

Branding in a Digitally Empowered World: The Role of User-Generated Content

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Abstract

Technology developments have caused marketing theory to evolve, and traditional branding concepts to change. In previous marketing literature, offline marketing was predominantly the primary distributor of brand messages and advertising, through television, radio and print, and online was presumed to be the secondary. Now a days roles have reversed and within the new branding paradigm, online is founded to be primary and offline secondary.

Young adults are using technology and digital platforms in complex ways directed towards content creation (Ballano, Uribe & Ramos, 2014). These young adults are consuming and participating on the internet frequently and understanding reasons for their behaviour is something this research will look to address and understand.

The aims of this research are to explore and offer a more complete view and deeper understanding of how young adult users, in the New Zealand context, produce user generated content, and what role brands and brand-related materials play in the content creation process. Research Objective 1. To explore and offer a more complete view of how young adult users consume and produce user generated content. Research Question 1. How do young adults consume user generated content about brands online? Research Question 2. How do young adults produce user generated content about brands online? Research Objective 2. To explore and offer a deeper understanding on what the meanings and motivations are for young adults consuming and producing user generated content. Research Question 3. What are the motivations and meanings behind young adults consuming user generated content? Research Question 4. What are the motivations and meanings behind young adults creating user generated content?

The research methodology approach used to analyse the dataset is through qualitative research. A thematic analysis is chosen as the research methodology for this report, with building on emerging themes of how young adults consume and generate user generated content and how they are motivated to create and consume content. Selected for the sample are 15 young adults ranging in age from 18 to 35 years old.

For the data collection, participants are tasked with completing an online questionnaire through Qualtrics, recording their interactions with service branded websites and apps, and providing commentary on user generated content they create and consumer with brands over a 3-day period.

This study investigating user generated content and branding is important because they are two widely acknowledged concepts in marketing theory, yet a gap remains in literature that addresses how this new generation of users are creating user generated content online and on Apps, and the meanings behind their

activities. Furthermore, looking at how this affects brands, in terms of the role brands and brand-related materials play in the content creation process, is valuable information to any marketing practitioner managing their online presence. Findings from the study can also inform marketers on what content young adults are generating and consuming, and from there can adjust strategies to suit.

Research findings presented in relation to Research Question 1 founded that consumption of user generated content was greatly carried out on social media and networking websites and apps. When users were consuming content on social streamed platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram it was founded that on Facebook, users spent time browsing feeds, communicating through Messenger, viewing friends' posts, clearing notifications. On Instagram similar behaviour followed suit, with respondents scrolling their newsfeed, viewing accounts that they followed stories and observing the explore page. Furthermore, Snapchat was primarily used for personal communication through sending and receiving snaps with friends and family.

Findings from Research Question 2 explained when users were generating content in the form of a post, the content produced incorporated different brand elements. Included in generated posts were a mixed adaptation of the brand name, product image, logo, mention and tag. Brand name, product image and logo were elements quite frequently incorporated into generated posts.

Research Question 3 results explained the founded motivational theme for consuming content was solitary routine. Solitary routine was discovered a motivational factor driving users towards consuming content due to habitual tendencies and routine behaviour. Results concluded that users were consuming content due to the reason, it being repetitive routine and habit for them. Consuming content was found to be an addictive behaviour.

Multiple sources of motivation were founded in correlation to Research Question 4, with findings showcasing that young adults when creating content were driven by the themes – information use and reuse as a personal resource, self-identity and self-affirmation. Results suggested that users were motivated for the purpose of use and re-use of information to keep in touch with their followers when generating content. Furthermore, self-identity was a motivation for producing user generated content, upon the use of personal interests and self-expression. And lastly, self-affirmation was a factor for motivation when sharing content as respondents pursued validation, attention and engagement with posts.

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Leath", followed by a period.

Date: Friday 13 September, 2019

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Ethics Approval

This study attained ethical approval by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on 27th February 2017, reference number 16/446

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background

The last decade has witnessed advancements to technology that have had major impacts on global markets. Development within the technology sector has transformed businesses, brands and consumers, and marketers today now must embrace this shift and adjust. With the enhancement of technology, both brands and consumers have newer capabilities, and are now more empowered than ever before. Information and mass communication on anything, anytime, anywhere is now increasingly accessible, leaving consumers with the choice of how little or how much they want to interact and be involved with particular brands. The influence consumers now have on brands, and the role they play in the public arena online, can dictate and effect the reputation of a brand, and its direction. Commenting, evaluating, posting and sharing on branded platforms or about brand-related materials, are all new consumer capabilities with a wide reach that have the ability to heavily influence brands. (Erdem, Keller, Kuksov & Pieters, 2016)

Business-to-consumer (B2C), and consumer-to business (C2B) activity now days is very interactive and constant with being able to communicate, relate and exchange information in real-time with the use of technological devices such as smartphones, laptops and tablets. With the rise of technology and digital, new opportunities have presented themselves for brands and consumers. Consumers can now tap into the internet and mobile apps and use these platforms to gather information about products and services (on the move), purchase these goods, and share their opinions on social media channels. Furthermore, businesses can also use this in an advantageous way, to collect data and information about consumer behaviour, and also use social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter to amplify and enhance their brand image and message. Because consumers now have greater ability to communicate, and can actively engage with brands, brands can react quicker and sway or direct conversation on digital in response (Erdem et al., 2016).

Technology developments have caused marketing theory to evolve, and traditional branding concepts have changed. In previous marketing literature, offline marketing was predominantly the primary distributor of brand messages and advertising, through television, radio and print, and online was presumed to be the secondary. Now days roles have reversed and within the new branding paradigm, online is founded to be primary and offline secondary. Due to the rapid

speed of information circulation and interconnectedness of communication between B2C and C2B, managing brands and building brands in this golden age of digital, can proceed at a quick pace. Consequently, from the changes in interaction, branding principles are reforming, and new guidelines and rules are being presented (Erdem et al., 2016).

The link between the concepts – communication, user-generated content and branding can be further established and explained. With the arrival of new age communication channels such as networking platforms, it has ultimately changed and enhanced the digital environment and how users communicate online. Millions of communication exchanges occur daily worldwide on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, which has changed and shaped how regularly people converse and communicate with one another. Communication is now faster than ever with digital devices just a hand away, readily accessible, and with the capability to post messages and content in real-time. As a result of this enhanced communication environment, effectively it correlates with the modern marketing phenomenon of user generated content. User generated content is any form of content publicly available that has been created and shared digitally by users. Content shared online by users, most of the time encompasses branding elements or factors. This is important as communication and the driving forces of user generated content dictates the portrayal of a brand and how it is perceived in the consumers mind. User generated content effects interconnectedness of the relationship between brands and consumers. From a branding perspective, businesses must manage fostering and enhancing the credibility of their brand through user-generated posts. This is not always easy to execute meaning different branding strategies need to be understood and adapted to facilitate successful and positive user generated content posts.

Young adults are using technology and digital platforms in complex ways directed towards content creation (Ballano, Uribe & Ramos, 2014). These young adults are consuming and participating on the internet frequently and understanding reasons for their behaviour is something this research will look to address and understand. Communication and information transferral on websites and social media apps make up the construct of what kind of users' young adults are in the digital environment. Young adults, also known as the 'net generation' have been surrounded by digital media all their lives. Ballano, Uribe & Ramos' (2014) research suggests young adults can be three kinds of users – readers, participants or creators, online. This research

investigates what this new generation of users are consuming, viewing and watching online and on apps, as well as looking at the content they are generating/posting. Furthermore, the study looks at understanding the meanings behind their activities, investigating those meanings, and how they may affect brands.

In today's modern society, we are witnessing marketing executives utilise the technological environment, particularly with the internet, to enhance a computer-generated space where users and consumers have the ability to produce their own user generated content. Although, in current academic business marketing research and literature, there has been a rather delayed and slow adaptation into insights, understanding the meanings of how user generated content creation and consumption can affect users and influence their experience in the online space via websites and applications. Yet, with this gap in the research field indicating the need for further understanding and information, it is evident marketers need to address the ever changing online environment, and its meanings for customer relationship management with businesses (Stern et al., 1998 and Strizhakova et al., 2008).

It is known that technological advancements and developments with the introduction of websites and applications, has caused a change in power and relations, between customers, businesses and their brands. The online web in modern society is now more convenient and accessible for users accessing the internet through their personal smartphones, tablets and laptops, harnessing consumers with instantaneous information and content. Today the internet is now 'user-centric' and is fast responsive in real quick time, compared to what it was 1-2 decades ago. The digital domain consequentially has caused user empowerment for the consumer and individual, but also firms and brands too (Cheong & Morrison, 2008).

As a result, from the evolution of the web space, the internet can no longer be viewed as one dimensional and simply a channel for businesses to use in marketing communication activities with consumers. Rather now, the internet has capabilities to empower users and consumers. It is evident there is a further need of understanding of the uses for consuming and generating content and how consumers are now interacting with and making use of brands in their day to day lives.

1.2 Problem Definition

The aims of this research are outlined in the following sections below. The research problem is reduced to research objectives and the research questions.

1.2.1 Research Problem

To explore and offer a more complete view and deeper understanding of how young adult users, in the New Zealand context, produce user generated content, and what role brands and brand-related materials play in the content creation process.

1.2.2 Research Objectives and Questions

Research Objective 1. To explore and offer a more complete view of how young adult users consume and produce user generated content

Research Question 1. How do young adults consume user generated content about brands online?

Research Question 2. How do young adults produce user generated content about brands online?

Research Objective 2. To explore and offer a deeper understanding on what the meanings and motivations are for young adults consuming and producing user generated content

Research Question 3. What are the motivations and meanings behind young adults consuming user generated content?

Research Question 4. What are the motivations and meanings behind young adults producing user generated content?

1.3 Methodology

The research methodology approach used to analyse the dataset is through qualitative research. A thematic analysis was chosen as the research methodology for this report, with the aim of building emerging themes of how young adults consume and generate user generated content and how they are motivated to create and consume content. Selected for the sample are 15 young adults, ranging in age from 18 to 35 years old.

For the data collection, participants are tasked with completing an online questionnaire through Qualtrics, recording their interactions with service branded websites and apps, and providing commentary on user generated content they create and consumer with brands over a 3-day period. NVivo software is the qualitative programme used to theme and analyse the data.

1.4 Contribution of This Study

This study investigating user generated content and branding is important because they are two widely acknowledged concepts in marketing theory, yet a gap remains in literature that addresses how this new generation of users are creating user generated content online and on Apps, and the meanings behind their activities. Furthermore, looking at how this affects brands, in terms of the role brands and brand-related materials play in the content creation process, is valuable information to any marketing practitioner managing their online presence. Findings from the study can also inform marketers on what content young adults are generating and consuming, and from there can adjust strategies to suit.

Contributions of this research founded that users remain passive when viewing and consuming curated content, with many respondents observing and absorbing information shared and distributed news, and little tendency to generate content in terms of sharing responses through posts and curating own personal content. The research contributes to literature by confirming and reinforcing that young adults when generating content, rely heavily on social media networks such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat being the three main players in terms of most activity and usage. Marketers can use this theory and knowledge to exert targeted marketing communications to the young adult demographic on these certain platforms.

1.5 Thesis Overview

Chapter 1 has provided a background to the research study, the research problem prompting relevant research objectives and questions, and a discussion on the chosen methodology for the study and the contributions from it. The following Chapter 2 discusses marketing literature, specifically the marketing digital environment, branding practices and user generated content, and provides a comprehensive review into these fields. Furthermore, gaps are identified provoking arguments on how young adults produce user generated content and the role brands play in the user generated content process. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach to the

research, and the qualitative research procedure. Chapter 4 informs of the results from the data collection and analysis and answers RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, RQ4. Chapter 5 includes discussion and conclusions from the results of the study, as well as recommendations and insights for brands and marketing practitioners. To conclude chapter 5, limitations and directions for future research are explained.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Contemporary Marketing & Branding Practices

The marketing environment has significantly changed since its emergence as a prominent business and management phenomenon. Today contemporary marketing relates to theories that highlight the importance of customer orientation, whereas in the past importance has weighed heavy on traditional market orientation. The theory takes traditional marketing principles and frameworks and restructures the process so businesses and marketers can adapt to change that bit quicker. It is a context that is user-centred, iterative and constructed for further learning.

Contemporary marketing strives in achieving built trust in the relationship firms have with their customer base through co-creative strategies. These strategies when managed and executed successfully, offer more support for their target market with a product range that varies depending on the select demographics wants and needs (Toon, Morgan, Lindgreen, Vanhamme & Hingley, 2016). Rather than what the company wants them to have. Consumers today have become more capable and literate in technology and its use, meaning consumers now research items much more in depth before they proceed with a sale or purchase. This has made for the implementation of contemporary marketing theories and strategies such as co-creation. This concept implies that a bridge between the customer and the business needs to be formed. A practical example of this would be attracting consumers through digital channels such as social media avenues, through curated content relevant to their needs. Utilising this avenue, and incorporating co-creative, is a more common practice in today's marketing strategy and is proving to be more prosperous for companies in the long run.

Another commonly found contemporary marketing philosophy is shared value. Shared value considers the market or desired demographic that the company is wanting to penetrate and shares product or service offering benefits with the market. It is when businesses actively try to improve the market environment whilst at the same time enticing more customers to them (Toon et al., 2016). For business to business firms this may include hosting events where firms in the same industry can be invited to attend to discuss possible collaborations together or establishing other customer/client working relationship opportunities.

2.2 Online Marketing Communications

The twenty first century has witnessed a changed and more interactive world through the adaptation of online marketing communications. With the arrival and incorporation of the internet into everyday lives both personally and in the workplace, marketers are trying to gauge the right areas to have presence in the digital world. Some main advantages for marketing online, include the lower costs than traditional media advertising and the extent of customisation it offers to target consumers (Owen & Humphrey, 2009).

Marketing communications distributed through online outlets can achieve different marketing campaign objectives and are significantly valuable in relation to the solid relationship building accomplished with consumers. There are a wide range of online avenues that exist where marketing communications can be circulated, but the three crucial online brand building tools are websites/apps, online advertisements and videos, and social media (Keller, 2013).

2.2.1 Websites and Apps

One of the first platforms to be established as a source in delivering online marketing communications for firms was websites. Due to the web's inter-connected nature, marketers have the opportunity to develop branded websites and apps that foster and enable any kind of user to choose product/service and brand information relevant to their needs and wants. If different targeted demographics and audiences have dissimilar levels of brand knowledge or interest, a well-designed website or app with a user-friendly layout can successfully communicate to users regardless of past personal experiences with a brand or the communication history with the consumer.

Relationship brand-building is a collaborative effort between both parties, the users and the business. A part in fostering this relationship between the two is the development of consumer generated websites and apps that can include reviews, ratings, comments and feedback on products and brands. It is vital that marketers precisely monitor the different online forums and contribute and participate where suitable. Consumers often like to generate and post opinions and reviews on products and services and search for advice and feedback from other users in the online community.

By creating online information sources for users on branded websites and apps, companies must be able to respond timely and provide reliable informative content to address any consumer queries and concerns. Both websites and apps need to be updated regularly with engaging information and have accessible customised information for their loyal and existing consumers. Web and app designs need to be visually pleasing and appealing to sustain the online browsers' interest, whilst efficiently communicating the brand message and corporate values. Creative design of the website or app is increasingly important because if users do not acquire having a positive experience with the interface and navigating the platform with ease, it can prove difficult in enticing consumers back to the platform in the vastly competitive and over saturated, cluttered online landscape.

2.2.2 Online Advertisements and Videos

Online advertising comes in a variety of advertisement forms, including banner ads, rich media ads and more. Advertising expenditure on the webspace has seen staggering growth in the past twenty years, and today surpasses traditional media advertising such as newspaper and television (Danenberg, Kennedy, Beal & Sharp, 2016). A series of potential benefits exist with internet advertising. Including, it is measurable and accountable with the use of software analytics being able to track which advertisements converted and went with which sales. Furthermore, it can be aimed towards a specific online consumer so that only the most suitable prospects are reached, whom have the ability and control to seek as much information as they want. It is explained in Danenberg, Kennedy, Beal & Sharp's (2016) literature review that online advertising campaigns and videos can forego and not have to adhere to traditional and broadcast media legal restrictions, which can create more persuasive and manipulating communication on brand messaging, resulting in positive feelings towards the brand. But with these advantages come disadvantages. Online users can find ads annoying and disruptive in their web user experience and sometimes ignore advertising efforts and close them if given the option with banner ads or pop up ads. Important to note is online advertisements and videos when it comes to streaming ads are characteristically more like television network advertising, acting as short films. The return in profit and advantage of video streaming ads online can be largely successful if campaigns are able to identify and strike a chord with their targeted audience.

2.2.3 Social Media

Social media plays an increasingly important role in brand communication due to its exponential growth in the last two decades. Recent literature suggests that brands are using social media to generate more positive brand awareness and strengthen both consumer and business relationships via a digital platform (Jussila, Kärkkäinen & Aramo-Immonen, 2014). Social media enables users to share messages, images, audio and video online with each other in the web environment. Social networking channels are various, but the major key players in today's interconnected society remain Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat, dominating digital media activity. Statistics in usage and activity on these outlets have remarkably grown in the last decade, with over a billion people being users on at least one or across various different social media networks (Keller, 2013). Social media as a marketing vehicle offers many benefits for brands and marketers. Firstly, it enables brands to have a voice and presence in the cyberspace. It also has the capability to complement and reinforce other marketing communication efforts and messages. Furthermore, it can enhance brand relevance, and lastly, it can build on creating a sense of community for users and encourage active engagement on the channels.

Some social media domains such as Twitter or Facebook provide an easy means for users to view other consumers opinions and existing attitudes and facilitate in expressing their own. They also can encourage feedback from users which can influence and improve aspects within a business's marketing program. Fine tuning and altering marketing messages is an important concept that marketers need to grasp and apply, as well as understanding the measurability and reach on social networks, which plays a dynamic role in yielding market insights (Keller, 2013).

Social media offers huge opportunities for marketers to connect with their target audience in ways that were not possible in the past. Although uncertainty lies within brands in some cases as to whether they should have a social media presence or not, many have now realized that conversation and discussions will take place in the online landscape whether they desire that or not. So therefore, the most obvious and recognizable strategy deems to be how best to participate on the channels and be actively involved with consumers. The various social media networks can accomplish different marketing objectives. Some of the channels provide insights into the current state of the marketplace, showcasing what is happening at any given time, allowing marketers to

respond and adjust communication and practices to suit. Monitoring social media platforms is now days an integral part of everyday routine for a marketer.

The social media network Facebook, as an example, offers marketers the capability to build long-term relationships with users and can be used to facilitate engagement with consumers and discover deeper insights into each individual's interests and passions. Some brands have fully capitalized on social media in the past couple of decades. Contrary to their success when choosing to engage in social media, speed of response to discussion and feedback, as well as the proper or right approach in tone of messaging is hugely important.

Users can pick and choose on their own intuition how engaged they choose to be with a brand. This may be at surface level or a deeper and broader level. It is critical that marketers do everything they can with their resources to encourage consumers to do so. Furthermore, companies need to bear in mind that not every consumer actively participates on social media networks. Only a select portion of users want to engage and be involved with select brands, and this can even be only some of the time. Knowing how to best market a brand or business to an audience given such diverse consumer profiles and backgrounds, as well as interests, is significantly imperative to understand and can separate successful digital marketing campaigns from failed ones now and in years to follow.

Companies are using different platforms of social media to enhance these relationships and get different levels of engagement by targeting different audiences. For example, social media outlet LinkedIn is used to enhance your professional networking's and to connect with potential clients, whereas Twitter or Instagram is better used to raise brand awareness (Lacoste, 2016). Research suggests that social media is used by firms to target different companies and members of the public in different ways, whilst also enhancing brand awareness different social media platforms allow for different engagement and coverage. According to Moore, Raymond & Hopkins' (2013) the social networking platform Facebook allows insight into customer needs and satisfaction.

In conclusion it could be suggested that social media has allowed brands to have a more efficient way of communicating with potential customers and raising brand awareness. By being able to have such a large reach to an audience via different platforms, it allows firms to gather information about customer satisfaction and raise brand awareness in much faster ways than face to face sales and word of mouth transfer. Brennan and Croft (2012) claim that brands have no

option but to develop social media strategies, because of the large amount of reach and brand awareness that can be achieved in doing so. By developing social media strategies marketers can connect with large groups of people and majority of the public spend some period of their leisure time on multiple of these social media platforms. By developing these strategies, it is also financially beneficial for companies as it allows for effective marketing strategies to be put in place to target certain groups, at certain times and on selected social media platforms. This therefore making marketing strategies, most cost effective whilst also being more directed and beneficial.

2.3 Digital Marketing

In understanding digital marketing and its importance in today's technologically advanced modern world and society, it is imperative to have insight and understanding into the concept and to review what previous research has discussed upon the notion and idea of digital marketing. Today, we are living in a new digital era and age where the communication channels are manipulated by consumer interaction and user generated content and are facilitated by social networks and the online environment (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). Consequentially, from the emergence of digital marketing, the marketing concept has expanded to include the idea of digital marketing and the digital landscape as opportunities and challenges have risen for products, services and brands. The introduction to digital marketing has seemed to have a positive effect for businesses, as firms now have this digital environment to manage, that has created several new avenues of digital tools. These include digital communication exchange online, known as electronic word of mouth, as well as social media channels, which companies can use for marketing practice with placing advertisements on the digital domain (Liu, Karahanna, & Watson, 2011). Arguably, the emergence and expansion of digital marketing tools has impacted the way in which businesses execute marketing strategies and campaigns, benefiting firms by making decisions and communications from business to consumer easier, due to the nature of digital tools being measurable, therefore making it more easy to identify, record, process and analyse data in terms of the marketing efforts of a businesses in a more constructive way (Ritter & Gemünden, 2004).

Multiple studies carried out in past academic literature proclaim that traditional marketing tools and strategies are more effective than digital, and that digital marketing channels rather assist as

a supportive role in achieving success and targets. While the statement is debatable and can be argued, an integration of the two marketing techniques seems to be common ground for most companies in today's marketing world, and incorporating digital marketing is an integral part with a modern, technologically advanced society, reaching consumers easier and more cost effectively. Instant and direct accessibility to consumers 24/7 around the clock via personal digital devices means marketers can deliver their objectives through social channels and in turn generate brand exposure and sales in terms of a business marketing and branding strategy.

The real question poses; how are consumers susceptible to digital marketing in the online domain, and are digital channels being used to facilitate and leverage consuming and generating user generated content in the most effective ways possible? Or in hindsight, are digital platforms proving more challenging, and more understanding in how to manage them for marketers is needed. It can be identified and argued that for some companies, they are still struggling to grasp how to integrate and create content on social networks, in a way of having a constructive effect resulting in profitability for the business through the channels of Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram advertising, electronic word of mouth (Singh & Koshy, 2011). Furthermore, a gap in the academic literature remains as to whether having a presence on digital spaces is beneficial regarding the role that social networks have on users and the content distributed.

Past literature starts with an idea that social media has assisted in helping to enhance user experience and customer relationships, and that if used purposefully it has the ability to generate widespread customer equilibrium and harmony, and viral dispersion of electronic word of mouth (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). This stance is applicable for digital marketing purposes, but methodology as to how and what content should be applied on the networks, may be suited and vary across different products and brands offerings. It is difficult and challenging in achieving knowing what, where and how to apply marketing communications and simultaneous messages. Marketing efforts can be trying, as consumers tend to consume more than generate, and enthusiasm to share electronic word of mouth can be little to none at times, therefore digital marketing may be worthless and non-profitable for particular or niche businesses.

Furthermore, other past academic literature holds the ideology that digital marketing can have multiple different advantages including that it is adaptable and measurable and is highly visible reaching millions of consumers with the ability to reach maximum viral exposure. These positive

attributes are things that digital marketing can offer to benefit the business to consumer exchange and relationship. With these added values can also come barriers and challenges and it is highly important to understand the underlying causes for digital marketing communication failures, to ensure firms do not continue in making the same mistakes and adjusting marketing efforts for success. Barriers that can lead to failed campaigns can include the inability of defining goals concisely, the lack of knowledge and expertise, and poor management of internal and external resources to enhance the digital channels and compliment them (Weber, 2009). All these factors and barriers are important for marketers to understand and consider as they can arise and cause disharmony and conflict when managing the different digital tools. For this reason alone, it can be challenging for companies to integrate and implement digital marketing communication and strategies on social networks, websites and apps due to the identified barriers causing adverse effects and unwanted results. Companies still to this day are learning how to overcome the challenges that digital marketing projects and utilizing digital media to reach maximum return in profitability, growth and brand attention.

Literature to date suggests that digital marketing is something that is being implemented by brands and firms more so than ever before, even with the challenges and barriers they may come up against in adapting and applying the digital marketing channels and tools. Digital marketing successes and failures are occurring in this 21st century postmodern life every day and it is vital in knowing the key components as reasons for why they do so, and also understanding the different adaptations to industry specific companies.

2.3.1 Digital Marketing Definition

Over the last decade the adaptation of technology and digitalisation has grown exponentially as more companies are making the move towards being more digitalized and having a presence in the online space. Due to this change and rise it is vital to look further into the wider web 2.0 and digital marketing which is a new extension from online marketing. Digital marketing can be defined as the technologies that make up marketing procedures. Across the literature there are different ways in which digital marketing can be described. It can be explained as a hierarchy or sub-concept that falls under internet marketing according to Farrah (2010), in Melewar and Smith' (2003) they explain the barriers that can occur with internet usage on digital platforms. In summary, digital marketing can be best defined as a range of several different digital networks,

inclusive of the internet, apps, mobile communication that are facilitated by technology devices such as desktops, smartphones, tablets, to inter link a consumer or user through interactive digital channels such as social media (Liu, Karahanna & Watson, 2011).

Digital marketing can also be explained as consisting of digital, internet and online marketing efforts that make up the core concept of what the notion truly means and incorporates. Social factors that are intertwined with digital media include online discussion forums, blog posts and web pages. These social influences can encourage and enhance conversation and discussion in the online space and can be explained in academic literature as social networking (Sharma, 2002). It is important that marketers can recognise social media as an important area to understand and become expert in as it is the relationship between those channels and users that caters to enhancing the consumer digital experience. Therefore, digital marketing is what fosters social interaction in the online domain and communicating messages between users and companies. The digital landscape knowingly can be challenging to manipulate and manage but it is key to recognise digital marketing is something that poses an opportunity for marketers to leverage, in facilitating relationships directly between themselves and their target audience. In retrospect, the aim of this research is to better understand how users interact with digital marketing efforts in terms of the content they view, consume, experience and engage with on social channels.

2.3.2 Digital Marketing and Branding

The concept of digital marketing has gained more discussion and attention in academic journals and resources today, due to organisations incorporating it daily and monthly into their marketing strategies and executing digital marketing actions in their daily routines. Whether it be advertising on social networks, sharing posts and content on branded profiles and pages, digital marketing has become a custom for firms on an everyday basis. Marketing on digital streams can be viewed as a more cost-efficient way for running advertisements and better use of expenditure for marketing budgets for sellers, as opposed to traditional media marketing. By using channels such as websites, apps, email, social networks to distribute marketing communications, it can be more cost effective for companies as return of investment outweighs ad spend, for example brand exposure and visibility can contribute to profitability, sales and growing brand value (Li et al., 2011). Jarivinen, Tollinen, Karjaluo and Jayawardhena (2012) also present a similar stance

in their literature, stating digital channels can promote more efficient communication and businesses can relay product and brand related information through using these tools. Consequently, this creates the ability to generate brand awareness in the consumer mindset and can improve predisposed feelings and attitudes towards the brand. Furthermore, these digital tools harness the power to accommodate and heighten purchase intentions for the consumer.

Digital media channels have enabled businesses to interact and send direct personalised communications with their targeted users which ultimately has helped in develop stronger and more loyal relationships between the two parties. Because of this, firms are becoming more heavily dependent on using digital marketing tools to access their consumers, as reach is easier, and timelier and more instantaneous than ever before. Furthermore, companies are aware that consumers spend considerable time on digital outlets daily, and digital devices are normally within arms of reach of consumers at any given time in the day (Jarivinen et al., 2012). Research conducted by Jarivinen et al., (2012) offers a look inside the usage around digital media and measuring the impact digital marketing has had in this new-found era. A key finding from the study recognises that utilising digital marketing is important in generating brand awareness and enhancing brand reputation and image. It is addressed in the study that businesses need to apply, adapt and update their capabilities in a way that coincides with the current state of the digital marketing environment, and to align their strategies and practices with current consumer behaviour.

A small amount of research has been conducted in academic literature concerning the usage of social media, as it is a complex area that can be studied a lot further as the environment is constantly changing and evolving, due to the introduction and depletion of certain digital marketing channels (Barry & Girona, 2017). Social networks have a powerful influence on consumer push and pull and how users interact with brands and the role they play in decisions to associate and practice patronage with that certain business. Because of the control digital marketing can dictate, consumer behaviour and purchase decisions can be heavily influenced online if executed sufficiently. Findings founded in Barry and Girona (2017) support this idea and highlight that by marketers creating digital content and adopting social media presence, indeed these factors can influence consumer purchase decisions and therefore marketers need to be producing social networking content and applying use of digital marketing tools in their

overall marketing strategy. An important finding from Barry and Girona (2017) literature is that brands need to emphasise and invest time into creating trustworthy content. By doing this businesses can convey trust and confidence and as a result can gain believability and honesty with the consumer. Marketers need to grow brand value and reputation, as well as helping advocate their brand on digital channels to sustain likability and desired outcomes with their target market.

In accordance with recent research, the arrival of digital technologies has meant creation of additional branding opportunities for businesses (Zahay, Schultz & Kumar, 2015). Creating trustworthy bonds between brands and consumers can strengthen foundations for their relationship, and strong ties linking the two. Informative communication including brand, product or market related information, as well as establishing trustworthy ties are all factors that can eventuate in having positive effects on building relationships and maintaining business to consumer connectedness over an established term (Chelariu & Osmonbekov, 2014). It can also be assumed that variables such as consumer engagement and productivity can be increased using communication on digital channels due to the speed and efficiency of providing real-time quick information through emails, updates, posts shared (Bolat, Kooli & Wright, 2016). Other academic literature, Strong and Bolat (2016) also argue the importance of managing digital marketing channels to develop and enhance consumer engagement with a brand, as benefits can prove endless. Examples of these benefits include the recognition and creation of brand awareness and the positive consequences that it can have on brand equity using digital streams such as mobile and social networks.

Since the arrival and adaptation of digital vehicles including social media channels, firms are encountering challenges with following changing trends and conducting different practices of communication through the various digital channels (Strong & Bolat, 2016). For example, marketing efforts on Instagram which focuses on photo and video content, would differ to marketing practice on a television network. To conclude, it can be claimed that digital capabilities can assist in communicating brand messages for a business and can improve the functionality and operational process in the brand to consumer networking context (Kaplan, 2012; Michaelidou et al., 2011). In addition, Strong and Bolat' (2016) study contributes to the academic body of research as it provides deeper understanding on the importance of the role

digital marketing in the business environment and consumer relations context. A potential area for future research could be to gain further insights as to how digital marketing on social networks can differ and vary across different industry specific organisations and to research the impact that has on different brand equity facets.

2.4 User Generated Content

The introduction to Web 2.0 technologies has aided the quick time creation and distribution of user generated content. Consequently, vast changes occur regularly in the digital landscape, and businesses are having to be informed and updated constantly. As an example, the spread of user generated content has significantly impacted customers, media suppliers, and marketing practitioners whilst requiring research to gain insight and knowledge into the short and long-term implications of this digital media content.

Over the years, the media landscape has changed into a more complex and dynamic combination of traditional and digital media that aims to meet the demands of modern society's fast paced lifestyles. Although traditional media is not as powerful as it once was and struggles due to greater segmentation, the interactive nature can still optimize this challenging market by present unique media vehicles that empower customers to have a voice amidst the saturated market of mass information and marketing.

In the digital environment, these niche media channels are directed more by user generated content, and less than by brands. User generated content can be explained as media content created by any member of the public that gets distributed on the web. User generated content poses new opportunities and capabilities than ever before as the potential for an individual user to communicate with and influence a mass audience on a wide scale globally, has just been made possible given the introduction of digital technologies. Some examples of popular and successful online websites and apps that foster the creation and consumption of user generated content include Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and YouTube, among many others.

2.4.1 Understanding User Generated Content

The marketing environment today continues to be more focused on user centric practice and models and has veered away from the traditional brand centric models. Consumers are now more active in in charge of their experiences that take place online, signifying the importance to

understand motivational sources that drive and encourage media and user generated consumption (McQuail, 2000). The power shift remains a challenge for marketers as they have had to modify how they traditionally identified their market and consumers, investing more divided attention into how and why consumers use digital media (Werner, Severin & Tankard, 1992). Therefore, it is vital for marketers and brands to fully understand the impact of user generated content within the online environment, focusing on why users create content. In the business research sector, a small amount of research has been conducted analysing young adult users who create and consume user generated content and understanding in depth their meanings.

The online domain has developed into a widespread information space that enables consumers and businesses to read and distribute information efficiently and in timely fashion. The internet serves as an outlet in which media communications can cover and reach an audience at a time and place most convenient for the consumer. With online activity and social media accounts expanding exponentially yearly, the internet has become the number one media outlet for young adults to visit first. The arrival of the web has increased content and file sharing applications, for example Messenger and Snapchat shaping and evolving how user generated content is created and distributed. Publishing content online has been made possible since the emergence of the internet through using personal profiles to participant in the information space. However, continuous organic growth and development is what caused extreme information overload online and the conception of user generated content.

The movement toward greater control for the user and dictating content has meant firms needing to understand consumer motivations for viewing media content as they are now confronted with more options and choices than ever before. Eastin & Daugherty (2005) proclaim that people consume content in relation to their internal motivations they have. Internal motivations represent practical sources that exist to meet consumer needs and wants. They are a foundation that helps form attitudes among the individual, which ultimately influences a consumer's behaviour and actions. A consumer's disposition to embrace user generated content is dependent on their attitude toward the content produced and how susceptible they are to different messages and imagery. Furthermore, because a person's motivations can differ and fluctuate greatly consumers may decide to consume or create user generated content for various and specific reasons.

User generated content is produced by consumers in pursuit of following their own personal incentives. As human beings we are motivated and driven by the want to understand and make sense of the experiences we encounter. Users who tend to create content do so on the basis it helps them understand their environment, or the topic at hand, or even themselves due to them feeling a sense of basic wisdom.

As the concept of user generated content becomes more known in literature and in society today, further understanding of the why aspect when creating content becomes more increasingly important as theory shifts towards a user centric framework of consumption. The ego-defensive construct for producing content minimizes an individual's self-doubts and provides them with a sense of community and belonging. Furthermore, the social function of creating user generated content is actioned because consumers feel the need to connect with others and it makes them feel validated and important. The ego-defensive function reasons that consumers can adhere in having self-doubts, so they seek out in reducing them. Whereas, the social function motivates users' people to spend time with other peers online and be involved in a sense of community. It is important for marketing executives to understand these two different functions or motivations for consuming digital user generated content and should ensure to provide comparable content creation opportunities or execute marketing communications on popular user generated content sites to ensure reaching these types of users.

Daugherty et al., (2008) research findings indicate that consumers are considerably more likely to create blogs, post within discussion forums, and construct websites than simply to consume these forms of user generated content. In contrast, user generated content audiences are more inclined to watch videos, view pictures, listen to audio, and visit websites when experiencing user generated content rather than when creating such content.

User generated content users appear more inclined to treat these vehicles like traditional sources and adopt a passive approach. In hindsight, user generated content creators strive toward self-expression by engaging in behaviours that provide them with a voice or showcase their individual thoughts (e.g., blogs, forums, personal websites). The differences founded can simply reflect the impact of individual skill or self-efficacy. These ideologies spotlight the importance of creating positive customer experiences with user generated content, in terms of both products

offered and content provided by marketers to promote goods and services through user generated content.

This framework is important to both scholars and practitioners because the internet can serve as a more powerful medium than traditional media, in the sense that consumers now may consume, interact with, control, create, and distribute media content. By providing consumers with a forum in which they may create and distribute their own user generated content, marketers might enhance the value of the brand information they present by engaging consumers in an active media experience. The user generated content space likely will expand greatly during the next decade as more users migrate toward consuming and creating user generated content.

Opportunities abound for both marketers in this burgeoning information space, thus they must seize this opportunity to communicate relevant content to audiences through this channel.

2.5 How Young Adults Consume User Generated Content in Relation of Brands Online

Digital emergence has evolved to the extent that every marketer wants to grab the maximum exposure out of it. Integrating the traditional marketing ways with digital can create a mass appeal for product and brand promotion. Social media can be defined as “a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technical foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 61).

The expansion and popularity of online social media networks has led to a new avenue of collaboration and communication for online users. With over a billion individuals around the world connecting and networking together to generate and collaborate content, they are sharing their knowledge and opinions on these social media platforms to foster engagement and start conversation (Cheung, 2011). These social media channels are virtual communities which allow users to interact and connect with each other on particular matters or subjects. User account memberships on social media platforms has exploded at an exponential rate since the mid 2000’s, with millions of social interactions and connections taking place across the social networks daily (Cheung, 2011). Current examples of social media sources include Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram, which are all very popular and heavily used in today’s society and are all entirely free to use. Understanding how users are consuming and generating content on these social media outlets has become an increasing area of interest for marketing practitioners, so they

can understand how to leverage and operate brands and services for greater return for marketers and the company.

2.5.1 Facebook

The social media network Facebook has gained a lot of traction over the last decade, being one of the most widely used social networks in the digital space globally (Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009). Its popularity with millions of young adult users has meant keeping up with friends and family has never been faster and easier, along with sharing posts, updates and photos and engaging with pages and groups. Main features on the network include: connecting with friends and family directly through instant messenger, viewing and sharing of status updates, photos and videos, and posting on friends' pages. Receiving notifications when friends engage on user's posts with likes or comments. Finding local social events and searching for businesses or brands to view posts, photos, reviews, and hours of operation. Following favourite artists and companies, keeping up to date with their latest news and announcements.

Staying connected with friends and family on the network serves as a main purpose for users having the website or app and being active on the platform so frequently. People tend to seek social interaction on the network with existing family and friends whom they have an established relationship with offline (Pempek et al., 2009). In addition, users disseminate and share content on Facebook with friends to express their identity (Pempek et al., 2009). However, not much is known or published in academic literature around how young adults use this platform Facebook, in terms of how they consume and generate content and their reasons for motivation. There is a need for this research to study and track how young adults use Facebook as a part of their daily routine, and if they tend to observe content more than they create it on the social network.

2.5.2 Instagram

The social media platform Instagram is another example of an enormously popular networking channel, that has rapidly grown on a global scale over the past nine years, being established in 2010 (Hu, Manikonda & Kambhampati, 2014). The photo sharing social networking service has risen exponentially in the number of users and photo/videos uploaded. In the form of communication on the social platform, Instagram users can easily share with their followers' updates with taking photos, adding a caption, using hashtags, tagging other accounts, and editing

their posts using filters. The photo-based platform has allowed users to not only share their lives through photos and videos, but enabled celebrities, influencers and service brands to engage with their consumers (Lee, Lee, Moon & Sung, 2015).

Instagram is the most popular photo sharing app, but it has attracted little attention in the research domain (Hu et al., 2014). Despite of this being the case within the research community, this research will explore how young adults are engaging with Instagram and the content they are viewing and generating. Again, motivations and meanings as to why will be discussed further in this research.

2.5.3 Snapchat

Snapchat is a multimedia messaging app, specific to mobile that allows users to share moments with their camera, capturing photos and videos, enabling users to communicate easily with friends, and to share images in real time and on the go. Being able to share raw personal photos and videos, anywhere, anytime has adapted this culture of togetherness and supporting relationships in a more emotional way. Snapchat offers users a more emotional experience than any other social network, due to persistent photo sharing of daily interactions in a more casual manner, where content is viewed but then becomes inaccessible to the receiver as it disappears after selected seconds for viewing (Bayer, 2016). Snapchats format has expanded and changed within the past few years, with now being able to view live stories from brands around the globe and exploring news in the Discover domain. Snapchat is a source that needs to be explored further in marketing literature, to uncover and acknowledge what kind of content users are sharing in their snapchat posts to friends and family, and what is motivating them to do so.

2.6 How Young Adults Generate User Generated Content in Relation of Brands Online

User generated content across various media channels is brand-related and has the potential to shape consumer brand perception. Brands may be mentioned and incorporated into generated posts for their symbolism, as the focus of opinions or complaints or as objects of interest (Smith, Fischer & Yongjian, 2012). Generating posts or re-sharing of existing brand communications and campaigns can include specific branding elements featured. Integrated into producing user generated content, users can apply various brand foundations into their post, including brand

name, image of branded product, brand logo, brand mention (e.g. @ _____), and brand tag (Roma & Alioni, 2019).

2.7 Theories for Motivation of Consuming and Generating User Generated Content

2.7.1 Service Overview

It is suggested in literature that firms, markets and society are now essentially concerned with the exchange of service through human acquired resources like knowledge and skills, for the advantage of an individual, group or party (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). It is understood that service elements comprised in a product offering are greater and more financially sustainable than those founded in product elements. Over the past few decades, a service has been traditionally conceptualized as a component or something that businesses add on and extend to the sale of products. An example of this can be after sale service, or it may also be an intangible good. Yet, it is proposed that there needs to be a new foundation for thinking. Possibly, this is that products and goods are brought due to the reason of the service they provide consumers with. In accordance to Wang et al., (2013) it is explained that a service is a process and therefore is not a unit of output. Furthermore, Vargo & Lusch, (2004) argue it is a process of using one parties resources for another's benefit. They also believe that goods are still vitally just as important, but they are delivery instruments for service, and consumers purchase the desired good for the service that each product/good provides (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

2.7.2 Context

From the understanding of past academic literature, there has been emphasis into research on how the meaning of a service brand is conceptualized and constructed in an online environment around the theory that consumers play a role as co-creators of value in marketing practice. The literature review highlights and discusses service dominant logic and how it integrates with consumer culture theory. Further, it allows for shifting of understanding and redefined thinking into how a consumer can be recognised as an individual that obtains and leverages resources, inclusive of service brands to attain specific goals. In development of this new ideology in relation with consumers, social identity constructs from past academic research are integrated to provide further knowledge into the various types of web user categories.

2.7.3 Service-dominant Logic and Consumer Culture Theory

The theoretical aspects around modern marketing have developed and evolved through the years, from what was understood as, markets are created through the exchange of tangible products or goods for money (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). In their research, Vargo & Lusch describe earlier marketing as being more concerned with operand resources, which can be explained as when actions cause and produce an effect. From here, the perception of marketing progressed into the idea that inserting value into operand resources leads to added product value, to then augment exchange value. Traditionally marketing theory alluded to the idea that product features and advertising or promotional activities were what correlated to enhance value for the product or service provided. The approach adopted by businesses and brands was concerned with providing the most valuable product offer. It was important for marketing practitioners to portray the product or service in a desirable light, making the good/service more attractive and enticing consumers to complete a sale. The introduction of interactive services and customer relationship marketing, identified by Vargo & Lusch, (2004) was the undeniable change in resources, in that operand resources were now giving firms a competitive advantage.

The meaning of service today is now recognised solely as the basis of exchange, not just typically goods. In modern marketing service dominant logic recognises that resources are operand - meaning human resources for example skills and knowledge, and that also service is the founded basis for all exchange. To simplify this theoretical understanding, shortly put it can be explained that service is exchanged for service. Consumers can use and recycle operand resources, enabling a consumer to consumer networking framework model. Conventionally in the 1990's it was not recognised by firms how consumers harnessed these resources with the widespread online access. Further speaking at that time, marketers instead incorporated a one-dimensional operand resource approach with direct business to consumer communications carried out through digital marketing tools (Deighton & Kornfeld, 2009). Deighton & Kornfeld, (2009) founded that digital devices that empowered businesses, could also have the same effect on consumers, offering them the same capabilities. This suggestion was founded to be further supported in Vargo & Lusch paper where they claimed that an individual is to be regarded as a subject, rather than an object in today's service for service exchange.

In this research user generated content is theorised as an operant resource, created and generated outside of the service firms means and out of their control. The link between the two theories service dominant logic and consumer culture theory offers further understanding in how consumers behave and act when completing an information search in the online domain via websites and apps. Furthermore, how users gain trust in service brands in pursuit of achieving goals and personal transformation. Arnould, Price & Malshe (2006) proclaim both consumer and firms' operant resources integrate with one another to provide value through an individual's three constructs – social, cultural and physical. Adapted from Arnould, Price & Malshe (2006) research is the philosophy that consumers are engaged in their own goals consisting of life projects and life roles. These goals factor into the flow of economic output but are not subjugated by the goals.

2.7.4 Value Co-creation through Service Exchange

It is understood that 'value' is an asset that almost always can be co-created by multiple parties, and always involves a consumer. Vargo & Lusch (2004), believe that the creation of value consists of being interactional and combinatorial. Value co-creation in the process of service exchange follows the three variants of resources, service and actor or consumer. The theory of value-co creation through service exchange has evolved since the introduction of service dominant logic in the 1990's. Today marketers are now recognising value co-creation as individuals utilising and retrieving resources to conjoin and create newfound resources or new merging's of them. Individuals adopt these resources to enhance their personal lives by adding value and enriching their life for the better.

Consumers who adopt new combinations of resources are included in the service to service exchange. The exchange has the capability to be business-to-consumer, business-to-business, consumer-to-consumer or other. Through collaboration and creating value it is important that innovation is primarily concerned with continuously forming new markets. A way in which this can be executed is through effectively managing and reconfiguring service networks and recognising when to acquit non-beneficiary service systems. Businesses and brands must determine ways in which they can dynamically innovate the customer experience and space online. In achieving this, marketers can extend and enhance how consumers interact with them and foster a stronger relationship. When a firm can implement this and apply the right strategy,

they will be able to recognise value co-creation through service exchange is a multi-faceted theory and practice that contributes to the longevity of a successful business/brand.

2.7.5 Identification

Brand identification is the action or process of an individual identifying with a brand, where that consumer attributes and utilizes the corporate brand's resources (Halliday, 2016). When a consumer makes an establishment and connects with a brand, beneficial and positive outcomes can occur for a company. These desired results can equate to consumer repeated patronage and word of mouth relaying (Halliday, 2016). Proposed in Strizhakova, Coulter, & Price (2011) research is the suggestion that companies need to strategically place self-identity cues either in their products or services, or their communication activities and marketing campaigns. This is because when an individual is capable to identify with a brand it is likely they will form stronger customer loyalty ties with the brand and are more enticed to recommend that brand to family, friends, or followers more often (Halliday, 2016). In support of this remark, Algesheimer, Dholakia & Herrmann (2005) explain a person who experiences brand identification and actively participates within a brand community, there is an increased likelihood the consumer admires the brand and mentions or recommends the brand more regularly. Further, the research suggests emphasis and focus should stay on the individual developing their own identity. Other academic literature from Deighton & Kornfeld (2009) explains now days people are not so concerned with the role they play as a consumer for a service firm. In hindsight, this traditional viewpoint has shifted and now individuals are more engaged with their own pursuit of identity as individuals and how they appear to their peers as connected users in this virtual online world.

One identification framework reclaimed from past literature that correlates with the theory of service dominant logic is Forrester, (2010), social technographics ladder. His framework coincides with consumer online behaviour and categorises users into certain groupings based on their activity and actions in the online space across various website/app channels. The ladder consists of a hierarchy status, with seven different tiers. Placed at the bottom of the hierarchy and then in ascending order are the 'inactives', 'spectators', 'joiners' (who visit networks), 'collectors', 'critics' (who comment, contribute or post), 'conversationalists', and lastly, the 'creators' (who initiate own content) (Forrester, 2010). The adaptability of this framework in services research is underdeveloped and the meanings of consumer activity or inactivity for

service brands could be explored further. Thus, the identified gap presents an opportunity for this research to address in its findings.

2.7.6 Self-Identity

It can be explained that individuals consume products in ways that align with their own personal sense of self (Belk, 2013). Sense of self is how people view and make sense of life and their own life. In past academic literature, it is said products or service offerings can be understood and viewed as an extension of self, used to hypothesise a consumer’s social environment and the role they play in it (Belk, 2013). This can be reasoned to the figurative meanings that products hold in value and portray, and how consumers use those existing connotations to generate, advance and foster their own identities for society. Consumption of products or services can be described as a resource for investment in one’s self. According to Holbrook (1994) value is extended and drawn from consumer experiences associated with products and services. Past academic literature highlights that meanings linked with product offerings can act as a key facilitator in influencing consumer behaviour (Solomon, 1983). An underlying prediction in this research is that self-identity will be a reason for motivation in consuming branded content online.

2.7.7 Process of Social Technographics Ladder

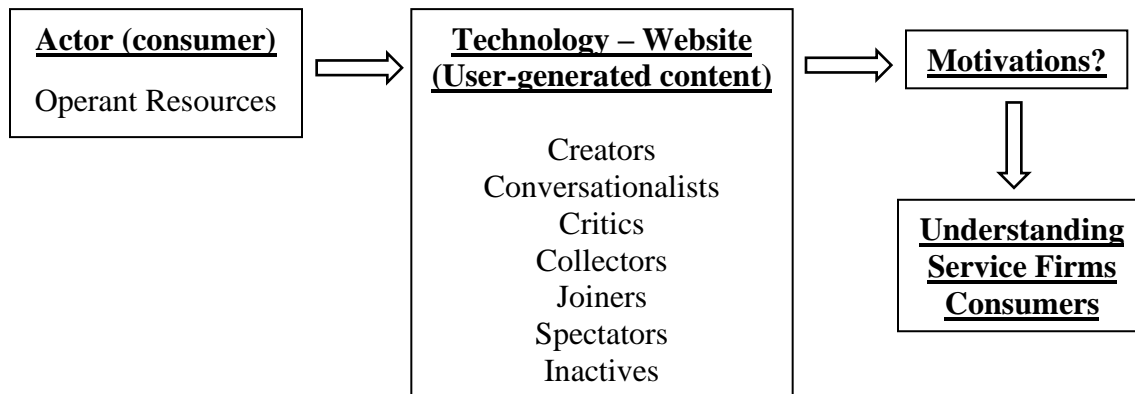


Figure 1 –Social Technographics Ladder

With reviewing past academic literature in marketing research discussed in this chapter, this framework is based on the process of the social technographics ladder in Halliday, (2016) and has been developed to conceptualize and relate directly to this study. From left to right, in the first stage identified is the actor or consumer adapted from Vargo & Lusch (2004) who suggest

that actors have accessibility to their own self-controlled operant resources – their specialized knowledge and skills. Individuals then use their operant resources with online technology visiting a service brands website or app, in which they can be categorized as users based on the way in which they interact with content, create, and consume it. From there, through the research and data collection, results will showcase the reasons, or many reasons for motivation, and what it was that drove the actor to create and/or consume that service brand’s content. This will then provoke further understanding of service firm consumers, contributing to valuable insights and discussions, and adding to the advances in services research marketing body of literature.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The research methodology approach used to analyse the dataset is through qualitative research. Qualitative research is a strategy that has become increasingly recognised in business research over the past few decades. As a research strategy qualitative research was decided appropriate upon the reasons it is exploratory research used to understand reasons and motivation and is primarily concerned with words and meanings. Participants are examined and used in the research to gain better understanding of the social world.

3.2 Context and Purpose - Research Questions

The research objectives for this study is to investigate

1. Explore and offer a more complete view of how young adult users consume and produce user generated content
2. Explore and offer a deeper understanding on what the meanings and motivations are for young adults consuming and producing user generated content

Because this is a qualitative study there are no specific hypotheses. Through collection of data, questions posed to respondents include - what service brand website they visited, the time in minutes/hours they spent on the website, what they did on the website, what motivated them to the website, and any further reflective comments. Simply put, underlying this research is finding out (x) what motivates these actors to consume and generate content on websites and apps, and the relationship these motivations have with understanding brand/firms' consumers. Topics to explore in this research include social media interaction and brand engagement.

Qualitative research is more suitable to this study than quantitative methods because qualitative research describes the qualities or characteristics of something. With this aspect of qualitative research, a qualitative study was most fitting to my research, as my research objectives pursued meaning and deeper understanding of how and why and consisted of reasoning questions. In hindsight, a quantitative study would not have been appropriate or suited as it consists of a statistical analysis, expressed in numbers which is concerned with demographics, trends and differences between variables. A qualitative study was the best option as this type of research can

provide insights and details about human behaviour, emotions and personality traits. In contrary, quantitative methods cannot match these outcomes. A qualitative data analysis was more appropriate, as the data reveals information about respondents' behaviours, opinions, routines, desires and various other information that contributes to descriptive and insightful answers and meaningful conclusions. Furthermore, because of my sample size consisting of a small group of participants, a qualitative study was more suited because a quantitative analysis commonly requires hundreds or thousands of participants. A key factor that made a qualitative study more suited to my data research was the reasoning that the researcher looks for trends in the data, rather than statistical analysis. For this study and as a researcher it was applicable and suitable to identify trends and search for participants statements that were alike, so themes could be drawn out and identified. Again, this qualitative method aligned best with the research as with being able to identify trends, it enabled recommendations for branding decisions and marketing strategies.

3.3 Research Approach

3.3.1 Interpretivism: Phenomenology

In terms of the research, the philosophical approach 'interpretivism' has been applied to the analysis, meaning as a researcher I am a subjectivist and create findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The inquiry aim from the research is to understand and interpret (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Table 1 – Interpretivism Phenomenology

Paradigm	Interpretivism
Ontology	Multiple realities and multiple truths/reality are socially constructed and constantly changing.
Epistemology	Researcher and object are interactively linked/findings are mutually created within the context of the situation which shapes the inquiry.
Method	Qualitative
Goal	Stress is on process and meaning.
Techniques	In depth and focus group interviews and participants observation.
Sample Size	Small/purposeful/respondents with important information/not meant to be representative.

Source: Retrieved from (Sale, Lohfeld & Brazil, 2002, pp. 44-45).

As identified in Table 1, an interpretivism approach to research uncovers truths which are dictated by social constructs and are variables that can change over time. In this research, the aim is to discover findings within the context of young adults consuming and using user generated content, which will shape meanings and the discussion toward the user generated content marketing inquiry.

3.3.2 Methodology- Thematic Analysis

When interpreting and theorizing qualitative data, different analysis approaches can be applied. One of the most common ways to approach qualitative data analysis is through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was chosen as the research methodology for this report, with the aim of building emerging themes of how users are motivated to create and consume content. Thematic analysis is a method for “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pg. 79). Thematic analysis can reflect reality and tease out the surface of reality, with the ontology being ‘reality realism’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Emerging themes is another part of the process in the analysis, identifying them and reporting them is an important part as the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic Analysis was appropriate for this research as it identifies for later retrieval the themes that emerge out of data.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

For the data collection, participants are tasked with completing an online questionnaire through Qualtrics, of their interactions with service branded websites and apps, and will provide commentary on user generated content they create and consumer with the service brands over a 3-day period. All submitted online questionnaires have been completed sufficiently and provide adequate insight to create good quality data for the analysis. Because record keeping of habits can be perceived as being truthful and accurate in tracking activity as it occurs (Bryman & Bell, 2007), provided for the participants is the online questionnaire, accessible for them from their laptop or mobile devices, so they can record activity conveniently and in real time as it occurs. Included in the questionnaire are clear questions and commentary boxes for them to respond in. For record tracking research to be effective, participants must continuously be encouraged for

engagement, so they remain motivated and committed to completing their questionnaires (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Offered to the participants as an incentive reward at the end of the 3-day period was as a shopping voucher - Prezzy card.

All questionnaires were fully completed and provided valuable data for the analysis. The analysis of the data will be supported by the NVivo software programme used to sort through the commentary and code the data through creating nodes. Nodes are known as groups of commentary and responses that are similar. Service websites that relate to each other such as networking websites, banks etc. will be grouped together. Then a table will be constructed identifying the most frequently visited service branded websites, and the motivations and resulting themes that occurred from the analysis.

From the analysis, emerging themes are evident. By sorting and grouping motivations to nodes, this facilitates in ensuring this. It was highlighted to participants that their instrumental outputs such as their time, effort and in-depth commentary in recording their daily practice will need to be honoured and upheld on their behalf, so that maximum and enough could be provided. The questionnaire is structured with specific questions as identified above in the research questions section. Inclusive of, the time they accessed the service branded website, the minutes/hours they spent online, the content they consumed and generated, and their motivations behind it. Respondents were able to recognize and precisely explain the impact they had with the service-branded website.

3.4.1 Sample

Selected for the sample was 15 young adults, ranging in age from 18 to 35 years old. This sample of respondents fits the study well as young adults are the most active online users in social networking and websites, usually creating and consuming user generated content frequently on a day-to-day basis. This young adult age bracket could potentially be less resistant toward service branded products (Strizhakova et al., 2011), therefore are more inclined to create and consume. Young adults, who are technologically advanced and digitally savvy are an attractive target market for businesses and brands (Strizhakova, Coulter, & Price, 2012). They are a specific market sought after by service and social networking websites in particular (Muniz & Schau, 2011), so findings within this segment could potentially be transferrable to other brands, as the bracket is a popular segment for consideration in today's digitally empowered era.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

3.5.1 Coding

The thematic analysis procedure can follow three phases of coding (Hyde & Olesen, 2011). In the research two out of the three have been applied – open coding and selective coding. To initially analyse the data, it began with open coding, identifying codes that developed from the analysis with the 15 data sources (online questionnaires). Open coding was carried out on the questionnaires, through the NVivo software - where nodes were created, descriptions were added, and quotes were added to each applicable node. Furthermore, the second process of coding – selective coding was applied when an adequate number of open codes had been created, which were then sorted and alluded toward certain themes.

3.5.2 Analysing the NVivo Data

Procedure:

1. Initially read through all fifteen online questionnaires to familiarize myself
2. Coded each valuable idea sentence by sentence (open coding) on NVivo, highlighting responses/text and selecting them for each applicable node
3. Identified themes and grouped related codes into themes (selective coding)

The best way to analyse the data was through coding and NVivo. NVivo and coding was appropriate for the type of data provided, because the sources (the fifteen questionnaires) could be easily inputted into the programme, nodes could be created, and reports could be run. I as the researcher have not chosen to go with other strategies such as phenomenology because it is a philosophy that is concerned with the question of how individuals view and make sense of the world (Bryman & Bell, 2015) which is not suitable for this research analysis. Furthermore, I did not choose a case study as the method, for the reasons a case study design is usually one dimensional and tends to focus on a single organization, a single location, a person or a single event (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter of the thesis will recognise and explain the data that was founded from the research, which consisted of the three-day recording and tracking of normal daily practice - online activity, using the online software Qualtrics to record these findings. The Qualtrics questionnaire featured several open-ended and close-ended questions to assist in probing respondents to answer how they act as users online, and reasons for their motivations in activity and consumption.

The four broader research questions constructed to assist in gaining data-rich information were:

***Research Question 1.** How do young adults consume and produce user generated content about brands online?*

***Research Question 2.** How do young adults generate user generated content about brands online?*

***Research Question 3.** What are the motivations and meanings behind young adults creating and user generated content?*

***Research Question 4.** What are the motivations and meanings behind young adults consuming user generated content?*

The participants in the online Qualtrics questionnaire were all young adults ranging within the age bracket of 18-32 years old. The consensus was an ethnically diverse group of respondents, who identified with several different ethnic groups. Majority of respondents had gained at least an undergraduate degree or were currently working towards completing one. Income brackets varied, with participants earning part-time or full-time wages or salaries, or otherwise, earning less than \$10,000 due to being enrolled as full-time students with their university studies.

The table identifies the 15 respondents who participated in the data collection and classifies demographic variables about each individual including their age range (years), ethnicity, income bracket, and the Websites and Apps they visited as per the data collection. A commentary column is included, explaining data collection discrepancies from their responses.

Table 2 – Demographics of Respondents and Website/Apps Usage

Respondent	Age Range (years)	Ethnicity	Education	Income	Website/Apps Visited	Commentary
AL	18 to 20	NZ European	High School	Less than \$10,000	Stuff (website), Facebook (website), Netflix (website), Wordpress (website), A.U.T Blackboard (website), Instagram (website), The Iconic (website), Facebook (website), Spotify (Website)	
AP	32 to 35	European	Postgraduate or Doctoral Degree	\$75,000 - \$99,999	Facebook (app), Snapchat (app), Instagram (app), Instagram (app), Snapchat (app), Instagram (app), Instagram (app), Facebook (website and app)	
JP					Instagram (app), Snapchat (app), Facebook (website)	Failed to answer demographic questions. Partial completion of questionnaire. Total of 3 responses.
JW	29 to 32	NZ Maori	Undergraduate Degree	\$50,000 - \$74,999	Instagram (app), Facebook (app), The Iconic (website), Snapchat (app), Superette (app), Air BnB (app), Stayz (website), Facebook (app)	
KD	18 to 20	South African	High School	Less than \$10,000	Instagram (app), Facebook (app), Snapchat (app), Pinterest (app), A.U.T Blackboard (website), Netflix (website), AliExpress (app), YouTube (app), Whatsapp (app)	

LA	29 to 32	NZ European	Undergraduate Degree	\$25,000 - \$49,000	Trade Me (app), YouTube (app), Neon (app), Auckland Airport (website), Pinterest (app), Messenger (app), Instagram (app), Air New Zealand (app), Spotify (app)	
MP	18 to 20	Indian	High School	Less than \$10,000	Instagram (app), Snapchat (app), Facebook (website), Facebook (app), YouTube (website), Boohoo (website), Snapchat (app), Snapchat (app), Facebook (website)	
ML	25 to 28	NZ European	Postgraduate or Doctoral Degree	\$75,000 - \$99,999	Facebook (website), Instagram (app), LinkedIn (website), Instagram (app), The Wheel Deal (website), Facebook (app), Skyscanner (website), Snapchat (app)	
RM	18 to 20	NZ European	High School	\$10,000 - \$24,999	Snapchat (app), Instagram (app), Facebook (app), Facebook (app), Instagram (website and app), Snapchat (app), Messenger (app)	Partial completion of questionnaire. Total of 7 responses.
SW	25 to 28	NZ European	Undergraduate Degree	\$50,000 - \$74,999	Facebook (app), Instagram (app), Snapchat (app), Tumblr (website), NZ Herald (app), Messenger (app), Imgur (app), Pinterest (app), YouTube (website)	
SP	29 to 32	Indian	Certificate or Diploma		Instagram (app), Planoly (website), Pinterest (app), Snapchat (app), Facebook (app)	Partial completion of questionnaire. Total of 5 responses.
SR	21 to 24	NZ Maori	High School	Less than \$10,000	Facebook (website), Tumblr (website), Pinterest (website), Facebook (website), ColourPop Cosmetics (website), NZ Herald (website), Instagram (website), Snapchat (app), YouTube (app)	

TB	29 to 32	NZ Maori	Undergraduate Degree	\$25,000 - \$49,999	Facebook (website), Instagram (app), Snapchat (app), Facebook (website), Instagram (app), Snapchat (app), Facebook (website), Instagram (app), Snapchat (app)
TL	21 to 24	Asian	Undergraduate Degree	\$25,000 - \$49,999	Facebook (website), Skype (website/software), WeChat (website/software), Facebook (website), Instagram (app), Skype (website/software), Facebook (website), Skype (website/software), YouTube (website)
VS	21 to 24	Indian	Undergraduate Degree	Less than \$10,000	Snapchat (app), Instagram (app), Showpo (app), YouTube (website), Messenger (app), Neon TV (website), LinkedIn (website), YouTube (website), Instagram (app)

4.2 Development of Themes

The data collected from the Qualtrics online questionnaire was identified, examined and analysed in the software programme NVivo to create codes from the text, which resulted in recognizing themes. The themes produced from the NVivo analysis were as recognised in the following tables.

In relation to Research Question 1 & 2:

The table is divided into two major themes founded from the data - Consuming and Generating. Open codes are recognized in the table in relation to these two themes and a brief description of each open code is explained.

Table 3 – Consuming and Generating User Generated Content

Theme	Open Code	Description
Consuming	Networking and Social Media	Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, Tumblr, LinkedIn, WhatsApp
	Audio-video world	YouTube, Spotify, Skype
	Shopping	The Iconic, Boohoo, Superette, AliExpress, TradeMe, Showpo, ColourPop Cosmetics
	Travel	Air New Zealand, Skyscanner, Auckland Airport, Air BnB, Stayz,
	Entertainment	Netflix, Neon TV
	News Source	NZ Herald, Stuff
	Study	A.U.T Blackboard, WordPress
	Generating (Posts)	Brand name
Image of branded product		Using a brands image, or taking a photo of a branded product and incorporating it into a post
Brand logo		Including imagery of a brand’s logo in content produced
Brand mention (e.g. @_____)		Mentioning of a brand’s name in content created
Brand tag		Tagging a brand in post created

In relation to Research Question 3 &4:

From the analysis, motivational purposes for consuming and generating user generated content have been categorically separated and acknowledged into four major themes. Within each theme there are specific and various open codes that are select to each individual one. Included in the table is a description column, explaining a short summary of each open code.

Table 4 – Motivations for Consuming and Creating User Generated Content

Theme	Open Code	Description
Motivation – information use and reuse as a personal resource	Information sharing	Sharing personal moments, memories and daily activities
	Communication	Communicating with friends and family (e.g. through Messenger, WhatsApp, Skype)
	Product search	Seeking product information whilst in pursuit of a product search
	News search	To stay updated with news. Searching for information on news outlets regarding national and international current affairs
	Updates	Updates on social media platforms main feeds to be updated on family and friends profiles, posts, photos and videos
Motivation – self identity	Personal interests	Following through with personal interests, music, video entertainment
	Self-extension	Extension of self (expression) through sharing personal opinions, feelings and views
Motivation – solitary routine	Habitual behaviour	Visiting websites and apps due to it being a repetitive routine and habit
	Boredom	To alleviate boredom
Motivation – self affirmation	Engagement	To attract attention and engagement from followers through likes, comments, replies

4.3 – Research Questions and Themes

In this section I analyse the two research questions and how they relate to and align with the themes founded from the data analysis. The findings are explained in-depth and provide answers to the research questions.

4.3.1 Research Question 1 – *How do young adults consume user generated content about brands online?*

Consuming User Generated Content

Results from the data have revealed that how young adults are consuming user generated content is predominantly through their digital devices, their mobile and laptops. With the convenience of a mobile, being accessible and reachable throughout the day and close by at night, time spent consuming content on mobile has proven to be considerably long.

Credible and popular networking and social media websites such as Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram were the websites and apps respondents visited the most. Consuming content on these platforms through their main feeds. Features offered through these sites and apps, meant for the audience (participants) viewing profiles, seeing shared posts, and passively observing the content.

Table 5 – Consuming and Generating Content Usage Statistics

Website/App	Digital Device used	Minutes
Facebook	50% used - Mobile	Range from 15-120mins, average 50mins
Instagram	99% used – Mobile 1% used - Laptop	Range from 15-120 mins, average 45mins
Snapchat	100% used - Mobile	Range from 5-60 mins, average 15mins

Statistical findings also found that 74% of content usage was spent consuming, and 26% of respondents generated content.

Consuming on Facebook

As per the data analysis, the findings explained that users accessed their Facebook account a lot, where they would passively consume content on the platform. From the analysis, people tended to just view and consume content on networking and social media sites, rather than create any content. It can be stated that from the research young adults consume much more content than they create. Consuming content on their Facebook homepage and main feed was a common daily occurrence, where participants would regularly check in on the social media channel, at least once a day or every couple of hours throughout the day. When not contributing on the platform, in the form of messages and comments, respondents would passively read information but not interact, engage or communicate on posts, or friends or brands profiles and pages.

Areas on Facebook respondents browsed:

AL *“Both my newsfeed and messenger”*

AL *“I mainly spent my time browsing my newsfeed”*

AP *“Reading newsfeed and visiting Stuff.co.nz Facebook page”*

JP *“Feed and messenger”*

RM *“Tagged memes and photos”*

SR *“Messages”*

TB *“Home and notifications”, “Other people’s pages”*

TL *“Newsfeed, Facebook messenger”*

Consuming on Instagram

The social media app Instagram is a photo and video-sharing social networking service that allows users to share fun and creative content with their following. Instagram’s growth and engagement has risen rapidly over the past decade with now over 1 billion users worldwide using the social app (The Verge, 2018), with young adults accounting for a large proportion of that statistic. The research found that participants were accessing Instagram to stay updated with people they know and influencers they follow. Passively consuming content on the app, meant users were scrolling through their Instagram feed to see new content posted from people and

things they care about. When refreshing the Instagram feed users were viewing posts in the form of both photos and videos from accounts they followed. Furthermore, then just viewing and scrolling their feeds, respondents were also viewing Instagram stories. Stories are a feature on the app that appear in a bar at the top of the feed and allows users to post photos or video sequences that disappear after 24 hours. On story posts you can add creative features like filters and can also add text and drawings to the post. Results from the data showed that participants would use this feature frequently and view their friends' stories, seeing the content they had posted in the last 24 hours. When viewing these stories, the content plays in chronological order from oldest to newest content shared. And lastly, the third area where users consumed content on the channel was the explore page. From the analysis, it was founded users would use the explore page to browse. When consuming content here, users were being exposed to endless posts with high engagement, from other accounts similar to ones they currently follow, and posts liked by people whom they follow and like.

Areas on Instagram respondents browsed:

AL *"Mostly my Instagram newsfeed"*

AP *"Newsfeed, checking Instagram stories from my best friends."*

JW *"My newsfeed and the Instagram stories"*

KD *"I spent the most time on the newsfeed (like the main page) and then on explorer, to see different memes or other people I don't follow"*

RM *"Newsfeed, stories and explore"*

SW *"Instagram stories feed"*

SP *"My home page, viewing content from the people I follow"*

SR *"Scrolling through the main feed, looking at new photos"*

TB *"Looking at pictures my friends and family share and a little bit of what people share of their day"*

Consuming on Snapchat

Snapchat is another popular social media app in modern society and from the research it was adherent that young adults are heavily using it as an outlet to stay engaged and view content. Snapchat is a multimedia messaging app that lets you easily communicate with friends and view their stories, and they market themselves around the world as “the fastest way to share a moment!”. Consuming content on this platform occurred in two forms founded from the data. Either viewing incoming snapchats users received from friends or viewing Snapchat stories from friends or others they follow. Similar to an Instagram stories, Snapchat stories is a select collection of images and/or videos that play out in the order they were taken and is posted for only 24 hours before it vanishes. Typical Snapchat stories include snippets of people’s daily activities and get posted in real-time, giving almost live updates, and normally interesting and entertaining content is uploaded.

Areas on Snapchat respondents browsed:

AP “...*watching other people’s snaps/stories...*”, “*Chat stories from friends*”

JP “*Stories and filters*”

MP “*Snapchat stories*”

RM “*Sending/receiving snaps*”, “*The snapping feature and looking at people’s stories*”

SR “*Looking at people’s stories...*”

4.3.2 Research Question 2 – *How do young adults generate user generated content about brands online?*

Generating Content

The raw data set proved that how young adults are producing user generated content is heavily on networking and social media sites and apps. This category profoundly outweighed the other categorised websites and apps such as audio-video world, travel, news sources and furthermore. The responses from the data showcased that young adults are creating user generated content through shared posts, such as Facebook posts, Instagram posts, and Snapchats shared. Users are engaging with content directly through commenting and sharing posts. These posts can be

personal content and an extension of self-identity, and they can also be informative, and in some cases, users are incorporating elements of branding in their content created. Included in content generated by participants, were brand imagery features, inclusive of the brands name, products, logo, mentions and tags. From a marketing perspective this is insightful, as brands and businesses can see that users are including and incorporating branding elements into their content, so knowing how to leverage user generated content and giving people the capability to add these foundations to their content, or even sharing branded posts, is a very valuable asset.

Generating Content with Brand Elements

When generating content whether on social and networking channels inclusive of Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram, users were founded to be incorporating one to various branding elements in single posts created. Brand elements consist of a brand name, image of branded product, brand logo, brand mention and brand tag. Where branding elements were featured in posts, the data revealed that these were added and used most when users tended to generate posts about food, beauty and clothing products and items.

Generating Content with Brand Name(s)

From the research participants used food and drink brands including Tip Top, Meadowfresh, Heineken, Pepsi and Luxe Fitness. Beauty and cosmetics brands such as Estee Lauder, Victoria Beckham, MAC Cosmetics, Jo Malone and Colour Pop Cosmetics. And lastly, clothing brands Calvin Klein, Gucci and Adidas.

Generating Content with Image of Branded Product

Images of the branded product were used in all cases where respondents created content featuring these brands. Whether it was directly, or indirectly. From the research intentional product placement and use of branding imagery occurred more so when clothing brands were incorporated into posts. For example, a photo sent on Snapchat to friends and followers showcasing a recently purchased Calvin Klein branded handbag. Another example was of a repost shared on one of the users Tumblr pages that featured a girl modelling Gucci Sneakers and an Adidas jumper.

Generating Content with Brand Logo

Featuring brand names and logos on clothing items and accessories. For example, one user sent a Snapchat to her friends, of a mirror selfie of herself wearing her Calvin Klein handbag hanging over her shoulder. Another example to support this finding, is a post that was reshared on a Tumblr page of imagery of a Gucci handbag and Adidas sneakers, where the brand clearly stood out and was highlighted as a point of focus and a representation of symbol and status that comes with those brands. The use of a brand logo would coincidentally feature with product packaging, when users incorporated these branded products into posts. For example, one user generated an Instagram post that included a picture of her lunch, where a can of Pepsi was placed beside it. Another example of this from the research would also be, when one user generated a Facebook post including a line-up of empty Heineken beer bottles. Exposure to the brand logo meant followers could recognize and be familiar with the brand and could identify with the user who shared the post.

Generating Content with Brand Mention (e.g. @_____ and brand tag)

Highlighted in the research was the infrequent use of brand mentions and brand tags when users generated content. Majority of participants did not always seem to tag or mention the brand, but the examples where respondents did, included the text @maccosmetics , #esteelaudernz , and #jomalonelondon.

4.3.3 Research Question 3 – *What are the motivations and meanings behind young adults consuming user generated content?*

Findings from the data set in response to RQ3 and user motivations can be found and outlined in the following table below.

Table 6 – User Motivations for Consuming User Generated Content

Most frequently visited Websites/Apps, in descending order, grouped by activity	Motivation stated for visit and related activity
Networking and Social Media – Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, Tumblr, LinkedIn, WhatsApp	<p>Need to get updated with information through main feed</p> <p>Need to get updated with profiles, posts, photos and videos</p> <p>Habitual behaviour</p> <p>To alleviate boredom</p>
Audio-video world – YouTube, Spotify, Skype	<p>Viewing of videos</p> <p>To be updated with newly released videos</p> <p>Seeking information via video</p> <p>To listen to music and be updated with new music</p>
Shopping – The Iconic, Boohoo, Superette, AliExpress, TradeMe, Showpo, ColourPop Cosmetics	<p>Getting product information</p> <p>Searching for a product</p> <p>Looking for deals</p> <p>Convenience factor – accessible and easy</p>
Travel –Air New Zealand, Skyscanner, Auckland Airport, Air BnB, Stayz,	<p>Checking prices of airfares</p> <p>Seeking information on accommodation</p> <p>Viewing information on travel bookings</p> <p>Transport and transfers information</p>

Entertainment – Netflix, Neon TV	To be entertained (through TV shows and movies)
News Source – NZ Herald, Stuff	To get updated with national and international current affairs
Study – A.U.T Blackboard, WordPress	To keep updated with university

As shown in the table there were multiple reasons as motivation for young adults consuming content. To refine and find the most re-occurring motivations, the main reasons founded to be – product search, news search, updates, solitary routine, habitual behaviour and boredom.

Similar and aligns to Halliday, (2016) study:

Consuming Motivation: Product Search

When consuming content users identified that seeking a product search was a reason for their motivation. The data revealed that when in the pursuit of searching for a product, users would try and gather product information to gain more understanding and knowledge on certain aspects of a product or service.

Consuming Motivation: News Search

Another motivational information source is the incentive to stay updated with the news. Participants stated that searching for information on news outlets such as the NZ Herald and stuff regarding national and global current affairs, served as a reason for motivation to them.

Consuming Motivation: Updates

The need to be informed and stay up to date with content on social media outlets was also a motivation when consuming content for users. The need for updates on social channel main feeds was so participants could remain informed and in the know on friends and followings profiles, posts, photos and videos.

AL “...checking my newsfeed to stay up to date on news and watch videos”, “I visited this site to check in on my feed and catch up on news, celebrities, make up tutorials, fashions pages,

bloggers, and just my friends and family in general.”, “wanted to check in and read any current news, events and activities that my friends were up to.”,

AP “My motivation is to stay up to date with what's happening in my friend’s life's and to read articles about topics I am interested in”

Consuming Motivation: Solitary Routine

The developed theme solitary routine is a paradigm for motivation in this research that users identified with repeatedly. The reoccurring habit of solitary routine as reason for motivation is one that respondents highlighted and stated frequently. With young adults reaching for their phone several times a day, and spending hours filtering through content, the idea overlaps with this theme developed, in that user routine and habitual tendencies are driving people towards consuming content.

Consuming Motivation: Habitual Behaviour

Habitual behaviour can be described as a form of automatic and routine behaviour. Results concluded that users were visiting websites and apps due to it being repetitive routine and habit for them. Consuming content was founded to be easy and comfortable for them, and an addictive behaviour.

Consuming Motivation: Boredom

“Lasch (1979) predicts these respondents, who, somewhat bored, rather than seeking intimacy with known others, distract themselves on the web, as he estimates a future “life full of distractions”. This excerpt of literature coincides with the results of the data as findings concluded that people are using websites and apps as a source of distraction and are motivated to use them to relieve their current state of boredom.

4.3.4 Research Question 4 – *What are the motivations and meanings behind young adults generating user generated content?*

Findings from the data set in response to RQ4 and user motivations can be found and outlined in the following table below.

Table 7 – User Motivations for Generating User Generated Content

Most frequently visited Websites/Apps, in descending order, grouped by activity	Motivation stated for visit and related activity
Networking and Social Media – Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest, Tumblr, LinkedIn, WhatsApp	To communicate with family and friends To share personal content
Audio-video world – YouTube, Spotify, Skype	To view and create musical playlists Following through on personal interests To communicate in real-time (with visual and audio) with family and friends
Shopping – The Iconic, Boohoo, Superette, AliExpress, TradeMe, Showpo, ColourPop Cosmetics	Writing a product review
Study – A.U.T Blackboard, WordPress	Various study and assignment activities carried out

As shown in the table there were multiple reasons as motivation for young adults generating content. To refine and find the most re-occurring motivations, the main reasons founded to be – information use and reuse information as a personal resource, information sharing, communication, self-identity, personal interests, self-extension, self-affirmation and engagement.

Similar and aligns to Halliday, (2016) study:

Generating Motivation: Information use and reuse information as a personal resource

An emergent theme from the dataset analysed was the use and re-use of information to keep in touch with followers (inclusive of family and friends). This theme is one that identifies and is similar to Halliday, (2016) user generated content study. Laptops and mobiles were technology

devices used to enable this theme, and the easy, dynamic and convenient free features on the website and apps facilitated users generating and producing their content.

Generating Motivation: Information Sharing

From the data, participants explained a reason for motivation when generating content was to share personal moments, memories and daily activities with their followers and friends. Extracts from the data that exemplify this information sharing motivation, see below.

AL "...send them photos through messenger"

Generating Motivation: Communication

The open code communication is another subset that supports the theme information use and reuse as a personal resource. Responses from participants explained that communicating with friends and followers, particularly on networking and social channels such as Facebook Messenger, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Skype, was a motivational factor when generating content, enabling them to engage and conversate with their peers. To support this idea, the following direct quotes from respondents have been selected.

AL "I used this site to communicate with my friends..."

Generating Motivation: Self-Identity

The developed theme of self-identity as a source for motivation was contrary to generating user generated content upon the use of personal interests and self-expression.

Generating Motivation: Personal Interests

The motivational theme, self-identity, has been open coded into two major codes. One being the developed code - personal interests. When identifying a motivation for generating content, it was revealed in the data that following through with personal interests in regard to content, music, video and entertainment served as a driving factor as to why they were generating.

Generating Motivation: Self-Extension

When generating content on social profiles, users explained their posts shared were a representation and extension of self (expression) through them sharing their personal opinions, feelings and views. Respondents described the content as reflective on themselves and that the

post(s) produced, associated and aligned with whom they are as a person, and what they identify with.

Generating Motivation: Self-Affirmation and Engagement

Reponses from users highlighted that when they generate content, a motivational reasoning for them generating and sharing it, is due to the reason of self-affirmation and seeking engagement and approval. The purpose of sharing content in some cases is to seek validation and attract attention and engagement from friends and followers through likes, comments and replies.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 Research Question 1 - How do young adults consume user generated content about brands online?

Findings from the research revealed that consumption of user generated content within this young adult user demographic, was greatly carried out on social media and networking websites and apps. These social streamed platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram served as networks for the users in staying inter-connected with friends, family, followers and news updates. 74% of the time people were consuming content, and only 26% of the time were they generating content.

When consuming content on Facebook users spent time browsing feeds, communicating through Messenger, viewing friends' posts, clearing notifications. On Instagram similar behaviour followed suit, with respondents scrolling their newsfeed, viewing accounts that they followed stories and observing the explore page. And furthermore, Snapchat was primarily used for personal communication through sending and receiving snaps with friends and family.

5.2 Research Question 2 – How do young adults produce user generated content about brands online?

As for generating content in the form of a post, it was found that the sample incorporated different brand elements, and this was a common revelation across all social media vehicles Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram. Included in generated posts were a mixed adaptation of the brand name, product image, logo, mention and tag. Brand name, product image and logo were elements quite frequently incorporated into generated posts, and from the research also founded was the infrequent and minimal use of brand tag by users.

So ultimately what does this all mean and how does it compare and add to the existing body of literature? It can be discussed that social media networks have limitless capabilities in strengthening consumer and business relationships through forms and exchanges of communication and sharing of information. Findings confirm that leveraging social media effectively can in turn create brand awareness and incorporating branding elements plays an important role with generated posts shared to family and followers (Jussila, Kärkkäinen & Aramo-Immonen, 2014).

As identified in literature, Forrester, (2007) identifies a framework in which young adults participate in the online landscape. In better understanding social computing behaviours, the literature scales online users by their level of participation in online activity. Known as the social technographics ladder, the method accounts for analysing current users and their behaviour on social networks and blogs and is also flexible and adaptable to other new technologies. Paramount to Forrester, (2007) ideology is understanding how users approach these online spaces.

Comprising of six levels in the social technographics ladder, participation at each level categorises people by the amount of activity and demonstrated behaviour. The six hierarchies in the ladder in descending order, are the creators, the critics, the collectors, the joiners, the spectators, and the inactives. The tier at the top of the ladder are identified as the creators, these kinds of users are seemingly active as online consumers and carryout actions such as posting blog posts, uploading videos and maintaining web pages. A creator's participation in activities can vary, carrying out all three kinds of activities, or just actioning one. From the research a small amount of people accounted for as being creators, with only 26% of users generating content over the three-day period. This statistic from the findings also correlates with the next tier under the creators, whom are classified the critics. Critics can contribute in participating online in two forms. Either commenting on blogs or generating posts such as reviews and ratings. It is said that critics pick and choose where they contribute their knowledge and often use other blog posts or products/services as a basis for their contribution. In recognition with the analysis, it can be said from the research a significantly small portion of young adults in modern society act as critics. The next step in the ladder falling underneath critics, are known as the collectors. Collectors are consumers that use RSS and add tags to websites/apps and photos. Again, only an insignificantly small amount from the research could be classified as collectors, as tagging websites and brands was not a frequently found behaviour.

In hindsight, with users not identifying largely with being creators, critics or collectors, they did fall heavily under the next two tiers. Joiners and spectators. Joiners have one distinctly defining behaviour, using and visiting social networking sites. Further, they also maintain profiles on their chosen social networking sites. All the sample can account for being Joiners as they all had at least one social networking account and carried out the specific behaviours.

In summary it can be concluded from the relations in the findings that young adults heavily fall into the category of being joiners and spectators in the online domain, and some account for being deemed creators and critics. Not one individual from the research can be said to identify at the bottom hierarchy as Inactive, meaning young adults either consume and/or generate content online and serve as co producers to websites and apps in one form or another.

5.3 Research Question 3 - What are the motivations and meanings behind young adults consuming User Generated Content?

From the insights gained in relation to research question 1 it was revealed young adult users consume more user generated content than they create on branded products on various websites and apps, predominantly being networking and social media ones, and the different branding elements incorporated into generated posts. How users interacted and engaged with content meant consumers were segregated and identified for their behaviour in the online community via social networking sites, apparent themes were developed explaining motivations behind these specific behaviours.

Product search and news search were both similar and correlating motivations for users consuming user generated content. When consuming user generated content, users would gather any information they could to gain more understanding and knowledge on certain goods or services, and news related current affairs. Updates was another source for motivation when consuming user generated content on the web, with findings highlighting peoples needs to stay informed with relevant content across various websites and apps.

Solitary routine and habitual behaviour were a frequently used source of motivation founded in the research. This finding correlates to Lasch, (1979) literature that believes that consumers intention to passing of time and averting boredom can be rationalized as elements subject to narcissism. Marketers can use this knowledge and seek ways to manipulate people into exploiting selfish behaviours, having them spend more time-consuming content and encouraging them to generate content.

5.4 Research Question 4 – What are the motivations and meanings behind young adults generating User Generated Content?

Firstly, recognised was the motivation of information use and reuse information as a personal resource. Demonstrating actions such as information sharing, communication with associates, in relation with producing user generated content, is important to recognize and implement certain informative strategies in dispersal of content. This information use can drive marketers in the direction of thinking how we can leverage content to be greatly informative, shared easily, and how they can be firstly recognised in information searches, maybe meaning for top paid ad space to appear at the top of Google searches for example.

Self-identity and personal interests serving as sources of motivation creates interesting touchpoints to discuss. As generating content in pursuit of portraying one's self, and generating content based upon personal interests, it is important to recognise the constructs that dictate identity and how they can influence self-portrayal. Arnould et al., (2006) explains social and cultural paradigms can influence the consumer and their life projects and roles. When portraying one's self-persona in an online environment, social factors such as brand communities and consumer tribes can dictate how consumers use their resources to achieve life goals as virtually connected people. Marketers need to identify their target demographics self-identity cues and accommodate them in their product and service development and marketing activities.

Self-affirmation was the final theme founded as a generating user generated content motivational source from the study. This theme coincided with existing literature Toma & Hancock (2013) that through engagement on social networking sites, users gravitate to self-affirming thoughts and their need for self-worth and integrity. This idea of narcissism and ego efforts can sometimes be unconscious, but it ultimately exhibits the idea of user self-worth and affirmation. These psychological factors are important insights for marketers to explore further.

5.5 Similarities with Halliday, (2016) Research

Multiple similarities in findings between the research conducted and Halliday, (2016) study were founded and identified in the data. This is important to note, as it means Halliday, (2016) literature is still applicable and relevant in today's world even after a few years later, given the ever changing and evolving technological environment. The same themes emerged from the

findings, which is important to understand as information use and sharing, communication, product and news searches and updates, and various self-constructs are re-occurring themes for a reason. It is important for marketers and brands to invest and exhaust resources into facilitating these sources of motivation.

5.6 Differences to Halliday, (2016) Research

Trust in authenticity of blogs and reviews was not founded to be a factor as a motivational source for consuming and generating content within this research as it did in Halliday, (2006). This could be due to the shift in time, and changing environment, trust in today's society is something consumers do not seek as much. Established reputation in known brands, and brand transparency could be something that has phased out this reason for motivation amongst online users.

5.7 Contribution of the Research

This study took a new approach into gaining further insights into user generated content about brands online and exploring the motivations for consuming and generating content. Similar and adapted from the approach to research in Halliday, (2016) study, the purpose for the research was to investigate and identify how young adults create and consume content on digital channels. Results and findings from the research founded that users remain passive when viewing and consuming curated content, with many respondents observing and absorbing information shared and distributed news, and little tendency to generate content in terms of sharing responses through posts and curating own personal content.

5.8 Theoretical Contribution

The research contributes to literature by confirming and reinforcing that young adults when generating content, rely heavily on social media networks such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat being the three main players in terms of most activity and usage. Marketers can use this theory and knowledge to exert targeted marketing communications to the young adult demographic on these certain platforms. Dependent on a brands product offerings and services, it can be argued that a social media presence and regularly updating content plays a crucial part in reaching this segment of the market. Young adults can be manipulated and socially engineered and motivated to engage with branded content, therefore leveraging and managing these social channels is seen mandatory in efforts to executing digital marketing and online media strategies.

5.9 Empirical Contribution

This research contributed empirically through the collection of real worlds, raw data in an authentic and non-orchestrated research setting. Through conducting research in a local market in Auckland, New Zealand, it standardises the findings to be specific and concise with New Zealand culture, providing contextual cultural grounding. Furthermore, this research considers and applies 15 of the respondent's experiences with the research and domain of interest in providing insightful and observational evidence.

5.10 Practical Contribution

As to contributing practically, this data and research gained will help marketing practitioners in managing their business to consumer relationship and fostering the dynamics between the parties. Brands can gain knowledge and expertise from the benefits of utilizing social networks to enhance multiple facets of their business including growth and profitability, brand equity and sales and revenue. In addition, curating content to monopolize attention is embedded and recognised in this research, meaning marketers need to apply the use of these digital tools to engage and interact with young adults on a regular basis to remain at forefront of the mind and relevant with these consumers.

5.11 Limitations

There are limitations that exist in this research. Partial completion rates, short answers that lacked being insightful and reflective, and the sample size. From the response rates with the Qualtrics online questionnaire, some of the questionnaires were not fully completed, and were only partially completed over the three-day period. A couple of individuals from the sample failed in recording at least 3 websites/apps visited per day over the three-day period.

Furthermore, written reflections and insights into why participants incorporated brand elements in generated content could have served as more insightful. In some of the cases, short answers were recorded and served relatively unreflective. Another limitation, restricting research was the sample size. Struggling to recruit enough participants was a challenge in carrying out this research, with fifteen participants being able to participate. In an ideal world, a larger sample size could be used which could reveal different findings and further revelations. Lastly, Kenney, (2009) suggests that hoarding information can limit analysis. Respondents may have forgotten to

record a sample and rather than leave it blank, they come back to the questions and pursue in filling out missing recorded entries. When this occurs, it can decrease the validity of the research, as attempts to recall cannot always be accurate, and can skew from original thinking, feelings and actions.

5.12 Directions for Future Research

To further the research findings future research could explore other social networking channels and how consumers behave on them. Now that there is a lot more research around social media brands and channels, an area that could be explored further is other booming websites and apps, for example Tik Tok, that has rapidly grown exponentially over the past few years in modern society. Or another example is LinkedIn. Both these other social domains are needing more knowledge and expertise in for marketing practitioners and academic literature. Unfortunately, none of the respondents were active on these networks and I was intrigued into finding out more information, as I know Tik Tok is popular amongst the young adult demographic, and it would be interesting to compare if users consume and generate content in similar ways in comparison to other video sharing platforms like Instagram. Furthermore, more research could be conducted in exploring young adults as members of communities as the context of individuals networking (Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki & Wilner, 2010). Another avenue for research in relation to user generated content that could provide interesting is investigating how users consume content on Podcasts and whether listening to them provokes them to generate content on other social platforms. Business forums are speculating Podcasts to see exponential growth over the next few years, as they have seen in recent years.

5.13 Conclusion

To conclude the research and the journey of conducting my own research I have been able to further my own understanding in marketing knowledge, specifically user generated content and the findings have added to existing academic literature and complimented marketing and branding theories. The research initially sought out to better understand two objectives, (1) to explore and offer a more complete view of how young adult users consume and produce user generated content (2) to explore and offer a deeper understanding on what the motivations and meanings are for young adults consuming and producing user generated content. From this a qualitative study involving 15 young adult respondents was conducted, and answers to research

objectives and questions were founded. Findings alluded to the bigger idea that users both generate and consume user generated content, but in more cases consume user generated content and most of the time act as passive observers. Motivations for consuming and generating user generated content aligned with some of the motivational sources identified in Halliday, (2016) study. It was highlighted and discussed that due to the dynamic and complex digital environment marketers needed to indefinitely have an online presence on as many digital channels as possible to leverage digital branding tools in supporting their business to consumer relationship. Profitability opportunities on digital marketing channels are there for the taking, and benefits can be detrimental for brand value, so marketing practitioners must continue to utilize the advantages of encouraging user generated content.

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Appendices

A. Participant Information Sheet

The logo for AUT (Auckland University of Technology) is displayed in white text on a black background. The letters 'AUT' are in a bold, sans-serif font.

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

1 October 2017

Project Title

“Branding in a Digitally Empowered World: User-generated Content about Brands Online”.

An Invitation

Hello, I am Ruby Heath, and am a postgraduate student, currently in the process of working towards my Masters of Business. As part of the degree, it is required that I undertake my own independent research.

Please note that participation in my research is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time prior to the completion of data collection before 15 October, 2017.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to offer a more complete view, and deeper understanding of how users are generating and consuming content about brands online. The research will look to investigate the motivations and meanings behind young adults creating and consuming user-generated content about brands. The benefits for you as a participant will be getting to participate in real life research in the form of an online study, and the research and results will be able to enhance your understanding in digital branding and consumer motivations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You were identified on the basis of being a young adult, who is a frequent user and consumer of online activity. The recruitment process was carried out through personally inviting you through either, a personal conversation, word-of-mouth referral, or an email to participate in my research. I have chosen to invite you to participate in my research as you fit my research sample criteria, as being either a male or female young adult. (If you are an A.U.T university student, whether you choose to participate or not, this research will not affect your grades in any A.U.T papers).

What will happen in this research?

My project will involve conducting research through you as participants, recording your normal daily practice of digital activity on websites and social media apps, and explaining meanings and motivations behind your user-generated content activities. In the online questionnaire you will be asked to identify the website or social media app you visited, the time you spent on the website or app (mins/hours), explain what you did on the website or app, asked if you generated content, and the meanings behind your activities.

The research will be conducted over a 3-day period, where you need to record daily practices every day, visiting 3 websites or apps daily, and a daily time commitment of at least 30 minutes. You as a participant will answer all questions, **insightfully** and **descriptively**, over the 3-day period, recording daily which websites and apps you visit and answering all other user-generated content related questions. Once the data collection is complete, I will analyse the data. Once the analysis is complete, the data will be retained by AUT and will be securely stored at AUT in the MARS department. Your data will be anonymous, and no one will be identified in the analysis.

What are the discomforts and risks?

No discomforts and risks will be experienced in this research.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

N/A.

What are the benefits?

The benefits for you are experiencing real life research, and the results will enhance your understanding of digital branding and how users generate value for themselves and brands by content creation. Academic and business marketing research will benefit from the insights gained about how marketers can better manage their websites and facilitate consumer interaction via content creation.

How will my privacy be protected?

All answers will be completely confidential and your personal details will remain anonymous. Privacy and confidentiality will be managed by myself and my primary supervisor, Associate Professor Mark Glynn.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

Your time - The research will span over a 3-day period where you will be invited to answer questions and save your answers daily. This means a time commitment of at least 30 minutes a day.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Please let me know if you would like to participate by Sunday 15 October 2017.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

By consenting to participate in the research, to do so click on the >> arrow button at the bottom right of the introduction and instructions page of the online research study, indicating and agreeing to commencement.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Yes. Copies of the findings will be sent via email at the close of the research and on completion of the thesis.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Associate Professor Mark Glynn, mark.glynn@aut.ac.nz, telephone: 09-921 9999 ext. 5813.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

You are able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Ruby Heath, email: rubyheath12@gmail.com

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Associate Professor Mark Glynn, mark.glynn@aut.ac.nz, telephone: 09-921 9999 ext. 5813.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 27 February 2017, AUTEK Reference number 16/446.

B. Qualtrics Questionnaire

UGC about Brands Online Survey

Survey Flow

Block: INTRODUCTION

Standard: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS (6 Questions)

Standard: WEBSITE/APP 1 (30 Questions)

Standard: WEBSITE/APP 2 (30 Questions)

Standard: WEBSITE/APP 3 (30 Questions)

Standard: WEBSITE/APP 4 (30 Questions)

Standard: WEBSITE/APP 5 (30 Questions)

Standard: WEBSITE/APP 6 (30 Questions)

Standard: WEBSITE/APP 7 (30 Questions)

Standard: WEBSITE/APP 8 (30 Questions)

Standard: WEBSITE/APP 9 (30 Questions)

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION & INSTRUCTIONS

Research Topic

Branding in a Digitally Empowered World: User-generated Content about Brands Online

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to offer a more complete view, and deeper understanding of how users are generating and consuming content about brands online. The research will look to investigate the motivations and meanings behind young adults creating and consuming user-generated content about brands.

Instructions

My project will involve conducting research through you as participants, recording your normal daily practice of online activity on websites/apps, and explaining meanings and motivations behind your user-generated content activities. In the online questionnaire you will be asked to identify the website/app you visited, the time you spent on the website (mins), explain what you did on the website/app, and what motivated your activities. The research will be conducted over a 3-day period, where you need to record daily practices every day, visiting 3 websites/apps daily, and a daily time commitment of at least 30 minutes over the 3-day period. You as a participant will be required to answer all questions, **insightfully** and **descriptively**, over the 3-day period, recording daily which websites/apps you visit and answering all content related questions..

For example...

Websites or Apps you may visit could be Facebook, Amazon, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, Netflix etc. Then you will need to explain what you did on the website e.g. browsed content, scrolled through newsfeed, looked at products and their information etc. Furthermore you will need to state what motivated you to visit that website/app, for example that may be... to communicate with friends, to get updated with photos and profiles, getting product information, following through on personal interests, keeping updated with university work, to be entertained etc. You will need to **elaborate further** with your answers but these are just ideas and examples. There will then be several other website/app content related questions you will need to also comment on.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

All information and responses you provide will be strictly anonymous and no individual results will be highlighted. The demographic information that is asked of you to answer, at the end of the survey, will be used for comparative purposes only.

Consent

By consenting to participate in this research, you do so by clicking the 'Next >>' arrow button, indicating commencement in the following, online research study.

Please read the attached Participant information sheet for further information.

Researcher Contact Details

Ruby Heath, rubyheath12@gmail.com

End of Block

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Demographic Questions

What is your Gender?

- Male
- Female

What is your Age?

- 18 to 20
 - 21 to 24
 - 25 to 28
 - 29 to 32
 - 32 to 35
-

What is your Ethnicity?

- NZ European
 - NZ Maori
 - Pacific Islander
 - Asian
 - Indian
 - Middle Eastern
 - Latin American
 - African
 - Other (please specify) _____
-

What is your highest completed level of Education?

- Primary School
 - High School
 - Certificate or Diploma
 - Undergraduate Degree
 - Postgraduate or Doctoral Degree
 - Other (please specify) _____
-

What is your yearly Income?

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000 - \$24,999
- \$25,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$74,999
- \$75,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 +

End of Block

WEBSITE/APP 1

Website/App 1

Name of Website or App:

Time spent on Website/App: (minutes) (e.g. 1hr = 60 mins, 1 1/2hrs = 90mins)

What Digital Device did you use to access this Website/App?

Mobile Phone

Laptop

iPad/Tablet

Desktop

Other (please specify) _____

What areas of the Website/App did you spend most of your time browsing?

What motivated you to visit this Website/App?

Was this Website/App useful?

Yes

No

Why/Why Not?

What would you recommend to improve the user experience on this Website/App?

Any further reflective comments?

Did you create any content on the Website/App?

Yes

No

If yes, what content was created?

Why did you create this content?

Did you incorporate any brand(s) imagery into your content?

Yes

No

If yes, please specify brand(s) and products used:

What elements of the brand did you use? (E.g. logo, slogan, text/font, picture of celebrity endorser etc.)

Did you add text or a caption to your content?

Yes

No

If yes, what did the text/caption say?

Why did you add this text/caption?

Did you make a tag?

Yes

No

If yes, who or what did you tag? (E.g. @_____ in your caption, or tagging a brand or other account, or hash tagging, or adding a location tag)

Why did you create this tag?

Did you send the content to anyone?

- Yes
- No

If yes, whom did you send it to and what kind of audience did it reach? (E.g. friends, family, public followers)

How do you think your followers interpret your content?

How does this content reflect who you are? (E.g. your identity)

Were you alone when you created this content?

- Yes
- No

If no, who were you with? (E.g. a friend)

What do you hope will happen with your content? (E.g. to attract attention and conversation, to get re-shared, to go viral, or to have low exposure and interest etc.)

Any further reflective comments on UGC?

C. AUTECH Ethics Approval Letter

AUTECH Secretariat

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, WU406 Level 4 WU Building City Campus
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

The logo for Auckland University of Technology (AUTECH) is displayed in white, bold, uppercase letters on a black rectangular background.

27 February 2017

Mark Glynn
Faculty of Business Economics and Law

Dear Mark

Re Ethics Application: **16/446 Branding in a digitally empowered world: User-generated content about brands online**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 27 February 2020.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTECH:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 27 February 2020;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 27 February 2020 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTECH is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTECH approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTECH grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

All the very best with your research,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K O'Connor', written in a cursive style.

Kate O'Connor

Executive Secretary

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: rubyheath12@gmail.com