

BRINGING TOGETHER CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE, BRANDING AND VIRAL MARKETING

User-generated content (UGC) is the content generated by customers, clients or fans who are already engaged and are motivated to share their positive experiences through blog posts, case studies, product reviews, video testimonials, social media, or even at events.

Otherwise known as micro-influencers, these advocates of your brand can play a big role in furthering marketing and sales goals. As it provides clear online evidence that others rate your services, this can hugely influence the trust people place in your business and have a powerful impact on the perception of your brand.

‘Social proof’ - when people trust and copy the actions or behaviour of others, is a psychological phenomenon that has been employed by marketers long before the internet. But digital platforms, and especially social media platforms, make the creation, discovery and engagement of UGC much more immediate and accessible.

So it's no surprise that many brands are integrating these tactics into their content and marketing strategies.



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According to the [Nielsen Consumer Trust Index](#), 92% of consumers trust organic, user-generated content (UGC) more than they trust traditional advertising.

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88% of consumers trust online reviews written by other consumers as much as they trust recommendations from their personal contacts.

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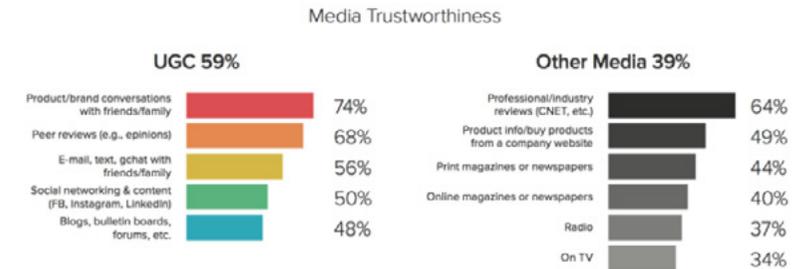
PEOPLE TRUST PEOPLE OVER BRANDS

And it doesn't necessarily need to be someone they know – the opinions of those perceived to be likeminded or share characteristics are influential: a surprising [51% of millennials](#) say consumer opinions found on a company's website have a greater impact on purchase decisions than recommendations from family and friends.

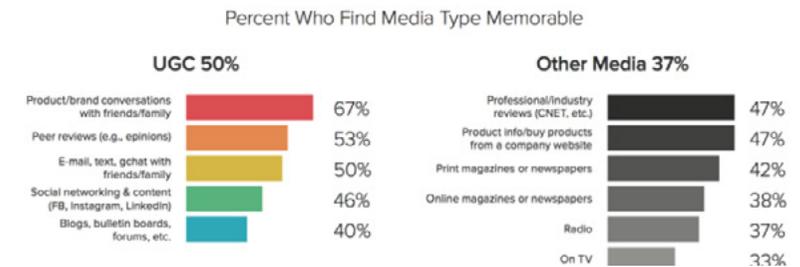
WHAT KIND OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

Tweets, videos, infographics, comments, blogs, status updates – anything that champions your business or your brand that's been voluntarily created by a consumer.

UGC is Trusted More than Traditional Media



UGC is More Memorable than Other Sources



AN EXAMPLE WHERE UGC WORKS PARTICULARLY WELL IS TRAVEL AND TOURISM...

Research carried out by digital marketing expert [Kris Littlewood](#) found that including user-generated content and ratings on a hotel's own website in a familiar, 'review site' type format improved site engagement and also boosted conversion rate by 17.8%.

A study by travel market strategists Tourism Economics estimated that user-generated content was "directly related to £1.7 billion of tourism spending in the UK".

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Word-of-mouth marketing generates more than twice the sales of paid advertising.

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WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INFLUENCERS AND ADVOCATES?

Influencers tend to have a significantly larger reach with a specific niche audience and are likely to be well-known among their community. They are recognised as having particular expertise and authority in their area. Campaigns involving influencers tend to aim for a more immediate, big impact.

On the other hand, harnessing UGC is more about building long term positive word-of-mouth through ongoing positive reviews, social posts, testimonials etc. It prioritises continual voluntary recommendations and endorsements on a more personal basis, motivated by positive experiences with your brand, whereas influencers tend to explicitly identified and targeted to tie in with specific campaigns. Think of advocates as mini-influencers. They can even include your own employees.

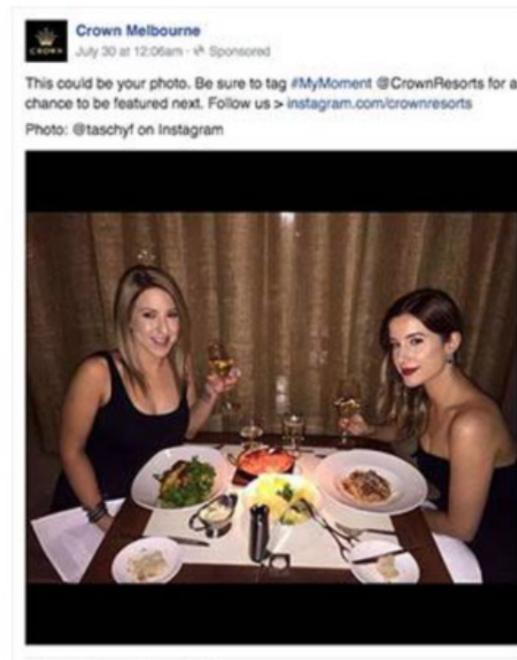
UGC IN CONTENT STRATEGY

Brands need to bridge the trust gap with engaging, relevant content and a special emphasis on user-generated content.

A common challenge for brands is creating content at the volume and pace that consumers want. Encouraging, showcasing and rewarding UGC – which can include anything from an image collected during a photo contest to a customer product review – is a powerful addition to a content strategy.

Influencers represent an “army of content creators” that can help brands and agencies amplify and distribute on platforms that matter to consumers like Pinterest, YouTube, or Facebook – or their own blog.

Crown Resorts turned UGC to formulate a relevance-driven approach to their Facebook ads by identifying the best customer-created visual content, get permission quickly, and start promoting it as soon as possible via Facebook ads.



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74% of consumers rely on social media to inform their purchasing decisions.
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HARNESSING UGC

Offer more ways for user to share opinions online

[Younger consumers](#) feel more strongly than Baby Boomers (64% vs. 53%) that companies should offer more ways to share their opinions online in the future – and they'll continue to participate.

Take action to maximise positive reviews. Review sites such as TripAdvisor and Booking.com that are populated by user-generated content, provide powerful examples of social proof; peer recommendations can influence the decision to buy, persuade people to act more quickly and reassure them they are making the right choices

Ask consumers to give you feedback and encourage them to post reviews. Let them know that their input is important to you. Make it easy for them to share.

Try integrating recommendations and reviews from third party sites on your website and prompt others to post feedback. Not only do you gain from the review site's credibility, you also get a steady stream of content without much effort on your part.

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65% of social media users from ages 18–24 evaluate information that is shared on social networks when making a purchasing decision.
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Amplify your content campaigns

People share social posts that resonate with them on an emotional level, especially interest, amusement, pleasure or excitement.

Give an incentive to share or contribute to content by creating campaigns (and a brand voice) that:

- Creates an emotional response
- Is relatable to their lives and how your product or service fits into it
- Provides a solution to a problem
- Reflects how they perceive themselves (or would like to be perceived)
- Is part of a wider story/narrative

Here, The Body Shop acknowledges a brand advocate who shares an image of their products, along with praise for their Forever Against Animal Testing campaign – a great example of how tapping into aligned beliefs.

Offer exclusivity

For example, if you're launching a new product, give existing, loyal customers exclusive, early access to gather authentic feedback and encourage them to spread the word. For example, how would they include your new topping in a recipe?

Keep the conversation flowing

Create dialogue. Reach out and ask questions. Get involved in discussions.

“Marketing is no longer about the stuff that you make, but the stories you tell. - Seth Godin, sethgodin.com”

Tag them in posts

Identify micro-influencers and tag them in relevant posts. Not only does this bring your content to the attention of relevant users, it highlights your content to those who share their interests.

Make your requests clear and easy

As with everything marketing, make sure your content has a clear call to action. For example, “please share”, “tell us your opinions”, “take part in this survey”, “get involved”, etc.

Display customer feedback and content everywhere in the purchase cycle. Promoting a particular product? Use customer feedback. Acknowledge brand advocates. Give special mentions to content generators in newsletters and links to their articles.

Curate their content into a newsletter, or infographic. This adds value to the effort made by users and encourages them to share. In this example, Community Folks has ‘crowdsourced’ its followers’ tips into an infographic:

Reward and recognise advocates

If you've got customers who are already passionate about your products and champion them unprompted, engage and reward in a meaningful way. A simple thank you, or a surprise gift can help to strengthen the relationship and their loyalty to your brand and lead to an increased number of shares. Marmite sent Jeremy Waita a personalised bike, after he bigged the brand up at an event..



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68% of people say that user-generated content is generally a good indicator of the quality of a brand or service.
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SOME GREAT EXAMPLES OF UGC

Aldi

Aldi's Kevin the Carrot campaign inspired and generated a lot of user-generated content.



Interactive UGC: Kevin selfies have taken Twitter by storm

Home-made 'Kevins' spark conversation on Facebook

Coca-Cola

Coca-Cola selected the UK's most popular names and printed them on the labels of their bottles, and made even more available online. It sparked a sharing frenzy across the nation and quickly became one of their most successful marketing campaigns. They were totally overwhelmed by how many people used the personalised bottles and used them to create and share stories and selfies.



25% of search results for the world's 20 largest brands are links to user created content.

ABOUT US

Located in North West England, Click Consult is a multi award-winning search marketing agency with a focus on organic (SEO) and paid search (PPC), with over 70 professionals employed and with a portfolio of over 60 clients from across the UK, Europe, Americas and Australia.

Click was named Search Agency of the Year 2018, adding to its long list of other awards and accolades, and also ranks within both RAR's and Econsultancy's 'Top 100 Digital Agencies', and Prolific North's 'Top 50 Digital Agencies'.

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0845 205 0292

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Blog

Click Consult regularly posts actionable insights on its blog – dealing with all aspects of search marketing. From technical SEO to PPC, content marketing and Analytics advice, the Click Consult blog has something for everyone of any ability.

eBooks

Click Consult produces in depth eBooks on aspects of search marketing on a regular basis, dealing with the latest best practices, changes to standard practices, methods of improvement and more.

Infographics

Sometimes what you need is a quick point of reference about complex subjects. Thanks to its team of highly talented designers, Click Consult is also able to distil its vast experience into easy to understand visual content.

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