

The Influence of Users Generated Content on Attitude Towards Brand And Purchase Intentions – Case of Bahrain

Saleh Shuqair, Philip Cragg, Amir Zaidan, Tijjay Mitchell
Business School, Marketing Major,

Bahrain Polytechnic

ABSTRACT :***Purpose:** The overarching purpose of this paper is to ascertain whether user generated content influences consumer purchasing intention, the elements influencing the Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) experience and their perceived attitude towards an associated brand.*

***Design:** A descriptive research design that utilises a quantitative methodology has been favoured. The research survey was designed to be self-administered and encompasses focused questions that seek to evoke a set of measurable responses which with analysis can provide clear answers for the research questions through quantifiable data. A sample size of 170 respondents undertook the research survey.*

***Findings:** Individuals in the Kingdom of Bahrain are significantly influenced by eWOM and they perceive customers' posts, reviews and shares as more trustworthy than the companies' posts as they enhance the attitude towards the brand, increase the customer's trust and give them a stronger sense of confidence towards the brand. The highest User Generated Content (UGC) factors impacting customer purchasing intentions and experience towards a brand were found to be reviews' quality, quantity, source credibility, impact of the negative reviews and clarity.*

The findings indicate that customer attitude towards a brand and purchase intentions are not impacted by "the reviewer's geographic location", "personal knowledge of the reviewer" and "the reviewer's number of followers on Social Network Sites" (SNSs).

***Originality/value:** The research has a Bahrain geographical focus in the absence of prior research and data in relation to this specific country. This allows for insight to be derived from the research on potential impact of eWOM on purchasing intentions in the kingdom of Bahrain. The outcome of this may enable further investigation of impact of eWOM on purchasing intentions. This may also further inform marketing decision makers in this country.*

Keywords: *Social Media, User Generated Content (UGC), Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), Purchasing Intentions, Bahrain.*

I. Introduction:

Social Media users share stories and experiences on an increasing variety of SNSs about all manner of products, services and experiences in order to be more engaged with a brand, a product or simply the opportunity to create personal brand meanings Kirmanico and Dretsch(2014). The impact of UGC in various forms of videos, images, texts and stories creates "additional value" to the firm Agrawala & Rahman(2015) and this value is typically derived through co-creation. Based on this understanding, companies and corporate alike are encouraged to adopt new marketing practices aimed at strengthening their marketing proposition and competitive position, whilst encouraging customers to engage in further co-creation on social media (Fournier & Lee(2009).

Whilst Mir & Rehman (2013) and MacKinnon (2013) have suggested that advertisers should sponsor social media users to promote their products, this paper takes the view that it is the impact of content being generated by authentic consumers and Enthusiastic Digital Users (EDU) that is vital, and therefore establishes a greater degree of trust, mainly due to the review and associated content being considered as transparent and an unbiased

source of communication. It provides EDUs and customers with an opportunity to engage with brands, in ways not previously possible prior to the millennium, all of which can have a direct impact on the conversion rate and purchasing decisions *Dennhardt (2012)*.

UGC, brand communities and customer shares are all considered to be forms of co-creation that can directly or indirectly influence a customer's purchasing intention and create additional value to the firms *See-To & Ho (2014)*. On this basis, the research study provides insights around the impact of UGC credibility on customer purchasing intentions and the attitude towards the brand through a quantitative methodology.

According to *Manap & Adzharudin (2013)* eWOM and UGC are commonly used on an interchangeable basis as they work exactly like common word-of-mouth.

For the purposes of this research, they shall be considered to have the same generalised meaning and as such should be considered as interchangeable.

II. Literature review:

eWOM: The term eWOM is an extension of the word of mouth concept that embraces a variety of electronic communication mediums. *Jalilvand et al. (2011)* defined it as a "process of consumers sharing information and opinions about a product or service to others". The influence of eWOM on the customer's behavioural intentions has been examined in several studies including those of, *Abalaesei & Sandu (2015)* Lin, Wu & Chen (2013), Khan and Jinnah (2011), and Cheung and Thandi (2010), with the majority of these studies revealing that eWOM does have a direct impact on the customer's purchasing decision. Most of them have discussed the eWOM from quality, quantity, sender's expert and source credibility dimensions.

Source credibility: Today, consumers feel that the product recommendations and information, which other users generate on social media, are more credible than the product advertisements as stated by *Mir and Rehman (2013)*. They believed there is no bias in their posts and shares, thus making the message stronger and more trustworthy. Independently, *MacKinnon (2012)* and *Sharif, Ahmad & Ahmad (2016)* draw similar conclusions on source credibility as being a measurement of the trustworthiness of the UGC source and include aspects such as, the reviewer's expertise and the reputation of the vendor, as an important influencing factor. These authors further suggest that viewing online reviews or comments helps consumers to be more confident in their purchase decision making. They also found that "message source credibility" had a significant and positive impact on consumer purchasing intentions. Another significant factor that influences the purchasing intention is the website quality, with several studies, including *Baia, Lawb (2008)* & *Sadeh et. al (2011)* and *Hasanov & Khalid (2015)*, confirming the impact of the website quality on purchasing intentions. *Gefen (2000)* provides additional emphasis stating that when customers trust the website they are more likely to trust the customers reviews and feel that the review is honest and non-biased. *Choi and Scott (2013)* propose that when eWOM takes place on social media, once trust and identification allow source credibility to be established, a positive relationship can be developed based upon the derived social capital. Furthermore, people will assess the social media content in order to establish trust based upon relevance, helpfulness, accuracy, reliability, or timeliness before sharing the social media content with friends whom they wish to receive similar benefit.

Quantity of eWOM: For the purpose of the research, quantity of eWOM shall be defined as the number of online reviews, posts and comments towards the products. *Fan et al.(2013)* have confirmed that viewing online comments and the total number of posted comments can increase the customers' confidence and trust towards the content around a specific product or service. *Cheung and Thadani (2012)* state that the number of reviews directly affects the buyers' purchase decision, sharing a similar viewpoint. *Fan et al. (2013)* discuss how the quantity of eWOM increases the perceived credibility of consumers and suggests that the amount of the reviews attract customers' attention and lead to establishing customers' trust. *Mir and Rehman⁴* highlighted that the quantity of posts, views, and reviews has a positive effect on consumers' perceived credibility and usefulness of product content which other users generate on YouTube and they further suggested that more studies need to be undertaken relating to other SNSs platforms.

Quality of eWOM: *Lee (2009)* defined the quality of the information as the extent to which users believe that information is relevant, timely, accurate, and complete. Therefore, we can look to utilise this definition whilst examining quality of eWOM as it provides some useful components for analysis. *Manthiou and Scherir (2010)* highlighted that the "relevance, understandability, sufficiency, objectivity, timeliness, accuracy, persuasiveness, trustworthiness and expertise of the information" positivity leads to customers' trust and leads to higher degree of adaption of the information. *Yaylc and Bayram (2012)* place additional emphasis upon the timeliness of the review as this can also influence trust and suggest that recent reviews could be more effective on influencing

purchase decisions. Fan *et al.* (2013) stated that realistic and persuasive reviews with solid argumentative points based on factual information about the product can also increase consumer confidence.

User generated contents: According to Moens, Li and Chua (2014) UGC is defined as “any form of content being generated online by platform users”. UGC is rapidly gaining power as a part of purchasing decision O’Conner (2008). *Dennhardt (2014)* pointed out that the UGC offers a rich new storytelling opportunity for marketers to tell their brand story and build a trusted relationship with customers. It was also stated that the impact of UGC creates new forms of value and competitive advantage Gangi and Wasko (2009). The impact of UGC on customers’ trust was examined in several studies, for instance MacKinnon (2012) revealed that customers rely heavily on and trust the contents generated by users on the internet. The impact of UGC on customers is vital as consumers trust content from their peers more than they do any other form of marketing communication (*Dennhardt (2014)*). According to Cheong and Morrison (2008) there is a lack of research on the credibility of positive and negative UGC, some of which may have been addressed since their publication.

Social Media Influence & Purchase Intentions: Bughin (2015) provides a significant piece of research around social media influence upon purchase decisions as it incorporated 20,000 European consumers across 30 product areas and more than 100 brands in 2013 and 2014. The research revealed that there was a greater influence than previously thought with consumers being directly influenced in two thirds of the product categories and indirectly in the remaining third. It was also discovered that different product categories experience different social media influence impact and each specific category has its own group of influencers with very little overlap. Additionally, first time buyers within these categories were approximately 50% more likely to be influenced by social media and offline influence was 40% more likely to influence purchase decisions directly. Analysis of the research also highlighted that a small number of active influencers were accounting for a large number of recommendations in each category and was particularly noticeable in certain product areas like shoes and clothing. Utilizing the principles of the long tail model Anderson³⁰ this also proposes that there may be potential in reactivating and engaging less active influencers.

The impact of UGC on Brand Attitude: brand attitude has been defined by many researchers as “a lasting general evaluation of people, objects, advertisements or issues” (Solomon (2009) on the other hand Mitchell and Olson³² defined brand attitude as a “consumer’s overall evaluation of a brand”.

According to MacKenzie, S.B. and R.J. Lutz (1989) attitude towards advertising is argued to be positively related to purchase intention. While Hwang, Yoon, and Park (2011) through investigating into web advertisements found that response towards advertising is positively related to website attitudes where the latter would positively influence brand attitude consequently influencing purchase intention positively.

Brand attitude is made up of the overall evaluation of the brand, which encompasses factors such as brand awareness, brand image, and brand based associations of attributes and benefits Fishbein and Ajzen (1980) Bruhn *et al.* (2003). According to Mitchell and Olson (2006) one of the reasons for the long-term interest into the area of brand attitude can be attributed to the fact that attitudes are relatively stable and enduring and thus useful predictors of consumer behaviour. Belch and Belch (2003) added that attitudes are also important to marketers as they provide a summary of a consumers’ evaluation of the product/service/brand.

Brand attitudes, and equally how they are formed, both impact on the ultimate goal of creating a purchase intention among consumers (Sicilia, Ruiz and Reynolds (2006), while positive attitudes are created by the firm generated content or traditional media in the form of advertising, arguably due to the substantial levels of firm control over this particular type of content generation and circulation Mitchell and Olson (1981) Belch and Belch (2003); Mangold and Faulds (2009); Bruhn *et al.* (2012). Mangold and Faulds (2009) on the other hand state that UGC has considerably changed the strategies and tools used for consumer communication, magnifying the impact consumer-to-consumer conversations have in the marketplace. The levels of control firms practice over traditional media are unmatched when it comes to UGC on social media and thus, it can be deducted that this source of content can be either positive or negative which can mean that UGC can either create a positive or negative portrayal of a brand impacting the consumers’ attitude towards it. Bruhn *et al.* (2012). recommended that UGC in the form of social media must be used in tangent with traditional or firm generated content, as both exert an important impact on a brand’s success.

Culture: According to Triandis (1972) culture is defined as “shared perceptions of the social environment” and as per Tylor (1958) it incorporates language, art, customs, habits, knowledge, morals, and beliefs acquired by a person in the process of socialization. Markus & Kitayama (1991) state that it affects information processing and

evaluation, whilst also, having an influence on each individual's self-construal and group identification. In addition, it also has an impact on the mechanism of cognitive stereotyping which leads to classification and evaluation of self and others in terms of personality traits and similarity, shaping trust, credibility, attitudes, and behaviours of individuals. According to Kale ⁴³ people from different cultures choose different messages and channels to communicate. Additionally several prior studies identified differences in social relationships and trust antecedents among cultures (Kim *et al.*(2011) ; Pavlou & Chai,(2002); Smith *et al.*(2007). The general cultural settings of countries and even regions, such as low-context and high-context cultures, impacts the individual actions, decisions and interaction within society and consequently online. Kim *et al.*(2011) found that in a comparative study of motives to join the online social network Facebook, the Korean students were "seeking social support" and "seeking information" while students in the US joined Facebook for "entertainment" and "convenience". The authors suggested that in low-context cultures (like the US), users join social networks for superficial impression management and casual relationships, while in high-context cultures (like Korea), the motives are based on the needs to form long-term relationships and define one's group identity. In a different comparative American-Korean study, Lewis & George (2008) identified that in SNSs there was a positive effect of cultural trait of masculinity on deceptive behaviour.

Money *et al.*(1998) stated that there haven't been studies to date comparing eWOM motivations and usage patterns in various cultures but existing findings confirm an important role of culture in the frequency and intensity of traditional WOM. In particular, individualism is likely to facilitate the spread of positive WOM to out-groups (weak ties), masculinity intensifies WOM sharing with in-groups and uncertainty avoidance is negatively associated with in- group (strong-tie) WOM. According to Liu *et al.*(2001) customers in "high uncertainty-avoidance" cultures proved to be less likely to engage in negative WOM or complain. This paper will examine the impact of the cultural context within the kingdom of Bahrain.

III. Research Questions:

This study attempts to answer the following questions:
1- Are customers Posts more credible than companies sponsored posts
2-Does using UGC increase purchasing intention
3-Does using UGC enhance the attitudes towards the brand

Methodology: A quantitative research method was carried out to identify the impact of eWOM and UGC on the purchasing intentions, The first phase of this paper was a literature review that discussed the concepts of eWOM and UGC from three dimensions, 1) quality of customers` posts , 2) quantity eWOM /customers` posts and 3) message credibility on the SNSs. The questionnaire consisted of 33 survey items around the influence of eWOM on the purchasing intention and the second part covered the demographics information of the respondents. Most variables utilize a four-point Likert scale ranged from Strongly-Agree "4" to Strongly-Disagree "1" and the rest multiple choice questions. The survey was pre-tested with 17 respondents from Bahrain Polytechnic in order to check the clarity of the research instrument. It was reproduced based on the test outcome where some items were removed, added and modified in the questionnaire. The data collection process was facilitated by Silah Gulf Bahrain Group at which a total of 500 respondents were contacted via an online questionnaire where a total of 170 responses were received.

IV. Results/Findings:

The demographics of the respondents:

Table 1 reports the demographic of the respondents who participated in this study.

Results:

Table 1 - Reports the Demographics of the Respondents:

Results:

Table 1 - Reports the Demographics of the Respondents:		
Demographics	Frequency N	Percent %
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	86	50.6

Female	84	49.4
Total	170	100
Age Category		
Below than 18 years	5	2.9
18 to 25 years	45	26
26 to 34 years	84	49.4
35 to 44 years	27	15.9
45 and above	9	5.1
Total	170	100
Nationality		
Bahraini	88	51.7
Non-Bahraini	82	49.3
Education		
Less than high school	4	2.4
Completed high school	17	10
Bachelor degree	90	52.9
Advanced degree	29	17.1
Associate degree	30	17.6
Total	170	100

The table above reports the demographic frequencies of the respondents respectively , 50.3% were males and 47.7% females, nearly 50% of the respondents aged between 25-34 , 27% aged between 20-24 and less than 20% aged from 35-44. Half of the respondents 51% hold a Bachelor degree and above 17% hold an advanced degree. Around 50% of the respondents are Bahraini nationals and the rest are resident expats in Bahrain.

Table 2 – Pre-Purchasing behaviour - Information search	Frequency	Percentage
Never	29	16.4%
Rarely	37	21.0%
Sometimes	70	39.7%
Often	20	11.9%
Always	20	11.9%
Total	176	100 %
I tend to search online for product reviews before i buy any product	Frequency	Percentage
Never	6	3.41%
Rarely	9	5.11%
Sometimes	56	31.82%

Often	50	28.41%
Always	55	31.25%
Total	176	100%
I have used reviews from a website to inform previous purchasing decisions	Frequency	Percentage
Always	39	22.16%
Sometimes	97	55.11%
Rarely	33	18.75%
Never	7	3.98%
Total	176	100%

Table 2 reports the information search behaviour; as stated above the majority of the respondents occasionally search for online reviews about products and services on SNSs. Only less than 10% of the participants stated that they never search for online reviews on social media before purchasing new products.

According to the table above, respondents clearly rely on reviews that subsequently inform their purchasing decisions where 55.1% sometimes rely on reviews and 22.73% feebly rely on reviews from SNSs.

Table 3 – The impact of UGC on Purchasing Intentions:

Survey Item	Mean	STDV
SNSs Reliability	3.16	0.66
SNSs Rated reviews usefulness	3.14	0.76
Reviews quantity importance	3.10	0.74
SNSs positive reviews influence on purchasing intention	3.07	0.69
SNSs popularity	3.04	0.73
Customers posts trustworthiness	3.02	0.61
Similarity between SNS review and opinions affect my purchase decision	3.01	0.65
Review clarity affects my purchase decision. (mistakes, level of detail, etc.	2.94	0.67
When I buy a product the impact of negative reviews on SNSs effects my purchasing decision	2.93	0.73

Customer reviews quantity affects my purchasing decision	2.87	0.62
SNSs product review recency influence on my purchase decision	2.81	0.70
Usefulness of the review rating affects my purchase decision	2.81	0.64
Importance of reviewers authentic name	2.78	0.81
Impact of reviewers frequency of posting on trust	2.67	0.69
Website internationality	2.61	0.72
Trust of undefined source of review	2.43	0.69
Reviewer geographic location influences feelings towards posts	2.42	0.75

The table above ranks the mean values of the questionnaire items on the impact of eWOM and UGC on the purchasing intention from the highest to the lowest. Seven survey items were reported above 3.0 on a 4 category Likert Scale “1” Strongly Disagree and “4” Strongly Agree. The highest mean score was “SNSs Reliability” (Mean 3.16) followed by “SNSs Rated reviews usefulness” (Mean 3.14), “Reviews quantity importance”(Mean 3.10) and “SNSs positive reviews influence on purchasing intention” (Mean 3.07). Items that addressed the quality of eWOM, quantity eWOM and source credibility in regards to “the purchasing intentions” were perceived high; so did the clarity of the reviews, the impact of the negative reviews and the large quantity of the reviews which also scored high. The lowest reported mean scores were “reviewer geographic location influences feelings towards posts” (Mean 2.42), “Trust of undefined source of review” (Mean 2.43) and “website internationality” (Mean 2.61).

Table 4 – The Impact of UGC on the attitude towards a brand:

Survey Item	Mean	STDV
Users` posts increase awareness about the brand	3.14	0.72
Users` posts give impression that the brand has a good quality	3.04	0.72
Users` posts make the brand more valuable	3.02	0.77
I feel the customers posts are trustworthy	3.01	0.57
Users` posts suggest that the brand is interesting	2.96	0.71
Users` shares increase my brand knowledge	2.96	0.58
SNS positive reviews influence brand feelings	2.90	0.68

Users` posts impact feelings towards product purchase	2.89	0.72
Users` posts suggest that the brand is safe	2.86	0.73
Reviewer's expertise with a brand influences my feelings towards the brand.	2.84	0.60
Users` post motivates me to visit pages/links	2.69	0.68
I encourage friends and relatives to buy	2.63	0.69
SNS reviewer's number of followers influences my sentiment towards their posts.	2.60	0.68
I tend to share customers posts about products	2.54	0.75

The second part of the questionnaire assessed the impact of eWOM and UGC on the attitude towards the brand using the same measurement technique of a 4 point Likert scale. The most highly rated elements were “Users` posts increase awareness about the brand” (Mean 3.14) “Users` posts give impression that the brand has a good quality” (Mean 3.04) The positive reviews on SNSs influence my feelings towards the brand followed by “I feel the customers posts are trustworthy” (Mean 3.01) “Users` posts make the brand more valuable”(Mean 3.02) and Users` posts impact feelings towards product purchase (Mean 2.89). Some other items such as the UGC increase the knowledge about the brand, make it interesting and appear safe were also perceived high.

The last part of the questionnaire aimed to assess the future behavioural intentions of users on social media and to see if social media posts encourages further posting , as reported above, “I tend to share customers posts about products” (Mean 2.54) “I encourage friends and relatives to buy” (Mean 2.63).

V. Discussion:

The major objectives of this study were to find the impact of eWOM on purchasing intentions, to investigate the influence of UGC on the attitude of the consumer towards the brand sentiment and to examine if customers` posts more credible than companies sponsored posts. The findings illustrate that SNSs users tend to search for online reviews on social media before purchasing products. The online reviews and comments, coming from credible sources that are clear and consistent with other reviews, influence their trust and confidence about the products and leads to purchasing the product. The essence of the research findings apparently suggests that online reviews are perceived as a credible source of pre-purchase information. At the pre-purchase stage the findings imply that online reviews were more widely adopted as confirmed in earlier work by Barnes⁵⁰ where the author states that eWOM plays an important role in the pre-purchasing stage on SNSs where customers go to search online for reviews.

This study demonstrates eWOM has a strong impact on individuals in Bahrain; as they “readily” trust online reviews, customer’s shares and perceive this information as far more trustworthy than posts by the product owner, advertisers or corporate. The premise of this being the high context culture of Bahrain facilitates a wider acceptance and implicit trust by individuals, which is further projected into the social media domain.

Irrespective of the nationalities of respondents, approximately 85% indicated that customer posts were felt to be more trustworthy than corporate or brand owner reviews. Therefore this indicates that the message source and its perceived credibility can leverage a greater degree of influence in the decision making process towards purchasing, an observation also noted in the work of *Dennhardt(2014)*.

The focus and activity of the aggregated online source proved to be of significant relevance in determining the currency and credibility of the information. The first initial information search online for products and services that the consumer has little or no knowledge appears to be key in determining future information source preferences, which one could assume to be an experience-developed preference. Additionally, the reviews also seem to provide reassurance regarding the pre purchase decision and assist in alleviating post purchase

dissonance. Throughout the survey there is strong sentiment towards the quality of the UGC suggesting that potential consumers place some credence in many of the aspects that determine quality UGC. Organisations also benefit from the inclusion of such content, according to approximately 78% of the respondents it gave the impression that the organisation was open and honest, therefore one could presume establishing and enhancing overall trust, which is a major step in the customer's purchasing journey. This fits with prevailing thought around how the customer journey has changed and developed with greater emphasis being placed upon the influence of such interactions before any purchasing journey is even conceived or initiated, which is also suggested by O'Conner (2008). Google(2015) discusses the idea of four types of moments, 'I-want-to-know, I-want-to-go, I-want-to-do and I-want-to-buy moments', where decisions and preferences are formulated. AoL (2015) talks about content moments that create content experiences that again can help to engage consumers through a variety of social mediums and shape their motivations.

Therefore, we could assume that these highly valued pieces of UGC will be more potent within these increasingly crucial consumer moments, which appears to be an underlying tone drawn from the research and this premise is further supported by the research carried out by Bughin (2015). This could have significant implications for marketers as it shifts the focus in the buying process and suggests changes in consumer behaviour. A greater emphasis upon facilitating and nurturing UGC may be required by marketers in order to ensure awareness during these customer moments and experiences. Marketers can leverage UGC in order to enhance engagement, through real customer stories and gain additional associated trust via the UGC. Marketers may also look to explore a variation of Anderson's ³⁰ long tail strategy in order to realise the potential in developing strategies around fostering wider UGC across a variety of platforms. The significance of this being highlighted in research from Yahoo *et al.* (2016) stating, one in three 16-34 year olds in the United States are social creators, which equates to approximately 25.5 million people in the US alone. However, the key will be to try and develop a reciprocal and symbiotic relationship where UGC provides insight beyond the traditional marketing boundaries.

This study indicates that the customers have a stronger power in communication as the majority of the respondents believe that the posts, shares and contents being generated by social media users provide additional value to the companies in regards to the brand awareness, knowledge and the positive feelings towards the brands. The findings also highlight that the generated content by the customers help firms by creating impressions that the brand is safe, interesting and of good quality. Thus EDU posts appear to be more trustworthy and credible and consumers heavily rely on them, the findings are consistent with similar studies such as MacKinnon (2012).

Marketing Implications: This study contributes to the existing literature and provides a number of pertinent marketing implications in regards to the companies' practices:

Adopt and deploy employee UGC posting in-order to increase social network reach that engages across multiple platforms

Initiate pro-active social monitoring programs that build profiles of the insights into the UGC discussions and forums for the purpose of maintaining positive content on SNSs postings.

Develop user guidelines and templates to encourage users to adopt, in order to enhance and maintain the quality of the UGC

Engage in two way UGC conversations to encourage further postings and broaden the appeal of the brand

Nurture and create relationships such as UGC incentive program that drive engagement with the addressable audience universe

Adopt Long-Tail strategy Anderson (2004) to encourage smaller niche batches of UGC that can potentially obtain better or similar results to those of professional bloggers

Encourage searchable UGC and SEO using hash tags in order to improve the reviews' ranking on search results

Limitation and future research: The study was conducted in Bahrain and the majority of the survey respondents belong to generation Y; hence generalizing the findings has to happen with caution due to

geographical and demographic context. Our study raised some questions to be examined in the future such as does eWOM drive business growth? What are the implications of eWOM on marketing management? what is driving the ongoing strength, within internet of things, social media platforms and authenticating customers. Can the impact of eWOM be measured and distinguished from other MarCom. Can eWOM be demystified?

VI. Acknowledgment:

We would like to acknowledge Silah Gulf Bahrain company for facilitating the data collection process.

Reference List:

- [1.] Abalaesi, M. and Sandu, R. (2015) 'Factors Influencing the Adoption of Electronic word of mouth', *SEA - Practical Application of Science*, 111(3), pp. 117–123.
- [2.] Agrawal, A.K., Kaushik, A.K. and Rahman, Z. (2015), "Co-creation of social value through integration of stakeholders", *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 189 No. 1, pp. 442-448.
- [3.] Ajzen, I. and Fishbein, M. (1980). 'Understanding Attitudes and Predicting Social Behaviour'. New Jersey; Prentice Hall.
- [4.] Anderson, Chris. (2004). 'The Long Tail'. *Wired*. [Online] Available at: <<http://www.wired.com/2004/10/tail/>> [Accessed: 20/06/2016]
- [5.] AOL. (2015). *Content Marketing, White Paper*. [Online] Available at: <<http://advertising.aol.com/content-marketing-eight-moments>> [Accessed: 19/06/2016]
- [6.] Bai, B., Law, R. and Wen, I. (2008) 'The impact of website quality on customer satisfaction and purchase intentions: Evidence from Chinese online visitors', *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 27(3), pp. 391–402. doi: 10.1016/j.ijhm.2007.10.008.
- [7.] Barnes, N. (2015) 'EWOM Drives Social Commerce: A Survey of Millennials in US and Abroad', *Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness*, 9(2), pp. 36–46.
- [8.] Belch, G. and Belch, A. (2003) 'Advertising and Promotion: An Integrated Marketing Communications Perspective', New York. McGraw-Hill. 6th edn.
- [9.] Bruhn, M., Schoenmueller, V., and Scafer, D. (2012), 'Are social media replacing traditional media in terms of brand equity creation?', Department of Marketing and Management, University of Basel, Management Research Review, Vol. 35 No. 9, 2012 pp. 770-790.
- [10.] Bughin, Jacques. (2015). 'Getting a sharper picture of social media's influence'. *McKinsey Quarterly*. Issue, July 2015.
- [11.] Cheong, H., & Morrison, M. (2008). Consumers' reliance on product information and recommendations found in ugc. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 8(2),
- [12.] Cheung, C. M. K., & Thadani, D. R. (2012). The impact of electronic word-of-mouth communication: A literature analysis and integrative model. *Decision Support Systems*, 54 (1), 461-470.
- [13.] Cheung, M. K., & Thadani, R. (2010). *The effectiveness of electronic Word-of-Mouth communication: a literature analysis*. Paper presented at the 23rd Beld eConference - eTrust: Implications for the individual, Enterprises and Society, Bled, Slovenia.
- [14.] Choi, J. and Scott, J. (2013) 'Electronic word of mouth and knowledge sharing on social network sites: A social capital perspective', *Journal of theoretical and applied electronic commerce research*, 8(1), pp. 11–12. doi: 10.4067/s0718-18762013000100006.
- [15.] Chua, Tat-Seng; Juanzi, Li; Moens, Marie-Francine (2014). *Mining user generated content*. Chapman and Hall/CRC. p. 7.
- [16.] Dennhardt, S. (2014) *User-generated content and its impact on Branding: How users and communities create and manage brands in social media*. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.
- [17.] Di Gangi, P. M. & Wasko, M. (2009a). Steal my idea! User innovation community influence on organizational adoption of user innovations: A case study of Dell IdeaStorm. *Decision Support Systems*, doi: 10.1016/j.dss.2009.04.004.
- [18.] Dretsche, J., Heather and Kirmani, A. (2014) Why are some brand Co-Creation activities more effective than others? The effects of brand knowledge potential and self-brand connection on brand engagement intentions by Heather Johnson Dretsche and Amna Kirmani.
- [19.] Fan, Y.-W., Miao, Y.-F., Fang, Y.-H. and Lin, R.-Y. (2013) 'Establishing the adoption of electronic word-of-mouth through consumers' perceived credibility', *International Business Research*, 6(3). doi: 10.5539/ibr.v6n3p58
- [20.] Fournier, S. Lee, L. (2009) *Getting brand communities right*. [Online] Available at: <<https://hbr.org/2009/04/getting-brand-communities-right>> [Accessed: 21 April 2016]
- [21.] Gefen, D. (2000). E-Commerce: The role of familiarity and trust, *The International Journal of Management Science* 28 (6): 725-737.

- [22.] Google (2015). *4 New Moments Every Marketer Should Know*. [Online] Available at: <<https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/infographics/4-new-moments-every-marketer-should-know.html>> [Accessed: 20/06/2016]
- [23.] Hasanov, J. and Khalid, H. (2015) 'The impact of Website quality on online purchase intention of organic food in Malaysia: A WebQual model approach', *Procedia Computer Science*, 72, pp. 382–389. doi: 10.1016/j.procs.2015.12.153.
- [24.] Hwang, J., Y.-S. Yoon, and N.-H. Park, (2011). Structural effects of cognitive and affective responses to web advertisements, website and brand attitudes, and purchase intentions: The case of casual-dining restaurants. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 2011. 30(4): p. 897-907.
- [25.] Jalilvand MR, Esfahani SS, Samiei N. (2011). Electronic word-of-mouth: challenges and opportunities, *Proc. Comput. Sci.*, 3, 42–46.
- [26.] Kale, S. H. (1991), "Culture-specific marketing communications: An analytical approach" *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 8, No. 2.
- [27.] Khan, M. and Jinnah, M. (2011) 'The Impact of E-Media on Customer Purchase Intention', *International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications*, 3(2), pp. 100–103.
- [28.] Kim, Y., Sohn, D. and Choi, S.M. (2011), 'Cultural difference in motivations for using social network sites: a comparative study of American and Korean college students', *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol. 27, No. 1, pp. 365-372.
- [29.] Lee, S.F. (2009) *Getting brand communities right*. [Online] Available at: <<https://hbr.org/2009/04/getting-brand-communities-right>> [Accessed: 21 April 2016].
- [30.] Lewis, C. C. and George, J. F. (2008), 'Cross-cultural deception in social networking sites and face-to-face communication', *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol. 24, No. 6, pp. 2945-2964.
- [31.] Lin, C., Wu, Y., & Chen, J. (2013). Electronic Word-Of-Mouth: The Moderating Roles Of Product Involvement And Brand Image. *Proceedings of 2013 international conference on technology innovation and industrial management*, Phuket, Thailand.
- [32.] Liu, B.S.C., Furrer, O. and Sudharshan, D. (2001), 'The relationships between culture and behavioural intentions toward services', *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 118-129.
- [33.] MacKenzie, S.B. and R.J. Lutz, (1989). An empirical examination of the structural antecedents of attitude toward the Ad in an advertising pretesting context. *The Journal of Marketing*, 1989. 53(2): p. 48-65
- [34.] MacKinnon, K. (2012) 'User Generated Content vs. Advertising: Do Consumers Trust the Word of Others Over Advertisers?', *The Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, 3(1), pp. 14–22.
- [35.] Manap, K. H. A., & Adzharudin, N. A. (2013). The Role of User Generated Content (UGC) in Social Media for Tourism Sector. In *West East Institute International Academic Conference Proceedings* (pp. 52–58). Istanbul, Turkey.
- [36.] Mangold, W., G. and Faulds, D., J. (2009) 'Social Media: The New Hybrid Element of the Promotion Mix', *Business Horizons* 52, no. 4 (July): 357–365.
- [37.] Manthiou, A. and Schrier, T. (2010) 'a comparison of traditional vs electronic word of mouth in the Greek hotel market: an exploratory STUDY', *Journal of Tourism Research*, 10(1)
- [38.] Markus, Hazel R. and Shinobu Kitayama (1991), "Culture and the Self: Implications for Cognition, Emotion, and Motivation," *Psychological Review*, 98 (2), 224–53.
- [39.] Mir, I. and Rehman, K. (2013) 'FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMER ATTITUDES AND INTENTIONS TOWARD USER-GENERATED PRODUCT CONTENT ON YOUTUBE', *Management & Marketing Challenges for the Knowledge Society*, 8(4), pp. 637–654.
- [40.] Mitchell, Andrew A., and Jerry C. Olson, (1981). "Are Product Beliefs the Only Mediator of Advertising Effects on Brand Attitude." *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18 (August), 318-332.
- [41.] Money, R.B., Gilly, M.C. and Graham, J.L. (1998), 'Explorations of national culture and word of mouth referral behavior in the purchase of industrial services in the United States and Japan', *The Journal of Marketing*, pp. 76-87
- [42.] O'Connor, Peter. (2008). "User-Generated Content and Travel: A Case Study on TripAdvisor.com". In : *Proceedings of the 15th International Conference on Information and Communications Technology in Tourism*, ENTER 2008. New York (USA) : Springer Computer Science, 2008, p. 61-72.
- [43.] Pavlou, P.A. and Chai, L. (2002), 'What drives electronic commerce across cultures? Across-cultural empirical investigation of the theory of planned behavior', *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, Vol. 3, No. 4, pp. 240-253.
- [44.] Sadeh, S., Sadeh, E., Mousavi, L. and Asgari, S. (2011) 'The Effects of Website Quality Dimensions on Customer Satisfaction in E-Retailing System', *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research*, 10(3), pp. 366–369.

- [45.] See-To, E.W.K. and Ho, K.K.W. (2014), "Value co-creation and purchase intention in social network sites: the role of electronic word-of-mouth and trust – a theoretical analysis", *Computers in Human Behavior*, Vol. 31, pp. 182-189.
- [46.] Sharif, M.A., Ahmad, W and Ahmad, A. (2016) 'Electronic word of mouth: investigating the influence of electronic message source credibility, message appeal and brand equity on consumer purchase intention', *City University Research Journal*, 06 (01) pp 151-165.
- [47.] Sicilia, M., Ruiz, S., and Reynolds, N. (2006) 'Attitude formation online: How the consumer's need for cognition affects the relationship between attitude towards the website and attitude towards the brand', *International Journal of Market Research*, 48, 2, pp. 139-154.
- [48.] Smith, T., Coyle, J.R., Lightfoot, E. and Scott, A. (2007), 'Reconsidering models of influence: the relationship between consumer social networks and word-of-mouth effectiveness', *Journal of Advertising Research*, Vol. 47, No. 4, pp. 387-397.
- [49.] Solomon, M.R., (2009). *Consumer Behavior Buying, Having and Being*. 8th ed. 2009, New Jersey: Pearson education
- [50.] Triandis, Harry C. (1972), *The Analysis of Subjective Culture*. Oxford: Wiley-Interscience.
- [51.] Tylor, Sir Edward Burnett (1871 [1958]), *The Origins of Culture*, Part 1 of *Primitive Culture*. New York: Harper.
- [52.] Yahoo, Deep Focus, Shareablee and Ipsos. (2016). *Unlocking Influencer Marketing*. [Online] Available at: <<https://advertising.yahoo.com/Insights/UNLOCK-INFLUENCER-MARKETING.html>> [Accessed: 22/06/2016].
- [53.] Yaylc, A. and Bayram, M. (2012) 'E-wOM: The effects of online consumer reviews on purchasing decisions', *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*, 7(1), p. 51. doi: 10.1504/ijima.2012.044958