Chapter 12
User-Generated-Content: Concept, Typology, and Marketing Outcomes

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ABSTRACT
User-generated-content, also called user-generated-media, user-created-content, and consumer-generated-content, refers to all types of content, like pictures, videos, or posts, created by consumers and delivered through online platforms like social media. User-generated content is gaining momentum as a marketing communication tool in the form of contests (e.g., create-your-own advertisements, branded storytelling, or branded interactive applications). By allowing consumers to become prosumers and creating or co-creating brand messages, advertisers increase consumers’ exposure to and involvement with brand communications, which results in a greater level of brand engagement. This chapter analyzes the effects of prosumers’ actions on marketing communications using the uses and gratifications theory approach. Two main types of advertising content created by prosumers, spontaneous content and marketing-oriented content, are identified. Five marketing communication outcomes of user-generated-content (credibility, message distortion, loss of control on the message valence, involvement with the message, and virality) are also examined. Implications for practitioners are also discussed.

1. INTRODUCTION
In today’s online digital interactive environment consumers are used to sharing their daily events and experiences in a ubiquitous way – anytime, everywhere, thus enhancing their social interactions (Hsiao, 2011; Wang, Moon, Kwon, Evans, & Stefanone, 2010). These events and experiences include brand-
related events and interactions. Especially in the context of Web 2.0, social media play an important role in brand-related communications. In fact, 70% of social media, or Social Networking Sites (SNSs), users develop brands and products through their online profiles (Zenith Media, 2010). These users develop their brand-related content through User-Generated-Content, that is, all kinds of ‘creative’ content, from a picture to a video or a post in a blog that is delivered through online media. From this approach to content creation consumers become prosusers or producers that consume the content they produce themselves. The term prosumer is a neologism acronym for producer and consumer that was coined by Töffler (1980) in order to designate how the role of the producers and the consumers would be blurred to the point of merging. This situation results as a consequence of a supersaturated market in which mass production of standardized products begin to satisfy the basic needs of consumers and consequently in order to keep increasing the benefits businesses begin personalizing this mass production. In other words, a highly personalized type of mass production evolves. In order for that personalization to be successful, the specific consumer needs to participate personally in the process of personalization or even co-creation (Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright, 2008) of the products and services s/he wants. User-Generated-Content produced by prosusers has important implications not only from a cultural point of view (Dijick, 2009), but also from a productive economics perspective (Tapscott & Williams, 2006). These new production processes are happening in a new economy based on globalization and information networks (Mandel, 1996). From the so-called smart mobs (Rheingold, 2002) to online virtual communities like Second Life, consumers can create and share content to satisfy their information, entertainment, and social needs. Co-creation as a function of prosusers can also be linked to actual movements like crowdfunding and collective co-creation. The term crowdsumer has been proposed as a neologism acronym for crowd-prosumer referring to those cooperative interactions prosusers have within a brand community (Martí, Bigné, & Hyder, 2014). Broadly speaking, crowdsumer refers to cooperative co-creation that can be found mainly in online communities or in wiki-based platforms. For instance, consumers can engage in developing a cooperative brand-based amateur advertisement, a brand-based action like a flash-mob upload to YouTube, or developing free software in a Linux context (Martí, Bigné, & Hyder, 2014). This trend in co-creation and prosuserism can especially be observed in millennials or Generation Y, the so-called digital natives (Prensky, 2001). Three quarters of them have created a profile on Social Networking Sites compared to half of Generation Xers or 30% of Baby Boomers (Pew Research Center, 2010). Millennials are also more likely than older adults to feel that technology makes life easier and brings family and friends closer together, highlighting the active role that technology and virtual communities represent for their social interactions (Martí, Bigné, & Hyder, 2014). Millennials are also more likely than other generations to seek entertainment through online videos, online gaming, virtual worlds like Second Life, and downloading music (Pew Research Center, 2009). Their proactive use of the web 2.0 makes them not only read other people’s blogs but also write their own.

Despite this increasing importance of User-Generated-Content in online consumer behavior (Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright, 2008) there is a lack of theoretical research related to User-Generated-Content. This chapter aims to fill this research gap by proposing a conceptualization and a typology of User-Generated-Content. In doing so we first analyze the increasing role of consumers in creating the content they consume (prosumers). Then we propose a theoretical framework to analyze User-Generated-Content providing a conceptualization, definition, type of content and platforms used to webcast User-Generated-Content; we analyze User-Generated-Content within marketing communications; and we present Uses & Gratifications Theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Anderson & Meyer, 1975; McQuail, 1995) as a suitable theoretical framework to explain how consumers can satisfy their information, entertain-