User-Generate-Content Behaviours Shape Brand Loyalty: A Self-determination Theory Perspective

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Abstract. The growth of social media has witnessed the birth of user-generated content (UGC) over the past decades. Social media platforms, such as Twitter and Instagram, generate many opportunities for users to share data, photographs, and videos and make their content spontaneously. However, the research on how users generate content from social media platforms benefits the social media brand is limited. This paper aims to examine the behaviours in which users generate content via social media platforms TikTok and how it contributes to the brand from a self-determination perspective. This study potentially explains why users become loyal to the brand by meeting their needs. The results find that users generate the content on TikTok can build their brand loyalty by meeting the demand of competence and relatedness. Moreover, the customers also need to feel the connection with others, including valuable to others, and receive the care and support from others. The discussion and limitation of this research are also given.

Keywords: UGC behaviour, Brand loyalty, Self-determination, Competence, Relatedness.

1. Introduction

Social media has witnessed the birth of user-generated content (UGC) over the past decades. Social media platforms, such as Twitter and Instagram, generate many opportunities for users to share data, photographs, and videos and make their content spontaneously. Current studies of user-generated content focus on exploring what the users share in specific sectors and the effects on social network building [1]. The change from traditional media communications (e.g., newspapers, televisions) to social media communications significantly reinforces the rights of individuals to create content freely.

Due to the development of social media marketing, individuals have become more attracted to UGC to make profits. However, the research on how users generate content from social media platforms benefits the social media brand is limited. The research delves into how user-generated content behaviour shape brand loyalty and how does this behaviour satisfy users' needs and contribute to the formation of brand loyalty. This paper aims to use survey design to examine the behaviours in which users generate content via social media platforms and how it contributes to the brand from a self-determination perspective. This study potentially explains why users become loyal to the brand by meeting their needs.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Associations between UGC and Brand Loyalty

UGC is originally from social media, denoting as an innovative content made by non-professional users, such as texts, pictures, audio, and videos [1]. Social media enables users to make their content spontaneously and freely, influencing the attitudes and behaviours of the public in different dimensions [2]. Thus, a growing number of brands have started using UGC to establish customer-brand relationships [1]. Previous research revealed much effort to study how UGC further impacted the users' purchase process at different stages [3]. In this sense, it is crucial to investigate how user-generated content behaviour contributes to branding.

With the popularity of generating content on social media, previous studies also indicated that user participation behaviours influenced content adoption and users' purchase intentions [4]. Meanwhile, social media platforms have changed communication, which allows the audience to actively

participate in sharing information rather than passively receiving it [1]. This new communication method motivates users to participate in content-generation behaviours [3]. Moreover, some scholars proposed that user-generated content impacts brand attitudes and purchase decision-making [1]. In this sense, social media platforms attract the users' attention and accelerate their participation in content generation, contributing to their loyalty toward the brand.

In reviewing the literature on UGC and brand loyalty, many studies focused on how UGC impacted consumer purchase intentions and how UGC works in different sectors [1]. Some scholars continued examining the strengths of UGC on brand loyalty with a meta-analysis approach [5]. Based on the literature, scholars have made great contributions to third-party companies and proposed some invaluable implications on how they should operate to engage consumers. However, limited studies reflect the relationship between UGC and the brand of social media platforms. Therefore, this paper examines the relationship, in terms of UGC and brand loyalty from a self-determination perspective and provides insights for those companies in future growth. In this sense, this paper proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: The behaviours that social media users create their own content is favourably positive to impact the brand loyalty on the social media brand.

2.2. Self-determination Theory and Its Mediating Role

Self-determination theory elaborates how people form their attitudes or behaviours by meeting their needs. This theory proposes that people always form their attitudes and behaviours with three dimensions of needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness [6]. A need for autonomy means the desire for self-motivation, a person's actions based on their intentions, or willingness to complete specific tasks freely [7, 8]. A need for competence indicates a person's desire for self-mastery and growth in their life [5, 7]. A need for relatedness refers to a desire to belong to a social environment and connect to others in society [5, 7]. Therefore, this paper assumes that the users' behaviours generating their content on social media platforms reflect autonomy, competence, and relatedness to meet their needs. This satisfaction of needs accelerates their formation of brand loyalty toward the brand of social media platforms.

Reviewing the self-determination theory and branding literature, scholars mainly focused on brand community loyalty and attachment, which investigated how self-determination theory plays a role in achieving it [9]. Aligning with this research discipline, this paper extends the propositions and suggests that people using social platforms to generate content can contribute to brand loyalty.

Therefore, this paper continues to propose the following hypotheses:

H2: Autonomy favourably mediates the relationship between the user-generated-content behaviours and their brand loyalty on the social media brand.

H3: Competence favourably mediates the relationship between the user-generated-content behaviours and their brand loyalty on the social media brand.

H4: Relatedness favourably mediates the relationship between the user-generated-content behaviours and their brand loyalty on the social media brand.

3. Methods

3.1. Measurement Development

This research is validated with a survey study. Firstly, this survey collects the users' demographic and usage experience as the control variables. Secondly, the survey asks the participants about their feelings and attitudes based on self-determination theory, including their autonomy, competence, and relatedness [10]. As for the brand loyalty, the measurement is also validated [11]. Based on previous literature, the measurement of each variable is validated.

3.2. Research Design & Sampling

A survey was conducted to examine the hypotheses. Aligned with the hypotheses, this research uses TikTok platform as the research object to examine how users' content-generating behaviours impact their brand loyalty on Byte Dance. All items follow a Likert five-point scale to examine participants' autonomy, competence, relatedness, and brand loyalty [11]. This research collected data from Wenjuanxing, a famous questionnaire platform in China. This platform is operated with some methods to avoid those issues to eliminate the effects of inefficient answers. In this study, participants were instructed by Wenjuanxing to finish the survey.

Finally, 418 responses were collected from September 17th to September 24th (a week). After checking the fake responses and inefficient responses, there were 366 responses chosen for further analysis in this research, with a response rate at 87.5 percent. Demographics are summarized in Table 1, which were also used as control variables.

Table 1. Demographic Information.

Variables	Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	149	40.71
	Female	217	59.29
Age	Under 18	1	0.27
	18-25	47	12.84
	26-30	118	32.24
	31-45	179	48.91
	45 or above	21	5.74
Occupation	Student	17	4.64
	Corporate Managers	66	18.03
	White collars	65	17.76
	Officer workers	191	52.19
	Technicians	3	0.82
	Professionals	7	1.91
	Teachers	1	0.27
	Freelancer	10	2.73
	Others	6	1.64
Total		366	100.0

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Measurement Validation

This study first measured the validation of collected data. The reliability of collected data was analysed with validated reliability measurement, with a Cronbach α coefficient at 0.951 [12]. The validity of this study is also validated, with a KMO value at 0.987 [13]. The results support enough reliability and validity to the further analysis of this research. In this study, 5-point scale is used to measure the fluctuation of each variable, which is a common method that always uses in marketing and consumer behaviour studies [14].

4.2. Logistic Regression Model

This research uses logistic regression model to examine the probability that consumers become loyal to TikTok based on their UGC behaviours. In this study, the independent and dependent variables are manipulated as dummy variable, including one group with a score above 3 and the other group with a score below 3.

Table 2. Logistic Regression Model Results.

Variables	Coefficient	SE	z	Wald $\chi 2$	p
Competent	4.219	1.111	3.796	14.412	0.000
Professional	4.523	2.057	2.198	4.833	0.028
Feel good	4.233	1.181	3.586	12.856	0.000
Understood by others	1.748	0.911	1.920	3.685	0.055
Valuable to others	1.913	0.864	2.213	4.899	0.027
Care from others	2.866	0.859	3.338	11.140	0.001
Constant	-10.720	2.257	-4.750	22.566	0.000

Table 3. Logistic Marginal Effect Results.

Variables	Marginal Effect	SE	z	p	95%CI
Competent	0.167	0.056	2.983	0.003	0.057 ~ 0.277
Professional	0.063	0.016	3.922	0.000	0.031 ~ 0.094
Feel good	0.163	0.060	2.714	0.007	0.045 ~ 0.280
Understood by others	0.046	0.029	1.569	0.117	-0.011 ~ 0.103
Valuable to others	0.048	0.025	1.907	0.057	-0.001 ~ 0.098
Care from others	0.082	0.030	2.706	0.007	0.023 ~ 0.142

According to the results in Table 2, the logistic regression model provides 6 variables. In this study, the variables “Competent”, “Professional”, and “Feel good” are included in competence dimension of self-determination theory. Variables “Understood by others”, “Valuable to others”, and “Care from others” are included in the relatedness dimension of self-determination theory. For the variable "Competent" (B = 4.219, p = 0.000 < 0.05), individuals who believe they are competent when using TikTok to generate content have 4.219 units higher log odds of the brand loyalty occurring compared to those who don't hold this belief, holding other factors constant. For the variable "Professional" (B = 4.523, p = 0.028 < 0.05), individuals who believe they are professional at generating content on TikTok have 4.523 units higher log odds of brand loyalty occurring compared to those who do not hold this belief, holding other factors constant. For the variable "Feel Good" (B = 4.233, p = 0.000 < 0.05), individuals who feel good when generating content on TikTok have 4.233 units higher log odds of brand loyalty occurring compared to those who do not, holding other factors constant. For the variable "Understood" (B = 1.748, p = 0.055), while it is close to significance, for individuals who feel they are understood when generating content on TikTok, the log odds of brand loyalty occurring is higher by 1.748 units compared to those who do not, holding other factors constant. However, this relationship is not statistically significant at the p < 0.05 level. For the variable "Valuable" (B = 1.913, p = 0.027 < 0.05), individuals who feel they are valuable to others when generating content on TikTok have 1.913 units higher log odds of brand loyalty occurring compared to those who do not feel valuable, holding other factors constant. For the variable "Cared About" (B = 2.866, p = 0.001 < 0.05), individuals who feel others care about what they said or did when generating content on TikTok have 2.866 units higher log odds of brand loyalty occurring compared to those who do not feel this way, holding other factors constant.

Based on Table 3, the positive effect was shown for those significant variables. Variable” Competent” (B = 0.167, p = 0.003 < 0.05), variable “Professional” (B =0.063, p = 0.000 < 0.05), and variable “Feel good” (B = 0.163, p = 0.007 < 0.05) show a significant level of marginal effect. Because the marginal effect coefficient is above 0, the results support H3 and H4.

5. Discussion

5.1. Theoretical Implications

Based on the analysis, the empirical results reveal a strong support for H3 and H4, which means that users generate the content on TikTok can build their brand loyalty by meeting the demand of competence and relatedness. Particularly, the customers need to feel their competence and professionality when generating content, which can bring them with good feelings to build their brand loyalty towards the brand. Moreover, the customers also need to feel the connection with others, including valuable to others, and receive the care and support from others. However, there is no evidence to support that customers need to feel free on social media platform when generating content and release their opinions and advice. This result makes sense because there are always adequate rules to restrict the users releasing extreme opinion to make a negative impact to the society. This analysis contributes to the scholars that brand loyalty is relevant to the need of customers when generating content on social media platforms. In this vein, the results also indicate that the importance of competence and relatedness for customers.

5.2. Managerial Implications

This research also contributes to the practices of social media platforms. The results in this research illustrate that social media platforms need to satisfy customers' needs to build and reinforce their brand loyalty. In other words, the management of social media platform corporations should care about customers' attitudes and feelings when designing the social media platforms.

5.3. Limitations

In this study, some limitations are identified below. First, this research uses logistic regression to examine the feasibility of using self-determination theory in building brand loyalty of social media users. However, this research fails to examine the specific degree of how each dimension in self-determination theory can contribute to brand loyalty. The author hopes that future research could align with this research and investigate the specific degree of impact for each dimension in self-determination theory on brand loyalty in social media platforms.

6. Conclusion

The pervasive rise of social media has undeniably catalyzed the prominence of user-generated content (UGC) in the digital age. Platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram have not only democratized content creation but have also paved the way for individuals to influence vast audiences, much like traditional media entities once did. This study has discerned that the intricate relationship between UGC and brand loyalty is feasible. It is evident that the manner in which users generate and engage with content on social media platforms plays a pivotal role in shaping brand loyalty. Furthermore, from a self-determination perspective, this study has illuminated the inherent human needs that such platforms satisfy, fostering a deeper connection to the brand. As users derive satisfaction and a sense of autonomy from their content creation endeavors, their allegiance to the brand is intensified. As the lines between traditional and social media communications continue to blur, understanding the dynamics of UGC is paramount for brands aiming to fortify their relationship with their audience. In a world where every individual has the potential to be a content creator, it is the brand's responsibility that recognize and nurture this potential that will stand for the test of time.

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