Word-of-Mouth Dissemination of User-Generated Content and Brand Interaction Strategies in Online Marketing

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Abstract: Online marketing has gradually shifted from enterprise-dominated information dissemination to content communication involving both businesses and consumers. User-generated content (UGC), as an important means through which consumers express product experiences, share consumption opinions, and participate in brand communication, has become a major source of online word-of-mouth. Consumers transform their personal consumption experiences into publicly accessible information through product reviews, usage experiences, videos, images, and comments, thereby influencing other consumers' brand perceptions and purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, UGC provides businesses with new opportunities to understand consumer needs, improve products and services, and establish brand relationships. However, several problems remain in current online marketing practices, including insufficient content authenticity, repetitive content, superficial brand interactions, and delayed responses to negative reviews. Businesses need to improve their marketing strategies in terms of content authenticity, user participation mechanisms, interactive feedback, and long-term brand relationship management. By doing so, they can transform UGC into a sustainable resource for brand communication and promote the transition from one-way promotion to two-way communication.

Keywords: online marketing; user-generated content; word-of-mouth communication; brand interaction; social media

1. Introduction

The development of internet technologies has changed the communication relationship between businesses and consumers. Traditional online marketing mainly relied on corporate websites, online advertisements, and promotional information to communicate brand messages. Consumers generally occupied the position of information recipients. With the development of Weibo, WeChat, short-video platforms, and online shopping platforms, consumers have gained increasingly diverse channels for publishing and exchanging information. They can actively

participate in brand communication through product reviews, usage experiences, video sharing, and online discussions. Consequently, corporate online marketing has gradually shifted from relying primarily on self-produced advertisements to placing greater emphasis on consumer experiences and social media communication (Liu & Wan, 2016). User-generated content (UGC) is an important manifestation of this transformation. Consumers are no longer merely purchasers of products or recipients of marketing messages. Through their own expressions and experiences, they can also influence how other consumers perceive brands. Compared with promotional content produced by businesses, content published by ordinary consumers often reflects everyday experiences and is more likely to attract attention and discussion. Particularly on short-video and social media platforms, a product review or a video documenting personal experience may generate further communication through comments, reposts, and secondary content creation.

In this context, UGC has become more than a means of information exchange among consumers. It is also an important resource for businesses to conduct online marketing, shape brand images, and maintain consumer relationships. How businesses can encourage the creation of authentic user content, maximize the value of online word-of-mouth, and strengthen connections between consumers and brands through effective interaction has become an important issue in online marketing.

2. The Relationship Between User-Generated Content and Online Word-of-Mouth Communication

2.1 Main Forms of User-Generated Content

User-generated content refers to information independently created and published by consumers or ordinary internet users concerning products, services, and brands. Its forms are diverse, including product reviews, ratings, and written feedback on online shopping platforms, as well as personal experiences, image sharing, short videos, livestreaming experiences, and comment-based discussions on social media. Such content generally originates from users' actual experiences and personal perceptions, reflecting a strong degree of individual expression.

From the perspective of online marketing, UGC differs significantly from official promotional content produced by businesses. Corporate promotional materials are usually organized around product advantages, brand positioning, and marketing objectives, with relatively clear commercial purposes. In contrast, UGC primarily reflects consumers' personal experiences and judgments. Its topics, forms of expression, and communication reach are relatively flexible. Consumers may share satisfactory experiences or point out product defects and service problems. This allows UGC to present a more diverse picture of a brand.

The development of short-video platforms has further expanded the forms of UGC. Consumers can use videos to record product usage processes and demonstrate product features through images, speech, and specific scenarios. Short-video marketing offers diverse content formats, relatively rapid dissemination, and considerable opportunities for user participation, providing consumers with convenient ways to participate in brand communication (Lu, 2024). As a result, UGC is no longer limited to simple written reviews but increasingly incorporates images, videos, and interactive discussions.

2.2 The Role of User-Generated Content in Online Word-of-Mouth Communication

Online word-of-mouth refers to the communication of product experiences, service evaluations, and brand opinions among consumers through the internet. Compared with traditional verbal communication among acquaintances, online word-of-mouth has a wider communication reach, longer information retention, and more diverse participants. A consumer review can be read directly by other users and may also reach a wider

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audience through reposting, sharing, and platform recommendations.

UGC provides an important foundation for the formation of online word-of-mouth. After purchasing and using a product, consumers may develop a willingness to share their experiences. When product quality, service experiences, or brand values meet their expectations, they may voluntarily publish positive reviews and recommend the product to others. When actual experiences differ from expectations, consumers may also express dissatisfaction through comments and complaints. Together, these contributions form the online word-of-mouth surrounding a brand.

The communication value of UGC is also reflected in the trust relationships formed among consumers. When faced with large amounts of commercial promotional information, consumers often need to determine whether the information is reliable and whether a product meets their needs. Experiences shared by ordinary users provide perspectives that differ from corporate advertising. In particular, when products are relatively difficult to evaluate before purchase, other consumers' reviews can help potential buyers understand their actual performance. Perceived risks in online purchases of fresh agricultural products include product performance, physical, financial, psychological, time-related, and service risks. Authentic and detailed product information can help reduce uncertainty in online transactions (Cui, 2016).

However, UGC does not necessarily produce positive word-of-mouth. Individual consumer experiences vary, and the same product may receive different evaluations. If businesses focus exclusively on positive content while ignoring negative feedback, a gap may emerge between brand promotion and consumers' actual experiences. Therefore, the value of online word-of-mouth depends not only on the volume of content but also on its authenticity, information quality, and consumers' overall perceptions of the brand.

2.3 User Participation and the Formation of Brand Interaction

UGC not only facilitates information exchange among consumers but also provides channels for establishing connections between consumers and businesses. In traditional marketing, businesses were primarily responsible for publishing content, while consumers responded mainly through purchasing behavior. In the social media environment, however, consumers can leave comments, ask questions, and share experiences on brand accounts. Businesses can also respond to consumer needs through comment replies, private messages, and online activities.

This interaction transforms brand communication from simple information delivery into continuous exchange. Consumers can express their opinions, while businesses can use feedback to understand their actual perceptions of products and services. Marketing activities therefore increasingly involve two-way communication. The growing importance of consumer needs and interactive experiences means that businesses should incorporate actual consumer demands into marketing activities rather than focusing exclusively on product sales (Zhang, 2017).

Brand interaction is also important because it strengthens consumers' sense of participation. When consumers realize that their opinions receive attention and may even influence product improvements or brand content, they are more likely to develop a willingness to maintain long-term engagement with the brand. Therefore, UGC serves both as a medium for online word-of-mouth communication and as an important connection point for building brand relationships.

3. Problems in UGC Communication and Brand Interaction in Online Marketing

3.1 Insufficient Authenticity and Credibility of User-Generated Content

The core value of UGC lies in its reflection of consumers' genuine experiences. If businesses

excessively interfere with user expression through commercialized practices, or use fabricated reviews, bulk positive comments, and paid promotions to create artificial word-of-mouth, the credibility of user content may be weakened.

Some businesses encourage consumers to publish reviews by offering gifts, coupons, and participation in prize draws. Although these practices can increase the volume of content in the short term, they may also cause consumers to focus more on rewards than on the products themselves. When reviews are primarily motivated by incentives, content may become repetitive and superficial, providing limited useful information to other consumers.

Some marketing content is presented in the style of ordinary consumer experiences but actually serves an obvious promotional purpose. If businesses fail to disclose the commercial nature of such collaborations, consumers may mistake promotional messages for independent consumer evaluations. Over time, this practice can undermine consumers' ability to assess brand information and damage corporate credibility.

3.2 Content Homogenization and Insufficient Communication Quality

Competition for attention on social media platforms is intense. Some users imitate popular video formats and content structures to attract more views. Businesses may also become overly dependent on trending topics, popular music, and standardized promotional templates, resulting in insufficient differentiation between brands.

Although short videos provide intuitive ways to present products, consumers may gradually experience content fatigue if marketing materials repeatedly focus on product introductions, price displays, and promotional information. Online marketing needs to connect entertainment experiences and consumption scenarios with the interests of target audiences. Simply changing content formats cannot continuously increase user participation (Li, 2022).

UGC also varies considerably in information quality. Some consumers publish content without providing specific usage scenarios or detailed experiences, offering only simple expressions of liking or disliking a product. Such content provides limited practical information for other consumers. A large volume of repetitive content may also obscure valuable consumer feedback, weakening the reference value of online word-of-mouth.

3.3 Superficial Brand Interaction and Insufficient Use of Consumer Feedback

Although many businesses have established social media accounts and created comment sections and online customer service channels, brand interaction often remains limited to simple replies and promotional activities. When consumers raise specific questions, businesses sometimes respond with standardized messages without addressing the actual problems related to products or services.

Some brands also rely excessively on likes, prize draws, reposting, and commenting tasks to increase interaction statistics. These activities may generate short-term account engagement, but they do not necessarily strengthen consumers' identification with the brand. Consumers may participate because of rewards and stop following the brand once the activity ends.

Another important issue is the inadequate handling of negative reviews. When businesses delete, avoid, or simply dismiss consumer complaints, they fail to resolve the original problems and may trigger further online discussions. Consumer feedback is an important source of information for understanding market needs. Without effective collection and utilization, businesses may find it difficult to achieve continuous improvement through brand interaction.

4. Strategies for UGC Word-of-Mouth Communication and Brand Interaction in Online Marketing

4.1 Improving User Content Quality Through Authentic Consumer Experiences

Businesses should regard authentic product experiences as the foundation of UGC marketing rather than pursuing content volume alone. Consumers' willingness to share their experiences is closely related to product quality, service standards, and actual usage experiences. Only when products and services meet consumers' basic expectations are users more likely to develop a lasting willingness to share.

In practice, businesses can provide consumers with opportunities to express themselves through product experience activities, user story collections, and consumption scenario sharing. For example, consumers can be encouraged to share how they actually use products, describe changes before and after using them, and present specific application scenarios. This allows other users to understand product characteristics through genuine experiences.

Businesses should also respect users' independent expressions and should not require consumers to publish exclusively positive reviews. When inviting users to participate in activities involving gifts or discounts, businesses should clearly explain the activity rules and avoid directly linking rewards to positive evaluations. Commercially sponsored content should also be appropriately disclosed to protect consumers' right to information. Only by reducing artificial packaging and misleading promotion can UGC fulfill its role in word-of-mouth communication.

4.2 Diversifying Content Formats and Encouraging Active User Participation

Consumers have different interests and communication preferences. Businesses should therefore design diverse participation opportunities according to their brand positioning and target audiences. For consumers who prefer visual expression, businesses can encourage the sharing of product images and short videos. For users who are more willing to express their opinions, experience articles, comment discussions, and product review activities can provide suitable channels for participation.

Short videos and livestreaming offer richer scenarios for UGC communication. Businesses can combine product demonstrations, user experiences, and consumer interaction to help audiences develop a more concrete understanding of brands. The integration of livestreaming, short videos, and online shopping platforms also provides connected channels through which consumers can access product information and participate in online transactions (Chen & Geng, 2023).

User participation should not be limited to promotional campaigns but should also become part of everyday brand communication. Businesses can continuously develop content themes around product usage, daily life scenarios, and consumer needs, allowing users to participate at different times. For products with distinctive regional or cultural characteristics, consumers can also be encouraged to share local culture, usage habits, and personal stories. This helps establish a connection between user content and brand identity. The combination of livestreaming marketing and agricultural brand development also demonstrates the relationship between content communication and brand building (Shi et al., 2020).

4.3 Improving Feedback Mechanisms and Strengthening Consumer Participation

Businesses should transform brand interaction from simple information responses into a continuous communication mechanism. After consumers publish comments, raise questions, or share usage experiences, businesses need to identify their actual needs and respond accordingly.

For product inquiries, businesses should provide clear and accurate information. For problems encountered during product use, they should offer specific solutions. Consumer suggestions should be

collected, evaluated, and considered in subsequent product or service improvements. Such practices allow users to feel that their opinions are valued rather than treating comment sections merely as spaces for brand promotion.

Businesses can also establish more stable interactive relationships through online brand communities, themed discussions, and user co-creation activities. Consumers may participate in new product idea collection, packaging design discussions, and brand activity planning, allowing their opinions to become useful references for brand development. Online brand communities provide relatively stable spaces for consumer communication and brand content dissemination. Businesses can use community content management to encourage continuous consumer participation.

Brand interaction should also be evaluated according to its actual quality rather than simply measured by the number of comments and likes. Whether consumers are willing to continue sharing experiences, actively participate in discussions, and whether businesses make improvements based on user opinions are all important indicators of effective interaction.

4.4 Managing Negative Word-of-Mouth and Building Brand Trust

Online word-of-mouth communication is open and accessible, meaning that negative consumer evaluations can also attract attention and spread among other users. Businesses should not simply regard negative reviews as threats to their brand image. Instead, they should treat them as important sources of information for identifying problems in products and services.

When responding to negative feedback, businesses need to identify the causes of the problems and provide appropriate responses. If problems are genuinely caused by product quality or inadequate services, businesses should acknowledge the issues and offer reasonable solutions. If consumers misunderstand product information, businesses should provide clear and objective explanations. For recurring problems, businesses should pay attention to the common needs reflected in the feedback and prevent similar issues from occurring again.

Brand trust depends not only on marketing communication but also on whether businesses consistently fulfill their promises regarding products and services. An online marketing system should connect sales, transportation, and after-sales services so that consumers receive relatively consistent experiences before, during, and after purchasing (Hou, 2019). Therefore, businesses should integrate online word-of-mouth management with product quality control, after-sales services, and consumer rights protection. This allows negative feedback to become a genuine basis for business improvement.

4.5 Integrating Content Communication with Brand Values

UGC offers considerable flexibility in communication, but businesses should not treat it merely as a tool for generating traffic. Brands need to establish clear positioning and ensure that user-shared content remains consistent with their core values. Otherwise, frequently changing communication directions to follow trending topics may weaken brand identity.

Businesses can establish long-term content themes around brand characteristics by combining product experiences, user stories, and brand culture. Consumer-generated content can demonstrate the practical uses of products while also reflecting the lifestyles and values promoted by a brand. In this way, individual pieces of user content can gradually contribute to a relatively consistent brand image.

At the same time, businesses should adjust their interaction methods according to the communication characteristics of different platforms. Short-video platforms are suitable for attracting participation through visual content and scenario-based presentations. Social media platforms are useful for everyday communication and topic discussions, while e-commerce platforms can connect product reviews with after-sales feedback. In the new media environment, businesses need to integrate marketing resources

according to the characteristics of different channels and establish interconnected communication approaches (Cao, 2021).

Brand value requires continuous accumulation. Businesses should encourage consumers to express their genuine experiences while maintaining user trust through stable product quality and service standards. Only when user content remains consistent with the actual performance of a brand can online word-of-mouth develop into a long-term brand asset.

5. Conclusion

UGC has changed the communication structure of online marketing, gradually transforming consumers from traditional information recipients into active participants in brand communication. Through product reviews, usage experiences, short videos, and social media discussions, consumers transform their personal consumption experiences into online word-of-mouth, influencing other consumers' brand perceptions and purchasing decisions. At the same time, UGC provides businesses with new channels for understanding consumer needs, improving products and services, and establishing brand relationships.

However, UGC marketing in the current online environment still faces several challenges, including insufficient authenticity, content homogenization, superficial interaction, and inadequate handling of negative feedback. Businesses need to take authentic consumer experiences as the foundation of content communication, encourage diverse forms of user participation, improve feedback mechanisms, strengthen negative word-of-mouth management, and reinforce brand value.

In the long term, the focus of UGC marketing should not simply be on increasing content volume or generating short-term traffic. Instead, businesses should establish stable communication relationships with consumers. Only by respecting consumers' genuine expressions, valuing their opinions, and translating interactive feedback into improvements in products and services can businesses fully realize the value of UGC in brand word-of-mouth communication and relationship building.

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