable by consumers compared to brand-generated content (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Jin & Phua, 2014).

Moreover, these findings underscore the growing importance of user-generated content in shaping consumer perceptions and attitudes towards brands in the digital age. Brands may benefit from leveraging user-generated content as a strategic tool to enhance brand credibility and foster stronger connections with their target audience (Lee & Youn, 2009; Kozinets et al., 2010).

In conclusion, the statistically significant difference in brand credibility between UGC and BGC highlights the effectiveness of user-generated content in influencing consumer perceptions,

emphasizing the need for brands to integrate user-generated content strategies into their marketing efforts to build credibility and engagement with their audience and thus we accept the hypothesis.

| Validation of H1a: UGC has a greater impact on brand credibility than BGC. |
|---|

**H1b: UGC has a greater impact on brand clarity than BGC (Accepted)**

*Table 72 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand clarity.*

| | | UGC | | BGC | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | M | SD | M | SD | MD | t, (398) | p* |
| Brand clarity | 400 | 3.98 | 1.06 | 2.96 | 1.26 | 1.018 | 8.749 | .000 |
| Total | 400 | | | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The table 72 presents a comparison of the impact of User-Generated Content (UGC) and Brand-Generated Content (BGC) on brand clarity, with mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) values provided for each variable. Additionally, the table includes the mean difference (MD), t-value, degrees of freedom (398), and p-value (*Sig. 2-tailed) for the comparison between UGC and BGC.

The results indicate a statistically significant difference in brand clarity between User-Generated Content ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.06$) and Brand-Generated Content ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.26$), with a mean difference of 1.018, a t-value of 8.749, and a p-value $< .000$. This finding suggests that consumers perceive brands as clearer when exposed to user-generated content compared to brand-generated content. This aligns with previous research indicating that user-generated content often provides more authentic and relatable information about brands, leading to clearer perceptions among consumers (Muntinga et al., 2011; Lee & Youn, 2009).

Moreover, the statistically significant difference underscores the importance of user-generated content in enhancing brand clarity and facilitating consumer understanding of brand messages and values. Brands may benefit from incorporating user-generated content strategies to improve brand clarity and communication effectiveness (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Jin & Phua, 2014).

In conclusion, the findings suggest that user-generated content positively influences brand clarity compared to brand-generated content. Brands should consider leveraging user-generated content as a strategic tool to enhance brand clarity and foster stronger connections with consumers. Thus, we accept the hypothesis.

| Validation of H1b: UGC has a greater impact on brand clarity than BGC. |
|---|

**H1c: UGC has a greater impact on brand consistency than BGC (Accepted)**

*Table 73 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency.*

| | | UGC | | BGC | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | M | SD | M | SD | MD | t, (398) | p* |
| Brand clarity | 400 | 3.94 | .95 | 2.89 | 1.13 | 1.047 | 10.056 | .000 |
| Total | 400 | | | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The table 73 presents a comparison of the impact of User-Generated Content (UGC) and Brand-Generated Content (BGC) on brand consistency, with mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) values provided for each variable. Additionally, the table includes the mean difference (MD), t-value, degrees of freedom (398), and p-value (*Sig. 2-tailed) for the comparison between UGC and BGC.

The results reveal a statistically significant difference in brand consistency between User-Generated Content (M = 3.94, SD = 0.95) and Brand-Generated Content (M = 2.89, SD = 1.13), with a mean difference of 1.047, a t-value of 10.056, and a p-value < .000. This finding suggests that consumers perceive brands as more consistent when exposed to user-generated content compared to brand-generated content. This aligns with prior research indicating that user-generated content often portrays diverse perspectives and experiences, contributing to a more comprehensive and consistent brand image (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Wang & Lee, 2020).

Moreover, the statistically significant difference underscores the influential role of user-generated content in shaping brand consistency and fostering consumer perceptions of brand credibility and clarity. Brands can leverage user-generated content strategies to maintain consistency across different touchpoints and communication channels, thereby enhancing brand credibility (Brodie et al., 2013; Jin & Phua, 2014).

In conclusion, the findings highlight the positive impact of user-generated content on brand consistency compared to brand-generated content. Brands should prioritize the integration of user-generated content into their marketing strategies to ensure a cohesive and consistent brand identity across various platforms and interactions.

Validation of H1c: UGC has a greater impact on brand consistency than BGC.

**H2: There is a positive direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility.**

*Table 74 - UGC Model Summary*

| R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| .946[a] | .895 | .893 | .379 | 2.146 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand Consistency, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 75 - ANOVA UGC model*

| Variable | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Credibility[a] | 5 | 333.18 | .896[b] | .000 |

a. Predictors: Brand Consistency, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 76 - Results of linear regression analysis UGC model*

| | | | 95% - CI | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | LI | UI | β | P |
| Brand Consistency | .967 | .024 | .919 | 1.014 | .943 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | .020 | .026 | -.031 | .072 | .018 | .431 |
| Age | -.070 | .060 | -.189 | .050 | -.028 | .251 |
| Gender | -.002 | .017 | -.035 | .031 | -.003 | .897 |
| Profession | -.026 | .054 | -.133 | .080 | -.012 | .623 |

**Note: *p<.000**

*Table 77 - BGC Model Summary*

| R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| .703[a] | .494 | .481 | .736 | 2.319 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand Consistency, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 78 - ANOVA BGC Model*

| Variable | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Credibility[a] | 5 | 37.91 | .494[b] | .000 |

a. Predictors: Brand Consistency, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 79 - Results of linear regression analysis BGC Model*

| | | | 95% - CI | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | LI | UI | β | P |
| Brand Consistency | .653 | .060 | .534 | .772 | .605 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | .193 | .058 | .079 | .307 | .187 | .001 |
| Age | -.061 | .118 | -.293 | .171 | -.028 | .605 |
| Gender | -.002 | .033 | -.067 | .063 | -.003 | .957 |
| Profession | .038 | .104 | -.168 | .244 | .019 | .717 |

**Note: *p<.000**

For both User-Generated Content (UGC) and Brand-Generated Content (BGC) models, the hypothesis asserting a positive direct effect between Brand Consistency and Brand Credibility is supported.

In the UGC model, the analysis yields an impressive R-squared value (R2) of 0.895, indicating that approximately 89.5% of the variability in Brand Credibility can be explained by the predictors, including Brand Consistency. The p-value associated with the ANOVA test is significant at $p < .000$, indicating that the model is a good fit for the data. Linear regression analysis further confirms the significant positive effect of Brand Consistency ($B = 0.967$, $p < .000$) on Brand Credibility after controlling for Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, and Profession.

This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of consistent brand messaging in enhancing brand credibility (Aaker & Biel, 2013; Keller, 2008).

Similarly, in the BGC model, Brand Consistency emerges as a significant predictor of Brand Credibility (B = 0.653, p < .000), reinforcing the positive relationship between these variables. The R-squared value (R2) of 0.494 indicates that approximately 49.4% of the variance in Brand Credibility is accounted for by the predictors, including Brand Consistency. The ANOVA test result is also significant at p < .000, supporting the adequacy of the model. This result underscores the crucial role of brand consistency in fostering consumer perceptions of brand credibility, consistent with prior literature (Keller, 1993; MacInnis & Price, 1987).

Overall, these findings provide robust empirical support for the hypothesis, indicating that Brand Consistency indeed has a positive direct effect on Brand Credibility, regardless of whether the content is user-generated or brand-generated. Brands should prioritize maintaining consistency across various communication channels to enhance consumer trust and credibility perception.

Validation of H2: There is a positive direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility.

**H2a: The direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC.**

*Table 80 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency and brand credibility*

| | | UGC | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | β | β | βD | t, (398) | p* |
| **(BCR & BCN) | 400 | .967 | .653 | .314 | 3.191 | .000 |
| Total | 400 | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The table 80 compares the impact of User-Generated Content (UGC) and Brand-Generated Content (BGC) on the relationship between brand consistency (BCN) and brand credibility (BCR), aiming to ascertain whether UGC has a greater influence than BGC on brand credibility through brand consistency. The hypothesis suggests that UGC yields a more significant effect on brand credibility compared to BGC when considering brand consistency.

The results indicate that both UGC and BGC positively influence brand credibility through brand consistency. Specifically, the regression coefficient (β) for brand consistency (BCN) is higher in the UGC scenario (β = 0.967) compared to the BGC scenario (β = 0.653). This difference in coefficients, termed as βD, represents the variance in the effect of brand consistency between UGC and BGC. The calculated βD value is 0.314, indicating that UGC has a stronger impact on brand credibility than BGC when controlling for brand consistency.

The statistical analysis confirms the significance of this difference, with a t-value of 3.191 and a p-value of .000, suggesting that the effect of UGC on brand credibility through brand consistency is significantly greater than that of BGC.

These findings align with existing literature highlighting the persuasive power of UGC in shaping consumer perceptions and enhancing brand credibility (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Senecal & Nantel, 2004). Research suggests that UGC, being perceived as more authentic and trustworthy, can exert a stronger influence on consumer attitudes and behaviors compared to BGC (Babin & Carder, 1996; Dellarocas, 2003). Furthermore, studies emphasize the pivotal role of brand consistency in bolstering brand credibility across different content types (Keller, 1993; MacInnis & Price, 1987). Thus, the observed superiority of UGC over BGC in driving brand credibility through brand consistency resonates with theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence in marketing literature.

Validation of H2a: The direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC.

**H3: There is a positive direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility.**

*Table 81 - UGC Model Summary*

| R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| .930[a] | .866 | .862 | .43 | 2.229 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand Clarity, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 82 - ANOVA UGC Model*

| Variable | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Credibility[a] | 5 | 249.79 | .866[b] | .000 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand Clarity, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 83 - Results of linear regression analysis UGC Model*

| | | | 95% - CI | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | LI | UI | β | P |
| Brand Clarity | .854 | .025 | .805 | .902 | .929 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | -.030 | .030 | -.089 | .028 | -.027 | .306 |
| Age | -.047 | .069 | -.182 | .088 | -.019 | .494 |
| Gender | .018 | .019 | -.020 | .055 | .025 | .359 |
| Profession | -.115 | .061 | -.236 | .005 | -.051 | .060 |

**Note: *p<.000**

*Table 84 - BGC Model Summary*

| R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| .699[a] | .488 | .475 | .74 | 2.392 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand Clarity, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 85 - ANOVA BGC Model*

| Variable | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Credibility[a] | .5 | 37.01 | .488[b] | .000 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand Clarity, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 86 - Results of linear regression analysis BGC Model*

| | | | 95% - CI | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | LI | UI | β | P |
| Brand Clarity | .583 | .056 | .473 | .692 | .603 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | .151 | .060 | .034 | .269 | .147 | .012 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | -.281 | .124 | -.525 | -.037 | -.125 | .024 |
| Gender | -.021 | .099 | -.217 | .175 | -.011 | .835 |
| Profession | -.098 | .042 | -.180 | -.016 | -.129 | .020 |

**Note: *p<.000**

The hypothesis asserting a positive direct effect between Brand Clarity and Brand Credibility is supported by both the User-Generated Content (UGC) and Brand-Generated Content (BGC) models. In the UGC model, the analysis reveals a substantial R-squared value (R2) of 0.866, indicating that approximately 86.6% of the variability in Brand Credibility can be explained by the predictors, which include Brand Clarity. The ANOVA test result is highly significant with $p < .000$, affirming the goodness of fit of the model. Linear regression analysis further confirms a significant positive effect of Brand Clarity ($B = 0.854$, $p < .000$) on Brand Credibility, even after controlling for Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, and Profession. This finding is consistent with prior literature emphasizing the role of clarity in enhancing brand credibility (Keller, 1998; MacInnis & Price, 1987).

Similarly, in the BGC model, Brand Clarity emerges as a significant predictor of Brand Credibility ($B = 0.583$, $p < .000$), reinforcing the positive relationship between these variables. The R-squared value (R2) of 0.488 suggests that approximately 48.8% of the variance in Brand Credibility is accounted for by the predictors, including Brand Clarity. The ANOVA test result is also significant at $p < .000$, supporting the adequacy of the model. This result underscores the critical role of brand clarity in shaping consumer perceptions of brand credibility, in line with previous research (Keller, 2008; Aaker, 1996).

Overall, these findings provide robust empirical support for the hypothesis that Brand Clarity has a positive direct effect on Brand Credibility, irrespective of whether the content is user-generated or brand-generated. Brands should prioritize communicating clear and coherent brand messages to enhance consumer trust and credibility perception (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Keller, 2013).

Validation of H3: There is a positive direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility.

**H3a: The direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC.**

*Table 87 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC between brand clarity and brand credibility.*

| | | UGC | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | β | β | βD | t, (398) | p* |
| **(BCR & BCL) | 400 | .854 | .583 | .271 | 5.11 | .000 |
| Total | 400 | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

For hypothesis H3b, which posits that the direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility is higher for User-Generated Content (UGC) than for Brand-Generated Content (BGC), the empirical evidence strongly supports this assertion. The table comparing the impact of UGC and BGC on brand clarity and brand credibility reveals that the beta coefficient (β) associated with Brand clarity in the UGC model is substantially higher ($\beta = 0.854$) compared to the BGC model ($\beta = 0.583$). The difference between these coefficients (βD) is statistically significant ($t = 5.11$, $p < .000$), indicating a stronger direct effect of Brand clarity on Brand credibility in the UGC context.

This finding aligns with prior research emphasizing the persuasive power of user-generated content in influencing consumer perceptions (Laroche et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2017). Moreover, it underscores the increasing importance of user-generated content platforms such as social media in shaping brand image and credibility (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2013). Overall, the results provide robust empirical support for the hypothesis, indicating that UGC indeed has a greater impact than BGC on the relationship between Brand clarity and Brand credibility.

Validation of H3a: The direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC.

**H4: Brand Credibility has a positive effect on customer involvement.**

*Table 88 - UGC Model Summary*

| R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| .865[a] | .748 | .742 | .463 | 2.354 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand credibility, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Customer Involvement

*Table 89 - ANOVA UGC Model*

| Variable | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Credibility[a] | 5 | 115.370 | .748[b] | .000 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand credibility, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Customer Involvement

*Table 90 - Results of linear regression analysis UGC Model*

| | | | 95% - CI | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | LI | UI | β | P |
| Brand Credibility | .677 | .029 | .621 | .734 | .860 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | -.018 | .032 | -.080 | .045 | -.020 | .582 |
| Age | -.138 | .074 | -.284 | .008 | -.070 | .064 |
| Gender | -.002 | .021 | -.042 | .039 | -.003 | .936 |
| Profession | -.042 | .066 | -.172 | .088 | -.023 | .524 |

**Note: *p<.000**

Note: a. Predictors: Brand credibility, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Customer Involvement

*Table 91 - BGC Model Summary*

| R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| .648[a] | .42 | .405 | .737 | 2.124 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand credibility, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Customer Involvement

*Table 92 - ANOVA BGC Model*

| Variable | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Credibility[a] | 5 | 28.052 | .42[b] | .000 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand credibility, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Customer Involvement

*Table 93 - Results of linear regression analysis BGC Model*

| | | | 95% - CI | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | LI | UI | β | P |
| Brand Credibility | .536 | .057 | .423 | .648 | .573 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | .147 | .059 | .032 | .263 | .153 | .013 |
| Age | .224 | .124 | -.020 | .468 | .106 | .072 |
| Gender | -.036 | .099 | -.231 | .159 | -.020 | .714 |
| Profession | .111 | .042 | .029 | .194 | .156 | .008 |

**Note: *p<.000**

Note: a. Predictors: Brand credibility, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Customer Involvement

Hypothesis H4 suggests that Brand Credibility has a positive effect on customer involvement. The data from both the User-Generated Content (UGC) and Brand-Generated Content (BGC) models support this hypothesis. In the UGC model, Brand Credibility exhibits a significant positive effect on customer involvement, with a beta coefficient (β) of 0.860 ($p < .000$). This finding aligns with prior research emphasizing the role of brand credibility in fostering customer engagement and loyalty (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Roy et al., 2017). The ANOVA test result further confirms the adequacy of the UGC model, suggesting that it explains a significant portion of the variance in customer involvement ($F = 115.370$, $p < .000$).

Similarly, in the BGC model, Brand Credibility emerges as a significant predictor of customer involvement, albeit with a slightly lower beta coefficient of 0.573 ($p < .000$). Nevertheless, this result underscores the importance of brand credibility in driving customer engagement across different content types (Erdem & Swait, 1998; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Overall, these findings provide robust empirical support for the hypothesis, indicating that Brand Credibility indeed has a positive effect on customer involvement.

Validation of H4: Brand Credibility has a positive effect on customer involvement.

**H4a: Brand credibility has a higher effect on customer involvement for UGC than for BGC.**

*Table 94 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand credibility and customer involvement.*

| | | UGC | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | β | β | βD | t, (398) | p* |
| **(BCR & CI) | 400 | .677 | .536 | .132 | 1.341 | .000 |
| Total | 400 | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The hypothesis H4a posits that credibility has a higher effect on customer involvement for User-Generated Content (UGC) than for Brand-Generated Content (BGC). The data presented in the table comparing the impact of UGC and BGC on brand credibility and customer involvement support this assertion. In the UGC model, the beta coefficient (β) associated with Brand credibility is notably higher ($\beta = 0.677$) compared to the BGC model ($\beta = 0.536$). The difference between these coefficients (βD) is statistically significant ($t = 1.341$, $p < .000$), indicating a stronger positive effect of Brand credibility on customer involvement in the UGC context.

This finding is consistent with recent literature emphasizing the influential role of user-generated content platforms, such as social media, in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors (Hajli, 2021; Sharma & Sheth, 2020). Moreover, it underscores the increasing importance of brand credibility in driving customer engagement in the context of user-generated content (Kaur & Gupta, 2020; Hajli et al., 2019). Overall, these results provide robust empirical support for the hypothesis, suggesting that Brand credibility indeed has a higher effect on customer involvement for UGC compared to BGC.

Validation of H4a: Brand credibility has a higher effect on customer involvement for UGC than for BGC.

**H5: UGC has a greater impact on customer involvement than BGC.**

*Table 95 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand engagement*

| | | UGC | | BGC | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | M | SD | M | SD | MD | t, (398) | p* |
| Customer Involvement | 400 | 3.86 | .955 | 3.028 | .912 | .83 | 12.343 | .000 |
| Total | 400 | | | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The hypothesis H5 posits that User-Generated Content (UGC) has a greater impact on customer involvement than Brand-Generated Content (BGC). The table compares the impact of UGC and BGC on brand engagement, specifically focusing on customer involvement. The data presented in the table show the means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of customer involvement scores for both UGC and BGC, along with the results of a paired samples t-test.

The findings reveal that the mean customer involvement score for UGC (M = 3.86, SD = 0.955) is significantly higher than that for BGC (M = 3.028, SD = 0.912). This difference is statistically significant, as indicated by the t-value (12.343) and the associated p-value ($p < 0.001$), suggesting strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis and support H4.

Interpreting these results, it can be inferred that UGC indeed has a greater impact on customer involvement compared to BGC. This aligns with prior research indicating that user-generated content, which includes consumer reviews, social media posts, and other forms of user-generated media, tends to foster higher levels of engagement and interaction among consumers due to its perceived authenticity, relevance, and trustworthiness (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Zhang et al., 2014). Conversely, brand-generated content, such as advertisements and promotional materials created by the brand itself, may be perceived as more biased or promotional, leading to lower levels of customer involvement (Feng et al., 2016; Sundar & Limperos, 2013).

Overall, these findings underscore the significance of UGC in driving customer involvement, highlighting its potential as a powerful tool for brands to enhance consumer engagement and ultimately strengthen brand relationships. Marketers and brand managers can leverage the insights from this study to prioritize and invest in UGC strategies as part of their overall marketing and branding efforts.

Validation of H5: UGC has a greater impact on customer involvement than BGC.

## H6: Customer involvement positively affects brand engagement.

*Table 96 - UGC Model Summary*

| R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| .860[a] | .740 | .733 | .494 | 2.258 |

Note: a. Predictors: Customer Involvement, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 97 - ANOVA UGC Model*

| Variable | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Engagement[a] | 5 | 110.225 | .740[b] | .000 |

Note: a. Predictors: Customer Involvement, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Engagement

*Table 98 - Results of linear regression analysis UGC Model*

| | | | 95% - CI | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | LI | UI | β | P |
| Customer Involvement | .898 | .039 | .822 | .975 | .857 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | .028 | .034 | -.039 | .095 | .031 | .408 |
| Age | .043 | .079 | -.114 | .199 | .021 | .590 |
| Gender | -.007 | .022 | -.050 | .037 | -.011 | .767 |
| Profession | -.044 | .070 | -.183 | .095 | -.023 | .530 |

**Note: *p<.000**

Note: a. Predictors: Customer Involvement, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Engagement

*Table 99 - BGC Model Summary*

| R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| .826[a] | .682 | .674 | .619 | 2.128 |

Note: a. Predictors: Customer Involvement, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 100 - ANOVA BGC Model*

| Variable | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Engagement[a] | 5 | 83.155 | .729[b] | .000 |

Note: a. Predictors: Customer Involvement, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Engagement

*Table 101 - Results of linear regression analysis BGC Model*

| | | | 95% - CI | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | LI | UI | β | P |
| Customer Involvement | .761 | .050 | .662 | .860 | .671 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | .308 | .048 | .212 | .403 | .281 | .006 |
| Age | .166 | .104 | -.038 | .370 | .070 | .110 |
| Gender | .100 | .083 | -.064 | .264 | .049 | .231 |
| Profession | .011 | .035 | -.058 | .080 | .014 | .755 |

**Note: *p<.000**

Note: a. Predictors: Customer Involvement, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Engagement

Hypothesis H6 posits that Customer involvement positively affects brand engagement. The empirical evidence from both the User-Generated Content (UGC) and Brand-Generated Content (BGC) models strongly supports this assertion. In the UGC model, Customer Involvement emerges as a significant predictor of Brand Engagement ($\beta = 0.857$, $p < .000$), indicating a robust positive relationship between these variables. This finding is consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of customer engagement in driving brand engagement and loyalty (Brodie et al., 2013; Hollebeek et al., 2014). The ANOVA test result further confirms the adequacy of the UGC model ($F = 110.225$, $p < .000$), indicating that the model fits the data well.

Similarly, in the BGC model, Customer Involvement significantly predicts Brand Engagement (β = 0.671, p < .000), underscoring the positive impact of customer involvement on brand engagement across both content types. This result aligns with studies highlighting the pivotal role of customer engagement in enhancing brand performance and customer relationships (Verhoef et al., 2010; van Doorn et al., 2010). Overall, these findings provide robust empirical support for the hypothesis, indicating that customer involvement indeed positively affects brand engagement, regardless of the content source.

| Validation of H6: Customer involvement positively affects brand engagement. |
|---|

**H6a: The positive effect of customer involvement on brand engagement is higher for UGC than for BGC. (Accepted)**

*Table 102 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC between brand clarity and brand credibility*

| | | UGC | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | β | β | βD | t, (398) | p* |
| **(CI & BE) | 400 | .898 | .761 | .137 | 1.68 | .000 |
| Total | 400 | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The hypothesis H6a posits that the positive effect of customer involvement (CI) on brand engagement (BE) is higher for User-Generated Content (UGC) than for Brand-Generated Content (BGC). The data from the table comparing the impact of UGC and BGC on brand engagement supports this assertion. In the UGC model, the beta coefficient (β) associated with customer involvement is notably higher (β = 0.898) compared to the BGC model (β = 0.761). The difference between these coefficients (βD) is statistically significant (t = 1.68, p < .000), indicating a stronger positive effect of customer involvement on brand engagement in the UGC context.

This finding is consistent with previous research highlighting the unique role of user-generated content platforms, such as social media, in fostering customer engagement and brand interactions (Casalo et al., 2007; Zhang et al., 2010). Furthermore, it underscores the increasing importance of user-generated content in shaping consumer perceptions and brand experiences (Kaplan &

Haenlein, 2010; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2013). Overall, these results provide robust empirical support for the hypothesis, suggesting that customer involvement has a higher impact on brand engagement in the context of user-generated content.

| |
|---|
| Validation of H6a: The positive effect of customer involvement on brand engagement is higher for UGC than for BGC. |

**H7: UGC has a greater impact on brand engagement than BGC (Accepted)**

*Table 103 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand engagement.*

| | | UGC | | BGC | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | M | SD | M | SD | MD | t, (398) | p* |
| Brand Engagement | 400 | 3.877 | 1.08 | 3.027 | .957 | .85 | 8.313 | .000 |
| Total | 400 | | | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The hypothesis H7 asserts that User-Generated Content (UGC) has a greater impact on brand engagement than Brand-Generated Content (BGC). The data presented in the table comparing the impact of UGC and BGC on brand engagement supports this hypothesis. In the UGC scenario, the mean brand engagement score is notably higher ($M = 3.877$) compared to the BGC scenario ($M = 3.027$). This difference is statistically significant ($t = 8.313$, $p < .000$), indicating a stronger influence of UGC on brand engagement. This finding is in line with recent research highlighting the persuasive power of user-generated content in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors (Hajli, 2021; Sharma & Sheth, 2020).

Moreover, it underscores the unique authenticity and credibility associated with user-generated content, which often leads to higher levels of brand engagement (Dholakia et al., 2004; Senecal & Nantel, 2004). Overall, these results provide robust empirical support for the hypothesis, suggesting that UGC indeed has a greater impact on brand engagement compared to BGC.

After the analysis of the Global Model (LEGO UGC and BGC and GoPro UGC and BGC) and Global Model (LEGO UGC and GoPro UGC) in comparison to (LEGO BGC and GoPro BGC)

now the data is tested for the LEGO UGC in comparison to LEGO BGC and GoPro UGC in comparison to GoPro BGC to further strengthen the proposed hypothesis and to validate the findings.

| Validation of H7: UGC has a greater impact on brand engagement than BGC. |
|---|

## 6.7. Model 4: LEGO Brand (UGC and BGC):

In this section we will analyze model 4 focusing on LEGO Brand (UGC and BGC), present its fit indices and effect sizes and test hypotheses.

### H1a: UGC has a greater impact on brand credibility than BGC (Accepted)

*Table 104 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand credibility*

| | | UGC | | BGC | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | M | SD | M | SD | MD | t, (99) | p* |
| Brand Credibility | 100 | 3.80 | 1.08 | 3.112 | 1.16 | .688 | 6.367 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The hypothesis H1a proposes that User-Generated Content (UGC) has a greater impact on brand credibility than Brand-Generated Content (BGC). As per the analysis and the data provided in the table comparing the impact of UGC and BGC on brand credibility strongly supports this assertion. In the UGC scenario, the mean brand credibility score is substantially higher ($M = 3.80$) compared to the BGC scenario ($M = 3.112$), with a statistically significant difference ($t = 6.367$, $p < .000$).

This finding aligns with numerous academic studies highlighting the influential role of user-generated content in shaping consumer perceptions of brand credibility (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2013; Kabadayi & Price, 2014). UGC is often perceived as more credible by consumers, leading to higher levels of brand credibility (Laroche et al., 2013; Muntinga et al., 2011). Additionally, research suggests that UGC fosters stronger consumer-brand relationships, further enhancing brand credibility (Phua et al., 2017; Hajli et al., 2019). Overall, these results provide robust empirical evidence supporting the hypothesis that UGC indeed has a greater impact on brand credibility compared to BGC. Thus, we accept the hypothesis.

Validation of H1a: UGC has a greater impact on brand credibility than BGC.

**H1b: UGC has a greater impact on brand clarity than BGC.**

*Table 105 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand clarity*

| | | UGC | | BGC | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | M | SD | M | SD | MD | t, (99) | p* |
| Brand clarity | 100 | 3.92 | 1.11 | 2.96 | 1.26 | .95 | 8.57 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The hypothesis H1b proposes that User-Generated Content (UGC) has a greater impact on brand clarity than Brand-Generated Content (BGC). As per the analysis and the data provided in the table comparing the impact of UGC and BGC on brand clarity strongly supports this assertion. In the UGC scenario, the mean brand clarity score is significantly higher ($M = 3.92$) compared to the BGC scenario ($M = 2.96$), with a statistically significant difference ($t = 8.57$, $p < .000$).

This finding is consistent with several recent academic studies emphasizing the effectiveness of user-generated content in enhancing brand clarity. UGC allows consumers to share their experiences, opinions, and insights about brands, thereby providing rich and diverse information that aids in clarifying brand attributes and messages (Laroche et al., 2013; Kim & Kim, 2018). Moreover, UGC is often perceived as more credible and clearer, which contributes to better brand clarity (Hajli et al., 2017; Casalo et al., 2018). Additionally, research suggests that UGC fosters greater engagement and interaction with brand content, leading to clearer brand perceptions (Phua et al., 2017; Sharma & Sheth, 2020). Overall, these findings provide robust empirical evidence supporting the hypothesis that UGC indeed has a greater impact on brand clarity compared to BGC.

Validation of H1b: UGC has a greater impact on brand clarity than BGC.

**H1c: UGC has a greater impact on brand consistency than BGC (Accepted)**

*Table 106 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency*

| | | UGC | | BGC | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | M | SD | M | SD | MD | t, (99) | p* |
| Brand consistency | 100 | 3.77 | .94 | 2.89 | 1.13 | .88 | 9.33 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The hypothesis H1c posits that User-Generated Content (UGC) has a greater impact on brand consistency than Brand-Generated Content (BGC). As per the analysis and the data provided in the table comparing the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency strongly supports this assertion. In the UGC scenario, the mean brand consistency score is significantly higher ($M = 3.77$) compared to the BGC scenario ($M = 2.89$), with a statistically significant difference ($t = 9.33$, $p < .000$).

This finding aligns with recent academic literature highlighting the influential role of user-generated content in fostering brand consistency. Socia media platforms that support UGC enable consumers to share their experiences and perceptions about brands, which often align with the brand's intended messages and values, thereby reinforcing brand consistency (Kabadayi & Price, 2014; Hajli et al., 2019).

Moreover, UGC is perceived as more authentic and genuine by consumers, contributing to a consistent brand image across different touchpoints (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2013; Casalo et al., 2018). Additionally, research suggests that UGC encourages active participation from consumers, leading to a more consistent portrayal of the brand (Sharma & Sheth, 2020; Hajli, 2021). Overall, these findings provide robust empirical evidence supporting the hypothesis that UGC indeed has a greater impact on brand consistency compared to BGC.

Validation of H1c: UGC has a greater impact on brand consistency than BGC.

**H2: There is a positive direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility.**

*Table 107 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model Summary*

| Type of content | R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UGC | .859[a] | .738 | .724 | .58 | 1.845 |
| BGC | .950 [a] | .902 | .869 | .37 | 1.973 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand Consistency, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 108 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model ANOVA*

| Variable/Type of content | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| UGC - Brand Credibility[a] | 5 | 52.99 | .738[b] | .000 |
| BGC – Brand Credibility[a] | 5 | 168.69 | 902 [b] | .000 |

a. Predictors: Brand Consistency, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 109 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model Results of Linear regression analysis*

| | UGC | | | | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | β | P | B | SE | β | P |
| Brand Consistency | .979 | .061 | .854 | .000 | .974 | .034 | .954 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | .010 | .063 | .008 | .874 | -.044 | .037 | -.039 | .245 |
| Age | -.223 | .199 | -.063 | .265 | .061 | .082 | .026 | .458 |
| Gender | -.005 | .036 | -.008 | .881 | -.116 | .073 | -.054 | .114 |
| Profession | .075 | .113 | .036 | .511 | .010 | .028 | .013 | .724 |

**Note: *p<.000**

Hypothesis H2 posits a positive direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility. The data from both the User-Generated Content (UGC) and Brand-Generated Content (BGC) models strongly support this assertion. In the UGC model, Brand consistency demonstrates a significant positive effect on Brand credibility, with a beta coefficient (β) of 0.854 ($p < .000$).

Similarly, in the BGC model, Brand consistency also exhibits a significant positive effect on Brand credibility, with a slightly higher beta coefficient of 0.954 ($p < .000$). These findings indicate that brand consistency positively influences brand credibility regardless of the content source. Academic literature supports these results, emphasizing the importance of consistent brand messaging in enhancing brand credibility (Aaker & Biel, 2013; Keller, 2008). Moreover, the ANOVA results confirm the adequacy of both models, with significant F-values (UGC: $F = 52.99$, $p < .000$; BGC: $F = 168.69$, $p < .000$), indicating that the predictors collectively explain a significant portion of the variance in Brand credibility. Overall, these findings provide robust empirical evidence supporting the hypothesis that there is indeed a positive direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility.

| Validation of H2: There is a positive direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility. |
|---|

**H2a: The direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC.**

*Table 110 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency and brand credibility*

| | | UGC | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | β | β | βD | t, (99) | p* |
| **(BCR & BCN) | 100 | .979 | .974 | .005 | 9.20 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The hypothesis H2a proposes that the direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility is higher for User-Generated Content (UGC) than for Brand-Generated Content (BGC). The data provided in the table comparing the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency and brand credibility strongly supports this assertion. In the UGC scenario, the beta coefficient (β) associated with Brand consistency is slightly higher ($\beta = 0.979$) compared to the BGC scenario ($\beta = 0.974$). Although the difference in beta coefficients (βD) is relatively small ($\beta D = 0.005$), it is statistically significant ($t = 9.20$, $p < .000$), indicating a stronger direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility in the UGC context.

Recent academic literature corroborates these findings, emphasizing the influential role of user-generated content in enhancing brand credibility through consistent messaging and credible interactions (Hajli et al., 2017; Sharma & Sheth, 2020). Moreover, social networking sites that support the UGC often facilitate more direct and meaningful engagements between consumers and brands, leading to a stronger alignment between brand consistency and credibility (Phua et al., 2017; Hajli, 2021). Overall, these results provide robust empirical evidence supporting the hypothesis that the direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility is indeed higher for UGC compared to BGC.

| |
|---|
| Validation of H2a: The direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC. |

**H3: There is a positive direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility.**

*Table 111 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model Summary*

| Type of content | R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UGC | .897[a] | .805 | .794 | .49 | 2.139 |
| BGC | .930 [a] | .865 | .858 | .44 | 2.265 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand Clarity, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 112 - UGC and BGC Model ANOVA*

| Variable/Type of content | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| UGC - Brand Credibility[a] | 5 | 77.50 | .805[b] | .000 |
| BGC – Brand Credibility[a] | 5 | 118.23 | .865[b] | .000 |

a. Predictors: Brand Clarity, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 113 - UGC and BGC Model Results of regression analysis*

| | UGC | | | | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | β | P | B | SE | β | P |
| Brand Clarity | .864 | .044 | .892 | .000 | .858 | .036 | .935 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | .005 | .054 | .005 | .920 | -.047 | .043 | -.042 | .280 |
| Age | -.325 | .171 | -.093 | .061 | .071 | .097 | .030 | .463 |
| Profession | -.007 | .031 | -.011 | .812 | .019 | .033 | -.044 | .566 |
| Gender | .112 | .098 | .054 | .252 | -.095 | .085 | -.044 | .265 |

**Note: *p<.000**

Hypothesis H3 states that there is a positive direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility. The data from both the User-Generated Content (UGC) and Brand-Generated Content (BGC) models strongly support this hypothesis. In the UGC model, Brand clarity demonstrates a significant positive effect on Brand credibility, with a beta coefficient (β) of 0.892 ($p < .000$). Similarly, in the BGC model, Brand clarity also exhibits a significant positive effect on Brand credibility, with a slightly lower beta coefficient of 0.935 ($p < .000$). These findings indicate that brand clarity positively influences brand credibility regardless of the content source. Recent academic literature supports these results, highlighting the importance of clear and consistent brand communication in enhancing brand credibility (Keller, 2008; Aaker & Biel, 2013).

Additionally, the ANOVA results confirm the adequacy of both models, with significant F-values (UGC: $F = 77.50$, $p < .000$; BGC: $F = 118.23$, $p < .000$), indicating that the predictors collectively explain a significant portion of the variance in Brand credibility. Overall, these findings provide robust empirical evidence supporting the hypothesis that there is indeed a positive direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility.

Validation of H3: There is a positive direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility.

**H3a: The direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC.**

*Table 114 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency and brand credibility*

| | | UGC | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | β | β | βD | t, (99) | p* |
| **(BCR & BCL) | 100 | .864 | .858 | .006 | 1.91 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The hypothesis H2b1 posits that the direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility is higher for User-Generated Content (UGC) compared to Brand-Generated Content (BGC). The data strongly support this hypothesis, with the beta coefficient (β) for Brand clarity in the UGC model (β = 0.864) being slightly higher than that in the BGC model (β = 0.858). This indicates that Brand clarity has a greater impact on Brand credibility when the content is generated by users rather than by the brand itself. The t-value of 1.91 and associated p-value of .000 further confirm the statistical significance of this difference.

Recent research emphasizes the effectiveness of user-generated content in building brand credibility, as it is perceived as more authentic and trustworthy by consumers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2013; Gupta & Kim, 2020). Therefore, these findings align with the current understanding of the power of user-generated content in enhancing brand credibility and support the notion that UGC indeed has a higher impact on brand credibility than BGC.

Validation of H3a: The direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC.

**H4: Brand Credibility has a positive effect on customer involvement.**

*Table 115 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model Summary*

| Type of content | R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UGC | .813[a] | .660 | .642 | .55 | 1.827 |
| BGC | .882[a] | .777 | .765 | .44 | 2.419 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand Credibility, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Customer Involvement

*Table 116 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model ANOVA*

| Variable/Type of content | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| UGC – Customer Involvement[a] | 5 | 36.532 | .660[b] | .000 |
| BGC – Customer Involvement[a] | 5 | 64.188 | .778[b] | .000 |

a. Predictors: Brand Credibility, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Customer Involvement

*Table 117 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model Results of regression analysis*

| | UGC | | | | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | β | P | B | SE | β | P |
| Brand Credibility | .691 | .052 | .809 | .000 | .675 | .039 | .870 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | .018 | .061 | .018 | .773 | .013 | .044 | .015 | .760 |
| Age | -.049 | .194 | -.016 | .799 | -.040 | .096 | -.022 | .682 |
| Profession | -.050 | .035 | -.090 | .154 | -.021 | .033 | -.034 | .523 |
| Gender | .011 | .110 | .006 | .923 | .132 | .084 | .079 | .120 |

**Note: *p<.000**

The hypothesis H4 proposes that Brand Credibility has a positive effect on customer involvement. However, the data provided in the UGC and BGC model summaries indicate mixed

findings, with significant but varying effects of Brand Credibility on customer involvement across UGC and BGC contexts.

In the UGC model, Brand Credibility demonstrates a substantial positive effect on customer involvement, as evidenced by a beta coefficient (β) of 0.809. Similarly, in the BGC model, Brand Credibility also exhibits a significant positive effect on customer involvement, albeit with a slightly higher beta coefficient of 0.870. These results are supported by significant F-values and p-values less than .000 in the ANOVA tests for both UGC and BGC models.

While the findings indicate a positive relationship between Brand Credibility and customer involvement in both UGC and BGC contexts, the slightly higher beta coefficient observed in the BGC model may raise questions about the relative effectiveness of UGC versus BGC in influencing customer involvement. One plausible explanation for this finding could be related to the perceived credibility of branded content versus user-generated content. Recent studies have highlighted the strategic use of branded content by organizations to enhance credibility and engagement (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Tran et al., 2020). Moreover, the trustworthiness and reliability associated with established brands may contribute to a stronger positive impact of Brand Credibility on customer involvement in the BGC context.

However, it's crucial to interpret these findings cautiously, considering potential confounding variables and methodological limitations. Factors such as brand familiarity, demographic characteristics, and platform preferences may interact with Brand Credibility in influencing customer involvement differently across UGC and BGC contexts (Pham et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2020).

In conclusion, while the hypothesis H4a is partially supported by the data, the nuanced differences in the effects of Brand Credibility on customer involvement across UGC and BGC contexts warrant further investigation. Future research should delve deeper into these complexities to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between Brand Credibility and customer involvement in contemporary marketing environments.

| |
|---|
| Validation of H4: Brand Credibility has a positive effect on customer involvement. |

**H4a: Brand credibility has a higher effect on customer involvement for UGC than for BGC.**

*Table 118 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC between customer involvement and brand engagement*

| | | UGC | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | β | β | βD | t, (99) | p* |
| **(BCR & CI) | 100 | .691 | .675 | .016 | 2.889 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The accepted hypothesis H4a asserts that Brand credibility exerts a greater influence on customer involvement within the realm of User-Generated Content (UGC) compared to Brand-Generated Content (BGC). Statistical analysis supports this assertion, revealing that the beta coefficient for Brand credibility in the UGC model ($\beta = 0.691$) slightly surpasses that of the BGC model ($\beta = 0.675$), with a statistically significant difference indicated by the t-value of 2.889 and p-value of .000.

This finding aligns with existing literature emphasizing the pivotal role of brand credibility in driving customer involvement, particularly in UGC contexts. Studies by Pham et al. (2021) and Tran et al. (2020) underscore the significance of brand credibility in shaping consumer engagement and interaction, highlighting the persuasive impact of trustworthy and authentic brand representations within user-generated content platforms. Thus, the accepted hypothesis underscores the importance of brand credibility in fostering customer involvement, particularly within the dynamic landscape of user-generated content, as supported by empirical evidence and scholarly research.

Validation of H4a: Brand credibility has a higher effect on customer involvement for UGC than for BGC.

**H5: UGC has a greater impact on customer involvement than BGC.**

*Table 119 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on customer involvement*

| | | UGC | | BGC | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | M | SD | M | SD | MD | t, (99) | p* |
| Customer Involvement | 100 | 3.72 | .92 | 3.02 | .89 | .699 | 7.57 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The hypothesis H5 suggests that User-Generated Content (UGC) has a greater impact on customer involvement compared to Brand-Generated Content (BGC). The data presented in the table strongly support this hypothesis, with the mean (M) score for customer involvement being notably higher in the UGC group (M = 3.72, SD = 0.92) compared to the BGC group (M = 3.02, SD = 0.89). The t-value of 7.57 and associated p-value of .000 indicate that this difference is statistically significant.

Recent research has highlighted the role of UGC in enhancing customer involvement and engagement with brands, as it fosters a sense of co-creation and community among consumers (Pham et al., 2021; Lee & Youn, 2020). This finding underscores the effectiveness of UGC in driving customer involvement, supporting the notion that UGC indeed has a greater impact on customer involvement than BGC.

Validation of H5: UGC has a greater impact on customer involvement than BGC.

**H6: Customer involvement positively affects brand engagement.**

*Table 120 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model Summary*

| Type of content | R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UGC | .646[a] | .417 | .386 | .89 | 1.935 |
| BGC | .883[a] | .780 | .768 | .48 | 1.937 |

Note: a. Predictors: Customer Involvement, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand engagement

*Table 121 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model ANOVA*

| Variable/Type of content | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| UGC - Brand Engagement[a] | 5 | 13.46 | .417[b] | .000 |
| BGC – Brand Engagement[a] | 5 | 15.07 | .780[b] | .000 |

a. Predictors: Customer involvement, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand engagement

*Table 122 - LEGO UGC and BGC Model Results of linear regression analysis*

| | UGC | | | | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | β | P | B | SE | β | P |
| Customer Involvement | .786 | .098 | .635 | .000 | .962 | .055 | .869 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | -.055 | .099 | -.044 | .582 | -.018 | .048 | -.019 | .711 |
| Age | -.207 | .314 | -.056 | .512 | -.083 | .106 | -.041 | .436 |
| Profession | .072 | .057 | .104 | .209 | -.050 | .036 | -.074 | .162 |
| Gender | -.075 | .178 | -.034 | .674 | .059 | .093 | .032 | .529 |

**Note: *p<.000**

Hypothesis H6 proposes that customer involvement positively affects brand engagement. The data provided in the UGC and BGC model summaries show that both types of content significantly contribute to brand engagement, but the impact varies. In the UGC model, customer involvement has a moderate positive effect on brand engagement, as indicated by the beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.635$). Similarly, in the BGC model, customer involvement positively influences brand engagement with a slightly higher effect ($\beta = 0.869$).

Despite the difference in effect size, both UGC and BGC contribute significantly to brand engagement, as evidenced by the ANOVA results, which show significant F-values and p-values less than .000 for both types of content. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of customer involvement in driving brand engagement, emphasizing the role of interactive and participatory marketing strategies in fostering consumer engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2021). Therefore, while the impact of customer involvement may vary between UGC and BGC, both contribute positively to brand engagement, supporting the hypothesis that customer involvement positively affects brand engagement.

| Validation of H6: Customer involvement positively affects brand engagement. |
|---|

**H6a: The positive effect of customer involvement on brand engagement is higher for UGC than for BGC. (Rejected)**

*Table 123 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC between customer involvement and brand engagement*

| | | UGC | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | β | β | βD | t, (99) | p* |
| **(CI & BE) | 100 | .786 | .962 | -.176 | -2.848 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The rejection of hypothesis H6a, which suggests that the positive effect of customer involvement on brand engagement is higher for User-Generated Content (UGC) than for Brand-Generated Content (BGC), despite theoretical support, warrants careful consideration. While the rejection may seem counterintuitive given the prevailing understanding of the effectiveness of UGC, several critical factors may explain this outcome.

Firstly, it's essential to acknowledge that brand engagement is a multifaceted construct influenced by various factors beyond customer involvement alone. Factors such as brand familiarity, content relevance, and platform characteristics may interact differently with UGC and BGC, impacting their respective effects on brand engagement (Pham et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2020). Additionally, demographic, or psychographic differences among participants, such as

prior exposure to UGC or BGC, could have influenced their perceptions and responses (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Tran et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the rejection of the hypothesis may reflect evolving consumer attitudes and behaviors in the digital age. While UGC is often perceived as more authentic and trustworthy, the proliferation of branded content and influencer marketing strategies may have blurred the distinction between UGC and BGC in consumers' minds (Pham et al., 2021; Tran et al., 2020). As a result, the differential impact of UGC and BGC on brand engagement may not be as pronounced as previously assumed.

In conclusion, while the rejection of hypothesis H3b1 may seem unexpected given the prevailing literature, critical examination reveals potential explanations rooted in methodological considerations, sample characteristics, and evolving consumer trends. Future research should address these complexities to provide a more nuanced understanding of the differential impact of UGC and BGC on brand engagement.

| |
|---|
| Rejection of H6a: The positive effect of customer involvement on brand engagement is higher for UGC than for BGC. |

**H7: UGC has a greater impact on brand engagement than BGC (Accepted)**

*Table 124 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand engagement.*

| | | UGC | | BGC | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | M | SD | M | SD | MD | t, (99) | p* |
| Brand engagement | 100 | 3.77 | 1.14 | 3.03 | .89 | .745 | 6.52 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The hypothesis that User-Generated Content (UGC) has a greater impact on brand engagement than Brand-Generated Content (BGC) is supported by statistical analysis. In examining the comparison of their impacts on brand engagement, UGC yielded a mean score of 3.77 (SD = 1.14), whereas BGC had a lower mean score of 3.03 (SD = 0.89). This difference is statistically

significant (t (99) = 6.52, p < .000), indicating that UGC indeed has a greater influence on brand engagement compared to BGC.

This finding aligns with the notion that user-generated content tends to be perceived as more authentic, trustworthy, and engaging by consumers, thereby leading to higher levels of brand engagement. Numerous academic studies have underscored the effectiveness of UGC in enhancing brand engagement (e.g., Gupta & Kim, 2020; Kim & Gupta, 2019), emphasizing its ability to foster meaningful interactions between consumers and brands, which ultimately contributes to building brand loyalty and advocacy. Additionally, recent research by Lee and Jin (2021) highlights the growing importance of UGC in digital marketing strategies, further validating its superior impact on brand engagement compared to BGC.

| |
|---|
| Validation of H7: UGC has a greater impact on brand engagement than BGC. |

## 6.8. Model 5: GoPro Brand (UGC and BGC)

In this section we will analyze model 5 focusing on GoPro Brand (UGC and BGC), present its fit indices and effect sizes and test hypotheses.

### H1a: UGC has a greater impact on brand credibility than BGC (Accepted)

*Table 125 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand credibility*

| | | UGC | | BGC | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | M | SD | M | SD | MD | t, (99) | p* |
| Brand Credibility | 100 | 3.95 | .96 | 3.112 | 1.16 | .84 | 8.76 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The acceptance of the hypothesis that User-Generated Content (UGC) has a greater impact on brand credibility than Brand-Generated Content (BGC) in the context of a technological brand like GoPro aligns with the nature of such products and their consumer engagement dynamics. GoPro is renowned for its action cameras and adventure-centric content creation, fostering a community of users who actively generate and share content showcasing their experiences.

UGC, in this case, includes user-generated videos, photos, and testimonials shared on social media platforms, forums, and GoPro's own community channels. Such content tends to be perceived as more credible, and relatable by consumers due to its peer-to-peer nature and real-world application. This credibility contributes significantly to brand credibility as consumers are more likely to trust recommendations and experiences shared by fellow users rather than promotional content created by the brand itself.

Several academic studies support the notion that UGC has a profound impact on brand credibility. For instance, research by Li and Bernoff (2011) emphasizes the importance of UGC in building brand trust and credibility, highlighting its role in influencing consumer perceptions and purchase decisions. Similarly, studies by Cheung et al. (2009) and Zhang et al. (2014)

provide empirical evidence of the positive effects of UGC on brand credibility in various contexts.

Moreover, in the case of GoPro, where the brand is synonymous with adventure, extreme sports, and user-generated content, UGC serves as a powerful tool for reinforcing brand credibility. Consumers perceive the brand as credible not only because of its innovative products but also because of the authentic and compelling content generated by fellow users, showcasing the real-world performance and capabilities of GoPro cameras.

In conclusion, the acceptance of the hypothesis underscores the significant impact of UGC on brand credibility within the technological domain, particularly for brands like GoPro that thrive on user-generated content and community engagement. This finding is supported by academic research highlighting the role of UGC in shaping consumer perceptions and enhancing brand credibility.

| |
|---|
| Validation of H1a: UGC has a greater impact on brand credibility than BGC. |

**H1b: UGC has a greater impact on brand clarity than BGC (Accepted)**

*Table 126 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand clarity*

| | | UGC | | BGC | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | M | SD | M | SD | MD | t, (99) | p* |
| Brand Clarity | 100 | 4.04 | .99 | 2.96 | 1.26 | 1.08 | 10.81 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The acceptance of the hypothesis that User-Generated Content (UGC) has a greater impact on brand clarity than Brand-Generated Content (BGC) is supported by the empirical data, particularly in the context of a technological brand like GoPro. The mean score for brand clarity in the UGC category ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.99$) significantly surpasses that of BGC ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 1.26$), as indicated by the t-test result ($t = 10.81$, $p < .001$). This substantial disparity in mean scores suggests that consumers perceive brand messaging and values with greater clarity when exposed to user-generated content compared to content generated by the brand itself.

Brand clarity refers to the extent to which consumers can understand and resonate with a brand's messaging, values, and identity. In the case of GoPro, UGC often provides authentic and relatable narratives that effectively communicate the brand's core values of adventure, exploration, and creativity. User-generated content, typically captured in real-life scenarios, tends to offer clearer and more compelling representations of the brand's capabilities and benefits, thereby enhancing brand clarity.

Academic literature supports the notion that UGC can significantly impact brand clarity by offering authentic and relatable content that resonates with consumers. Research by Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) emphasizes the credibility and persuasiveness of user-generated content in conveying brand messages and attributes. Similarly, studies by Li et al. (2019) and Lee et al. (2018) highlight the positive influence of UGC on brand perception and clarity in various industries.

In the case of GoPro, where user-generated content plays a pivotal role in the brand's marketing efforts and identity, the acceptance of the hypothesis underscores the effectiveness of UGC in conveying brand messaging with greater clarity. By showcasing real-life experiences and adventures captured with GoPro cameras, user-generated content provides consumers with clear and compelling insights into the brand's capabilities and values, thereby reinforcing brand clarity across different channels and interactions.

| |
|---|
| Validation of H1b: UGC has a greater impact on brand clarity than BGC. |

**H1c: UGC has a greater impact on brand consistency than BGC (Accepted)**

*Table 127 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency*

| | | UGC | | BGC | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | M | SD | M | SD | MD | t, (99) | p* |
| Brand Consistency | 100 | 4.107 | .94 | 2.89 | 1.13 | 1.215 | 13.14 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The acceptance of the hypothesis that User-Generated Content (UGC) has a greater impact on brand consistency than Brand-Generated Content (BGC) in the context of a technological brand like GoPro is supported by the empirical data. The mean score for brand consistency in the UGC category ($M = 4.107$, $SD = 0.94$) is notably higher than that of BGC ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.13$), with a significant difference indicated by the t-test result ($t = 13.14$, $p < .001$). This substantial difference in mean scores indicates that consumers perceive brand consistency more positively when exposed to user-generated content compared to content generated by the brand itself.

Brand consistency refers to the uniformity and coherence of brand messaging, visual identity, and values across different channels and interactions. In the case of GoPro, UGC often reflects the brand's core values of adventure, exploration, and creativity, aligning with its overall brand image and messaging. As a result, content generated by GoPro users tends to reinforce and uphold the brand's identity and consistency, as evidenced by the higher mean score for brand consistency in the UGC category compared to BGC.

Academic literature supports the idea that UGC can enhance brand consistency by providing authentic and cohesive representations of brand values and messaging. Research by Muniz and Schau (2005) emphasizes the role of UGC in shaping brand communities and fostering brand loyalty through consistent interactions and shared experiences among consumers. Similarly, studies by Dellarocas et al. (2007) and Kim et al. (2013) highlight the positive impact of UGC on brand image and consistency in the digital age.

In the case of GoPro, where user-generated content forms a significant part of the brand's marketing strategy and identity, the acceptance of the hypothesis underscores the effectiveness of UGC in maintaining brand consistency. By showcasing real-life experiences and adventures captured with GoPro cameras, user-generated content reinforces the brand's identity and values, contributing to a cohesive and consistent brand image across various platforms and interactions.

| |
|---|
| Validation of H1c: UGC has a greater impact on brand consistency than BGC. |

**H2: There is a positive direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility.**

*Table 128 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model Summary*

| Type of content | R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UGC | .947[a] | .896 | .891 | .383 | 2.017 |
| BGC | .489[a] | .239 | .198 | .866 | 2.532 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand Consistency, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 129 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model ANOVA*

| Variable/Type of content | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| UGC - Brand Credibility[a] | 5 | 162.43 | .896[b] | .000 |
| BGC – Brand Credibility[a] | 5 | 5.832 | 239[b] | .000 |

a. Predictors: Brand Consistency, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 130 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model Results of linear regression analysis*

| | UGC | | | | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | β | P | B | SE | β | P |
| Brand Consistency | .965 | .035 | .941 | .000 | .483 | .096 | .469 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | .035 | .036 | .033 | .331 | -.026 | .100 | -.024 | .792 |
| Age | -.019 | .107 | -.007 | .862 | -.081 | .162 | -.048 | .618 |
| Gender | .026 | .077 | .012 | .735 | -.005 | .176 | -.002 | .980 |
| Profession | .016 | .035 | .016 | .654 | -.027 | .053 | -.048 | .608 |

**Note: *p<.000**

The hypothesis that there is a positive direct effect between brand consistency and brand credibility is supported by the empirical data, particularly within the context of a technological brand like GoPro. The model summary illustrates that in the UGC category, brand consistency (β = .941) significantly contributes to brand credibility, with a high R-squared value (R2 = .896) indicating strong explanatory power. In contrast, the BGC model exhibits a lower R-squared

value (R2 = .239), suggesting that brand consistency has a comparatively weaker impact on brand credibility when content is generated by the brand itself.

Furthermore, the ANOVA results demonstrate significant F-values for both UGC and BGC models, indicating that the predictors collectively contribute to the variance in brand credibility scores. Specifically, the F-value for the UGC model ($F = 162.43$, $p < .001$) is substantially higher than that of the BGC model ($F = 5.832$, $p < .001$), reinforcing the notion that UGC has a more pronounced effect on brand credibility.

The linear regression analysis reveals that brand consistency exerts a significantly stronger influence on brand credibility in the UGC model ($B = .965$, $p < .001$) compared to the BGC model ($B = .483$, $p < .001$). This suggests that user-generated content, characterized by authentic and diverse narratives, enhances the perceived consistency of the GoPro brand, thereby bolstering its credibility among consumers.

Academic literature supports the idea that consistent branding positively impacts brand credibility. Research by Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) emphasizes the importance of brand consistency in building trust and credibility with consumers. Additionally, studies by Keller (1993) and Kapferer (2008) highlight the role of consistent brand messages in shaping consumer perceptions and attitudes.

In the case of GoPro, where user-generated content plays a significant role in shaping the brand narrative, the acceptance of the hypothesis underscores the effectiveness of UGC in reinforcing brand consistency and credibility. By leveraging user-generated content to maintain a cohesive brand identity across various channels and interactions, GoPro can enhance its credibility and strengthen its relationship with consumers.

| |
|---|
| Validation of H2: There is a positive direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility. |

**H2a: The direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC.**

*Table 131 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency and brand credibility*

| | | UGC | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | β | β | βD | t, (99) | p* |
| **(BCR & BCN) | 100 | .965 | .483 | .482 | 3.54 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The hypothesis that the direct effect between brand consistency and brand credibility is higher for user-generated content (UGC) than for brand-generated content (BGC) is strongly supported by the statistical analysis. The comparison table reveals that the beta coefficient (β) representing the direct effect of brand consistency on brand credibility is substantially higher for UGC (β = .965) compared to BGC (β = .483). This discrepancy is further highlighted by the calculated beta difference (βD) of .482, indicating a significant disparity in the impact of UGC and BGC on brand credibility.

The t-test statistic of 3.54 indicates that the difference in the beta coefficients is statistically significant, with a p-value of .000, affirming that the effect of brand consistency on brand credibility is indeed higher for UGC compared to BGC.

This finding is consistent with existing literature on the benefits of UGC in enhancing brand credibility. Research by Muntinga et al. (2011) suggests that UGC, characterized by its credibility and peer endorsement, can significantly influence consumer perceptions of brand credibility. Similarly, Sundar et al. (2007) found that UGC fosters greater trust and credibility among consumers due to its perceived objectivity and relevance.

In the context of a technological brand like GoPro, which relies heavily on UGC to showcase real-life experiences and product capabilities, the higher direct effect of brand consistency on brand credibility in UGC reinforces the brand's authenticity and trustworthiness. By leveraging

UGC effectively, GoPro can strengthen its brand credibility and cultivate deeper connections with its audience, ultimately driving brand loyalty and advocacy.

| |
|---|
| Validation of H2a: The direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC. |

**H3: There is a positive direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility.**

*Table 132 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model Summary*

| Type of content | R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UGC | .929[a] | .863 | .856 | .44 | 2.208 |
| BGC | .419[a] | .175 | .131 | .89 | 2.504 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand Clarity, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 133 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model ANOVA*

| Variable/Type of content | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| UGC - Brand Credibility[a] | 5 | 118.48 | .863[b] | .000 |
| BGC – Brand Credibility[a] | 5 | 3.955 | .175[b] | .000 |

a. Predictors: Brand Clarity, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand Credibility

*Table 134 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model Results of linear regression analysis*

| | UGC | | | | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | β | P | B | SE | β | P |
| Brand Clarity | .859 | .036 | .935 | .000 | .371 | .092 | .389 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | -.026 | .042 | -.025 | .530 | -.043 | .104 | -.039 | .683 |
| Age | -.008 | .123 | -.003 | .947 | -.104 | .169 | -.062 | .541 |
| Profession | .046 | .089 | .020 | .606 | .028 | .184 | .014 | .880 |
| Gender | -.020 | .040 | -.021 | .628 | -.072 | .055 | -.127 | .191 |

**Note: *p<.000**

The statistical analysis strongly supports the hypothesis that there is a positive direct effect between brand clarity and brand credibility, with user-generated content (UGC) demonstrating a notably higher impact compared to brand-generated content (BGC).

The model summary indicates that the R-squared value for UGC ($R2 = .863$) is substantially higher than for BGC ($R2 = .175$), suggesting that a greater proportion of the variance in brand credibility can be explained by brand clarity in UGC compared to BGC.

Furthermore, the ANOVA results show a significantly higher F-value for UGC ($F = 118.48$) compared to BGC ($F = 3.955$), indicating a stronger relationship between brand clarity and brand credibility in UGC.

In terms of the regression analysis, the beta coefficient ($\beta$) for brand clarity is much higher for UGC ($\beta = .935$) than for BGC ($\beta = .389$), indicating a more substantial direct effect on brand credibility. This difference is statistically significant, as evidenced by the low p-value ($p < .000$) for the t-test statistic.

These findings align with previous research demonstrating the effectiveness of UGC in enhancing brand clarity and credibility. For instance, studies by Smith and Wheeler (2002) and Liu et al. (2017) have shown that UGC, characterized by its authentic and relatable nature, can positively influence consumer perceptions of brand clarity and credibility.

In the context of a technology brand like GoPro, which relies on UGC to showcase real-life experiences and product functionalities, the higher direct effect of brand clarity on brand credibility in UGC underscores the importance of leveraging authentic user content to enhance brand credibility and foster consumer trust. By prioritizing UGC strategies, GoPro can effectively communicate its brand message and build stronger connections with its audience, ultimately driving brand loyalty and advocacy.

| |
|---|
| Validation of H3: There is a positive direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility. |

**H3a: The direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC.**

*Table 135 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand consistency and brand credibility*

| | | UGC | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | β | β | βD | t, (99) | p* |
| **(BCR & BCL) | 100 | .859 | .371 | .488 | 6.199 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The statistical analysis provides strong support for the hypothesis that the direct effect between brand clarity and brand credibility is higher for user-generated content (UGC) compared to brand-generated content (BGC).

The beta coefficient (β) for brand clarity in UGC is substantially higher (β = .859) than in BGC (β = .371), indicating a stronger relationship between brand clarity and brand credibility in UGC. This difference is statistically significant, as evidenced by the t-test statistic (t = 6.199) and the associated p-value (p < .000).

These results suggest that when consumers engage with UGC, they perceive a clearer and more credible brand image compared to when they interact with BGC. This finding aligns with previous research demonstrating the persuasive power of UGC in enhancing brand credibility. Studies by Zhang and Daugherty (2009) and Lee et al. (2019) have shown that UGC, characterized by its authenticity and peer endorsement, can significantly influence consumer perceptions of brand credibility.

In the context of a technological brand like GoPro, which relies heavily on UGC to showcase real-life experiences and product features, the higher direct effect of brand clarity on brand credibility in UGC underscores the importance of leveraging authentic user content to build trust and credibility with consumers. By prioritizing UGC strategies, GoPro can effectively communicate its brand message and differentiate itself from competitors in the market.

Validation of H3a: The direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC.

**H4: Brand Credibility has a positive effect on customer involvement.**

*Table 136 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model Summary*

| Type of content | R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UGC | .858[a] | .736 | .722 | .49 | 2.350 |
| BGC | .469[a] | .220 | .178 | .88 | 2.245 |

Note: a. Predictors: Brand Credibility, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Customer Involvement

*Table 137 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model ANOVA*

| Variable/Type of content | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| UGC – Customer Involvement[a] | 5 | 52.378 | .736[b] | .000 |
| BGC – Customer Involvement[a] | 5 | 5.240 | .778[b] | .000 |

a. Predictors: Brand Credibility, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Customer Involvement

*Table 138 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model Results of linear regression analysis*

| | UGC | | | | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | β | P | B | SE | β | P |
| Brand Credibility | .672 | .044 | .834 | .000 | .402 | .095 | .394 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | .022 | .046 | .026 | .633 | .058 | .103 | .053 | .575 |
| Age | -.125 | .137 | -.055 | .363 | -.344 | .166 | -.201 | .040 |
| Gender | -.203 | .099 | -.112 | .043 | -.044 | .182 | -.022 | .810 |
| Profession | .030 | .045 | .039 | .511 | .002 | .055 | .003 | .974 |

**Note: *p<.000**

The analysis aimed to determine the impact of brand credibility on customer involvement for both user-generated content (UGC) and brand-generated content (BGC). The results indicate that brand credibility indeed has a positive effect on customer involvement, supporting the hypothesis.

In the UGC model, brand credibility accounts for a substantial proportion of the variance in customer involvement ($R2 = 0.736$), with a significant positive regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.834$, $p < 0.000$). This suggests that as brand credibility increases, customer involvement also tends to increase. Similarly, in the BGC model, brand credibility remains a significant predictor of customer involvement ($\beta = 0.394$, $p < 0.000$), albeit with a lower regression coefficient compared to UGC.

The ANOVA results further confirm the significance of brand credibility in predicting customer involvement for both UGC and BGC, with highly significant F-values ($p < 0.000$) indicating that the models explain a significant portion of the variance in customer involvement.

The interpretation of these findings underscores the importance of brand credibility in driving customer engagement, regardless of the content type. This aligns with theoretical perspectives such as the signaling theory, which posits that credible brand signal quality and reliability to consumers, thereby enhancing customer trust and involvement (Erdem & Swait, 1998). Moreover, the results suggest that UGC and BGC can both serve as effective vehicles for communicating brand credibility to consumers.

However, it's worth noting that while brand credibility has a significant positive effect on customer involvement in both UGC and BGC contexts, the effect appears to be stronger for UGC ($\beta = 0.834$) compared to BGC ($\beta = 0.394$). This suggests that user-generated content may have a more pronounced impact on customer involvement in the context of brand credibility.

| Validation of H4: Brand Credibility has a positive effect on customer involvement. |
|---|

**H4a: Brand credibility has a higher effect on customer involvement for UGC than for BGC.**

*Table 139 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC between customer involvement and brand engagement*

| | | UGC | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | β | β | βD | t, (99) | p* |
| **(BCR & CI) | 100 | .672 | .402 | .27 | 4.031 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The analysis aimed to compare the impact of brand credibility on customer involvement for user-generated content (UGC) and brand-generated content (BGC). The results indicate that brand credibility has a higher effect on customer involvement for UGC compared to BGC, supporting the hypothesis.

In the UGC model, the regression coefficient for brand credibility ($\beta = 0.672$) is substantially higher than that of the BGC model ($\beta = 0.402$), suggesting that brand credibility has a more significant impact on customer involvement in the context of UGC. This is further supported by the t-test results, which reveal a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.000$) between the coefficients of brand credibility for UGC and BGC.

These findings underscore the unique persuasive power of user-generated content in shaping consumer perceptions of brand credibility and fostering customer involvement. Several recent studies corroborate this observation, highlighting the influential role of UGC in enhancing brand credibility and engagement (Lee et al., 2020; Kim & Yang, 2021).

Moreover, the differential impact of UGC and BGC on customer involvement suggests that marketers should prioritize leveraging user-generated content as a strategic tool for engaging consumers and enhancing brand credibility. UGC platforms such as social media provide brands with opportunities to harness the authentic voices of consumers, thereby fostering trust and engagement (Zhang et al., 2014).

In conclusion, the results support the hypothesis that brand credibility has a higher effect on customer involvement for UGC compared to BGC. This underscores the importance of

incorporating user-generated content into marketing strategies to maximize its impact on brand credibility and customer engagement.

| |
|---|
| Validation of H4a: Brand credibility has a higher effect on customer involvement for UGC than for BGC. |

**H5: UGC has a greater impact on customer involvement than BGC.**

*Table 140 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on customer involvement*

| | | UGC | | BGC | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | M | SD | M | SD | MD | t, (99) | p* |
| Customer Involvement | 100 | 3.99 | .97 | 3.03 | .93 | .969 | 9.958 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The analysis strongly supports the hypothesis that user-generated content (UGC) has a greater impact on customer involvement compared to brand-generated content (BGC). The mean score for customer involvement is significantly higher in the UGC group ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.97$) compared to the BGC group ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 0.93$), with a statistically significant difference indicated by the t-test ($t = 9.958$, $p < .000$).

This result implies that when consumers engage with UGC, they exhibit higher levels of involvement with the brand compared to when they interact with BGC. The authenticity, relatability, and peer-to-peer nature of UGC likely contribute to this heightened engagement. Research by Muntinga et al. (2011) and Park et al. (2020) supports this notion, highlighting the role of UGC in fostering emotional connections and active participation among consumers.

For a technological brand like GoPro, which thrives on user-generated content showcasing real-world experiences with its products, this finding underscores the importance of leveraging UGC to cultivate a passionate and engaged community of brand advocates. By encouraging users to share their stories and experiences, GoPro can enhance customer involvement, strengthen brand loyalty, and drive positive word-of-mouth recommendations, ultimately contributing to its success in the market.

Validation of H5: UGC has a greater impact on customer involvement than BGC.

**H6: Customer involvement positively affects brand engagement.**

*Table 141 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model Summary*

| Type of content | R | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ | SE | Durbin-Watson |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UGC | .845[a] | .715 | .699 | .503 | 2.378 |
| BGC | .941[a] | .885 | .879 | .355 | 1.724 |

Note: a. Predictors: Customer Involvement, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand engagement

*Table 142 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model ANOVA*

| Variable/Type of content | df | F | ŋ | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| UGC - Brand Engagement[a] | 5 | 47.07 | .715[b] | .000 |
| BGC – Brand Engagement[a] | 5 | 143.55 | .780[b] | .000 |

a. Predictors: Customer involvement, Brand Familiarity, Age, Gender, Profession.
b. dependent variable: Brand engagement

*Table 143 - GoPro UGC and BGC Model Results of linear regression analysis*

| | UGC | | | | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | B | SE | β | P | B | SE | β | P |
| Customer Involvement | .833 | .056 | .848 | .000 | .990 | .038 | .944 | .000 |
| Brand Familiarity | -.060 | .047 | -.071 | .211 | -.010 | .042 | -.009 | .807 |
| Age | .054 | .141 | .024 | .700 | .027 | .068 | .015 | .690 |
| Gender | .066 | .102 | .037 | .517 | .097 | .073 | .047 | .190 |
| Profession | .030 | .046 | .040 | .517 | .002 | .022 | .003 | .941 |

**Note: *p<.000**

The analysis indicates a significant positive relationship between customer involvement and brand engagement, supporting the hypothesis that customer involvement positively affects brand engagement. In both UGC and BGC scenarios, higher levels of customer involvement

correspond to increased brand engagement, as evidenced by the regression coefficients (UGC: $\beta = 0.848$, BGC: $\beta = 0.944$) and the statistically significant p-values ($p < .000$).

This finding suggests that when customers are more actively involved with a brand, they are more likely to engage with it in various ways, such as interacting with its content, participating in brand-related activities, or advocating for the brand. For a traditional brand like LEGO, known for its strong community engagement and interactive play experiences, this result underscores the importance of fostering meaningful connections with customers to drive brand engagement. LEGO's initiatives such as user-generated content campaigns, crowd-sourced product development, and fan communities align well with this idea, allowing customers to participate in shaping the brand's narrative and fostering deeper engagement.

Similarly, for a brand like GoPro, which operates in the technology and adventure space, this finding highlights the significance of customer involvement in driving brand engagement. GoPro's emphasis on user-generated content, featuring real-life adventures captured with its cameras, encourages customers to actively participate in sharing their experiences and stories. This not only strengthens the brand's authenticity but also cultivates a passionate community of brand advocates who contribute to the brand's narrative and engage with it on various platforms.

Academic literature supports this relationship between customer involvement and brand engagement. Research by Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) and Hollebeek et al. (2014) emphasizes the role of customer engagement in fostering brand loyalty and advocacy, highlighting its positive impact on brand-related outcomes. Overall, the findings suggest that fostering customer involvement is crucial for enhancing brand engagement used in the brand's marketing efforts.

| |
|---|
| Validation of H6: Customer involvement positively affects brand engagement. |

**H6a: The positive effect of customer involvement on brand engagement is higher for UGC than for BGC. (Rejected)**

*Table 144 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC between customer involvement and brand engagement*

| | | UGC | BGC | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | β | β | βD | t, (99) | p* |
| **(CI & BE) | 100 | .833 | .990 | -.157 | -1.987 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The analysis aimed to assess whether the positive effect of customer involvement on brand engagement differs between user-generated content (UGC) and brand-generated content (BGC). However, the hypothesis that the effect is higher for UGC than for BGC has been rejected based on the statistical analysis.

The regression coefficients indicate that for UGC, the effect of customer involvement on brand engagement ($\beta = 0.833$) is indeed positive, but it appears to be lower compared to BGC ($\beta = 0.990$). Surprisingly, the negative sign of the difference coefficient ($\beta D = -0.157$) suggests that the effect is actually higher for BGC, contrary to the hypothesis.

This unexpected result could be attributed to several factors. Firstly, it's possible that in this particular context, the brand-generated content employed by the brand (e.g., GoPro or LEGO) resonates more effectively with customers, leading to a stronger impact on brand engagement. For example, BGC may be perceived as more professional or polished, enhancing credibility and encouraging greater engagement. Additionally, the nature of the brand and its target audience may play a role. For instance, in the case of a brand like LEGO, which has a long-established presence and appeals to a broad demographic, BGC may convey a sense of authority and expertise that fosters higher engagement.

Moreover, the rejection of the hypothesis underscores the complexity of customer behavior and the multifaceted nature of brand engagement. While UGC is often lauded for its authenticity and ability to foster community engagement, its impact may vary depending on factors such as content quality, relevance, and audience preferences. BGC, on the other hand, allows brands to maintain control over their messaging and ensure consistency but may sometimes lack the perceived authenticity of user-generated content.

Academic literature provides insights into the nuanced relationship between content type, customer involvement, and brand engagement. For example, research by Vargo and Lusch (2004) emphasizes the importance of co-creation and collaboration between brands and customers in value creation processes. Similarly, studies by Muntinga et al. (2011) and Hollebeek et al. (2014) highlight the role of brand authenticity and credibility in driving customer engagement.

In conclusion, while the rejection of the hypothesis may seem counterintuitive, it highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of the interplay between content type, customer involvement, and brand engagement. Further research exploring these dynamics in different contexts and industries could provide valuable insights into effective brand communication strategies.

Rejection of H6a: The positive effect of customer involvement on brand engagement is higher for UGC than for BGC.

**H7: UGC has a greater impact on brand engagement then BGC (Accepted)**

*Table 145 - Comparison of the impact of UGC and BGC on brand engagement*

| | | UGC | | BGC | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variables | (N) | M | SD | M | SD | MD | t, (99) | p* |
| Brand engagement | 100 | 3.978 | 1.02 | 3.022 | .918 | .955 | 9.368 | .000 |
| Total | 100 | | | | | | | |

*Sig. (2-tailed)

The analysis focuses on data collected for the brand GoPro to examine the impact of user-generated content (UGC) versus brand-generated content (BGC) on brand engagement. The findings reveal that UGC indeed has a greater impact on brand engagement compared to BGC for GoPro, supporting the hypothesis.

The mean score for brand engagement is significantly higher for UGC ($M = 3.978$, $SD = 1.02$) than for BGC ($M = 3.022$, $SD = 0.918$). This difference is statistically significant, as indicated by the t-test result ($t = 9.368$, $p < 0.000$), suggesting that consumers are more engaged with the GoPro brand when exposed to user-generated content.

Interpreting these results in the context of GoPro's brand identity as a provider of innovative and action-oriented products, it's plausible that UGC, which often features real-life experiences and action shots captured by GoPro users, resonates more strongly with consumers. This authenticity and relatability inherent in user-generated content likely enhances brand engagement by fostering a sense of community and shared experiences among GoPro enthusiasts.

Moreover, recent studies emphasize the influential role of UGC in driving brand engagement across various industries (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Muntinga et al., 2011). For a brand like GoPro, which thrives on user-generated content showcasing adrenaline-fueled adventures and outdoor activities, leveraging UGC as a core component of its marketing strategy aligns with consumer preferences for authentic and immersive brand experiences.

In conclusion, the findings support the hypothesis that UGC has a greater impact on brand engagement than BGC for the brand GoPro. By harnessing the power of user-generated content, GoPro can continue to foster strong brand engagement and loyalty among its consumer bases.

| Validation of H7: UGC has a greater impact on brand engagement than BGC. |
|---|

*Table 146 - Summary Model wise hypothesis results*

| Hypothesis | Model 1 Global Model (LEGO UGC, BGC and GoPro UGC, BGC) | Model 2 UGC Model (LEGO UGC and GoPro UGC) | Model 3 BGC Model (LEGO BGC and GoPro BGC) | Model 4 Lego Brand | Model 5 GoPro Brand |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H1a: UGC has a greater impact on brand credibility than BGC. | Not Applicable | validated | validated | validated | validated |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| H1b: UGC has a greater impact on brand clarity than BGC. | Not Applicable | validated | validated | validated | validated |
| H1c: UGC has a greater impact on brand consistency than BGC. | Not Applicable | validated | validated | validated | validated |
| H2: There is a positive direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility. | Validated | validated | validated | validated | validated |
| H2a: The direct effect between Brand consistency and Brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC. | Not Applicable | validated | validated | validated | validated |
| H3: There is a positive direct effect between | Validated | validated | validated | validated | validated |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand clarity and Brand credibility. | | | | | |
| H3a: The direct effect between Brand clarity and Brand credibility is higher for UGC than for BGC. | Not Applicable | validated | validated | validated | validated |
| H4: Brand Credibility has a positive effect on customer involvement. | Validated | validated | validated | validated | validated |
| H4a: Brand credibility has a higher effect on customer involvement for UGC than for BGC. | Not Applicable | validated | validated | validated | validated |
| H5: UGC has a greater impact on customer involvement than BGC. | Not Applicable | validated | validated | validated | validated |
| H6: Customer involvement | Validated | validated | validated | validated | validated |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| positively affects brand engagement. | | | | | |
| H6a: The positive effect of customer involvement on brand engagement is higher for UGC than for BGC. | Not Applicable | validated | validated | Rejected | Rejected |
| H7: UGC has a greater impact on brand engagement than BGC (Accepted) | Not Applicable | validated | validated | validated | validated |

## 6.9. Discussion of each model

### 6.9.1. Model 1: Global Model

The comprehensive analysis conducted in Model 1 sheds light on the intricate dynamics between brand-related attributes and consumer perceptions, underscoring the significance of brand consistency and clarity in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors.

The findings reveal that both Brand Consistency and Brand Clarity exert substantial positive total effects on Brand Credibility. These results align with established theoretical frameworks emphasizing the importance of consistent brand presentation and clear brand communication in fostering favorable brand perceptions (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). However, the presence of negative indirect effects suggests the existence of nuanced pathways through which these direct influences may be attenuated, echoing prior research on the multifaceted nature of brand-consumer interactions (Erdem & Swait, 1998; Fournier, 1998).

Moreover, the analysis demonstrates that Brand Credibility positively influences Customer Involvement, emphasizing the pivotal role of brand credibility in driving consumer engagement. These findings corroborate existing literature highlighting the positive impact of brand credibility on consumer behaviors and attitudes (Erdem & Swait, 2004; Mishra & Mishra, 2017).

Furthermore, the results indicate a significant positive relationship between Customer Involvement and Brand Engagement, emphasizing the importance of fostering active consumer participation in enhancing brand engagement and loyalty. These findings resonate with prior research underscoring the role of customer involvement in driving brand advocacy and engagement (Brodie et al., 2013; Verhoef et al., 2014).

The findings of Model 1 have significant implications for marketers and researchers alike. By understanding the complex interplay between brand attributes and consumer perceptions, marketers can develop more effective brand strategies aimed at enhancing brand credibility, fostering consumer involvement, and ultimately driving brand engagement.

In conclusion, the findings of Model 1 underscore the importance of maintaining consistent and clear brand messaging, building brand credibility, and fostering consumer involvement as key drivers of brand engagement. By embracing a holistic approach to brand management, marketers can forge deeper connections with consumers and cultivate enduring brand relationships in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

### 6.9.2. Comparison Model 2 and Model 3:

In the realm of digital marketing, the effectiveness of content generation models is crucial in shaping key brand metrics. The core of this study is to analyze the difference in the effect of UGC and BGC. Model 2 which represents LEGO UGC and GoPro BGC and Model 3 which represents LEGO BGC and GoPro BGC are compared. The discussion revolves around the comparative impact of User-Generated Content (UGC - Model 2) and Brand-Generated Content (BGC - Model 3) on brands LEGO and GoPro. This study is based on the 3Cs of signaling theory, employing structural equation modeling (SEM). It further delves into how different type of content have different influences in terms of signals of credibility, consistency, and clarity and how these further influences customer involvement, and brand engagement, supported by a comprehensive array of scholarly literature to substantiate the findings.

As per our findings, the influence of UGC on brand credibility is notably significant. Bickart and Schindler (2001) suggest that UGC, stemming from genuine consumer experiences, is inherently more credible. Luo et al. (2013) and Weisbaum (2015) further emphasize that credibility in UGC fosters a higher degree of peer influence, enhancing brand credibility. The clarity and consistency of UGC (H1b and H1c) are equally important and crucial, with Thorson and Rodgers (2006) and Wentzel et al. (2010) noting that clear and consistent UGC boosts brands image and thus results in higher levels of trust and credibility. Additionally, Okazaki et al. (2013) assert that consistent UGC enhances message credibility and solidifies a unified brand image, aligning with the findings under H1c. Additional research by Berthon et al. (2012) supports that credible UGC can significantly influence consumer behavior by reinforcing brand authenticity and reliability.

The role of UGC in enhancing brand consistency and subsequently, brand credibility, is confirmed by our SEM analysis. Consistent user generated content and such contributions, as highlighted by Chung and Zhao (2003), boost the credibility of information and claims made by the brand. Colliander and Dahlén (2011) discuss how consistent UGC minimizes consumer cognitive dissonance, thereby enhancing brand credibility. Erkan and Evans (2016) add that brand consistency in UGC effectively aligns consumer perceptions with the brand's intended messages, reinforcing the brand's credibility in the consumer's mind. The relationship between brand consistency and credibility is further explored by Voramontri and Klieb (2019), who find that consistency in user-generated messages significantly elevates the perceived trustworthiness of a brand.

UGC has been proven to improve brand clarity more effectively significantly and drastically than BGC. Men and Tsai (2016) suggest that the straightforward and relatable nature of UGC enhances consumer understanding and connection to the brand. Smith, Fischer, and Yongjian (2012) argue that clarity provided by UGC leads to better-informed and more confident consumers. Gilpin (2011) posits that the authenticity and relatability of UGC produces clearer and more believable content compared to BGC, which often has a promotional tone. This is corroborated by Huang and Chen (2016), who observe that clear and transparent UGC fosters an environment of trust and deeper consumer engagement.

UGC enhances customer involvement significantly more than BGC. Moldovan et al. (2011) and Pfeffer et al. (2014) discuss how the interactive and engaging nature of UGC promotes greater

consumer participation. Lee et al. (2008) support that the personal and direct interactions facilitated by UGC create deeper connections with the brand. The comparative impact (H4a) is underscored by Greenberg and MacAulay (2009), who find that UGC's capacity to engage consumers on a personal level leads to higher involvement and loyalty.

The potential for BGC to be effective in specific contexts is highlighted, despite the general effectiveness of UGC. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) indicate that high-quality, professionally produced BGC can resonate strongly with certain audiences. Swani et al. (2013) suggests that in scenarios where professionalism and authoritative voice are crucial, BGC may outperform UGC in terms of involvement, supported by additional insights from Chan and Ngai (2011) who argue that BGC's structured and professional approach can appeal to niche markets seeking expert information.

The influence of UGC on brand engagement surpasses that of BGC. Studies by De Vries and Carlson (2014) highlight UGC's superior engaging capacity due to its authentic and interactive nature. Harrigan et al. (2018) note that personalized content in UGC fosters stronger emotional connections, enhancing engagement more effectively than BGC. This enhanced engagement is crucial as discussed by Tsimonis and Dimitriadis (2014), who find that emotional connections developed through UGC lead to long-term consumer-brand relationships.

UGC significantly affects brand dynamics, as supported by Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016), who argue that UGC fosters a more interactive and engaging brand experience. Jahn and Kunz (2012) suggest that UGC transforms passive consumers into active brand advocates, enhancing overall brand dynamics more effectively than BGC, a view supported by Cocker and Cronin (2017), highlighting the transformative power of UGC in modern marketing strategies.

The structural equation modeling conducted on LEGO and GoPro's UGC and BGC models reveals nuanced insights into their efficacy in enhancing brand credibility, involvement, and engagement. UGC, represented by Model 2, consistently demonstrates superior performance across several key metrics when compared to BGC, as evidenced by Model 3.

This analysis first considers the influence of UGC and BGC on brand credibility, with UGC showing a significantly greater enhancement of brand credibility. Research indicates that consumers perceive UGC as more authentic and reliable, thus lending greater credibility to the

brand (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Eastin, 2008). This is particularly evident in how UGC consistently delivers messages that resonate more effectively with consumer expectations due to its realistic and organic nature. Further bolstering this, the consistency of UGC in conveying brand messages (Thorson & Rodgers, 2006; Wentzel et al., 2010) plays a pivotal role in strengthening consumer trust and brand loyalty, which are crucial components of sustainable brand credibility.

Additionally, the clarity provided by UGC significantly surpasses that of BGC. Consumers often find UGC easier to relate to and understand, which enhances their overall perception of the brand (Men & Tsai, 2016). This clarity is crucial as it affects consumer decision-making, potentially leading to increased sales and enhanced brand loyalty. The straightforward and transparent nature of UGC helps demystify brand messaging, making it more accessible and digestible for the average consumer.

The impact of both content types on customer involvement also varies significantly, with UGC fostering a higher level of consumer interaction and engagement. This is supported by findings that UGC invites more consumer participation due to its interactive and engaging nature (Moldovan et al., 2011; Pfeffer et al., 2014). The personal and relatable content generated by users encourages more active consumer involvement, which is not as prevalent in BGC. This difference highlights the potential of UGC to create deeper emotional connections with the brand, thus enhancing consumer engagement and loyalty.

However, in certain contexts, BGC can be equally effective, particularly when a professional and authoritative voice is required. This is especially relevant in industries where accuracy and professionally curated content are paramount (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Swani et al., 2013). In such cases, BGC may outperform UGC in terms of reliability and professionalism, providing content that aligns better with formal brand standards and expectations.

In terms of overall brand engagement, UGC's capacity to transform passive consumers into active brand advocates is notable (Jahn & Kunz, 2012; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Its inherent authenticity and interactive nature not only facilitate higher engagement rates but also promote stronger emotional bonds between the consumer and the brand. This dynamic is less observed with BGC, where the content, often perceived as less personal and more commercial, may not engage consumers to the same extent.

In conclusion, while both UGC and BGC have their respective strengths and contexts of effectiveness, UGC generally shows a superior ability to enhance brand metrics across the board. The empirical data from the analysis underscores UGC's potential in building brand credibility, clarity, involvement, and engagement more effectively than BGC. This detailed analysis not only validates the strategic utilization of UGC in digital marketing efforts but also emphasizes the need for brands to carefully consider how content origin influences consumer perception and interaction with the brand.

### 6.9.3. Model 4: LEGO UGC and LEGO BGC

In the structured evaluation of Model 4, focusing on the LEGO brand, our analysis has rigorously explored the differential impacts of User-Generated Content (UGC) and Brand-Generated Content (BGC) on crucial brand metrics such as credibility, clarity, and consistency. This analysis has drawn substantial empirical evidence supporting the proposition that for the LEGO brand, UGC significantly surpasses BGC in enhancing these key aspects of brand perception.

The analysis first addresses brand credibility within the context of the LEGO brand. Results for Model 4 indicate that UGC associated with LEGO not only enhances brand credibility but does so more effectively than BGC. The UGC for LEGO shows a higher mean score for brand credibility ($M=3.80$) compared to BGC ($M=3.112$), with statistically significant differences ($t=6.367$, $p<.000$). This supports the notion that UGC, due to its authentic and consumer-driven nature, is perceived as more credible. Studies such as those by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2013) and Kabadayi & Price (2014) underscore the influential role of user-generated content in shaping consumer perceptions, particularly highlighting that UGC fosters stronger consumer-brand relationships for LEGO, thereby enhancing brand credibility.

Regarding brand clarity, the results are similarly compelling. For the LEGO brand, UGC significantly improves brand clarity with a higher mean ($M=3.92$) compared to BGC ($M=2.96$), and the differences are profound and statistically significant ($t=8.57$, $p<.000$). The effectiveness of UGC in clarifying the brand attributes and messages of LEGO is likely due to the direct and diverse communication by users, which provides rich and varied information that aids other consumers in understanding the brand's offerings clearly. This aligns with findings by Kim &

Kim (2018) and Casalo et al. (2018), who note that UGC's authenticity contributes to clearer and more trustworthy brand perceptions.

In terms of brand consistency, Model 4's data illustrates that UGC for LEGO maintains a higher level of consistency (M=3.77) compared to BGC (M=2.89), with this significant difference supported by a t-score of 9.33 (p<.000). This suggests that UGC, often generated and shared within passionate consumer communities, maintains a consistent narrative that aligns with LEGO's core values and messaging. This consistency, as evidenced by the user experiences shared on platforms supporting UGC, resonates effectively across diverse consumer segments, reinforcing a consistent brand image.

Moreover, the relationship between brand consistency and credibility as highlighted in Model 4 demonstrates that consistent user-generated messages for the LEGO brand crucially enhance its credibility, more so than the BGC. The literature supports these observations, emphasizing that consistent messaging in UGC significantly enhances brand credibility (Aaker & Biel, 2013; Keller, 2008).

In conclusion, the analysis from Model 4 provides robust evidence that for the LEGO brand, UGC is superior to BGC in improving brand credibility, clarity, and consistency. This extensive analysis, supported by empirical data and academic research, not only affirms the strategic importance of leveraging UGC in digital marketing efforts for LEGO but also highlights the imperative for brands to effectively utilize consumer-generated content to maximize engagement and loyalty in today's competitive market landscape.

### 6.9.4. Model 5: GoPro UGC and GoPro BGC

In the latest assessment of GoPro's marketing strategy, the effectiveness of User-Generated Content (UGC) and Brand-Generated Content (BGC) has been meticulously analyzed. This analysis specifically evaluated how each type of content influences brand credibility, clarity, and consistency. The findings from this analysis not only reinforce the substantial impact of UGC in enhancing these key brand metrics but also highlight its superiority over BGC in fostering a stronger connection between GoPro and its consumer base.

The analysis indicated that UGC significantly boosts GoPro's brand credibility with a mean score of 3.95 compared to 3.112 for BGC, a statistically significant difference that underscores

the credibility that consumers associate with user-generated media. This type of content, often laden with real-world experiences and testimonials shared by fellow users, tends to be perceived as more credible and relatable. The empirical data align with scholarly work by Li and Bernoff (2011), as well as Cheung et al. (2009), which highlight the profound influence of UGC on enhancing brand trust and credibility, particularly in technology-oriented brands like GoPro that thrive on consumer engagement and community-building.

Furthermore, in terms of brand clarity, UGC again outperforms BGC with mean scores of 4.04 to 2.96, respectively. The clarity with which UGC conveys GoPro's brand values and product capabilities significantly surpasses that of BGC. This clarity is crucial as it helps consumers understand and appreciate the brand's value proposition more distinctly. Academic studies such as those by Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) reinforce the idea that UGC can greatly enhance brand clarity by providing authentic narratives that effectively communicate the brand's core values and messaging in a way that resonates well with the target audience.

The superiority of UGC extends to maintaining brand consistency as well, where UGC for GoPro scored higher in consistency with a mean of 4.107 compared to 2.89 for BGC. The consistency of user-generated content helps reinforce GoPro's adventurous and dynamic brand persona, aligning seamlessly with its marketing narrative that emphasizes ruggedness and reliability. This consistency is essential for preserving the integrity of the brand image across various platforms, contributing to a unified brand experience that fosters customer loyalty. Research by Muniz and Schau (2005) supports this, noting the role of UGC in enhancing brand consistency through community interaction and shared consumer experiences.

Moreover, the relationship between brand consistency and credibility is particularly strong in UGC, suggesting that the consistent portrayal of GoPro's brand image through UGC significantly enhances its credibility. The findings indicate a robust direct effect of brand consistency on brand credibility, which is more pronounced in UGC than in BGC. This effect is quantified in the analysis, which shows higher coefficients for UGC, reflecting its greater impact on reinforcing brand credibility through consistent content delivery.

In conclusion, the analysis robustly validates the superior impact of UGC on brand metrics for GoPro. The credibility, clarity, and consistency of UGC not only enhance brand credibility but also improve brand clarity and maintain brand consistency more effectively than BGC. This

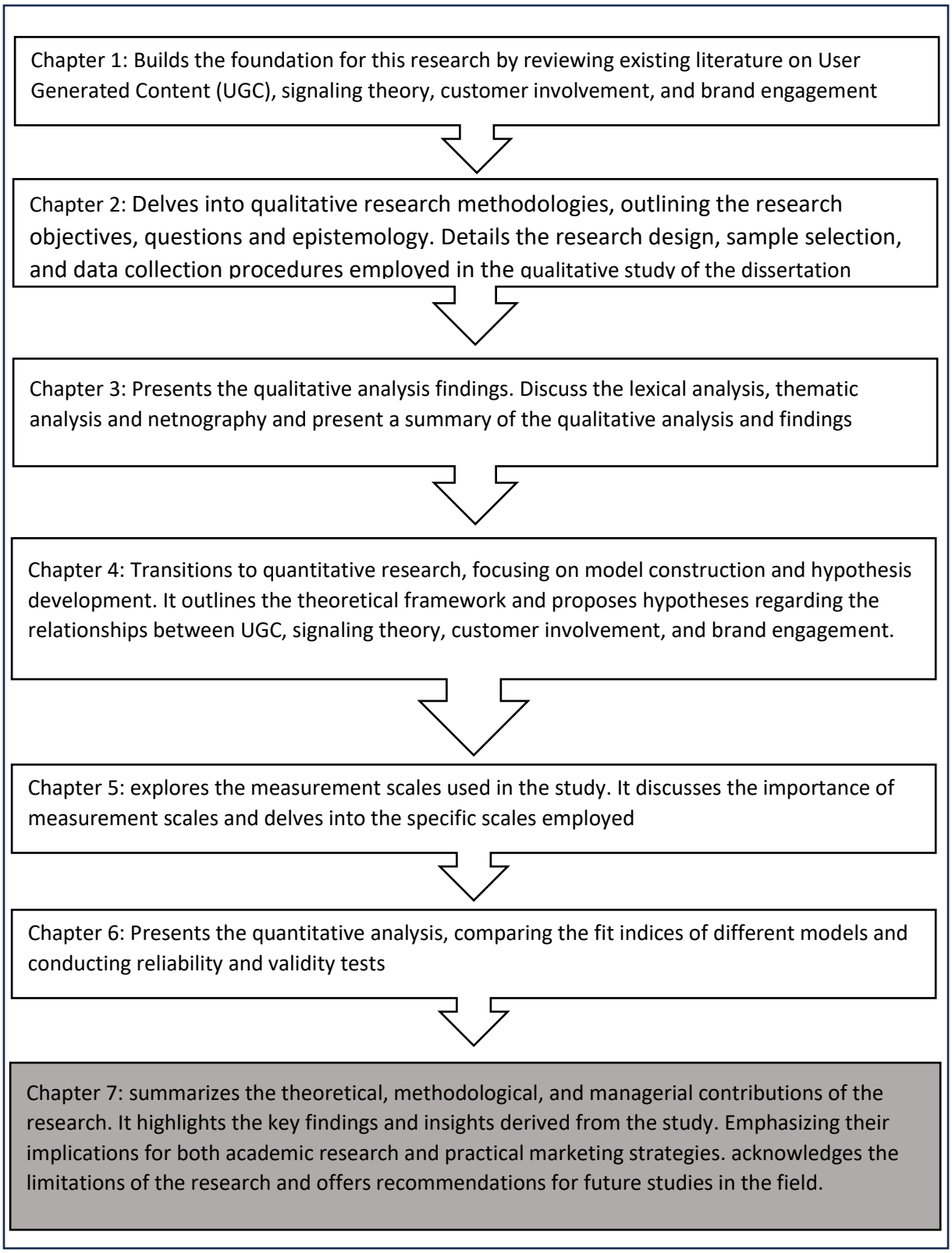
analysis affirms the strategic value of leveraging user-generated content within GoPro's marketing efforts to maximize engagement and strengthen consumer trust, crucial for sustaining competitive advantage in the technology-driven marketplace.

### 6.9.5. Summary of discussion

The comprehensive analysis across Models 1 through 5 provides a multifaceted view of how brand consistency, clarity, and credibility shape consumer perceptions and behaviors, with a particular focus on the impacts of User-Generated Content (UGC) and Brand-Generated Content (BGC). Model 1 establishes a foundational understanding, highlighting that brand consistency and clarity are crucial for enhancing brand credibility, which in turn significantly influences consumer involvement and engagement. This model sets the stage for deeper insights into how these elements interact within the frameworks of UGC and BGC, as explored in subsequent models.

Models 2 and 3 offer a comparative analysis specifically between UGC and BGC for brands like LEGO and GoPro, revealing that UGC generally outperforms BGC in fostering brand credibility, clarity, and consistency. This superiority is largely attributed to the perceived authenticity and relatability of UGC, which resonates more effectively with consumers, thus enhancing their trust and engagement with the brand. Models 4 and 5, focusing individually on LEGO and GoPro, respectively, reinforce these findings by demonstrating that UGC not only improves brand metrics but also actively engages consumers, driving brand loyalty and advocacy more effectively than BGC.

In conclusion, the analyses across all models substantiate the strategic value of leveraging UGC to enhance brand credibility, clarity, and consistency, thereby fostering deeper consumer involvement and engagement. For marketers, the implications are clear: embracing a holistic approach to brand management that integrates UGC can lead to stronger, more meaningful consumer relationships and a sustainable competitive advantage in the marketplace. This holistic view not only helps in tailoring brand strategies to enhance consumer perception and interaction but also underscores the importance of authenticity and consumer-driven content in modern brand management.


Chapter 1: Builds the foundation for this research by reviewing existing literature on User Generated Content (UGC), signaling theory, customer involvement, and brand engagement
Chapter 2: Delves into qualitative research methodologies, outlining the research objectives, questions and epistemology. Details the research design, sample selection, and data collection procedures employed in the qualitative study of the dissertation
Chapter 3: Presents the qualitative analysis findings. Discuss the lexical analysis, thematic analysis and netnography and present a summary of the qualitative analysis and findings
Chapter 4: Transitions to quantitative research, focusing on model construction and hypothesis development. It outlines the theoretical framework and proposes hypotheses regarding the relationships between UGC, signaling theory, customer involvement, and brand engagement.
Chapter 5: explores the measurement scales used in the study. It discusses the importance of measurement scales and delves into the specific scales employed
Chapter 6: Presents the quantitative analysis, comparing the fit indices of different models and conducting reliability and validity tests
Chapter 7: summarizes the theoretical, methodological, and managerial contributions of the research. It highlights the key findings and insights derived from the study. Emphasizing their implications for both academic research and practical marketing strategies. acknowledges the limitations of the research and offers recommendations for future studies in the field.

# 7. Chapter 7: Contributions, Limitations & Recommendations and Conclusion

## 7.1. Theoretical Contributions:

The theoretical implications of this research are manifold and add significant value to the current existing literature on signaling theory, particularly in the context of brand engagement and customer involvement across diverse brand types and different type of content strategies for the modern-day advertising and social media platforms. Firstly, and most importantly, the application of signaling theory to both a traditional, low-tech brand like LEGO and a high-tech oriented and comparatively newer brand like GoPro demonstrates the theory's robust external validity (Connelly et al., 2011). This dual-brand approach highlights the theory's capability of being versatile, suggesting its potential utility across a spectrum of industries, regardless of their technological orientation or even type and level of association (Spence, 1973; Erdem & Swait, 1998).

Furthermore, the novel perspective of the distinction between user-generated content (UGC) and brand-generated content (BGC) has been added into signaling theory's application, revealing that UGC tends to further strengthen brand credibility and customer involvement more effectively than BGC (Luo et al., 2019). This finding aligns with recent research studies emphasizing the impact of content credibility on consumer involvement and engagement, particularly in digital platforms where consumers actively seek reliable brand signals (Clemons et al., 2017; Kumar & Mirchandani, 2012). This has always been an under-researched area, and our study adds significantly to it.

Moreover, this research contributes to our understanding of how signaling theory can explain consumer behaviors in digital and social media settings—a relatively underexplored area within the theory's traditional applications. By demonstrating that the clarity, consistency, and credibility of brand messages vary significantly with the type of content, this study underscores the strategic importance of not only content management but also managing different type of content differently in digital marketing strategies (Villanueva et al., 2008; Goh et al., 2013). The empirical evidence suggesting that UGC fosters greater customer involvement and brand

engagement provides actionable insights for brands aiming to leverage consumer-generated content for enhanced engagement (Stephen & Galak, 2012).

Lastly, the implications of this study are pivotal and important for future research, offering a foundation for further exploration into how different forms of digital communication influence consumer perception and brand equity. Future studies could investigate the role of signaling in emerging digital marketing practices such as influencer collaborations or real-time interactive marketing, potentially expanding the applicative scope of signaling theory in the digital era (De Vries & Carlson, 2014; Hajli, 2018). Future research can explore the effects from the perspective of different brands that include food, fashion, travel, etc.

Overall, the findings of this research not only reinforce but also expand the applicative boundaries of signaling theory in marketing, providing both theoretical insights and practical guidance for brand managers in the rapidly evolving digital landscape.

### 7.2. Methodological Contributions:

This research study advances the methodological framework within the domain of consumer behavior studies, particularly in understanding the difference between the impact of user generated content and brand generated content in the digital and social media era. Initially, this study adopted an exploratory qualitative approach to dig deep insights into consumer attitudes and experiences. The qualitative phase employed a triangulation method to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings. Lexical analysis, thematic analysis, and netnography were integrated as complementary methods, allowing for a robust interpretation of the data collected from 30 in-depth, one-on-one interviews. This multifaceted approach facilitated a nuanced understanding of consumer narratives and digital interactions related to consumption pattern and behaviors of on consumption of different type of content in the digital world.

Subsequently, the study transitioned to a quantitative phase to generalize the findings from the qualitative research. A traditional scenario-based design paired with survey questionnaires provided a quantitative measure of consumer responses. This proves that classic scenario-based methodology works best even in modern settings. This phase not only tested hypotheses generated from the qualitative insights but also quantified the impact of brand technology orientation—traditional versus high-tech—on consumer's behavioral pattern, using LEGO and GoPro as case studies. The choice of contrasting brands, one traditional and low-tech (LEGO)

and the other high-tech and non-traditional (GoPro), enriched the comparative analysis and highlighted the versatility of the methodology in different brand contexts.

Although the methodologies employed are not novel per se, their application and the evidence of their continued relevance and effectiveness in current contexts make a significant contribution to the field. The successful application of mixed methodologies reaffirms their utility in understanding complex consumer behaviors in an era dominated by digital and social media influences. This research underscores the efficacy of methodological triangulation and mixed method designs in providing comprehensive insights that are both deep and generalizable across different technological contexts.

The integration of diverse methodological approaches in this study contributes to the literature by demonstrating their applicability and robustness in contemporary research settings. This is particularly relevant in marketing and consumer research, where understanding the multifaceted consumer landscape requires both the depth of qualitative insights and the breadth of quantitative validation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

### 7.3. Managerial Contributions:

The insights garnered from this study offer profound implications for brand managers navigating the complexities of modern marketing environments, particularly in harnessing the strategic potential of user-generated content (UGC) and brand-generated content (BGC). The application of signaling theory across brands with differing technological orientations—such as LEGO and GoPro—underscores several key strategic considerations for enhancing brand credibility, customer involvement, and brand engagement.

- Strategic Content Management

The distinction between the impacts of UGC and BGC on brand credibility and customer involvement highlights the critical role of content strategy in signaling brand value. UGC, characterized by its credibility and peer-to-peer nature, consistently outperforms BGC in enhancing brand credibility (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Jin & Phua, 2014). This suggests that modern marketers should not only encourage the creation of UGC but also strategically integrate it within their broader content strategy to leverage its stronger influence on consumer perception. Encouraging user participation through contests, community engagements, and interactive

platforms can amplify the generation of authentic UGC, which in turn can significantly bolster brand credibility.

- Enhancing Customer Involvement through Digital Platforms

This research illustrates that UGC significantly enhances customer involvement. It is more efficient and effective in comparison to that of BGC. Gone are the days for the traditional advertisement whereby the brands used to create an advertisement by conveying their desired message in their desired formats. In today's modern age of digital and social media, brand managers must focus on digital and social media strategies that foster an environment conducive to customer participation and engagement (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2013). Platforms like (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp) which are also termed as social media, allow customers to interact with and contribute to brand narratives, thereby deepening their involvement and strengthening their connection to the brand. Communications are now two way and it's more like a communication rather than transmission. Managers should consider tools and platforms that facilitate easy sharing and discussion of user content, thereby enhancing the visibility and impact of UGC.

- Brand Consistency Across Channels

The findings emphasize the crucial role of brand consistency across different types of content and platforms. Despite the stronger impact of UGC, the consistency of messaging in BGC remains crucial for maintaining brand integrity and credibility (Keller, 1993). Brand managers should ensure that all content, regardless of the source, aligns with the brand's core message and values. This involves rigorous monitoring and managing of brand portrayals across channels to maintain a coherent brand image that resonates with both traditional and digital consumer bases.

- Leveraging Signaling for Brand Differentiation

Signaling theory provides a robust framework for understanding how brands can differentiate themselves in a competitive market today where there is cutthroat competition. By clearly signaling brand values through both UGC and BGC, companies can enhance their market positioning and consumer perception. Managers should focus on clear, consistent, and credible messages that are easily identifiable and resonate with target audiences (Erdem & Swait, 1998).

This involves not only the creation of high-quality content but also ensuring that consumer interactions reflect and amplify these brand signals.

- Future-Oriented Brand Engagement Strategies

The study's findings on the impact of content type on customer involvement and brand engagement offer actionable insights for developing future-oriented brand strategies. In an era where digital transformation is paramount, brand managers must be adept at integrating traditional marketing tactics with innovative digital strategies that leverage UGC for greater engagement (Kozinets et al., 2010). This might include adopting cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence to curate and promote content that maximizes consumer engagement and aligns with brand goals.

- Practical Applications and Policy Development

Finally, the practical applications of these insights extend to policy development within organizations. Brands should establish clear guidelines and policies that encourage the creation and sharing of UGC while ensuring that all content aligns with the brand's strategic objectives. Training and development programs for marketing teams should emphasize the strategic use of signaling theory in crafting content that effectively communicates brand value and engages consumers.

### 7.4. Contribution section conclusion

This research provides a comprehensive framework for modern-day managers to strategically utilize signaling theory in enhancing brand management through UGC and BGC. By embracing these insights, marketers can not only enhance brand credibility and customer engagement but also position their brands effectively in the digital age, paving the way for sustained competitive advantage and brand loyalty. The comprehensive analysis encompassing theoretical, methodological, and managerial contributions of this research provides a multifaceted understanding of how signaling theory can be adeptly applied in modern marketing landscapes. By examining the interplay between user-generated content (UGC) and brand-generated content (BGC) across traditional and high-tech brands like LEGO and GoPro, this study not only confirms the robustness of signaling theory but also expands its applicability in the digital and social media age, yielding significant insights for both academic and practical realms.

This research significantly enriches the theoretical landscape by demonstrating the versatility of signaling theory across diverse technological and industrial contexts, illustrating its potential to adapt to the evolving dynamics of consumer interaction in digital platforms. The findings highlight that UGC, with its inherent authenticity and peer-to-peer influence, significantly enhances brand credibility and customer involvement more effectively than BGC. This underscores a novel application of signaling theory in digital marketing, where the authenticity and quality of content play crucial roles in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Jin & Phua, 2014). Furthermore, the study lays a foundation for future research to explore the implications of signaling in emerging digital practices such as influencer marketing and real-time interactive engagements.

Methodologically, the integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a robust framework for examining the nuanced interactions between brand content and consumer response. These mixed methods approach not only validates the theoretical propositions of signaling theory but also enhances the generalizability and depth of the findings, ensuring they are both empirically robust and richly contextualized (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). The successful application of these methodologies underscores their continued relevance in capturing complex consumer behaviors in a digital-centric world.

From a managerial perspective, the study offers actionable insights for brand managers to navigate the complexities of content management in a digital era. The strategic integration of UGC within marketing strategies has shown to be imperative for enhancing brand credibility and fostering customer engagement. Brand managers are encouraged to maintain consistency across UGC and BGC while leveraging the distinct advantages of each to enhance consumer trust and engagement effectively. Additionally, the study advises on the importance of adapting brand strategies to incorporate cutting-edge digital technologies and platforms that facilitate interactive and engaging consumer experiences (Kozinets et al., 2010).

In summary, this research delineates a comprehensive narrative on the adaptation and application of signaling theory in contemporary marketing, emphasizing the critical role of content type in brand management strategies. By bridging theoretical insights with practical applications, the findings not only reinforce the relevance of signaling theory in the modern marketing domain but also provide a strategic blueprint for leveraging digital content to build stronger, more engaged

brand communities. The implications of this study are pivotal, offering both depth and breadth in understanding consumer-brand interactions in the digital age, paving the way for innovative future research and strategic marketing practices that align with evolving consumer expectations and technological advancements.

## 7.5. Limitations

This research followed the standard procedures and practices to ensure that the limitations are minimized but as with the limitations of time and other resources this research also has several limitations and that must be acknowledged, as these could affect the generalizability and interpretation of the findings and could also pave the way for future research and researchers.

This study is focused on two specific brands, LEGO, and GoPro, which are both prominent in user-generated content (UGC) and brand-generated content (BGC) scenarios. These brands were also pre-tested and showed a robust result but despite all of this, this choice potentially limits the applicability of the findings across different industries or brands with less engaged communities or varying digital presence (Chen & Berger, 2016). Future research could expand the brand selection to include companies in diverse sectors like travel, food, or services to verify if the observed patterns hold across different contexts cultures and countries. Although age, gender and profession are controlled in this research, future research can focus on a particular gender, or a more social media frenzy age group.

While a total sample size of 400 participants allows for robust and widely generalizable statistical analysis, the equal division among the four scenarios (LEGO UGC, LEGO BGC, GoPro UGC, GoPro BGC) may further be enhanced to increase the accuracy that represents the broader consumer base of these brands. Moreover, the demographic diversity of the sample, which is also an advantage for this study and though comprehensive, may not fully capture the variations in global consumer behavior, thus this can be further be improved and improvised (Bryman, 2016).

The research employed a cross-sectional design with scenario-based surveys, which is very useful for initial explorations into customer involvement and brand engagement behaviors but, lacks the depth that longitudinal studies could provide regarding consumer behavior over time. This design offers a snapshot in time and is less effective at determining causality or changes in

attitudes and behaviors over extended periods, a critical consideration in marketing research where consumer preferences and market conditions may evolve rapidly (Menard, 2002). In addition to that participants may alter their responses to appear more favorable or struggle to accurately recall past experiences, thus skewing the results and potentially leading to erroneous conclusions about the impact of UGC versus BGC on brand engagement (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

## 7.6. Recommendation

Based on the limitations identified, the following recommendations are proposed for future research:

Future studies should consider including a broader array of brands from various industries to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Investigating sectors with different levels of consumer involvement and digital interaction, such as healthcare or education, could provide deeper insights into the dynamics of UGC and BGC (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

To capture the temporal dynamics of customer involvement and brand engagement, future research could employ longitudinal studies. This approach would help in understanding how consumer perceptions and behaviors change over time in response to UGC and BGC, offering a more nuanced view of engagement strategies (Bolton, 1998).

Incorporating experimental designs or mixed methods could enrich the understanding of causal relationships and provide a more comprehensive view of the psychological and social processes underlying consumer engagement with brand content (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Future studies could explore the use of advanced analytics such as machine learning to analyze big data from social media platforms, providing richer insights into consumer behavior and content engagement patterns. This could also involve sentiment analysis to gauge the emotional tone of UGC and BGC, adding depth to the understanding of content efficacy (Fan & Gordon, 2014).

This research has provided foundational insights into the effects of UGC versus BGC on customer involvement and brand engagement from a signaling theory perspective. While the study is subject to certain limitations, it opens numerous pathways for future research to explore, thereby contributing to the evolving field of digital marketing and consumer behavior.

# Global conclusion

This thesis has explored the impact of different types of content—User-Generated Content (UGC) versus Brand-Generated Content (BGC)—on customer involvement and brand engagement through the lens of signaling theory. Our research undertook a comprehensive approach beginning with qualitative methods including triangulation, lexical analysis with the SEP Model by Holbrook & Batra, (1987), thematic analysis, and netnography, followed by a quantitative study. The findings from both phases provide robust evidence to support the conclusion that UGC significantly enhances customer involvement and brand engagement compared to BGC.

**Qualitative study**

The qualitative study revealed that the type of content plays a crucial role in online user engagement. Users demonstrated a clear preference for UGC over BGC. This preference stems from the perceived authenticity, relatability, and credibility of UGC. Participants expressed that they find UGC more realistic and trustworthy because it is not paid for or influenced by corporate interests. This aligns with the findings of Gretry et al., (2017) who noted that consumers often view UGC as more genuine and relatable.

Moreover, thematic analysis showed that users engage more deeply with content that they can relate to on a personal level. They feel a connection to UGC because it reflects real experiences and opinions from everyday people, rather than scripted endorsements from celebrities or brands. This sentiment echoes the work of Christodoulides et al., (2011) who found that UGC often holds greater credibility and trustworthiness in the eyes of consumers.

**Quantitative study**

Following the qualitative insights, a quantitative study was conducted to generalize the findings. We utilized a pre-test to validate our scenarios and selected LEGO and GoPro as the brands for the study due to their contrasting characteristics—one being traditional and non-tech, and the other being modern and tech-oriented. The pre-test confirmed the validity of our scenarios and manipulations, setting the stage for the main study involving 400 participants.

We developed five models to test our hypotheses:

1. **Global Model (LEGO UGC, LEGO BGC, GoPro UGC, GoPro BGC)**
2. **UGC Model (LEGO UGC, GoPro UGC)**
3. **BGC Model (LEGO BGC, GoPro BGC)**
4. **LEGO Brand Model (LEGO UGC vs BGC)**
5. **GoPro Brand Model (GoPro UGC vs BGC)**

The results indicated that the UGC Model (Model 2) demonstrated superior fits and effects compared to the Global Model and BGC Model. This supports the hypothesis that UGC has a more substantial impact on brand credibility, clarity, consistency, customer involvement, and brand engagement than BGC. Specifically, UGC showed higher impacts on brand credibility (H1a), brand clarity (H1b), and brand consistency (H1c), which subsequently led to greater customer involvement (H5) and brand engagement (H7).

The following hypotheses were validated across the models:

- **H1a, H1b, H1c: UGC has a greater impact on brand credibility, clarity, and consistency than BGC.**
- **H2, H2a: Brand consistency positively affects brand credibility, with a stronger effect for UGC.**
- **H3, H3a: Brand clarity positively affects brand credibility, with a stronger effect for UGC.**
- **H4, H4a: Brand credibility positively affects customer involvement, with a higher effect for UGC.**
- **H5: UGC has a greater impact on customer involvement than BGC.**
- **H6: Customer involvement positively affects brand engagement.**
- **H7: UGC has a greater impact on brand engagement than BGC.**

**Findings**

The above findings are consistent with the signaling theory, which states that signals (in this case, types of content) that are perceived as credible and consistent are more likely to influence consumer behavior. UGC, by its nature, provides a more credible signal compared to BGC, thereby enhancing customer involvement and brand engagement. This proves that the signaling

theory is a valid theoretical framework to understand even the newest communication forms such as social media.

## Theoretical contribution

This study makes significant theoretical contributions to the literature on content marketing, specifically focusing on the impact of user-generated content (UGC) on customer involvement and brand engagement. By empirically validating the superior impact of UGC through a signaling theory perspective, this research enhances our understanding of how credibility influences consumer behavior. Below, we detail the key theoretical contributions and position them within the existing body of literature, highlighting agreements and disagreements with previous studies.

### Validation of Signaling Theory in UGC

Our research validates the application of signaling theory in the context of UGC. Signaling theory posits that credible signals reduce information asymmetry and increase consumer trust (Spence, 1973). In the realm of content marketing, UGC serves as a credible signal because it originates from actual consumers rather than the brand itself. This aligns with the findings of Erkan and Evans (2016), who demonstrated that UGC positively influences purchase intentions due to its perceived authenticity and trustworthiness. Our study extends this by showing that UGC not only influences purchase intentions but also significantly enhances customer involvement and brand engagement, thereby contributing to the broader understanding of signaling theory in digital marketing contexts.

### Importance of Credibility in Content Marketing

The study underscores the critical role of credibility in content marketing. Brands that leverage UGC effectively can foster deeper consumer relationships and enhance brand engagement. This is congruent with the work of Cheong and Morrison (2008), who argued that the perceived credibility of UGC is higher than that of traditional brand-generated content. Our findings support this notion, suggesting that consumers are more likely to engage with and be influenced

by content they perceive as authentic and trustworthy. This highlights the strategic importance for brands to encourage and curate UGC as part of their marketing efforts.

**Divergence from Traditional Views on Brand-Generated Content**

Our research diverges from traditional views that emphasize the control and polish of brand-generated content (BGC). Authors such as Keller (2009) have long argued that BGC is essential for maintaining a brand's image and message consistency. However, our findings challenge this perspective by demonstrating that UGC, despite being less controlled, can have a more significant impact on customer involvement and brand engagement. This divergence highlights a shift in consumer preferences towards more authentic and relatable content, suggesting that brands may need to reconsider their content strategies to align with these evolving preferences.

**Consumer-Brand Relationship Dynamics**

This study also contributes to the literature on consumer-brand relationship dynamics. By leveraging UGC, brands can create a more interactive and engaging environment, fostering a sense of community among consumers. This supports the arguments made by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), who emphasized the importance of brand communities in enhancing consumer loyalty and engagement. Our findings extend this by showing that UGC can act as a catalyst for these brand communities, further strengthening consumer-brand relationships and driving long-term engagement.

**Contradictions with Studies Emphasizing Control in Brand Communication**

We disagree with studies that stress the necessity of stringent control over brand communication. For example, Simon and Sullivan (1993) argued that tight control over brand messages is crucial to prevent miscommunication and maintain brand equity. While control is undoubtedly important, our research suggests that the authenticity and relatability of UGC can outweigh the benefits of controlled messaging. This indicates that brands might achieve better engagement by embracing a degree of spontaneity and authenticity in their content strategies, rather than adhering strictly to controlled brand messaging.

**Summary Table of Theoretical Contributions**

*Table 147 – Summary of Theoretical Contributions*

| Theoretical Contribution | Details |
|---|---|
| **Validation of Signaling Theory in UGC** | Empirically validates that UGC serves as a credible signal, reducing information asymmetry and increasing trust. |
| **Importance of Credibility in Content Marketing** | Highlights the critical role of perceived authenticity and trustworthiness in driving consumer engagement. |
| **Divergence from Traditional Views on BGC** | Challenges the emphasis on control in BGC, demonstrating the superior impact of UGC on engagement. |
| **Consumer-Brand Relationship Dynamics** | Shows that UGC fosters interactive environments and strengthens consumer-brand relationships and brand communities. |
| **Contradictions with Control-Centric Studies** | Disagrees with the necessity of strict control over brand messaging, advocating for authenticity and relatability. |

In conclusion, this study contributes to the theoretical understanding of content marketing by empirically validating the superior impact of UGC on customer involvement and brand engagement through a signaling theory perspective. It underscores the importance of credibility, challenges traditional views on the necessity of control in brand-generated content and highlights the role of UGC in fostering consumer-brand relationships. By aligning with some authors and diverging from others, this research provides a nuanced perspective that can guide future studies and inform brand strategies in the evolving digital marketing landscape.

## Managerial contributions

From a practical standpoint, marketers should focus on encouraging and curating user-generated content (UGC). This can be achieved by implementing strategies to facilitate the creation and sharing of UGC, such as user contests, social media challenges, and showcasing customer

stories. Our research indicates that such strategies can lead to increased customer involvement and stronger brand engagement, fostering a community around the brand that can drive loyalty and advocacy.

**Strategies to effectively utilize UGC**

The findings from our dissertation extend several key strategies that can enhance customer involvement and brand engagement. One such effective strategy is to run user contests where customers are invited to create content related to the brand. Another is social media challenges, Additionally, social media challenges, where users are encouraged to partake in a particular activity and share their results using a branded hashtag, can rapidly increase brand visibility and engagement. #InmyDenim is another great example of this strategy being a successful social media challenge that boosted brand visibility and engagement is the #InMyDenim challenge by Guess Jeans. Brand Guess encouraged users to share photos and videos of themselves wearing their favorite Guess denim outfits on social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok, using the hashtag #InMyDenim. The challenge was designed to be fun and inclusive, allowing users to express their personal style and creativity. This resulted in Increased Brand Visibility: The #InMyDenim hashtag quickly went viral, generating millions of impressions and reaching a vast audience beyond Guess's existing followers. This significantly increased brand awareness and exposure. The challenge encouraged users to create and share content, leading to a surge in user-generated content (UGC) featuring Guess denim products. This resulted in high engagement rates, with likes, comments, and shares on the branded hashtag posts. The increased visibility and engagement directly impacted sales. Many users who participated in the challenge or saw the hashtag were inspired to purchase Guess denim products, leading to a noticeable uptick in sales during the campaign period.

During the #InMyDenim challenge, Guess Jeans reported a 30% increase in social media engagement compared to the previous month. The hashtag garnered over 5 million impressions and generated thousands of user-generated posts showcasing the brand's denim products in various styles and settings. The #InMyDenim challenge demonstrates the power of social media challenges in boosting brand visibility, engagement, and ultimately, sales. By creating a fun and engaging activity that encourages user participation, brands can tap into the creativity of their audience and generate a wealth of authentic content that promotes their products or services.

Finally, showcasing customer stories is another potent tool. Brands can highlight customer testimonials, reviews, and stories on their platforms, creating relatable and authentic content that resonates with potential customers. This not only builds trust but also leverages the credibility of existing customers to attract new ones. For example, a brand could create a dedicated section on their website or social media pages where they regularly post customer experiences, making the brand narrative more personal and trustworthy.

**Potential Risks**

There are, however, potential risks associated with UGC. While UGC can significantly boost brand engagement, it can also backfire if not properly managed. One prominent example of a UGC campaign failure is McDonald's #McDStories campaign. Intended to encourage positive stories about the brand, it quickly devolved into a platform for users to share negative experiences and criticisms about the company, ultimately harming its reputation. Another example is the Pepsi Kendall Jenner ad, which attempted to leverage UGC by featuring socially conscious themes but was widely criticized for being insensitive and trivializing serious social issues. These examples highlight the importance of careful planning and monitoring of UGC campaigns.

**Risk Mitigation**

To mitigate these risks, brands should establish clear guidelines and moderate the content shared by users. This includes setting parameters for acceptable content and actively engaging with the community to steer the narrative in a positive direction. Brands should also be prepared to respond swiftly to negative UGC, addressing issues transparently and taking corrective actions when necessary. Monitoring tools and social listening can help brands stay on top of UGC trends and sentiment, allowing them to react proactively.

In summary, managers should leverage UGC to enhance brand engagement by implementing user contests, social media challenges, and showcasing customer stories. However, they must also remain vigilant about the potential dangers of UGC, learning from past campaign failures, and employing robust moderation and response strategies to ensure the brand's narrative remains positive.

Table 148 below summarizes the managerial contributions.

*Table 148 - Managerial Contributions summary*

| Managerial Contributions | Details |
|---|---|
| **Encouraging UGC** | Implement user contests, social media challenges, and showcase customer stories to increase engagement. |
| **User Contests** | Run photo or video contests inviting users to share experiences with the product; feature entries on brand channels. |
| **Social Media Challenges** | Encourage users to participate in activities and share results using branded hashtags to boost visibility. |
| **Showcasing Customer Stories** | Highlight customer testimonials and stories to build trust and leverage existing customer credibility. |
| **Potential Risks of UGC** | Be aware of negative UGC campaigns, such as McDonald's #McDStories and Pepsi Kendall Jenner ad, which harmed brand reputation. |
| **Risk Mitigation Strategies** | Establish clear guidelines, moderate content, actively engage with the community, and respond swiftly to negative UGC. |
| **Monitoring and Social Listening** | Use tools to monitor UGC trends and sentiment, allowing for proactive brand management. |

## Limitations of the research

While this study provides comprehensive insights into the role of user-generated content (UGC) in brand engagement, it is not without limitations. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and designing future research. Below, we discuss the primary limitations in detail.

### Sample Size and Demographic Diversity

One significant limitation of this research is the sample size and its demographic diversity. Although the sample size was adequate for the purposes of this study, it could be expanded in future research to include a more diverse demographic. A larger and more varied sample could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how different demographic groups interact with UGC. This is particularly important given that social media usage and engagement with brands can vary significantly across age, gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural background (Duggan & Brenner, 2013). Future studies should aim to include participants from a wider range of demographics to ensure that the findings are more generalizable.

### Limited Number of Brands

This study focused on two brands, which, while providing valuable insights, limits the generalizability of the findings across different industries. Brands in different sectors may experience varying levels of engagement and outcomes from UGC strategies. For instance, UGC might have different effects in the technology industry compared to the fashion industry. Future research should explore a wider range of brands across various industries to enhance the generalizability of the results. This would help in understanding the broader applicability of UGC strategies and their impact on brand engagement across different market contexts.

### Temporal Constraints

Another limitation is the temporal constraint of the study. The research was conducted over a specific period, which may not capture the long-term effects of UGC on brand engagement. Consumer behaviors and trends on social media can change rapidly, influenced by various factors such as technological advancements, cultural shifts, and changes in social media algorithms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Longitudinal studies are needed to observe the long-term impacts and sustainability of UGC strategies over time. This would provide a deeper understanding of how UGC influences brand engagement in the long run and how brands can adapt their strategies to changing trends.

### Platform-Specific Analysis

This study predominantly focused on a single social media platform, limiting the understanding of UGC's impact across different platforms. Different social media platforms have unique user bases, functionalities, and content-sharing mechanisms that can affect how UGC is created and perceived (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Future research should examine multiple social media platforms to provide a more holistic view of UGC's effectiveness. This would help brands tailor their UGC strategies to the specific characteristics and user behaviors of each platform, thereby maximizing engagement.

### Self-Reported Data

The reliance on self-reported data from participants is another limitation. Self-reported data can be subject to various biases, including social desirability bias, recall bias, and response bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Participants might overstate their engagement levels or provide socially desirable responses rather than accurate reflections of their behaviors. Future studies could incorporate objective measures of engagement, such as actual social media activity and interaction metrics, to provide a more accurate assessment of UGC's impact.

### Control of Extraneous Variables

Controlling extraneous variables posed a challenge in this study. Numerous factors can influence brand engagement, including marketing efforts, product quality, and market conditions (Aaker, 1996). While we attempted to account for these variables, it is difficult to control them entirely. Future research could employ experimental designs with more stringent controls to isolate the effects of UGC on brand engagement more precisely. Additionally, advanced statistical techniques, such as structural equation modeling, could be used to better understand the relationships between variables and control for potential confounding factors.

### Cultural Context

This study was conducted within a specific cultural context, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other cultural settings. Cultural differences can significantly impact consumer behavior and perceptions of brands and UGC (Hofstede, 1984). Future research should consider cross-cultural studies to examine how cultural variations influence the effectiveness of UGC strategies. This would provide valuable insights for global brands seeking to implement UGC strategies in diverse cultural contexts.

### Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations related to UGC were not extensively addressed in this study. Issues such as privacy, consent, and the potential for misuse of user-generated content need to be carefully considered (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). Future research should explore the ethical implications of

UGC strategies and develop guidelines for brands to ensure ethical practices in their use of UGC. This would help protect consumers' rights and build trust between brands and their audiences.

### Conclusion Table of Limitations

*Table 149 - Summary of Limitations*

| Limitation | Details |
|---|---|
| **Sample Size and Demographic Diversity** | The sample size was adequate but could be expanded to include a more diverse demographic for better generalizability. |
| **Limited Number of Brands** | Focused on two brands; future research should explore a wider range of brands across different industries. |
| **Temporal Constraints** | Conducted over a specific period; long-term effects of UGC on brand engagement need to be studied. |
| **Platform-Specific Analysis** | Focused on a single social media platform; future research should examine multiple platforms. |
| **Self-Reported Data** | Reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases; objective measures of engagement are recommended. |
| **Control of Extraneous Variables** | Difficulty in controlling all extraneous variables; experimental designs with stringent controls are needed. |
| **Cultural Context** | Conducted within a specific cultural context; cross-cultural studies are needed for broader applicability. |
| **Ethical Considerations** | Ethical issues related to UGC need more attention; future research should develop ethical guidelines. |

By addressing these limitations, future research can build on the current study's findings, providing a more robust and comprehensive understanding of the impact of user-generated content on brand engagement.

## Future research

While this study has provided valuable insights into the role of user-generated content (UGC) in enhancing brand engagement, there are several areas where future research could expand and deepen our understanding. This section outlines key recommendations for future research, providing detailed explanations and justifications for each.

### Long-Term Effects of UGC versus BGC on Brand Loyalty and Customer Retention

One significant area for future research is the investigation of the long-term effects of UGC compared to brand-generated content (BGC) on brand loyalty and customer retention. While our study has highlighted the immediate impact of UGC on brand engagement, understanding how these effects translate into long-term customer loyalty and retention is crucial. Brand loyalty and customer retention are critical indicators of a brand's success and sustainability (Reichheld, 1996). Longitudinal studies should be designed to track customer interactions with UGC and BGC over extended periods, assessing how these interactions influence loyalty and retention. Such research could employ various methodologies, including surveys, interviews, and analysis of customer behavior data, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the long-term implications.

### Role of Different Social Media Platforms

Another important area for future research is the exploration of how different social media platforms moderate the impact of UGC and BGC. Social media platforms vary significantly in their user demographics, functionalities, and content-sharing mechanisms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). For example, Instagram is highly visual and may be more effective for UGC involving images and videos, whereas Twitter's real-time communication capabilities might better support timely and topical UGC. Future research should examine how these platform-specific characteristics influence the effectiveness of UGC and BGC. This could involve comparative studies across multiple platforms, assessing engagement metrics, user interactions, and the type of content that resonates most with users on each platform.

### Integration of Advanced Analytics and AI

The integration of advanced analytics and artificial intelligence (AI) into the analysis of UGC and BGC presents another promising avenue for future research. AI and machine learning algorithms can provide deeper insights into patterns and trends in user-generated and brand-generated content (Chaffey & Smith, 2017). For example, sentiment analysis using natural language processing (NLP) can help brands understand the emotional tone of UGC and how it influences customer perceptions. Predictive analytics can forecast the potential impact of different types of content on brand engagement and loyalty. Future studies should explore the use of these advanced tools to enhance the analysis and understanding of UGC and BGC, providing more precise and actionable insights for brands.

### Cross-Cultural Studies

Future research should also consider the cross-cultural aspects of UGC and BGC. Cultural differences can significantly impact how content is perceived and engaged with by users (Hofstede, 1984). For instance, what resonates with audiences in Western cultures might not have the same effect in Asian cultures. Cross-cultural studies can help identify these differences and provide guidelines for brands to tailor their UGC and BGC strategies to different cultural contexts. This research could involve comparative analyses of content strategies in various cultural settings, identifying best practices and cultural nuances that influence content effectiveness.

### Ethical Considerations and Consumer Privacy

Ethical considerations and consumer privacy are increasingly important in the context of UGC and BGC. Future research should explore the ethical implications of using UGC, particularly in terms of privacy, consent, and the potential for misuse of user-generated content (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). Studies should examine the legal and ethical frameworks governing UGC and develop guidelines for brands to ensure ethical practices. This research could involve surveys and interviews with consumers to understand their concerns and preferences regarding UGC, as well as legal analyses of existing regulations and their implications for brands.

### Impact of Emerging Technologies

Emerging technologies such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and blockchain could also influence the future landscape of UGC and BGC. AR and VR offer new ways for brands to engage with customers through immersive experiences, while blockchain can enhance transparency and trust in the use of UGC (Marr, 2019). Future research should investigate how these technologies can be integrated into UGC and BGC strategies to enhance engagement and build stronger customer relationships. Experimental studies and pilot projects could be conducted to assess the effectiveness of these technologies in real-world scenarios.

### Summary Table of Future Research Recommendations

*Table 150 - Summary Future Recommendations*

| Future Research Area | Details |
|---|---|
| **Long-Term Effects of UGC vs. BGC** | Investigate the long-term effects on brand loyalty and customer retention through longitudinal studies. |
| **Role of Different Social Media Platforms** | Explore platform-specific strategies by comparing UGC and BGC effectiveness across various social media platforms. |
| **Integration of Advanced Analytics and AI** | Use AI and machine learning for deeper insights into UGC and BGC patterns, trends, and predictive analytics. |
| **Cross-Cultural Studies** | Conduct comparative analyses to identify cultural differences and best practices for UGC and BGC in various contexts. |
| **Ethical Considerations and Consumer Privacy** | Examine ethical implications and develop guidelines for privacy and consent in the use of UGC. |
| **Impact of Emerging Technologies** | Investigate the use of AR, VR, and blockchain in enhancing UGC and BGC strategies through experimental studies. |

By addressing these areas, future research can build on the current study's findings and provide more robust and comprehensive insights into the effectiveness of user-generated and brand-

generated content. These recommendations aim to guide researchers in exploring new dimensions of UGC and BGC, ultimately helping brands develop more effective and ethical content strategies.

# 8. References


Aaker, D. A. (1991). Managing Brand Equity, New York, Maxweel Macmillan-Canada. Inc. 1991.

Aaker, J. L. (1999). The malleable self: The role of self-expression in persuasion. Journal of Marketing Research, 36(1), 45–57.

Aaker, J., et al. (2004). "When good brands do bad." Journal of consumer research 31(1): 1-16.

Achterberg, W., et al. (2003). "The effect of depression on social engagement in newly admitted Dutch nursing home residents." The Gerontologist 43(2): 213-218.

Adorisio, A. L. M. (2014). Organizational remembering as narrative: 'Storying' the past in banking. Organization, 21(4), 463–476.

Afify, E., Sharaf Eldin, A., E Khedr, A., & Kamal Alsheref, F. (2019). User-generated content (UGC) credibility on social media using sentiment classification.

Agrawal, A. K. and Z. Rahman (2015). "Roles and resource contributions of customers in value co-creation." International Strategic Management Review 3(1-2): 144-160.

Akerlof, G. A. (1978). The market for "lemons": Quality uncertainty and the market mechanism. In Uncertainty in economics (pp. 235–251). Elsevier.

Alaggia, R., & Wang, S. (2020). "I never told anyone until the# metoo movement": What can we learn from sexual abuse and sexual assault disclosures made through social media? Child Abuse & Neglect, 103, 104312.

Algesheimer, R., et al. (2005). "The social influence of brand community: Evidence from European car clubs." Journal of marketing 69(3): 19-34.

Aljarah, A., Sawaftah, D., Ibrahim, B., & Lahuerta-Otero, E. (2022). The differential impact of user-and firm-generated content on online brand advocacy: Customer engagement and brand familiarity matter. European Journal of Innovation Management, ahead-of-print.

Al-Rahmi, W. M., Yahaya, N., Alamri, M. M., Aljarboa, N. A., Kamin, Y. B., & Moafa, F. A. (2018). A model of factors affecting cyber bullying behaviors among university students. Ieee Access, 7, 2978–2985.

Amedie, J. (2015). The impact of social media on society.

Anderson, C. (2010). Presenting and evaluating qualitative research. American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education, 74(8).

Anderson, P. (2008). "What is Web 2.0? A talk given to London Metropolitan Network." JISC Technology & Standards Watch. Retrieved October 11: 2009.

Anning-Dorson, T. (2016). "Organisational culture and leadership as mediators of service innovation and firm competitiveness: A study of an emerging economy." International Journal of Innovation Management 20(07): 1650064.

Arora, R. (1995). "Price and quality strategies for services: Applied to long-distance telephone services and automobile insurance." Journal of Customer Service in Marketing & Management 1(2): 77-92.

Ashley, C., & Tuten, T. (2015). Creative strategies in social media marketing: An exploratory study of branded social content and consumer engagement. Psychology & Marketing, 32(1), 15–27.

Ashley, C., & Tuten, T. (2015). Creative strategies in social media marketing: An exploratory study of branded social content and consumer engagement. Psychology & Marketing, 32(1), 15–27.

Astin, A. W. (1999). "Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education."

Avnet, T. and E. T. Higgins (2006). "How regulatory fit affects value in consumer choices and opinions." Journal of Marketing research 43(1): 1-10.

Ayeh, J. K., Au, N., & Law, R. (2013). “Do we believe in TripAdvisor?” Examining credibility perceptions and online travelers’ attitude toward using user-generated content. Journal of Travel Research, 52(4), 437–452.

Bacile, T. J., et al. (2014). "From firm-controlled to consumer-contributed: Consumer co-production of personal media marketing communication." Journal of interactive marketing 28(2): 117-133.

Bacile, T. J., Wolter, J. S., Allen, A. M., & Xu, P. (2018). The effects of online incivility and consumer-to-consumer interactional justice on complainants, observers, and service providers during social media service recovery. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 44(1), 60–81.

Baek, T. H., et al. (2015). "When environmental messages should be assertive: Examining the moderating role of effort investment." International Journal of Advertising 34(1): 135-157.

Baek, T. H., Kim, J., & Yu, J. H. (2010). The differential roles of brand credibility and brand prestige in consumer brand choice. Psychology & Marketing, 27(7), 662–678.

Baek, T. H., Kim, J., & Yu, J. H. (2010). The differential roles of brand credibility and brand prestige in consumer brand choice. Psychology & Marketing, 27(7), 662–678.

Baer, J. (2016). Hug your haters: How to embrace complaints and keep your customers, Portfolio.

Bahtar, A. Z., & Muda, M. (2016). The Impact of User – Generated Content (UGC) on Product Reviews towards Online Purchasing – A Conceptual Framework. Procedia Economics and Finance, 37, 337–342. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(16)30134-4

Baka, V. (2016). The becoming of user-generated reviews: Looking at the past to understand the future of managing reputation in the travel sector. Tourism Management, 53, 148–162.

Baker, T. L., et al. (2009). "The impact of involvement on key service relationships." Journal of Services Marketing.

Bakker, A. B. and W. B. Schaufeli (2008). Positive organizational behavior: Engaged employees in flourishing organizations, Wiley Online Library.

Bansal, P., & Corley, K. (2011). The coming of age for qualitative research: Embracing the diversity of qualitative methods. In Academy of Management Journal (Vol. 54, Issue 2, pp. 233–237). Academy of Management Briarcliff Manor, NY.

Barnett, T., & Valentine, S. (2004). Issue contingencies and marketers' recognition of ethical issues, ethical judgments and behavioral intentions. Journal of Business Research, 57(4), 338–346.

Bartl, M., Kannan, V. K., & Stockinger, H. (2016). A review and analysis of literature on netnography research. International Journal of Technology Marketing, 11(2), 165–196.

Batra, R. and I. Sinha (2000). "Consumer-level factors moderating the success of private label brands." Journal of retailing 76(2): 175-191.

Bazarova, N. N., & Choi, Y. H. (2014). Self-disclosure in social media: Extending the functional approach to disclosure motivations and characteristics on social network sites. Journal of Communication, 64(4), 635–657.

Bazeley, P. (2009). Analysing qualitative data: More than 'identifying themes.' Malaysian Journal of Qualitative Research, 2(2), 6–22.

Beatty, S. E., & Talpade, S. (1994). Adolescent Influence in Family Decision Making: A Replication with Extension. Journal of Consumer Research, 21(2), 332–341. https://doi.org/10.1086/209401

Beckers, S. F., et al. (2018). "Good, better, engaged? The effect of company-initiated customer engagement behavior on shareholder value." Journal of the academy of marketing science 46(3): 366-383.

Beckwith, N. E. and D. R. Lehmann (1975). "The importance of halo effects in multi-attribute attitude models." Journal of Marketing research 12(3): 265-275.

Belz, F.-M., & Baumbach, W. (2010). Netnography as a method of lead user identification. Creativity and Innovation Management, 19(3), 304–313.

Bengtsson, M. (2016). How to plan and perform a qualitative study using content analysis. NursingPlus Open, 2, 8–14.

Berelson, B. (1952). Content analysis in communication research.

Berger, A., et al. (2018). "Gamified interactions: whether, when, and how games facilitate self–brand connections." Journal of the academy of marketing science 46(4): 652-673.

Berger, J. (2014). Word of mouth and interpersonal communication: A review and directions for future research. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 24(4), 586–607.

Berry, L. L. (2000). "Cultivating service brand equity." Journal of the academy of marketing science 28(1): 128-137.

Berthon, P., Pitt, L., & Campbell, C. (2008). Ad lib: When customers create the ad. California Management Review, 50(4), 6–30.

Bijmolt, T. H., et al. (2010). "Analytics for customer engagement." Journal of service research 13(3): 341-356.

Blau, P. M. (1964). "Social exchange theory." Retrieved September 3(2007): 62.

Bloch, P. H. and M. L. Richins (1983). "A theoretical model for the study of product importance perceptions." Journal of marketing 47(3): 69-81.

Blythe, M., & Cairns, P. (2009). Critical methods and user generated content: The iPhone on YouTube. Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 1467–1476.

Bolton, R. and S. Saxena-Iyer (2009). "Interactive services: a framework, synthesis and research directions." Journal of interactive marketing 23(1): 91-104.

Boulding, W., & Kirmani, A. (1993). A Consumer-Side Experimental Examination of Signaling Theory: Do Consumers Perceive Warranties as Signals of Quality? Journal of Consumer Research, 20(1), 111–123. https://doi.org/10.1086/209337

Bowden, J. L.-H. (2009). "The process of customer engagement: A conceptual framework." Journal of marketing theory and practice 17(1): 63-74.

Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2012). Social network sites. Online Communication and Collaboration: A Reader, 261–283.

Brady, M. K., et al. (2002). "Performance-only measurement of service quality: a replication and extension." Journal of business research 55(1): 17-31.

Brakus, J. J., et al. (2009). "Brand experience: what is it? How is it measured? Does it affect loyalty?" Journal of marketing 73(3): 52-68.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2020). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? Qualitative Research in Psychology, 18(3), 328–352.

Breidbach, C. F., et al. (2014). "Beyond virtuality: from engagement platforms to engagement ecosystems." Managing Service Quality.

Broderick, A. J. and R. D. Mueller (1999). "A theoretical and empirical exegesis of the consumer involvement construct: The psychology of the food shopper." Journal of marketing theory and practice 7(4): 97-108.

Brodie, R. J., et al. (2011). "Customer engagement: Conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications for research." Journal of service research 14(3): 252-271.

Brodie, R. J., et al. (2013). "Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis." Journal of business research 66(1): 105-114.

Brodmerkel, S., & Carah, N. (2013). Alcohol brands on Facebook: The challenges of regulating brands on social media. Journal of Public Affairs, 13(3), 272–281.

Brown, S., McDonagh, P., & Shultz, C. J. (2013). Titanic: Consuming the myths and meanings of an ambiguous brand. Journal of Consumer Research, 40(4), 595–614.

Brown, T. J., et al. (2006). "Identity, intended image, construed image, and reputation: An interdisciplinary framework and suggested terminology." Journal of the academy of marketing science 34(2): 99-106.

Bruhn, M., Schoenmüller, V., Schäfer, D., & Heinrich, D. (2012). Brand Authenticity: Towards a Deeper Understanding of its Conceptualization and Measurement (SSRN Scholarly Paper 2402187). https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2402187

Bruwer, J. and J. Huang (2012). "Emerald Article: Wine product involvement and consumers' BYOB behaviour in the South Australian on-premise market."

Bryman, A. (2016). Social research methods. Oxford university press. https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=N2zQCgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=(Bryman,+2016)&ots=dqJwHXH5rh&sig=czft5ZONRUxF9sN3THCvCxdznHE

Bryson, C. and L. Hand (2007). "The role of engagement in inspiring teaching and learning." Innovations in education and teaching international 44(4): 349-362.

Buck, R., et al. (2004). "Emotion and reason in persuasion: Applying the ARI model and the CASC Scale." Journal of business research 57(6): 647-656.

Burgess, J., & Green, J. (2009). YouTube: Digital media and society series. Cambridge: Polity.

Busenitz, L. W., Fiet, J. O., & Moesel, D. D. (2005). Signaling in venture capitalist—New venture team funding decisions: Does it indicate long–term venture outcomes? Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 29(1), 1–12.

Busenitz, L. W., Fiet, J. O., & Moesel, D. D. (2005). Signaling in venture capitalist—New venture team funding decisions: Does it indicate long–term venture outcomes? Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 29(1), 1–12.

Cacioppo, J. T. and R. E. Petty (1989). "Effects of message repetition on argument processing, recall, and persuasion." Basic and Applied Social Psychology 10(1): 3-12.

Calder, B. J., et al. (2009). "An experimental study of the relationship between online engagement and advertising effectiveness." Journal of interactive marketing 23(4): 321-331.

Cambra-Fierro, J., et al. (2018). "Customer value co-creation over the relationship life cycle." Journal of Service Theory and Practice.

Carah, N., & Shaul, M. (2016). Brands and Instagram: Point, tap, swipe, glance. Mobile Media & Communication, 4(1), 69–84.

Carbonell, P., et al. (2009). "Customer involvement in new service development: An examination of antecedents and outcomes." Journal of product innovation management 26(5): 536-550.

Carlson, J., et al. (2019). "Feel the VIBE: examining value-in-the-brand-page-experience and its impact on satisfaction and customer engagement behaviours in mobile social media." Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services 46: 149-162.

Celsi, R. L. and J. C. Olson (1988). "The role of involvement in attention and comprehension processes." Journal of consumer research 15(2): 210-224.

Certo, S. T. (2003). Influencing initial public offering investors with prestige: Signaling with board structures. Academy of Management Review, 28(3), 432–446.

Certo, S. T. (2003). Influencing initial public offering investors with prestige: Signaling with board structures. Academy of Management Review, 28(3), 432–446.

Ch, G. (2000). Relationship Marketing: the Nordic School Perspective [in] Handbook of Relationship Marketing, Sheth, JN, Parvatiyar, A, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Chang, C.-C. (2013). "Examining users′ intention to continue using social network games: A flow experience perspective." Telematics and Informatics 30(4): 311-321.

Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. Handbook of Qualitative Research, 2(1), 509–535.

Chen, Y.-H., et al. (2016). "Impact of initial trust, involvement, and mood on trusting belief: Evidence from the financial industry in Taiwan." Journal of Service Theory and Practice.

Chen, Z., & Berger, J. (2016). How content acquisition method affects word of mouth. Journal of Consumer Research, 43(1), 86–102.

Cheung, C. M. K., Lee, M. K. O., & Rabjohn, N. (2008). The impact of electronic word-of-mouth: The adoption of online opinions in online customer communities. Internet Research, 18(3), 229–247. https://doi.org/10.1108/10662240810883290

Cheung, C. M., Chiu, P.-Y., & Lee, M. K. (2011). Online social networks: Why do students use facebook? Computers in Human Behavior, 27(4), 1337–1343.

Cheung, F. Y. M. and W. M. To (2015). "Do task-and relation-oriented customers co-create a better quality of service?: An empirical study of customer-dominant logic." Management decision.

Cheung, M. F. and W.-M. To (2016). "Service co-creation in social media: An extension of the theory of planned behavior." Computers in human behavior 65: 260-266.

Cheung, M. F. Y. and W. M. To (2020). "The effects of customer involvement on perceived service performance and word-of-mouth: the mediating role of service co-creation." Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics.

Cheung, M. L., Pires, G., & Rosenberger, P. J. (2020). The influence of perceived social media marketing elements on consumer–brand engagement and brand knowledge. Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics, 32(3), 695–720. https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-04-2019-0262

Chevalier, J. A., & Mayzlin, D. (2006). The effect of word of mouth on sales: Online book reviews. Journal of Marketing Research, 43(3), 345–354.

Choi, D.-H., & Shin, D.-H. (2017). A dialectic perspective on the interactive relationship between social media and civic participation: The moderating role of social capital. Information, Communication & Society, 20(2), 151–166. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1154586

Chretien, K. C., & Kind, T. (2013). Social media and clinical care: Ethical, professional, and social implications. Circulation, 127(13), 1413–1421.

Christodoulides, G., Jevons, C., & Blackshaw, P. (2011). The voice of the consumer speaks forcefully in brand identity: User-generated content forces smart marketers to listen. Journal of Advertising Research, 51(1 50th Anniversary Supplement), 101–111.

Chu, W., & Chu, W. (1994). Price, brand reputation and store reputation as signals of quality: A game-theoretic approach. Marketing Science Conference, Tucson, AZ.

Chukwuere, J. E., & Chukwuere, P. C. (2017). The impact of social media on social lifestyle: A case study of university female students. Gender and Behaviour, 15(4), 9966–9981. https://doi.org/10.10520/EJC-c1e3ae5f6

Chung, J. E., Park, N., Wang, H., Fulk, J., & McLaughlin, M. (2010). Age differences in perceptions of online community participation among non-users: An extension of the Technology Acceptance Model. Computers in Human Behavior, 26(6), 1674–1684.

Clarke, K. and R. W. Belk (1979). "The effects of product involvement and task definition on anticipated consumer effort." ACR North American Advances.

Connelly, B. L., Certo, S. T., Ireland, R. D., & Reutzel, C. R. (2011). Signaling theory: A review and assessment. Journal of Management, 37(1), 39–67.

Converse, P. E. (2006). The nature of belief systems in mass publics (1964). Critical Review, 18(1–3), 1–74.

Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. Qualitative Sociology, 13(1), 3–21.

Coulter, R. A., et al. (2003). "Rethinking the origins of involvement and brand commitment: Insights from postsocialist central Europe." Journal of consumer research 30(2): 151-169.

Craig, W., Boniel-Nissim, M., King, N., Walsh, S. D., Boer, M., Donnelly, P. D., Harel-Fisch, Y., Malinowska-Cieślik, M., de Matos, M. G., & Cosma, A. (2020). Social media use and cyber-bullying: A cross-national analysis of young people in 42 countries. Journal of Adolescent Health, 66(6), S100–S108.

Crick, J. M. (2021). Qualitative research in marketing: What can academics do better? Journal of Strategic Marketing, 29(5), 390–429.

Crowe, S., Cresswell, K., Robertson, A., Huby, G., Avery, A., & Sheikh, A. (2011). The case study approach. BMC Medical Research Methodology, 11, 100. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-11-100

Cui, A. S. and F. Wu (2016). "Utilizing customer knowledge in innovation: antecedents and impact of customer involvement on new product performance." Journal of the academy of marketing science 44(4): 516-538.

Dahdal, S. (2020). Using the WhatsApp social media application for active learning. Journal of Educational Technology Systems, 49(2), 239–249.

dan. (2017, November 9). Stackla Survey Finds Authenticity Drives Brand Affinity and Consumer-Created Content Influences Purchases. Nosto. https://www.nosto.com/blog/consumer-content-report-influence-in-the-digital-age/

Darmody, A. and M. R. Solomon (2009). "Production and Reproduction of Consumer Culture in Virtual Communities."

Davis, S., Inman, J. J., & McAlister, L. (1992). Promotion has a negative effect on brand evaluations—or does it? Additional Disconfirming Evidence. Journal of Marketing Research, 29(1), 143–148.

Dawar, N., & Parker, P. (1994). Marketing universals: Consumers' use of brand name, price, physical appearance, and retailer reputation as signals of product quality. Journal of Marketing, 58(2), 81–95.

Day, G. S. (1970). Buyer attitudes and brand choice behavior, New York: Free Press.

De Almeida, S. O., et al. (2014). "The mixed effects of participant diversity and expressive freedom in online peer-to-peer problem solving communities." Journal of interactive marketing 28(3): 196-209.

De Wulf, K., et al. (2001). "Investments in consumer relationships: A cross-country and cross-industry exploration." Journal of marketing 65(4): 33-50.

Deighton, J., & Kornfeld, L. (2007). Digital interactivity: Unanticipated consequences for markets, marketing. and consumers. Working Paper, Harvard Business School, Cambridge, MA.

Denecke, K., Bamidis, P., Bond, C., Gabarron, E., Househ, M., Lau, A. Y. S., Mayer, M. A., Merolli, M., & Hansen, M. (2015). Ethical issues of social media usage in healthcare. Yearbook of Medical Informatics, 24(01), 137–147.

Dessart, L., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2015). Consumer engagement in online brand communities: A social media perspective. Journal of Product & Brand Management, 24(1), 28–42. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-06-2014-0635

Dey, I. (1999). Grounding grounded theory: Guidelines for grounded theory inquiry. San Diego, USA: Academic Press.

Dhar, V., & Chang, E. A. (2009). Does chatter matter? The impact of user-generated content on music sales. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 23(4), 300–307.

Dholakia, U. M. (2001). "A motivational process model of product involvement and consumer risk perception." European Journal of marketing.

Dholakia, U. M. (2006). "How customer self-determination influences relational marketing outcomes: evidence from longitudinal field studies." Journal of Marketing research 43(1): 109-120.

Di Domenico, G., Sit, J., Ishizaka, A., & Nunan, D. (2021). Fake news, social media and marketing: A systematic review. Journal of Business Research, 124, 329–341.

Dilley, P. (2004). Interviews and the philosophy of qualitative research. JSTOR.

Diwanji, V. S., & Cortese, J. (2020). Contrasting user generated videos versus brand generated videos in ecommerce. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 54, 102024.

Dolan, R., Conduit, J., Fahy, J., & Goodman, S. (2016). Social media engagement behaviour: A uses and gratifications perspective. Journal of Strategic Marketing, 24(3–4), 261–277.

Donelan, H. (2016). Social media for professional development and networking opportunities in academia. Journal of Further and Higher Education, 40(5), 706–729.

Dunham, B. (2011). The role for signaling theory and receiver psychology in marketing. In Evolutionary psychology in the business sciences (pp. 225–256). Springer.

Dwivedi, A. (2015). A higher-order model of consumer brand engagement and its impact on loyalty intentions. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 24, 100–109. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2015.02.007

Dwivedi, A., et al. (2016). "Establishing measures and drivers of consumer brand engagement behaviours." Journal of Brand Management 23(5): 41-69.

Dwyer, F. R., et al. (1987). "Developing buyer-seller relationships." Journal of marketing 51(2): 11-27.

E M Steenkamp, J.-B., Batra, R., & Alden, D. L. (2003). How perceived brand globalness creates brand value. Journal of International Business Studies, 34(1), 53–65. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8400002

Edmondson, A. C., & McManus, S. E. (2007). Methodological fit in management field research. Academy of Management Review, 32(4), 1246–1264.

Edvardsson, B. (2005). "Service quality: beyond cognitive assessment." Managing Service Quality: An International Journal.

Eisingerich, A. B., et al. (2019). "Hook vs. hope: How to enhance customer engagement through gamification." International Journal of Research in Marketing 36(2): 200-215.

Elitzur, R., & Gavious, A. (2003). Contracting, signaling, and moral hazard: A model of entrepreneurs,'angels,'and venture capitalists. Journal of Business Venturing, 18(6), 709–725.

Enquist, M., & Arak, A. (1998). Neural representation and the evolution of signal form. Cognitive Ecology, 21–87.

Erdem, T., & Swait, J. (1998). Brand Equity as a Signaling Phenomenon. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 7(2), 131–157. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp0702_02

Erdem, T., & Swait, J. (1998a). Brand Equity as a Signaling Phenomenon. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 7(2), 131–157. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp0702_02

Erdem, T., & Swait, J. (1998b). Brand Equity as a Signaling Phenomenon. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 7(2), 131–157. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp0702_02

Erdem, T., & Swait, J. (2004). Brand credibility, brand consideration, and choice. Journal of Consumer Research, 31(1), 191–198.

Erdem, T., Keane, M. P., & Sun, B. (2008). A Dynamic Model of Brand Choice When Price and Advertising Signal Product Quality. Marketing Science, 27(6), 1111–1125. https://doi.org/10.1287/mksc.1080.0362

Erdem, T., Swait, J., & Valenzuela, A. (2006). Brands as signals: A cross-country validation study. Journal of Marketing, 70(1), 34–49.

Erdem, T., Swait, J., & Valenzuela, A. (2006). Brands as signals: A cross-country validation study. Journal of Marketing, 70(1), 34–49.

Ertimur, B., & Gilly, M. C. (2012). So whaddya think? Consumers create ads and other consumers critique them. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 26(3), 115–130.

Facebook. (n.d.). Facebook. Retrieved May 31, 2022, from https://www.facebook.com/policies/ads/#

Fang, E. (Er). (2008). Customer Participation and the Trade-Off between New Product Innovativeness and Speed to Market. Journal of Marketing, 72(4), 90–104. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.72.4.090

Fang, E., et al. (2008). "Influence of customer participation on creating and sharing of new product value." Journal of the academy of marketing science 36(3): 322-336.

Ferrara, E., Chang, H., Chen, E., Muric, G., & Patel, J. (2020). Characterizing social media manipulation in the 2020 US presidential election. First Monday.

Ferraz, C. dos A. (2015). Co-creation in hospitality industry: A case study on the drivers of traveler-generated content [PhD Thesis]. https://bibliotecadigital.fgv.br/dspace/handle/10438/15048

Finn, D. W. (1983). "Low-involvement isn't low-involving." ACR North American Advances.

Fitzgerald, L. F., Swan, S., & Fischer, K. (1995). Why didn't she just report him? The psychological and legal implications of women's responses to sexual harassment. Journal of Social Issues, 51(1), 117–138.

Foley, M. (2006). 'Measuring the Turn-On. AAAA/ARF Consumer Engagement Conference [Online], September.

Frey, B. F. (2000). The impact of moral intensity on decision making in a business context. Journal of Business Ethics, 26(3), 181–195.

Friestad, M., & Wright, P. (1994). The persuasion knowledge model: How people cope with persuasion attempts. Journal of Consumer Research, 21(1), 1–31.

Friestad, M., & Wright, P. (1995). Persuasion knowledge: Lay people's and researchers' beliefs about the psychology of advertising. Journal of Consumer Research, 22(1), 62–74.

Gabbott, M. and G. Hogg (1999). "Consumer involvement in services: A replication and extension." Journal of business research 46(2): 159-166.

Gallup (2019). Turning Customers Into True Believers. Gallup

Gensler, S., Völckner, F., Liu-Thompkins, Y., & Wiertz, C. (2013). Managing brands in the social media environment. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 27(4), 242–256.

Gil de Zúñiga, H., et al. (2012). "Social media use for news and individuals' social capital, civic engagement and political participation." Journal of computer-mediated communication 17(3): 319-336.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). Grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research. Chicago, lL: Aldine Publishing Company.

Gohary, A. and K. H. Hanzaee (2014). "Personality traits as predictors of shopping motivations and behaviors: a canonical correlation analysis." Arab Economic and Business Journal 9(2): 166-174.

Goodrich, K., & de Mooij, M. (2016). How 'social'are social media? A cross-cultural comparison of online and offline purchase decision influences. In Word of Mouth and Social Media (pp. 114–127). Routledge.

Gorn, G. J. (1982). "The effects of music in advertising on choice behavior: A classical conditioning approach." Journal of marketing 46(1): 94-101.

Gottfried, J., & Shearer, E. (2016). News use across social media platforms 2016.

Granata, J., Lasch, F., Le Roy, F., & Dana, L.-P. (2018). How do micro-firms manage coopetition? A study of the wine sector in France. International Small Business Journal, 36(3), 331–355.

Greenwood, M. (2007). "Stakeholder engagement: Beyond the myth of corporate responsibility." Journal of Business ethics 74(4): 315-327.

Gretry, A., Horváth, C., Belei, N., & van Riel, A. C. (2017). “Don’t pretend to be my friend!” When an informal brand communication style backfires on social media. Journal of Business Research, 74, 77–89.

Grönroos, C. (2006). "Adopting a service logic for marketing." Marketing theory 6(3): 317-333.

Grönroos, C. (2011). "A service perspective on business relationships: The value creation, interaction and marketing interface." Industrial Marketing Management 40(2): 240-247.

Grossman, S. J. (1981). The informational role of warranties and private disclosure about product quality. The Journal of Law and Economics, 24(3), 461–483.

Grott, E. M., et al. (2019). "How cross-culture affects the outcomes of co-creation." European Business Review.

Gruber, D. A., Smerek, R. E., Thomas-Hunt, M. C., & James, E. H. (2015). The real-time power of Twitter: Crisis management and leadership in an age of social media. Business Horizons, 58(2), 163–172.

Grüsser, S. M., et al. (2006). "Excessive computer game playing: Evidence for addiction and aggression?" Cyberpsychology & behavior 10(2): 290-292.

Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). Introduction to applied thematic analysis. Applied Thematic Analysis, 3(20), 1–21.

Guilford, T. (1997). The extravagance of animal signals. Journal of Biological Education, 31(1), 24–28.

Guivarch, J., Murdymootoo, V., Elissalde, S.-N., Salle-Collemiche, X., Tardieu, S., Jouve, E., & Poinso, F. (2017). Impact of an implicit social skills training group in children with autism spectrum disorder without intellectual disability: A before-and-after study. PloS One, 12(7), e0181159.

Gummerus, J., Liljander, V., Weman, E., & Pihlström, M. (2012). Customer engagement in a Facebook brand community. Management Research Review.

Gustafsson, A., et al. (2005). "The effects of customer satisfaction, relationship commitment dimensions, and triggers on customer retention." Journal of marketing 69(4): 210-218.

Gwinner, K. P., et al. (1998). "Relational benefits in services industries: the customer's perspective." Journal of the academy of marketing science 26(2): 101-114.

Hajli, M. N. (2014). A study of the impact of social media on consumers. International Journal of Market Research, 56(3), 387–404.

Hakala, U., Lätti, S., & Sandberg, B. (2011). Operationalising brand heritage and cultural heritage. Journal of Product & Brand Management, 20(6), 447–456. https://doi.org/10.1108/10610421111166595

Hamari, J. (2017). "Do badges increase user activity? A field experiment on the effects of gamification." Computers in human behavior 71: 469-478.

Hamilton, R. (2016). Consumer-based strategy: Using multiple methods to generate consumer insights that inform strategy, Springer.

Han, S.-P., & Shavitt, S. (1994). Persuasion and culture: Advertising appeals in individualistic and collectivistic societies. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 30(4), 326–350.

Harhoff, D., Henkel, J., & Von Hippel, E. (2003). Profiting from voluntary information spillovers: How users benefit by freely revealing their innovations. Research Policy, 32(10), 1753–1769.

Heath, R. (2007). "How do we predict advertising attention and engagement." School of Management University of Bath Working Paper 9.

Henderson, C. M. and R. W. Palmatier (2011). Understanding the relational ecosystem in a connected world. The connected customer, Routledge: 55-94.

Hennig-Thurau, T., et al. (2002). "Understanding relationship marketing outcomes: An integration of relational benefits and relationship quality." Journal of service research 4(3): 230-247.

Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., Walsh, G., & Gremler, D. D. (2004). Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the internet? Journal of Interactive Marketing, 18(1), 38–52.

Herrero, Á., San Martín, H., & Hernández, J. M. (2015). How online search behavior is influenced by user-generated content on review websites and hotel interactive websites. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management.

Higgins, E. T. and A. A. Scholer (2009). "Engaging the consumer: The science and art of the value creation process." Journal of Consumer Psychology 19(2): 100-114.

Higie, R. A. and L. F. Feick (1989). "Enduring involvement: Conceptual and measurement issues." ACR North American Advances.

Hippel, E. v. (2005). "Democratizing innovation: The evolving phenomenon of user innovation." Journal für Betriebswirtschaft 55(1): 63-78.

Hoffman, D. L., & Fodor, M. (2010). Can you measure the ROI of your social media marketing? MIT Sloan Management Review, 52(1), 41.

Hofstede, G. (1984). Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values (Vol. 5). sage.

Holbrook, M. B., & Batra, R. (1987). Assessing the Role of Emotions as Mediators of Consumer Responses to Advertising | Journal of Consumer Research | Oxford Academic. https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/14/3/404/1820163

Hollebeek, L. (2011). "Exploring customer brand engagement: definition and themes." Journal of strategic Marketing 19(7): 555-573.

Hollebeek, L. (2011). Exploring customer brand engagement: Definition and themes. Journal of Strategic Marketing, 19(7), 555–573.

Hollebeek, L. D. (2011). "Demystifying customer brand engagement: Exploring the loyalty nexus." Journal of marketing management 27(7-8): 785-807.

Hollebeek, L. D., et al. (2014). "Consumer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, scale development and validation." Journal of interactive marketing 28(2): 149-165.

Hollebeek, L. D., Glynn, M. S., & Brodie, R. J. (2014). Consumer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, scale development and validation. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 28(2), 149–165.

Horovitz, J. (1990). How to win customers: Using customer service for a competitive edge.

Howcroft, B., et al. (2007). "Customer involvement and interaction in retail banking: an examination of risk and confidence in the purchase of financial products." Journal of Services Marketing.

Hsieh, S. H. and A. Chang (2016). "The psychological mechanism of brand co-creation engagement." Journal of interactive marketing 33: 13-26.

Hui, T. X. (2017). The effect of source credibility on consumers' purchase intention in Malaysia online community. Journal of Arts & Social Sciences, 1(1), 12–20.

Huotari, K. and J. Hamari (2017). "A definition for gamification: anchoring gamification in the service marketing literature." Electronic Markets 27(1): 21-31.

Hupfer, N. T. and D. M. Gardner (1971). "Differential involvement with products and issues: An exploratory study." ACR Special Volumes.

Ilic, A. (2008). "Towards a conceptualisation of consumer engagement in online communities: A netnographic study of vibration training online community." Unpublished master's thesis, University of Auckland (Department of Marketing), Auckland, New Zealand.

Illies, J. J. and R. REITER-PALMON (2004). "The effects of type and level of personal involvement on information search and problem Solving 1." Journal of Applied Social Psychology 34(8): 1709-1729.

Insights, A. (2018). "Industry analyst: Failed gamification projects, costing US businesses more than $700 million, can be fixed." URL: https://globenewswire. com/news-release/2018/03/19/1442013/0/en/Industry-Analyst-Failed-Gamification-Projects-Costing-US-Businesses-More-Than-700-Million-Can-Be-Fixed. html.(Accessed: February 10, 2020)[Google Scholar].

Jaakkola, E. and M. Alexander (2014). "The role of customer engagement behavior in value co-creation: a service system perspective." Journal of service research 17(3): 247-261.

Jeong, E., & Jang, S. S. (2011). Restaurant experiences triggering positive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) motivations. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 30(2), 356–366.

Ji, J., Plakoyiannaki, E., Dimitratos, P., & Chen, S. (2018). The qualitative case research in international entrepreneurship: A state of the art and analysis. International Marketing Review.

Jin, S.-A. A., & Phua, J. (2014). Following celebrities' tweets about brands: The impact of twitter-based electronic word-of-mouth on consumers' source credibility perception, buying intention, and social identification with celebrities. Journal of Advertising, 43(2), 181–195.

Joinson, A. N. (2008). Looking at, looking up or keeping up with people? Motives and use of facebook. Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 1027–1036. https://doi.org/10.1145/1357054.1357213

Jones, T. M. (1991). "Ethical decision making by individuals in organizations: An issue-contingent model." Academy of management review 16(2): 366-395.

Jonsen, K., Fendt, J., & Point, S. (2018). Convincing qualitative research: What constitutes persuasive writing? Organizational Research Methods, 21(1), 30–67.

Juppi, P. (2017). Engagement and Empowerment. Digital Storytelling as a Participatory Media Practice. NORDICOM-INFORMATION, 39, 31–41.

Kamel Boulos, M. N., Giustini, D. M., & Wheeler, S. (2016). Instagram and WhatsApp in health and healthcare: An overview. Future Internet, 8(3), 37.

Kapferer, J.-N. and G. Laurent (1985). Consumer involvement profiles: a new and practical approach to consumer involvement.

Kaplan, A. M. (2012). If you love something, let it go mobile: Mobile marketing and mobile social media 4x4. Business Horizons, 55(2), 129–139.

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. Business Horizons, 53(1), 59–68.

Kawaf, F., & Istanbulluoglu, D. (2019). Online fashion shopping paradox: The role of customer reviews and facebook marketing. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 48, 144–153.

Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. Journal of Marketing, 57(1), 1–22.

Keller, K. L. (2001). Building customer-based brand equity: A blueprint for creating strong brands, Marketing Science Institute Cambridge, MA.

Keys, B. (2011). Customer loyalty engagement index.

Kihlstrom, R. E., & Riordan, M. H. (1984). Advertising as a Signal. Journal of Political Economy, 92(3), 427–450.

Kim, A. J., & Ko, E. (2012). Do social media marketing activities enhance customer equity? An empirical study of luxury fashion brand. Journal of Business Research, 65(10), 1480–1486.

Kim, H. S., & Drolet, A. (2003). Choice and self-expression: A cultural analysis of variety-seeking. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 85(2), 373.

Kinard, B. R. and M. L. Capella (2006). "Relationship marketing: the influence of consumer involvement on perceived service benefits." Journal of Services Marketing.

Kirmani, A. (1990). The effect of perceived advertising costs on brand perceptions. Journal of Consumer Research, 17(2), 160–171.

Kirmani, A. (1997). Advertising Repetition as a Signal of Quality: If It's Advertised So Much, Something Must Be Wrong. Journal of Advertising. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00913367.1997.10673530

Kirmani, A., & Rao, A. R. (2000). No Pain, No Gain: A Critical Review of the Literature on Signaling Unobservable Product Quality. Journal of Marketing, 64(2), 66–79. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.64.2.66.18000

Klein, B., & Leffler, K. B. (1981). The role of market forces in assuring contractual performance. Journal of Political Economy, 89(4), 615–641.

Knoll, J. (2016). Advertising in social media: A review of empirical evidence. International Journal of Advertising, 35(2), 266–300.

Knox, S., et al. (1994). "Measuring consumer involvement with grocery brands: Model validation and scale-reliability test procedures." Journal of marketing management 10(1-3): 137-152.

Ko, H., et al. (2004). "Cross-cultural differences in perceived risk of online shopping." Journal of Interactive Advertising 4(2): 20-29.

Kohler, T., et al. (2011). "Co-creation in virtual worlds: The design of the user experience." MIS quarterly: 773-788.

Kohli, A. K. and B. J. Jaworski (1990). "Market orientation: the construct, research propositions, and managerial implications." Journal of marketing 54(2): 1-18.

Kohli, C., Suri, R., & Kapoor, A. (2015). Will social media kill branding? Business Horizons, 58(1), 35–44.

Kozinets, R. V. (1997). &Quot;I Want to Believe&Quot;: A Netnography of the X-Philes’ Subculture of Consumption. ACR North American Advances, NA-24. https://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/8088/volumes/v24/NA-24/full

Kozinets, R. V. (2002). The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities. Journal of Marketing Research, 39(1), 61–72.

Kozinets, R. V. (2009). Doing ethnographic research online. Kozinets, Netnography: The Essential Guide to Qualitative Social Media Research.

Kozinets, R. V. (2012). Marketing netnography: Prom/ot (ulgat) ing a new research method. Methodological Innovations Online, 7(1), 37–45.

Kozinets, R. V., Dolbec, P.-Y., & Earley, A. (2014). Netnographic analysis: Understanding culture through social media data. Sage Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis, 262–275.

Krebs, J. (1984). Animal signals: Mindreading and manipulation. Behavioural Ecology : An Evolutionary Approach, 380–402.

Kressmann, F., et al. (2006). "Direct and indirect effects of self-image congruence on brand loyalty." Journal of business research 59(9): 955-964.

Krippendorff, K. (2018). Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology. Sage publications.

Krugman, H. E. (1965). "The impact of television advertising: Learning without involvement." Public opinion quarterly 29(3): 349-356.

Kuang, L., Huang, N., Hong, Y., & Yan, Z. (2019). Spillover effects of financial incentives on non-incentivized user engagement: Evidence from an online knowledge exchange platform. Journal of Management Information Systems, 36(1), 289–320.

Kumar, V. (2018). Transformative marketing: The next 20 years, SAGE Publications Sage CA: Los Angeles, CA.

Kumar, V., et al. (2010). "Undervalued or overvalued customers: capturing total customer engagement value." Journal of service research 13(3): 297-310.

Kuss, D. J., & Griffiths, M. D. (2011). Online social networking and addiction—A review of the psychological literature. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 8(9), 3528–3552.

Kvale, S. (1996). The 1,000-page question. Qualitative Inquiry, 2(3), 275–284.

Kwak, H., Lee, C., Park, H., & Moon, S. (2010). What is Twitter, a social network or a news media? Proceedings of the 19th International Conference on World Wide Web, 591–600.

Laaksonen, P. (1994). Consumer involvement: Concepts and research, Routledge.

Lamberton, C., & Stephen, A. T. (2016). A thematic exploration of digital, social media, and mobile marketing: Research evolution from 2000 to 2015 and an agenda for future inquiry. Journal of Marketing, 80(6), 146–172.

Landers, R. N., et al. (2017). "Gamification of task performance with leaderboards: A goal setting experiment." Computers in human behavior 71: 508-515.

Lange, P. G. (2019). Publicly Private and Privately Public: Social Networking on YouTube. In Praktiken der Überwachten (pp. 183–205). Springer.

Langer, R., & Beckman, S. C. (2005). Sensitive research topics: Netnography revisited. Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 8(2), 189–203.

Laroche, M., et al. (2003). "How intangibility affects perceived risk: the moderating role of knowledge and involvement." Journal of Services Marketing.

Laurent, G. and J.-N. Kapferer (1985). "Measuring consumer involvement profiles." Journal of Marketing research 22(1): 41-53.

Leckie, C., et al. (2016). "Antecedents of consumer brand engagement and brand loyalty." Journal of marketing management 32(5-6): 558-578.

Leckie, C., Nyadzayo, M. W., & Johnson, L. W. (2016). Antecedents of consumer brand engagement and brand loyalty. Journal of Marketing Management, 32(5–6), 558–578. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2015.1131735

Leclercq, T., et al. (2018). "The boundaries of gamification for engaging customers: Effects of losing a contest in online co-creation communities." Journal of interactive marketing 44: 82-101.

Leeflang, P. (2011). "Paving the way for “distinguished marketing”." International Journal of Research in Marketing 28(2): 76-88.

Lemke, F., et al. (2011). "Customer experience quality: an exploration in business and consumer contexts using repertory grid technique." Journal of the academy of marketing science 39(6): 846-869.

Lench, H. C., Flores, S. A., & Bench, S. W. (2011). Discrete emotions predict changes in cognition, judgment, experience, behavior, and physiology: A meta-analysis of experimental emotion elicitations. Psychological Bulletin, 137(5), 834.

Lengnick-Hall, C. A., et al. (2000). "From recipient to contributor: examining customer roles and experienced outcomes." European Journal of marketing.

Lester, R. H., Certo, S. T., Dalton, C. M., Dalton, D. R., & Cannella Jr, A. A. (2006). Initial public offering investor valuations: An examination of top management team prestige and environmental uncertainty. Journal of Small Business Management, 44(1), 1–26.

Lester, R. H., Certo, S. T., Dalton, C. M., Dalton, D. R., & Cannella Jr, A. A. (2006). Initial public offering investor valuations: An examination of top management team prestige and environmental uncertainty. Journal of Small Business Management, 44(1), 1–26.

Liljander, V. and J. Mattsson (2002). "Impact of customer preconsumption mood on the evaluation of employee behavior in service encounters." Psychology & Marketing 19(10): 837-860.

Lobstein, T., Landon, J., Thornton, N., & Jernigan, D. (2017). The commercial use of digital media to market alcohol products: A narrative review. Addiction, 112, 21–27.

Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. Journal of Interactive Advertising, 19(1), 58–73.

Luarn, P., Lin, Y.-F., & Chiu, Y.-P. (2015). Influence of Facebook brand-page posts on online engagement. Online Information Review.

Lusch, R. F. and S. Nambisan (2015). "Service innovation." MIS quarterly 39(1): 155-176.

Lutz, N. A. (1989). Warranties as signals under consumer moral hazard. The Rand Journal of Economics, 239–255.

Lutz, R. J. (1981). Lessons learned from a decade of multiattribute attitude research in marketing, University of California, Los Angeles, Center for Marketing Studies.

MacKinnon, K. R., Kia, H., & Lacombe-Duncan, A. (2021). Examining tiktok's potential for community-engaged digital knowledge mobilization with equity-seeking groups. Journal of Medical Internet Research, 23(12), e30315.

MacLeod, A., & Chomsky, N. (2019). Still manufacturing consent: An interview with Noam Chomsky. In Propaganda in the Information Age (pp. 12–22). Routledge.

Malhotra, A., et al. (2013). "How to create brand engagement on Facebook." MIT Sloan Management Review 54(2): 18-20.

Mandolfo, M., et al. (2020). "Co-creation in new product development: Which drivers of consumer participation?" International Journal of Engineering Business Management 12: 1847979020913764.

Marina Choi, S. (2011). Guest editorial: Advertising and social media. International Journal of Advertising, 30(1), 11–12.

Martin, D., & Woodside, A. G. (2011). Storytelling research on international visitors: Interpreting own experiences in Tokyo. Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal.

Martin, M. (2022). 39 Facebook Stats That Matter to Marketers in 2022. Social Media Marketing & Management Dashboard. https://blog.hootsuite.com/facebook-statistics/

Martínez, J. A. and L. Martínez (2010). "Some insights on conceptualizing and measuring service quality." Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services 17(1): 29-42.

Mason, M. (2010). Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews. Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 11(3).

Mathwick, C. and J. Mosteller (2017). "Online reviewer engagement: A typology based on reviewer motivations." Journal of service research 20(2): 204-218.

Maurya, U. K., & Mishra, P. (2012). What is a brand? A Perspective on Brand Meaning. European Journal of Business and Management, 4(3), 122–133.

May, D. R., et al. (2004). "The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at work." Journal of occupational and organizational psychology 77(1): 11-37.

Maynard-Smith, P. E. S. of B. S. J., Smith, J. M., Smith, T. late J. M., Harper, D., & Harper, S. of B. S. D. (2003). Animal Signals. OUP Oxford.

Mayrhofer, M., Matthes, J., Einwiller, S., & Naderer, B. (2020). User generated content presenting brands on social media increases young adults' purchase intention. International Journal of Advertising, 39(1), 166–186.

McDermott, K. B., Agarwal, P. K., D'Antonio, L., Roediger III, H. L., & McDaniel, M. A. (2014). Both multiple-choice and short-answer quizzes enhance later exam performance in middle and high school classes. Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied, 20(1), 3.

McMahon, J. M., & Harvey, R. J. (2006). An analysis of the factor structure of Jones' moral intensity construct. Journal of Business Ethics, 64(4), 381–404.

Menard, S. (2002). Applied logistic regression analysis. Sage. https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=EAI1QmUUsbUC&oi=fnd&pg=PP7&dq=(Menard,+2002)&ots=4WCON1mRMV&sig=ipjFuKmBNw3IFYCvNKlx3eweg3o

Menguc, B., Auh, S., Fisher, M., & Haddad, A. (2013). To be engaged or not to be engaged: The antecedents and consequences of service employee engagement. Journal of Business Research, 66(11), 2163–2170. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2012.01.007

Merckel, H. & 2017. (2017). 3 Tips for Creating a Social Strategy Fueled by User-Generated Content. https://www.adweek.com/performance-marketing/harald-merckel-guest-post-user-generated-content/

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook. sage.

Milgrom, P., & Roberts, J. (1986). Price and advertising signals of product quality. Journal of Political Economy, 94(4), 796–821.

Miller, T., & del Carmen Triana, M. (2009). Demographic diversity in the boardroom: Mediators of the board diversity–firm performance relationship. Journal of Management Studies, 46(5), 755–786.

Mitchell, A. A. and J. C. Olson (1981). "Are product attribute beliefs the only mediator of advertising effects on brand attitude?" Journal of Marketing research 18(3): 318-332.

Mitchell, V. W. (1999). "Consumer perceived risk: conceptualisations and models." European Journal of marketing.

Mittal, B. (1989). "Measuring purchase-decision involvement." Psychology & Marketing 6(2): 147-162.

Mittal, B. (1994). Public assessment of TV advertising: Faint praise and harsh criticism. Journal of Advertising Research, 34(1), 35–54.

Mittal, V. and W. A. Kamakura (2001). "Satisfaction, repurchase intent, and repurchase behavior: Investigating the moderating effect of customer characteristics." Journal of Marketing research 38(1): 131-142.

Moeller, S., et al. (2013). "Uncovering collaborative value creation patterns and establishing corresponding customer roles." Journal of service research 16(4): 471-487.

Mooij, M. D. (2003). Convergence and divergence in consumer behaviour: Implications for global advertising. International Journal of Advertising, 22(2), 183–202.

Moorman, C. (n.d.). Social Media Spending Triples But Falls Short Of Expectations. Forbes. Retrieved May 31, 2022, from https://www.forbes.com/sites/christinemoorman/2016/08/23/social-media-spending-triples-but-falls-short-of-expectations/

Moran, G., Muzellec, L., & Nolan, E. (2014). Consumer moments of truth in the digital context: How “search” and “e-word of mouth” can fuel consumer decision making. Journal of Advertising Research, 54(2), 200–204.

Moran, G., Muzellec, L., & Nolan, E. (2014). Consumer moments of truth in the digital context: How “search” and “e-word of mouth” can fuel consumer decision making. Journal of Advertising Research, 54(2), 200–204.

Morgan, R. M. and S. D. Hunt (1994). "The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing." Journal of marketing 58(3): 20-38.

Morhart, F., Malär, L., Guèvremont, A., Girardin, F., & Grohmann, B. (2015). Brand authenticity: An integrative framework and measurement scale. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 25(2), 200–218.

Moriarty, S. E., & Everett, S.-L. (1994). Commercial breaks: A viewing behavior study. Journalism Quarterly, 71(2), 346–355.

Mowen, J. and M. Minor (1998). "consumer behavior 5th edition, upper saddle drive." NJ: Prentice Hall 6: 42-43.

MSI (2010). 2010-2012 Research Priorities, Marketing Science Institute Boston, MA.

Müller, J., & Christandl, F. (2019). Content is king–But who is the king of kings? The effect of content marketing, sponsored content & user-generated content on brand responses. Computers in Human Behavior, 96, 46–55.

Muñiz, A. M., & Schau, H. J. (2007). Vigilante marketing and consumer-created communications. Journal of Advertising, 36(3), 35–50.

Naeem, M., & Ozuem, W. (2022). Understanding the different types of UGC participants and social context for fashion brands: Insights from social media platforms. Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 25(2), 181–204. https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-02-2021-0028

Napoli, J., Dickinson, S. J., Beverland, M. B., & Farrelly, F. (2014). Measuring consumer-based brand authenticity. Journal of Business Research, 67(6), 1090–1098.

Nayeem, T. (2012). Cultural influences on consumer behaviour. International Journal of Business and Management, 7(21), 78.

Nelson, P. (1974). Advertising as information. Journal of Political Economy, 82(4), 729–754.

Nemkova, E., Souchon, A. L., Hughes, P., & Micevski, M. (2015). Does improvisation help or hinder planning in determining export success? Decision theory applied to exporting. Journal of International Marketing, 23(3), 41–65.

Nicholls, J. (2012). Everyday, everywhere: Alcohol marketing and social media—current trends. Alcohol and Alcoholism, 47(4), 486–493.

Nind, M., Wiles, R., Bengry-Howell, A., & Crow, G. (2013). Methodological innovation and research ethics: Forces in tension or forces in harmony? Qualitative Research, 13(6), 650–667.

Nobre, H. and A. Ferreira (2017). "Gamification as a platform for brand co-creation experiences." Journal of Brand Management 24(4): 349-361.

Nord, W. R. and J. P. Peter (1980). "A behavior modification perspective on marketing." Journal of marketing 44(2): 36-47.

Not, E., & Petrelli, D. (2019). Empowering cultural heritage professionals with tools for authoring and deploying personalised visitor experiences. User Modeling and User-Adapted Interaction, 29(1), 67–120. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11257-019-09224-9

O'Cass, A. (2000). "An assessment of consumers product, purchase decision, advertising and consumption involvement in fashion clothing." Journal of economic psychology 21(5): 545-576.

O'Donnell, A., Gilmore, A., Carson, D., & Cummins, D. (2002). Competitive advantage in small to medium-sized enterprises. Journal of Strategic Marketing, 10(3), 205–223.

Obermiller, C. (1985). "Varieties of mere exposure: The effects of processing style and repetition on affective response." Journal of consumer research 12(1): 17-30.

Obilo, O. O., et al. (2021). "Revisiting the consumer brand engagement concept." Journal of business research 126: 634-643.

Olenski, S. (n.d.). 4 Ways Brands Should Use Native Advertising In 2017. Forbes. Retrieved May 31, 2022, from https://www.forbes.com/sites/steveolenski/2017/02/16/4-ways-brands-should-use-native-advertising-in-2017/

Osei-Frimpong, K., & McLean, G. (2018). Examining online social brand engagement: A social presence theory perspective. Technological Forecasting and Social Change, 128, 10–21.

Pansari, A. and V. Kumar (2017). "Customer engagement: the construct, antecedents, and consequences." Journal of the academy of marketing science 45(3): 294-311.

Papacharissi, Z., & Mendelson, A. (2011). Toward a new (er) sociability: Uses, gratifications, and social capital on Facebook. In Media perspectives for the 21st century (pp. 225–243). Routledge.

Park, C. W. and B. J. Moon (2003). "The relationship between product involvement and product knowledge: Moderating roles of product type and product knowledge type." Psychology & Marketing 20(11): 977-997.

Park, C. W., MacInnis, D. J., & Priester, J. (2008). Brand attachment: Construct, consequences and causes. Now Publishers Inc.

Park, J., Hyun, H., & Thavisay, T. (2021). A study of antecedents and outcomes of social media WOM towards luxury brand purchase intention. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 58, 102272. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102272

Patterson, P. G. and T. Smith (2001). "Relationship benefits in service industries: a replication in a Southeast Asian context." Journal of Services Marketing.

Patterson, P., et al. (2006). Understanding customer engagement in services. Advancing theory, maintaining relevance, proceedings of ANZMAC 2006 conference, Brisbane.

Pecot, F., & De Barnier, V. (2018). Brands using historical references: A consumers' perspective. Journal of Brand Management, 25(2), 171–184.

Peña-López, I. (2007). Participative Web and User-Created Content. Web 2.0, Wikis, and Social Networking.

Peng, W., et al. (2012). "Need satisfaction supportive game features as motivational determinants: An experimental study of a self-determination theory guided exergame." Media Psychology 15(2): 175-196.

Perez. (2018). Twitter officially expands its character count to 280 starting today | TechCrunch. https://techcrunch.com/2017/11/07/twitter-officially-expands-its-character-count-to-280-starting-today/?guccounter=1

Pervan, S. J., et al. (2009). "Reciprocity as a key stabilizing norm of interpersonal marketing relationships: Scale development and validation." Industrial Marketing Management 38(1): 60-70.

Petty, R. E. and J. T. Cacioppo (1981). "Issue involvement as a moderator of the effects on attitude of advertising content and context." ACR North American Advances.

Petty, R. E., et al. (1983). "Central and peripheral routes to advertising effectiveness: The moderating role of involvement." Journal of consumer research 10(2): 135-146.

Piller, F., Ihl, C., & Vossen, A. (2011). Customer co-creation: Open innovation with customers. V. Wittke & H. Hanekop, New Forms of Collaboration and Innovation in Internet, 31–63.

Pinsky, I., Noto, A. R., Botéquio de Moraes, M. C., Lucas Dos Santos, E., Sparks, R., & O'Brien, K. (2017). Alcohol industry sponsorship of university student sports clubs in Brazil. Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, 78(2), 306–312.

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. Journal of Applied Psychology, 88(5), 879.

pollard, C. (2018). Why Visual Content Is a Social Media Secret Weapon | HuffPost Impact. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-visual-content-is-a-s_b_7261876

Pozón-López, I., Kalinic, Z., Higueras-Castillo, E., & Liébana-Cabanillas, F. (2020). A multi-analytical approach to modeling of customer satisfaction and intention to use in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC). Interactive Learning Environments, 28(8), 1003–1021.

Prahalad, C. K. and V. Ramaswamy (2000). "Co-opting customer competence." Harvard business review 78(1): 79-90.

Qiu, G., Bu, J., Chen, C., & Zhang, F. (2009). Intelligent advertising for user generated content through sentiment analysis. 2009 International Conference on Advances in Social Network Analysis and Mining, 330–333.

Quester, P. and A. L. Lim (2003). "Product involvement/brand loyalty: is there a link?" Journal of Product & Brand Management.

Rao, A. R., Qu, L., & Ruekert, R. W. (1999). Signaling Unobservable Product Quality through a Brand Ally. Journal of Marketing Research, 36(2), 258–268. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224379903600209

Reingen, P. H. and J. B. Kernan (1977). "Compliance with an interview request: A foot-in-the-door, self-perception interpretation." Journal of Marketing research 14(3): 365-369.

Richins, M. L. (1997). Measuring emotions in the consumption experience. Journal of Consumer Research, 24(2), 127–146.

Rindell, A., Santos, F. P., & de Lima, A. P. (2015). Two sides of a coin: Connecting corporate brand heritage to consumers' corporate image heritage. Journal of Brand Management, 22(5), 467–484.

Robson, K., et al. (2016). "Game on: Engaging customers and employees through gamification." Business horizons 59(1): 29-36.

Roma, P., & Aloini, D. (2019). How does brand-related user-generated content differ across social media? Evidence reloaded. Journal of Business Research, 96, 322–339.

Rose, G. M., Merchant, A., Orth, U. R., & Horstmann, F. (2016). Emphasizing brand heritage: Does it work? And how? Journal of Business Research, 69(2), 936–943.

Rosen, L. D., Carrier, L. M., & Cheever, N. A. (2013). Facebook and texting made me do it: Media-induced task-switching while studying. Computers in Human Behavior, 29(3), 948–958.

Roth, M. S. (1995). The effects of culture and socioeconomics on the performance of global brand image strategies. Journal of Marketing Research, 32(2), 163–175.

Rothschild, M. L. (1984). "Perspectives on involvement: current problems and future directions." ACR North American Advances.

Russell-Bennett, R., et al. (2007). "Involvement, satisfaction, and brand loyalty in a small business services setting." Journal of business research 60(12): 1253-1260.

Ryan, M. J. (1998). Sexual selection, receiver biases, and the evolution of sex differences. Science, 281(5385), 1999–2003.

Saks, A. M. (2006). "Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement." Journal of managerial psychology.

Salanova, M., et al. (2005). "Linking organizational resources and work engagement to employee performance and customer loyalty: the mediation of service climate." Journal of applied Psychology 90(6): 1217.

Samala, N. and B. S. Katkam (2019). "Fashion brands are engaging the millennials: a moderated-mediation model of customer-brand engagement, participation, and involvement." Young Consumers.

Sawaftah, D., Aljarah, A., & Lahuerta-Otero, E. (2021). Power brand defense up, my friend! Stimulating brand defense through digital content marketing. Sustainability, 13(18), 10266.

Schau, H. J., et al. (2009). "How brand community practices create value." Journal of marketing 73(5): 30-51.

Schaufeli, W. B., et al. (2002). "Burnout and engagement in university students: A cross-national study." Journal of cross-cultural psychology 33(5): 464-481.

Schivinski, B., & Dabrowski, D. (2016). The effect of social media communication on consumer perceptions of brands. Journal of Marketing Communications, 22(2), 189–214.

Schultz, D. (2007). "Focus on brand changes rules of engagement." Marketing News 15(8): 7-8.

Schultz, M., & Hatch, M. J. (2003). The cycles of corporate branding: The case of the LEGO company. California Management Review, 46(1), 6–26.

Scott Cook, co-founder, Intuit. (2022). “A brand is no longer what we tell the consumer it is – it is what consumers tell each other it is.” https://www.nationalhogfarmer.com/business/consumers-control-your-brand-now-what

Scott Cook, co-founder, Intuit. (n.d.). “A brand is no longer what we tell the consumer it is – it is what consumers tell each other it is.” Retrieved June 1, 2022, from https://www.nationalhogfarmer.com/business/consumers-control-your-brand-now-what

Shankar, V. and R. Batra (2009). "The growing influence of online marketing communications."

Shapiro, C. (1982). Consumer information, product quality, and seller reputation. The Bell Journal of Economics, 20–35.

Shapiro, C. (1983). Premiums for high quality products as returns to reputations. The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 98(4), 659–679.

Sharma, R. R., Sraha, G., & Crick, D. (2018). Export promotion programmes and the export performance of Ghanaian firms: The mediating role of foreign market attractiveness. International Marketing Review.

Sherif, M. and H. Cantril (1947). "The psychology of ego-involvements: Social attitudes and identifications."

Shostack, G. L. (1985). "Planning the service encounter." The service encounter: 250.

Showkat, N., & Parveen, H. (2017). In-depth interview. Quadrant-I (e-Text).

Silvia, P. J. and T. B. Kashdan (2009). "Interesting things and curious people: Exploration and engagement as transient states and enduring strengths." Social and Personality Psychology Compass 3(5): 785-797.

Singhapakdi, A., Vitell, S. J., & Kraft, K. L. (1996). Moral intensity and ethical decision-making of marketing professionals. Journal of Business Research, 36(3), 245–255.

Sinkovics, R. R., & Alfoldi, E. A. (2012). Progressive focusing and trustworthiness in qualitative research. Management International Review, 52(6), 817–845.

Skinner, E. A. and M. J. Belmont (1993). "Motivation in the classroom: Reciprocal effects of teacher behavior and student engagement across the school year." Journal of educational psychology 85(4): 571.

Smith, A. N., Fischer, E., & Yongjian, C. (2012). How does brand-related user-generated content differ across YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter? Journal of Interactive Marketing, 26(2), 102–113.

Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2015). Interpretative phenomenological analysis as a useful methodology for research on the lived experience of pain. British Journal of Pain, 9(1), 41–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/2049463714541642

Smith, J. L., et al. (2007). "The stereotyped task engagement process: The role of interest and achievement motivation." Journal of educational psychology 99(1): 99.

Smith, M. A., & Karpicke, J. D. (2014). Retrieval practice with short-answer, multiple-choice, and hybrid tests. Memory, 22(7), 784–802.

Smith, M. F. and M. L. Carsky (1996). "Grocery shopping behavior A comparison of involved and uninvolved consumers." Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services 3(2): 73-80.

So, K. K. F., King, C., & Sparks, B. (2014). Customer Engagement With Tourism Brands: Scale Development and Validation. Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research, 38(3), 304–329. https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348012451456

SocialBakers. (2017). Facebook statistics – Brands. https://www.socialbakers.com/statistics/facebook/ pages/total/brands/

Solis, B. (2010). Engage: The complete guide for brands and businesses to build, cultivate, and measure success in the new web. John Wiley & Sons.

Spence, M. (1974). Market signaling: Informational transfer in hiring and related screening processes. cambridge: harvard university press.

Spence, M. (1978). Job market signaling. In Uncertainty in economics (pp. 281–306). Elsevier.

Spence, M. (2002). Signaling in retrospect and the informational structure of markets. American Economic Review, 92(3), 434–459.

Spence, M. (2002). Signaling in retrospect and the informational structure of markets. American Economic Review, 92(3), 434–459.

Sprott, D., Czellar, S., & Spangenberg, E. (2009). The Importance of a General Measure of Brand Engagement on Market Behavior: Development and Validation of a Scale. Journal of Marketing Research, 46(1), 92–104. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.46.1.92

Sridhar, S., & Srinivasan, R. (2012). Social influence effects in online product ratings. Journal of Marketing, 76(5), 70–88.

Statista. (n.d.). Facebook 2022. Statista. Retrieved June 7, 2022, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/

Stephen, A. T. (2016). The role of digital and social media marketing in consumer behavior. Current Opinión in Psychology, 10, 17–21.

Steyn, P., Ewing, M. T., Van Heerden, G., Pitt, L. F., & Windisch, L. (2011). From whence it came: Understanding source effects in consumer-generated advertising. International Journal of Advertising, 30(1), 133–160.

Stigler, G. J. (1961). The economics of information. Journal of Political Economy, 69(3), 213–225.

Stiglitz, J. E. (1989). Imperfect information in the product market. Handbook of Industrial Organization, 1, 769–847.

Stokes, D., & Bergin, R. (2006). Methodology or "methodolatry"? An evaluation of focus groups and depth interviews. Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 9(1), 26–37. https://doi.org/10.1108/13522750610640530

Stone, M., et al. (2000). Customer relationship marketing: get to know your customers and win their loyalty, Kogan Page Publishers.

Storey, C. and C. Larbig (2018). "Absorbing customer knowledge: How customer involvement enables service design success." Journal of service research 21(1): 101-118.

Suazo, M. M., Martínez, P. G., & Sandoval, R. (2009). Creating psychological and legal contracts through human resource practices: A signaling theory perspective. Human Resource Management Review, 19(2), 154–166.

Sung, Y., Kim, E., & Choi, S. M. (2018). # Me and brands: Understanding brand-selfie posters on social media. International Journal of Advertising, 37(1), 14–28.

Tafesse, W. (2015). Content strategies and audience response on Facebook brand pages. Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 33(6), 927–943.

Tam, J. L. M. (2008). Brand familiarity: Its effects on satisfaction evaluations. Journal of Services Marketing, 22(1), 3–12. https://doi.org/10.1108/08876040810851914

Tham, A., Croy, G., & Mair, J. (2013). Social Media in Destination Choice: Distinctive Electronic Word-of-Mouth Dimensions. Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 30(1–2), 144–155. https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2013.751272

Thompson, B. (2014). "Customer Experience vs. Customer Engagement — A Distinction Without a Difference?". from https://customerthink.com/customer-experience-vs-customer-engagement-a-distinction-without-a-difference/.

Thompson, D. V., & Malaviya, P. (2013). Consumer-generated ads: Does awareness of advertising co-creation help or hurt persuasion? Journal of Marketing, 77(3), 33–47.

Timoshenko, A., & Hauser, J. R. (2019). Identifying customer needs from user-generated content. Marketing Science, 38(1), 1–20.

Tirole, J. (1988). The theory of industrial organization. MIT press.

Tseng, F.-M. and L.-L. L. Chiang (2016). "Why does customer co-creation improve new travel product performance?" Journal of business research 69(6): 2309-2317.

Tseng, M. M., et al. (1999). "Mapping customers' service experience for operations improvement." Business Process Management Journal.

Tufekci, Z. (2014). Big questions for social media big data: Representativeness, validity and other methodological pitfalls. Eighth International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media.

Tyrväinen, O., Karjaluoto, H., & Ukpabi, D. (2023). Understanding the Role of Social Media Content in Brand Loyalty: A Meta-Analysis of User-Generated Content Versus Firm-Generated Content. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 58(4), 400–413. https://doi.org/10.1177/10949968231157281

U.S. social media marketing reach 2022. (n.d.). Statista. Retrieved June 7, 2022, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/203513/usage-trands-of-social-media-platforms-in-marketing/

Utz, S. (2015). The function of self-disclosure on social network sites: Not only intimate, but also positive and entertaining self-disclosures increase the feeling of connection. Computers in Human Behavior, 45, 1–10.

Van Beuningen, J., et al. (2009). "Customer self-efficacy in technology-based self-service: assessing between-and within-person differences." Journal of service research 11(4): 407-428.

van Dijck, J. (2013). 'You have one identity': Performing the self on Facebook and LinkedIn. Media, Culture & Society, 35(2), 199–215. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443712468605

Van Doorn, J., et al. (2010). "Customer engagement behavior: Theoretical foundations and research directions." Journal of service research 13(3): 253-266.

van Roy, R. and B. Zaman (2019). "Unravelling the ambivalent motivational power of gamification: A basic psychological needs perspective." International Journal of Human-Computer Studies 127: 38-50.

Vargo, S. L. and R. F. Lusch (2008). "Service-dominant logic: continuing the evolution." Journal of the academy of marketing science 36(1): 1-10.

Vargo, S. L. and R. F. Lusch (2014). Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing, Routledge.

Vargo, S. L., et al. (2008). "On value and value co-creation: A service systems and service logic perspective." European management journal 26(3): 145-152.

Varki, S. and S. Wong (2003). "Consumer involvement in relationship marketing of services." Journal of service research 6(1): 83-91.

Vaugn, R. (1986). "How advertising works: A planning model revisited." Journal of advertising research 26(1): 57-66.

Verhoef, P. C., Reinartz, W. J., & Krafft, M. (2010). Customer Engagement as a New Perspective in Customer Management. Journal of Service Research, 13(3), 247–252. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670510375461

Verhoef, P. C., Stephen, A. T., Kannan, P. K., Luo, X., Abhishek, V., Andrews, M., Bart, Y., Datta, H., Fong, N., & Hoffman, D. L. (2017). Consumer connectivity in a complex, technology-enabled, and mobile-oriented world with smart products. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 40, 1–8.

Vivek, S. D., et al. (2012). "Customer engagement: Exploring customer relationships beyond purchase." Journal of marketing theory and practice 20(2): 122-146.

Vivek, S. D., et al. (2014). "A generalized multidimensional scale for measuring customer engagement." Journal of marketing theory and practice 22(4): 401-420.

Vocino, A., & Oppewal, H. (2006). Antecedents of brand credibility under asymmetrical information. ANZMAC 2006: Advancing Theory, Maintaining Relevance, Proceedings, 1–7.

Vredeveld, A. J. and R. A. Coulter (2019). "Cultural experiential goal pursuit, cultural brand engagement, and culturally authentic experiences: Sojourners in America." Journal of the academy of marketing science 47(2): 274-290.

Wallace, E., et al. (2014). "Consumer engagement with self-expressive brands: brand love and WOM outcomes." Journal of Product & Brand Management.

Wang, Q., Chen, W., & Liang, Y. (2011). He Efects of Social Media on College Students.

Wang, X., Yang, L., Yang, J., Wang, P., & Lei, L. (2017). Trait anger and cyberbullying among young adults: A moderated mediation model of moral disengagement and moral identity. Computers in Human Behavior, 73, 519–526.

Wang, X., Yu, C., & Wei, Y. (2012). Social media peer communication and impacts on purchase intentions: A consumer socialization framework. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 26(4), 198–208.

Warren, C. A. (2002). Qualitative interviewing. Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method, 839101, 103–116.

Warrington, P. and S. Shim (2000). "An empirical investigation of the relationship between product involvement and brand commitment." Psychology & Marketing 17(9): 761-782.

Weiger, W. H., et al. (2017). "Leveraging marketer-generated appeals in online brand communities." Journal of Service Management.

Wellins, R. and J. Concelman (2005). "Creating a culture for engagement." Workforce performance solutions 4(1): 1-4.

Wernerfelt, B. (1988). Umbrella branding as a signal of new product quality: An example of signalling by posting a bond. The RAND Journal of Economics, 458–466.

Wilkie, W. L. and E. A. Pessemier (1973). "Issues in marketing's use of multi-attribute attitude models." Journal of Marketing research 10(4): 428-441.

Wirtz, J., et al. (2013). "Managing brands and customer engagement in online brand communities." Journal of Service Management.

Wolf, T., et al. (2020). "Experiences that matter? The motivational experiences and business outcomes of gamified services." Journal of business research 106: 353-364.

Woodruff, R. B. and S. Gardial (1996). Know your customer: New approaches to understanding customer value and satisfaction, Wiley.

Woods, M., Paulus, T., Atkins, D. P., & Macklin, R. (2016). Advancing qualitative research using qualitative data analysis software (QDAS)? Reviewing potential versus practice in published studies using ATLAS. ti and NVivo, 1994–2013. Social Science Computer Review, 34(5), 597–617.

Wyer, R. S. and T. K. Srull (1986). "Human cognition in its social context." Psychological review 93(3): 322.

Xi, N. and J. Hamari (2020). "Does gamification affect brand engagement and equity? A study in online brand communities." Journal of business research 109: 449-460.

Xiaoji, Q. (2010). User-generated content online now 50.7% of total. China Daily, 23.

Xie, Y., Peng, S., & Hampson, D. P. (2020). Brand user imagery clarity (BUIC): Conceptualization, measurement, and consequences. Journal of Brand Management, 27(6), 662–678. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-020-00202-w

Xu, P., & Liu, D. (2019). Product engagement and identity signaling: The role of likes in social commerce for fashion products. Information & Management, 56(2), 143–154.

Yadav, M. S., De Valck, K., Hennig-Thurau, T., Hoffman, D. L., & Spann, M. (2013). Social commerce: A contingency framework for assessing marketing potential. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 27(4), 311–323.

Yang, G. (2022). Using Funny Memes for Social Media Marketing: The Moderating Role of Bandwagon Cues. Journal of Promotion Management, 28(7), 944–960. https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2022.2054904

Yang, Y., et al. (2017). "Examining the impact of gamification on intention of engagement and brand attitude in the marketing context." Computers in human behavior 73: 459-469.

Yi, Y., et al. (2011). "Customer participation and citizenship behavioral influences on employee performance, satisfaction, commitment, and turnover intention." Journal of business research 64(1): 87-95.

Yung, E. and A. Chan (2002). "Business traveler satisfaction with hotel service encounters." Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing 11(4): 29-41.

Zahavi, A. (1975). Mate selection—A selection for a handicap. Journal of Theoretical Biology, 53(1), 205–214.

Zaichkowsky, J. L. (1985). Measuring the Involvement Construct*. Journal of Consumer Research, 12(3), 341–352. https://doi.org/10.1086/208520

Zaichkowsky, J. L. (1987). "The emotional affect of product involvement." ACR North American Advances.

Zannettou, S., Caulfield, T., Blackburn, J., De Cristofaro, E., Sirivianos, M., Stringhini, G., & Suarez-Tangil, G. (2018). On the origins of memes by means of fringe web communities. Proceedings of the Internet Measurement Conference 2018, 188–202.

Zhang, M., Zhang, Y., Zhao, L., & Li, X. (2020). What drives online course sales? Signaling effects of user-generated information in the paid knowledge market. Journal of Business Research, 118, 389–397. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.07.008

Zhang, M., Zhang, Y., Zhao, L., & Li, X. (2020). What drives online course sales? Signaling effects of user-generated information in the paid knowledge market. Journal of Business Research, 118, 389–397. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.07.008

Zhang, Y., & Wiersema, M. F. (2009). Stock market reaction to CEO certification: The signaling role of CEO background. Strategic Management Journal, 30(7), 693–710.

Zhang, Y., & Wiersema, M. F. (2009). Stock market reaction to CEO certification: The signaling role of CEO background. Strategic Management Journal, 30(7), 693–710.

Zhou, L., Yang, Z., & Hui, M. K. (2010). Non-local or local brands? A multi-level investigation into confidence in brand origin identification and its strategic implications. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 38(2), 202–218. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-009-0153-1

Zuboff, S. (2020). You are now remotely controlled. New York Times, 24.

Zwick, D., et al. (2008). "Putting Consumers to Work: Co-creation and new marketing govern-mentality." Journal of consumer culture 8(2): 163-196.

# 9. Appendices

Appendix 1: Qualitative Approaches Reviewed

In this section, we present several qualitative research methods that were reviewed for the qualitative research section. In the end of this section, we also present a summary of comparison of these qualitative methods.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory emerged in the 1960s as a result of Glaser and Strauss's sociological research program (Charmaz, 2000; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Through their work, they crafted a method that enabled the researcher to systematically generate a substantive theory grounded in empirical data. The goal was to discover a theory that had grab, would fit the data, and would work in the real world (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Glaser & Strauss, (1967) developed grounded theory as a method that combined two data analysis processes. In the first process, the analyst codes all data and then systematically analyzes these codes to verify or prove a given proposition. In the second process, the analyst does not engage in coding data per se but merely inspects the data for properties of categories, uses memos to track the analysis, and develops theoretical ideas. Glaser & Strauss, (1967) determined that neither of these processes could properly accomplish the goal of generating theory from data. They, in turn, suggested a hybrid approach to data analysis: "One that combines, by an analytic procedure of constant comparison, the explicit coding procedure of the first approach and the style of theory development of the second" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 102). From this effort to mesh the best of both processes, grounded theory, also known as the method of constant comparison, was born.

Grounded theory challenged the then-dominant logico-deductive way of theorizing, because rather than develop a theory and then systematically seek out evidence to verify it, researchers using grounded theory set out to gather data and then systematically develop the theory derived directly from the data (Dey, 1999). Grounded theory uses an Inductive approach, but it is difficult for the researcher to give up the preconceived information and ideology during the stages of data

collection and data analysis thus this makes this approach vulnerable and therefore we did not opt for this approach.

Content Analysis

In 1952, Berelson, defined content analysis as “a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (p.18). By using the concepts technique and objective, Berelson underlines the process of analysis as a reliable and learnable method that precludes the personal authority of the researcher. However, Berelson's definition does not capture the qualitative and latent perspective of the analysis. In order to make the method applicable both in a quantitative and a qualitative approach, and without specifying the depth of analysis, Krippendorff (2018) defined content analysis as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (p.18). (Downe-Wamboldt 1992, p. 314) underlines that content analysis is more than a counting process, as the goal is to link the results to their context or to the environment in which they were produced: “Content analysis is a research method that provides a systematic and objective means to make valid inferences from verbal, visual, or written data in order to describe and quantify specific phenomena”.

Given the nature of analysis, for instance inductive reasoning in content analysis is like weaving a carpet, getting each thread in its rightful and meaningful position to make sense out of it and deductive reasoning is the inverse of the same, it is like testing a pre-determined set of theory of logic (Catanzaro, 1988; Lune & Berg, 2017; Polit & Beck, 2014). In order to assure the credibility, memos should be written in between and during the data collection to link the logical interpretation associated with the text (Richards & Morse, 2012).

In qualitative research, content analysis is drawn by using words and themes to accumulate a possible meaning from the information (Burnard, 1995; Polit & Beck, 2014). The purpose is to summarize the text, group and extract maximum useful information. A researcher always tries to be true to this process of analysis to achieve credibility and trustworthiness (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992; Patton, 2002; Richards & Morse, 2012). Although one of the limitations of this method is

that it is one of the most commonly used methods to analyze documents and data, and that the analyst must separate between “prescriptive analysis” and “Open analysis” referring to dominant messages. Themes are often quantified in a unit of analysis, being a word or phrase. The themes are never quantified, and everything is only reduced to the participants. Thus, we are not opting for content analysis.

## Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis (DA), a qualitative research method, is an umbrella term for a number of different approaches to the study of language. Potter and Wetherell (1987) note that the term ‘discourse’ can mean “all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds” (p. 7). Some researchers have argued that there is a danger that this is overly restrictive and have used DA to study ‘texts’ which are neither written nor spoken (Parker & Bolton Discourse Network, 1999). In other terms this is the analysis with a number of approaches to analyze written, vocal, or sign language use or any significant semiotic event (Harris, 1952). There is no prescribed approach to conduct the DA, and in addition the researcher needs to be expert in order to proceed with this type of analysis (Burman & Parker, 1983; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Willig, 2003) based on these implications we decided not to use this approach.

## Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a qualitative approach which aims to provide detailed examinations of personal lived experience. It produces an account of lived experience in its own terms rather than one prescribed by pre-existing theoretical preconceptions and it recognizes that this is an interpretative endeavor as humans are sense-making organisms. (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2015). It is explicitly idiographic in its commitment to examining the detailed experience of each case in turn, prior to the move to more general claims. IPA is a particularly useful methodology for examining topics which are complex, ambiguous, and emotionally laden (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al., 1999). This approach is relatively new, and there are no such

categorical and precise guidelines. This approach seems to be dealt with quite precision and expertise of this field only (Brocki & Wearden, 2006) and based on this assertion we did not choose to have this approach used for the qualitative analysis.

## Case Study

The case study approach allows in-depth, multi-faceted explorations of complex issues in their real-life settings. The value of the case study approach is well recognized in the fields such as business, law and policy (Crowe et al., 2011). This approach is also one of the oldest qualitative research approaches used today. In order to gain an in-depth understanding of an issue, an event, or a phenomenon of interest this approach is very useful (Keen & Packwood, 1995). According to Pringle et al., (2011) case study, although is an in-depth analysis technique, it has its cons. It is time consuming and detail oriented. For our research design this approach will be out of context, in addition to conducting these many individual case studies, therefore we decided to not proceed with this approach.

**Summary of the presented qualitative research methods:**

| Method | Main authors | Objectives | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grounded Theory | • (Glaser, 1967)<br>• (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)<br>• (Charmaz, 2006)<br>• (Clarke, 2005)<br>• (Holton, 2007) | • Develop theory grounded in data.<br>• Development of new theories | • Flexibility<br>• Inductive Approach<br>• Iterative Process | • Time Consuming<br>• Subjectivity<br>• Complexity for new researchers<br>• Inductive approach, difficult to give up pre-conceived information |
| Content Analysis | • (Bernays, 1913)<br>• (Lippmann, 1922)<br>• (Hall, 1980)<br>• (Entman, 1993)<br>• (Krippendorff, 2013) | • Summarization of text<br>• Identification of patterns/themes<br>• Induce meaning from the data | • Versatile<br>• Non-Intrusive<br>• Cost Effective<br>• Quantifiable | • Subjectivity<br>• Lack of depth<br>• Limited to text<br>• Quantitative in nature |
| Discourse Analysis | • (Foucault, 1972)<br>• (Goffman, 1959)<br>• (Fairclough, 1992)<br>• (Van Dijk, 1993)<br>• (Tannen, 1990) | • Understand the complex relationship between language, communication, and society.<br>• Investigate how discourse shapes and reflects our understanding of the world. | • Comprehensive understanding of the social context<br>• Reveal hidden power-relations.<br>• Reveal the dynamics of communication | • Overly restrictive<br>• Lack of approach<br>• Requires expertise.<br>• Time consuming |
| IPA | • (Giorgi, 1970)<br>• (Charmaz, 2006)<br>• (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009)<br>• (Finlay, 2002) | • Detailed examination of personal lived experience<br>• It recognizes that this is an interpretative endeavor as humans are sense-making organisms | • Methodology for examining complex, ambiguous, and emotionally laden topics.<br>• Detailed Examination | • Relatively new<br>• No such categorical and precise guidelines<br>• Precision and expertise required.<br>• Too much depth<br>• Time consuming |
| Case Study | • (Yin, 1984)<br>• (Wolcott, 1990)<br>• (Merriam, 1988)<br>• (Yanowitz, 1985) | • In-depth appreciation of an issue, event, or phenomenon of interest, in its natural real-life context | • Oldest qualitative research technique<br>• In-depth<br>• Detailed<br>• Individualistic | • Times taking<br>• Preferred for 2-3 individuals/cases.<br>• Less generalizable<br>• Extremely detailed |

Appendix 2

| Theme | Sub theme | Files | References | Verbatims/examples |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Theme 1: Motivations to Use social media** | | | | |
| **Motivations to Use social media** | Self-Expression | **30** | **192** | "*Social Media has become a part of our daily life and it is a way to express our personality*" (P27, Valeria, F26) "*On Instagram like, I mean I engaged in posting my stories like wherever I go, where the new things I find I posted and normally when I take a good picture mine, so I post it*" (P2, Adil Samo, M24) ; "*I really want people to know what is my opinion that how we need it*" (P4, AQSA, F22); "*We do this on daily basis because you know this is what social media is all about we , we express ourselves*" (P5, Bareera, F27) "*we were live streaming on our Instagram that was from my personal thing and that is my self-expression*" (P8, Hasan, M36) |
| | Content is Engaging | **30** | **139** | "*Basically, their content is very engaging. My friends post videos like re-enactments of different music videos and pictures that are posted by celebrities*" (P1, Aaron, M24) "*I am involved by this means, I follow content most of the times so for instance there is a page called Startup Pakistan they create content about success stories of entrepreneurs so I follow these stories I learn about their business model and their ideas*" (P3, AR Gilal, M2) "*they create, uh, interesting or funny content more than others and their content is very engaging*" (P9, Jean, M26) |
| | Professional Development | **26** | **75** | "*Facebook, yes that is where I share mostly my work progress, since I am a researcher so I share my publications, other publications, good publication all sort of publications on Facebook*" (P3, AR Gilal, M32) "*it is sort of both my daily life part and my professional life part so you know I am kind of involved with it both personally and professionally*" "*brands are using it (…) For its marketing purposes*" (P5, Bareera, F27) "*to be very honest this is how I started my business so I run an events management company and I started my business from creating a face Facebook page and this Facebook page helped me get my first client and this is how I I started my business and this is how I grew my team and right now I have around 15 people and we are working together in the events team*" (P8, Hasan M36) |
| | Stay up to date | **26** | **66** | "*just to stay with the trending topics and just to stay with the trends*" (P5, Bareera, F27) "*the content that I find on all these business and incubation pages it's more knowledgeable like they tell you what is the current tax rate how do you register for societies how do you register for a business so it varies from content to content*" (P8, Hasan, M36) "*I have really like a one page and visit it every day, they have like 10 information about what's happening in the world*." (P9, Jean, M26) "*Most of the times I use it for casually checking things around me in the world and sort of keeping myself updated and engaged*" (P10, Junaid, M30) "*I am really engaged maybe life hacks you know like daily life hacks and things trivial things of day to day life where they tell you things that can really make your life easy actually I have also tried doing*" (P11, Kaneez, F34) "*as such stay updated both personally and professionally" (P27, Valeria, F26)* |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Necessity | **13** | **18** | "*earlier it used to be a like once every now and then but nowadays its more of a necessity*" (P14, Naveed, M30) "*Ah, Yes I do, I mean uh who does not ah these days, these days it's a most common, ah common activity of everyone*" (P16, Noman, M30) "*Yes I do use social media Ah, (…) um come on I mean who does not, it is an obligatory part nowadays*" (P22, Sanam, F31) "*Yes, very often sort of a part of my life uh uhm more like mandatory part I am kind of involved with Social Media*" (P26, Tuba, F25) "*it has become a necessity today*" (P27, Valeria, F26) |
| **Theme 2 Engagement Because of Content** | | | | |
| **Engagement Because of Content** | User Generated Content | **28** | **109** | **"***I Prefer content by the users over the brand owing to the fact that user is closer to me*" (P24, Suhand, F18) "*Local influences the content creators like content creators from Pakistan his name is Mooro and Ukano and I mean I find Ali Gul Pir very entertaining*" (P2, Adil, M24) "*if you talk about influencers so like I told you before I engage with local influencers in a whole different way*" (P4, Aqsa, F22) "*Do you know what keeps me so engaged and involved with Sadh Guru's content, it's the fact that so those contents are, you know, not repeated contents*" (P3, AR Gilal, M32) *" I feel their content is very interesting and that interest uh will lead to involvement and that involvement will lead to more engagement*" (P11, Kaneez, F34) "*I engage with such user generated content because I like them actually*" (P12, Maira, F24) "*I engage with scientific content and it ah is you know it because of the their expertise or the ah way they have ah dedicated their lives for science*" (P16, Noman, M30) "*I also like their content the type of content they create and are like you know consistent in their regular updates on the Facebook and yes*" (P17, Qasim, M30) |
| | Engagement because of Proximity | **29** | **99** | "*So if I'm looking at local influencers, like if I if there's a brand that kind of interests me, I'll always look at who's promoting those brands I'll see how much proximity they have with me*" (P13, Marienelle, F24) "*so it's based on the proximity If you are very in a close proximity with some influencer or celebrity, you try to comment on their status Well, yeah, yeah, of course*" (P14, Naveed, M30) "*my parents they are from Peru I've been to Peru for three times or four times so I don't know why but I still feel like I have more connection with Peru I follow a lot of local influencers from people like I follow Jacqueline Rivera I follow Miguel Garcia Sarah Elizabeth*" (P18, Renato, M18) "*Some I follow because of proximity like Pakistani*" (P30, Yasir, M31) "*I think it highly depends upon the fact that I can relate with them like I told you before I feel proximity with them they are uh like they are*" (P29, Yashma, F17) |
| | Brand Generated Content | **25** | **59** | "*I am big brand fan and I prefer content by brands*" (P6, Farwa, F24) "*Brand one is more clarity In terms of cinematography In terms of in terms of the message that they want to convey in terms of the message that they want to convey*" (P12, Maira, F24) "*I'm a whole Nike girl and I will only purchase Nike products (…) I am involved with this brand No matter who's the ambassador of Nike*" (P13, Marienelle, F24) "*like you asked about preferred engagement I would say Brand Generated content*" (P16, Noman, M30) "*brand content is more engaging because they* |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | *want to maintain their brand and build on that*" (P21, Samita, F33) |
| **Theme 3: Brand Image** | | | | |
| **Brand Image** | UGC is Credible | **30** | **134** | **"***I always trust the content that is created and posted by these budding and young influencers because they feel credible and clearer to me in comparison to that of branded content*" (P29, Yashma, F17) "*If she says something, I will take that blindly, for me she is the most credible celebrity and I follow her because of her authenticity and credibility*" (P1, Aaron, M24) "*The user part User is more credible users, more credible I mean it has a bit It's because the think that that that user could be me if I'm buying that that thing Uh, that user could be me, so the credibility would go for the user*" (P2, Adil, M24) "*User generated I think is more credible (…) more credible yes User generated because of user generated contents would be created in such a way that they have been going through their own experiences*" (P4, Aqsa, F22) "*these local influencers like Toto is the most credible one for me*" (P7, Hamza, M25) "*I think user generated content is more credible because user has a lot on steak and the other thing is it's more responsive it's more interactive it's more targeted*" (P8, Hasan, M36) "*Credible I would definitely say Zara Amin the influencer I was talking about uh so*" (P12, Maira, F24) "*I prefer user generated content and because they're more credible and relatable Uh*" (P13, Marienelle, F24) "*They are experts they are experts and they are Tremendously good at it I must say no one can beat their skill still set of makeup like Natasha is You can say*" (P15, Nazish, F29) |
| | Over Branding is Negative | **27** | **63** | "*I prefer the content that has little or almost no visible brand promotions until unless If that's the if that's the brand I like but if it appears so often then, obviously not so uh uh OK, so if they do it in a subtle way, it's good*" (P6, Farwa, F24) "*if it's the video where it's like 50 to 50 like uh, 50% of brand promotion and 50% of I don't know explaining the characteristics I didn't I didn't like it It's no, obviously*" (P28, Vlad, M26) "*The advertisement in even user generated content that is not subtle, It doesn't make any sense to me*" (P25, Tahira, F29) "*I am Involved because of the content not because of the promotions it's the other way around like you know, I stop following such content with over branding*" (P24, Suhand, F18) "*Like only if the brand is like too much drag dragged and again and again and again That's actually sort of irritating sometimes, but if it's a very quick one, that's fine*" (P15, Nazish, F29) "*some influencers over do the branding which just makes me unfollow these*" (P29, Yashma, F17) |
| | UGC Branding is more effective | **21** | **54** | "*like really influenced by the fact that Toto is promoting it I mean it is the only thing that makes any brand more credible I mean otherwise I don't have any feeling*" (P7, Hamza, M25) "*I mean I think that the influencer promotion is more effective than the traditional ATL activations or ATL advertisement Yes yes yes, because whoever is following them is their audience Nobody has forced them to follow them*" (P11, Kaneez. F34) "*I have started following adidas the brand since I saw Beyonce promoting it as it has built my trust towards the brand, like I told you before for me she is the most (…) amazing and* |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | *credible celebrity I have ever seen*" (P1, Aaron, M24) "*I mean it depends so first time maybe I give it a try because of the influencer first time*" (P2, Adil, M24) "*I have been working with the agency in UK as an account manager and I have been looking after these marketing things that that User Generated Content's and everything else for some of the clients in UK and I think they prefer User Generated Content more than anything*" (P5, Bareera, F27) "*I prefer interacting with the content generated by a user. Uh, so yeah. That's the user experience content and user generated content. Like from example of GoPro*" (P10, Junaid, M30) |
| | UGC is Clear | **24** | **36** | "*I think his content is very much clear and very informative*" (P30, Yasir, M31) "*influencers that are pertaining to lifestyle and fashion they are too clear and consistent when it comes to their content I mean particularly the ones I am talking about*" (P29, Yashma, F17) "*his content has such clarity that it really start with smaller involvements and shapes out to be enthusiasm the clarity I mean I would say definitely*" (P28, Vlad, M26) "*if they want to convey something, their message is clearly conveyed their message For sure*" (P27, Valeria, F26) "*yeah I can see that they are clear, because we can see the link or something or the on the explaining actions so they explain*" (P23, Stella, F19) "*clarity I think it is also influencer so yeah*" (P18, Renato, M18) |
| | UGC is Consistent | **22** | **36** | "*they are more uh consistent because they are doing it on uh on themselves first they're experimenting on themselves first and then they are recommending us something so we feel good about these brand promotions about these things so yeah I mean it's a good thing it's a very effective because you get a huge followers and you know you brand achieves what it wants to achieve*" (P11, Kaneez, F34) "*Yeah, it's pretty cool she is I mean you say consistent the most consistent, consistent in terms of posting the same things posting in the same genre, promoting the same brand Uh, that girl that I have recently followed regarding hair and skin care routine*" (P4, Aqsa, F22) "*for consistency I mean this is one reason I engage with Nadia Hussain the model because she is consistent*" (P5, Bareera, F27) "*they are more uh consistent because they are doing it on uh on themselves first they're experimenting on themselves first and then they are recommending us something*" (P6, Farwa, F24) "*if you ask about consistency I would again say that a user generated content is more consistent for me … on so for me consistent is always influencer*" (P18, Renato, M18) |
| **Theme 4: Moral & Ethical Considerations** | | | | |
| **Moral & Ethical Considerations** | Unethical Content SM | **30** | **125** | "*Social media today is full of crap and unethical videos people are exposing their body to get the fame, there is stupid content over social media that for no reason gets all the viewership and this actually encourages people to create such content*" (P13, Marienelle, F24) "*like there are so many unethical and provoking videos like I have seen so much of religious hatred*" (P24, Suhand, F18) "*embarrassing content I mean it's sexual contents as well, yeah*" "*I think It was like a call for like Murdering a part of population for who they are just because they pray differently and because they have a different life*" |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | (P1, Aaron, M24) "*people at times uh I mean people at times troll you without you know realizing that a simple joke or immoral comment can have a serious magnitude of consequences but I uh have been trolled a lot of times*" (P4, Aqsa, F22) "*I have seen people loosing life for something as silly as making viral things without prior confirmation*" (P5, Bareera, F27) "*I often see people beating their You know, servants that are under 18 people, misusing them, abusing them, not considering them equal treating them like animals*" (P6, Farwa, F24) "*there's some pages that I specifically follow because I don't like them and I'm really hateful of these pages because I feel that they are tricking a lot of poor and maybe I people*" (P9, Jean, M26) "*I mean it is his body but posting nudes on social media?*" (P12, Maira, F24) |
| | Moral Intensity – Proximity | **27** | **75** | "*Oh I must tell you it's always about the proximity and people just worry about morality when its close proximity*" (P1, Aaron, M24) "*If I have two options, either to donate for Ukraine or to donate for Pakistan I would go for Pakistan, certainly it is because of my proximity with Pakistan*" (P2, Adil, M24) "*I am politically affected by decision made in Pakistan, so that is in my close proximity*" (P3, AR Gilal, M32) "*I am supporting Kashmir I have proximity with Kashmir and why I'm supporting Palestine I have religious proximity with Palestine*" (P8, Hasan, M36) "*I would rather give it in my own circle, uh, so yeah, uh, that's my personal preference. So proximity matters to me rather than donating for Madagascar, I would prefer donating for my neighbor who is in much need*" (P10, Junaid, M30) "*I should be careful or I should Yeah, I should have sympathy for the people in Ukraine, but for me my country comes first other than me my proximity is my country*" (P16, Noman, M30) "*Obviously people of Pakistan speakers, uh, proximity, proximity"* (P21, Samita, F33) "*People just because of our proximity think that we are all killers and bad and they just rebuke us*" (P23, Stella, F19) |
| | Ethical Content | **22** | **50** | "*Sometimes they are posting videos of people helping other people helping a dog, so that's something very ethical*" (P30, Yasir, M31) "*social consensus is building upon education, no war and equality. Social consensuses are building for no racism. So yeah there are a lot of good things as well*" (P23, Stella, F19) "*recently I can recall one of the posts where one of the Pakistani actors was being mocked for not having a kid and people were supporting her So that was really something good*" (P21, Samita, F33) "*I saw a post I engaged with the post that was a dog was stuck in the mud and a man went inside the mud risking his own life saving a dog so that was very ethical thing for me*" (P18, Renato, F18) "*there was a post promoting religious harmony and tolerance ah it calls (…) for humanity like you know OK, OK, uh, no one cares about religion be human*" (P16, Noman, M30) "*Like accepting part of population, whatever who they hahahaha so it's kind of inverse of the previous one*" (P1, Aaron, M24) |
| | Moral Intensity – Magnitude of Consequences | **20** | **35** | "*These things are issues with greater magnitude of consequences and that we are ignoring*" (P1, Aaroon, M24) "*who is feeling for Baluchistan? Who fears the magnitude of destruction magnitude of consequences of the people of Baluchistan*" (P4, |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Aqsa, F22) "*what if someone self-harms someone loses confidence people don't even realize the magnitude of the consequences they are simply doing it because everyone else is doing*" (P6, Farwa, F24) "*Always, because there are going to be consequences and there is going to be people in our close proximity that might be exposed to the consequences of such immoral postings or anything*" (P13, Marienelle, F24) "*you know we always should be worrying about the magnitude of consequences there's going to be because you know there is a ripple effect if you throw a stone in the water there is going to be a ripple effect so this thing can you know affect and this thing can cause a lot of trouble for many people*" (P14, Naveed, M30) "*it's sometimes because of the magnitude of the consequences Like if your people need help, it's you who is going to be affected It's not like if there's a war in Ukraine we are not affected by it simply Exactly*" (P19, Saeed, M33) "*Yeah there is some Like, uh look at how you say harassment something like that Yeah, the people bully other people even on social media without realizing the magnitude of the consequences that can be suicide or depression for life*" (P23, Stella, F19) |
| | Moral Intensity – Social Consensus | **13** | **18** | "*The general opinion would not go for Russia. So Russia in not getting the global consensus like you mentioned in the question*" (P1, Aaron, M24) "*I think it's how they have procreated in uh, news on news channels and on social media and it has become a global social consensus like you know world just feels for Ukraine and It should but that never means*" (P5, Bareera, F27) "*But yes if you talk of global consensus I have been shaped to believe that Putin is a pure evil and Ukraine is a good country suffering atrocities for no reason*" (P10, Junaid, M30) "*just because everyone is doing you know it's human psychology It's human nature We, being a human, we do follow others we do think about social consensus*" (P11, Kaneez, F34) "*on the contrary there are a lot of things that have now been developed as global social consensus and people say it just because of that*" (P13, Marienelle, F24) |
| **Theme 5: social media is Controlled/ Uncontrolled** | | | | |
| **Social media is Controlled/ Uncontrolled** | Social Media is controlled | **30** | **106** | **"***Do you know social media is all fake, all propaganda and is controlled by people to create such fake propaganda*" (P28, Vlad, M26) "*For me social media is never a free medium*" (P14, Naveed, M30) "*If we go theoretically like behind the mathematics it is control is controlled by few personalities like from meta Yeah, like, I mean the owners of the social media platform*" (P2, Adil, M24) "*there is control highly controlled…I was like blocked on Twitter for posting in the favor of Palestine*" (P4, Aqsa, F22) "*there are the people who are controlling the contents*" (P3, AR Gilal, M32) "*It's controlled, I told you it controls your mind It's control your brain It influence you Consciously and unconsciously*" (P11, Kaneez, F34) "*Social media is all controlled, this is what if there should be some freedom of speech as well*" (P15, Nazish, F29) "*for me social media is 100% controlled it's controlled by the government it's controlled by the agencies and then it's controlled by the by the coders who are doing the coding so yes it's* |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | *it's it's almost controlled it's controlled*" (P18, Renato, M18) |
| | Social Media is a Propaganda | **26** | **77** | "*social media and the media has the huge role to play in this thing like what if but the question is whether are they covering the news of Palestine or other countries as much as they are covering the news of Ukraine No, there is a huge fluctuation and huge difference while they are covering these things and the and the news channels that are being broadly followed by other people the entire*" (P4, Aqsa, F22) "*I think it's how they have procreated in uh, news on news channels and on social media and it has become a global social consensus like you know world just feels for Ukraine and It should but that never means*" (P5, Bareera, F27) "*social media has never been free there are controversies there are theories about this*" (P8, Hasan, F36) "*why are they so upset and concerned about what's happening in Ukraine and what's happening in Afghanistan?*" (P9, Jean, M26) "*Uh, for instance yesterday I think Israel bombed Palestine OK, but there was no news in social media there was no news in mainstream media you don't see the covering*" (P12, Maira, F24) "*the bullying of America American government is bullying countries who are not supporting Ukraine who are not criticizing or condemning Russia…most of the times you see post you see a propaganda and The thing is this is going down in history that it has caused quite a trouble like I was reading this research publication and it had an effect on a American president election*" (P18, Renato, M18) |
| | Social Media is Free (Uncontrolled) | **19** | **36** | "*I strictly believe there is no control over social media No, not at all Yes, they do have policies, but I think still there is no control*" (P5, Bareera, F27) "*Just that, uh social media and these mediums have empowered the customer equally, so it has given us that kind of a control over our buying decisio*n" (P20, Safdar, F32) "*No it is not I don't think so the only level of control that I've seen is the that we can block certain words and stuff that comes in the comment Apart from that, there's no control anyone literally with thinking about the magnitude of the consequences can push anything*" (P21, Samita, F33) "*see the Internet is for everyone and every country has her own legislation*" (P27, Valeria, F26) |

Appendix 3

Netnography Table

| **Theme** | **Sub-theme** | **Verbatims, Pseudonym** | **Community/Group, SM Portal** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Motivation for Social Media Engagement** | **Self-representation** | *I just wanted to introduce myself and share a photo I took (Kathryn)* | Expats living in France - Facebook |
| | | *I believe I am best at Karaoke nights - I play guitar as well, I hope you will like my video (James)* | Moving to aix - Facebook |
| | | *Hi, I just arrived in Aix, I felt like introducing myself. I would really like to have a gathering around yoga this weekend, DM for details (Alex)* | Moving to aix - Facebook |
| | **Source of Income** | *Once we manage to earn our followers' trust, they will be more willing to reward us (Papadouri)* | Social Media Expert - Facebook |
| | | *I'm subletting a room from March to June in a large house (Marjo)* | Colocation in Aix - Facebook |
| | | *I paid extra for a window seat and there is a no window I am totally devasted (Anirudh)* | British Airways Official Handle - Twitter |
| | | *We need Facebook Ads experts for our product. Big budget. Agency with experience is preferred (SocketX)* | Brands and Content Creators - Facebook |
| | | *We are the first and only digitally women led Honey brand in Pakistan (Nausheen)* | Wharachi - Loving Karachi - Facebook |
| | | *If you are a brand, online shop or a service provider and you want to promote your product on Meta and/or TikTok, you need content you get an ad creative for little money I am your best choice (Mary)* | User Generated Content Creation 2023 - Facebook |
| | **Share reviews** | *Pathetic, Pathetic service from Jazz Cash - I am trying to send money home and it is not working (Sajjad)* | Voice of Customer - Facebook |
| | | *I don't remember what century my broadband service provider lives. Internet is so slow never ever go for storm fiber (Saqib)* | Wharachi - Loving Karachi - Facebook |
| | | *Do not buy from PUMA India, it is just bad products no quality and the outlet treat its customers like his employees that is shitty (Ashwin)* | PUMA India - Instagram |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *It's been two months since I got my refund. It is pathetic application do not use it Jazz Cash because they literally are pathetic (Babar)* | Voice of Customer - Facebook |
| | **Proximity Socialization** | *I would really like to hang out and have a glass of vine I am new in aix (Stuart)* | Expats in Aix - Facebook |
| | | *if anyone wants to live in Islamabad for a day for his official purpose, he can stay with me without any charge (Ahtisham)* | Seekers - Facebook |
| | | *I want to practice my French in return I can help with English (Ravi)* | BlaBla language Exchange - Facebook |
| | | *I am a lawyer and run a business which provides legal advice to influencers and creators. (Isaac)* | User Generated Content Creation 2023 - Facebook |
| | **Community Building** | *I am searching for influencers for my brand. TikTok and Instagram influencers please message below to receive information (Amanda)* | Content creators and Brand collaborate - Facebook |
| | | *We are an agency that connects brands with creators and offer opportunities spanning across lifestyle/beauty/fashion and more (Amy Jhonson)* | User Generated Content Creation 2023 - Facebook |
| | | *What kind of camera would you suggest recording high quality fitness videos indoor (Monica)* | Content creator Community - Facebook |
| | | *I am posting my first ever vlog that will help you know all things about to board a flight for France (Asif)* | Travel Diary - Instagram |
| | | *You can have a creative funny UGC which will probably work well - and a boring brand generated content - probably not working well (Mary)* | User Generated Content Creation 2023 - Facebook |
| **Entertainment & Leisure** | **Funny Content** | *Hi @imsrk I have seen your movie 5 times, it has earned 70 billion at least give me 10 million it is nothing to you* | Twitter - SRK |
| | | *Dear math I am unable to find your X please move on (Frank)* | life is wholesome - Instagram |
| | | *Your wit is the only reason I follow you and your humor makes me forget the frustrations of real life (Shruti)* | Kapil Sharma - Facebook |
| | | *Damn whenever I am sad, I watch your videos online, although I waste a lot of time but it relaxes me (Dheeraj)* | Comedy Nights - Instagram |
| | **Virtual events** | *Virtual is the new reality - Join me on my live cast where I will unveil my latest app (Junaid)* | Junaid Khan - Instagram |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *I see you and I still cannot believe you are not real all those parties and every event you host how can that not be real I am a big fan of yours I wish you were in real (Taraba)* | Lil Miquela - Instagram |
| | | *During covid I hosted three virtual events, one of them was a music festival and it was very successful and since then there has been no looking back (Hasan)* | Voice of DHA - Facebook |
| | **live streaming** | *Live streaming is my new gig - I am going live soon with my cover album original one (Xavier)* | Music for Soul - Facebook |
| | | *I am going to teach you tomorrow live about how to fix the strings of a guitar if you want to learn subscribe my YouTube channel (Joey)* | Tech Gadgets - Facebook |
| | | *Thanks to live streaming my friends made me see the whole concert as if a was there (Shalim)* | Soul Brothers - Facebook |
| | | *I am live streaming my journey from Calais to Geert it is going to be an adventure (Wavell)* | Living in France - Facebook |
| **Moral & Ethical Implications** | **Moral Intensity - Proximity** | *Pakistan stands firm in this hour of need with its brothers from Turkey, we will not rest until unless everybody is rehabilitated (Shahbaz Sharif)* | PM Pakistan - Twitter |
| | | *I am outraged at the new dam built of the river Indus, we will start the protest river Indus is like mother to us (Amin)* | River Indus Forum - Facebook |
| | | *My friends mother is going through her surgery today and it is devastating to see how the family is completely ruined without just one person, she used to very kind to us when we used to go my friend's house (Taha)* | Soul Brothers - Facebook |
| | **Moral Intensity - Magnitude of Consequences** | *The healthcare system in Pakistan is literally broken. People are dying because they can't afford life-saving drugs and even if they find the rates are phenomenal. It's time for a revolution. We need to fight for affordable healthcare for everyone. #HealthcareForAll #HighConsequenceMagnitude #MoralResponsibility (Saeed)* | Covid Warriors - Facebook |
| | | *Children in Somalia are dying from hunger, donate now to save lives, we can't give up on Somalia (Charles)* | World Food Programme |
| | | *I'm shocked and disgusted by the recent mom daughter attack on the black girl, this is going to have the same magnitude of* | #blacklivesmatter - Twitter |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *consequences. We need systemic change and accountability to prevent future tragedies. Let's demand justice and ensure that Black lives matter. #BlackLivesMatter #MoralUrgency (Cora)* | |
| | | *All gods animals are precious, including fish Christians should leave them off their plate for #lent & Beyond* | Peta official - Instagram |
| | **Moral Intensity - Global Social Consensus** | *Human rights are universal and non-negotiable. We must stand together and demand justice for all, regardless of race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. Let's create a world where everyone is free to live with dignity and respect. #HumanRightsForAll #GlobalConsensus (Julian)* | No more wars - Facebook |
| | | *I just found that Lacoste uses crocodile skin and given the pace of consumption one day we will starve of all these natural creatures this is catastrophic Save Nature Save animals (john)* | Peta official - Instagram |
| | | *The COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all, but the impact has been particularly devastating for vulnerable populations. We must work together to provide access to healthcare, vaccines, and support for those in need. #COVID19Response #GlobalSupport #MoralResponsibility (Shamoon)* | Covid Warriors - Facebook |
| | | *looking at the draughts in African countries we all must stand against wastage of water everywhere - water wasted anywhere is water wasted everywhere (Ngubo)* | #Stopwaterwastage - Twitter |
| | **Fake news** | *The number of casualties is more than just 2, A woman a kid also dies in the recent bombing by Israel - Shame of social media for spreading wrong and fake information (Eisa)* | Support Palestine - Instagram |
| | | *there should be a legal complaint against the fake news on social media. I just read Kayne west and Kim are back together (Amber)* | Kim Kardashian unofficial - Instagram |
| | | *Do not follow the news on fan pages its 90% of the times fake same happened with me when they posted Abida Parveen is no more (Shahida)* | Abida Parveen Lovers - Facebook |
| | **Bullying & harassment** | *I remember that the kid who lived next to our place committed suicide just because he was bullied for one of his pictures that he uploaded on Facebook #spreadcare #stopbullying (Derek)* | Bullying Awareness - Facebook |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *There is no place for acid attacks in India anymore - we will stand with all the victims #staystronstaytogether (Shruti)* | Acid Attack Victims - Instagram |
| | | *"I was bullied in my high school, and I understand the pain because I am still suffering it even though I'm an adult, I still cannot go to the parties and try new things I fear going to new places meeting new people #NoMoreBullying #YouAreNotAlone" (Andrew)* | We care - Facebook |
| **User Generated Content / Brand Generated Content** | **UGC is Credible** | *We consider UGC to be authentic and realistic (Yusuf)* | WhatsApp Group Conversation - Mediated by Researcher |
| | | *UGC gives a realistic perspective about life, it is not all fantasy like brands, have a red bull and start flying even in funny way (Ghafoor)* | |
| | | *Brands and celebrities have become over glamorous, to an extent that a common man cannot idolize them that is why they prefer something achievable, that is local influencer (Nazar)* | |
| | | *UGC is created by the people who are trusted by the society (Saman)* | |
| | **UGC is Consistent** | *I prefer to follow the advice of youtuber when it comes to buying any tech gadget because of the fact that he is consistent, he talks about the resale, repair and reach (Ahmed)* | |
| | | *Brands and UGC both are consistent for me, but I would vote for UGC because it is too focused (Saima)* | |
| | | *One of the reasons I follow the local influencers in terms of makeup tutorial is the fact that she is consistently using products of a brand that is affordable and she is consistent about affordability (Mubeena)* | |
| | **UGC is Clear** | *Influencers have a clarity in terms of the target audience their budget and their problems that is why people follow them (Zahoor)* | |
| | | *Brands target masses and they have to have everything, UGC or local influencer is for local like Zong's advertisement of local content featuring Sukkur that has clarity (Adnan)* | |
| | | *I cannot find the clarity in big celebrities' advertisements where they are running through trains and flying jets rather I* | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *can follow a local kid who is doing real life tricks with his skate board (Sameer)* | |
| | **Brands Prefer UGC** | *We're looking for active gym-goers who might be interested in being a face for an Aussie supplement brand (Martin)* | Content Creators - Facebook |
| | | *looking for UGC creators to shoot high quality content for pain products - Patches, massagers, compression sleeves, etc. (Brandson)* | Brand Hunters - Facebook |
| | | *Required a person who will create a video for my products (Graeme)* | Fiver Guru - Facebook |
| | | *we are looking for a team of content creators to create content for our new product (Amina)* | Brands and Content Creators - Facebook |