



crowdtap

The People-Powered Marketing Platform

The Marketer's Guide to User-Generated Content

Best Practices for the Future of Brand Storytelling

What's the role of a brand when everyone is a storyteller?

Your customers are media-empowered and highly vocal when it comes to their brand and product preferences. They don't simply want a say in your marketing — they want a seat at the table. The million-dollar question: How can you mobilize them to drive business impact?

This report aims to shed light on the rapidly evolving user-generated content landscape and provide tangible best practices for marketers navigating this new terrain. You'll see that we've also provided some research around the impact of consumer-led stories, and even asked a few of our friends in the industry to weigh in with their own opinions on the state of UGC.

Read on to learn why we believe the future of brand storytelling will be people-powered, and why in many ways, the future is now.

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Crowdtap Research: What Motivates People to Create & Share Digital Content

UGC is the Next Iteration of Word-of-Mouth

People have been sharing stories about brands for decades. What has changed are the vehicles through which word-of-mouth messages travel. The rise of the Internet, and later, social media, catapulted watercooler conversations to digital spaces where they could be created and shared in public fashion. Today, these stories are increasingly taking the form of rich, multimedia experiences that are facilely created by technology-empowered consumers.

The maturation of social media and mobile has ushered in a proliferation of content types and an overall improvement in the quality of UGC. Photo and video editing tools are allowing people to create high-quality UGC with minimal effort — and digital natives, self-publishers and stewards of their own personal brands, are creating and sharing more content than ever before.



of all online content is consumer-generated.

Source: Folio, December 2013

Teens and Millennials are driving a new era of content marketing that reflects an overall democratization of the media landscape. Within digital, microformats are growing and traditional media channels are eroding. Emerging platforms are dominated by personalities and real people — not brands or media companies — and these content creators command massive followings and more influence than some of the largest brands and media properties around.

Of course, expert content creators comprise a small sliver of the total UGC pie. In reality, the consumer content landscape reflects a mix of high-reach, expert creators and everyday peer influencers who are creating and sharing content with their own networks of family and friends.



Mobile apps like VSCO Cam® empower everyday content creators to take their skills up a notch, leading to an increase in premium UGC across social platforms.

Images via grid.vSCO.co

“Brands have been dabbling in the UGC space for more than a decade and it is only until fairly recently that the space has matured enough where the quality of the content matches the requirements of the brand. Broadly, smartphone cameras are now as good as professional cameras and collaborative tools like PicsArt and publishing platforms like Instagram now make it easier for artists, creatives and mainstream consumers to produce content that brands want to align themselves with.

This means we’re reaching a point where brands can open up more to creative communities around the world, which I hope will mean an even greater proliferation of visual-based media which can be consumed in any language and by anyone, anywhere.”



TOBY DANIELS
CEO & Founder, Crowdcentric
[@tobyd](#)

UGC Spans the Full Spectrum of Social Influence

The UGC landscape covers a wide range of creators, from high-reach topical experts to everyday peer influencers who share updates with their close networks via social channels.

A reflection of the “real world,” your online community is comprised of individuals who have their own passions, interests and talents. Ensure your UGC strategy takes into consideration the full spectrum of social influence and accounts for the unique motivations of everyday consumers and professional content creators. Further, remember that building an ongoing relationship with creators is paramount: people don’t create content with campaign cycles in mind — for them, it’s an always-on activity.

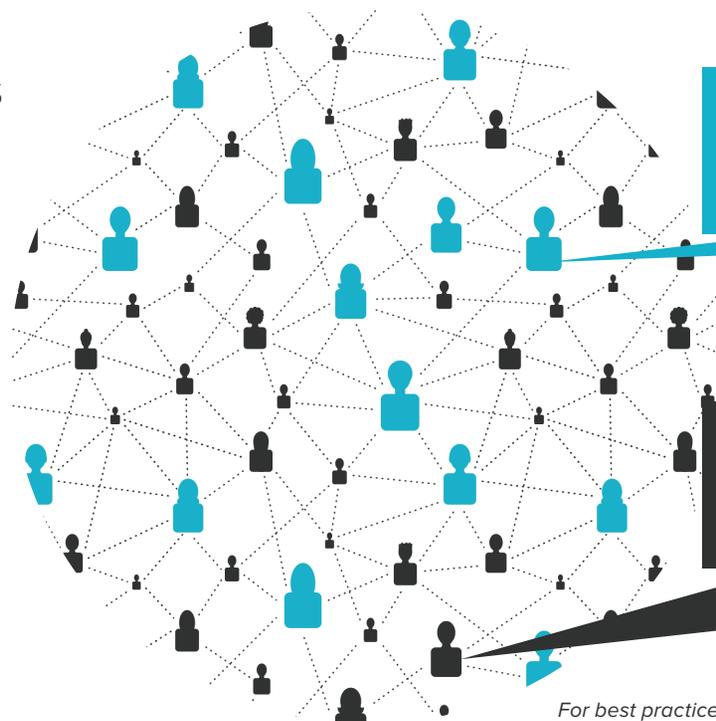
Expert Content Creators

e.g. SocialStars by Crowdtap

Elite group of professional or semi-professional creators who create content within specific categories and topics

Peer Influencers

Everyday consumers who are media-empowered and share user-generated content via social channels



SIERRA FURTADO
Beauty Expert, Content Creator
1.4M YouTube subscribers



IVAN BREVAS
K-Pop & Tumblr Enthusiast
Tallahassee, Fla.

For best practices for partnering with expert content creators, see page 20.

The Case for Elevating the Role of User-Generated Content in Your Marketing

There's a reason Forrester Research cites user-generated content as a brand-builder with "influential marketing potential" — when used correctly, it can be an extremely powerful asset in your digital toolkit. UGC is powerful for three key reasons: first, it's ubiquitous among digital natives (Millennials, in particular, are prolific content creators); second, it's influential as it engenders more trust and is more memorable than other media formats; and third, UGC is a proven driver of brand metrics such as awareness, favorability and purchase intent. Considered together, these supporting points underscore UGC's untapped potential for brands.

"User-Generated Content's Impact on Brand Building," Forrester Research, July 2015

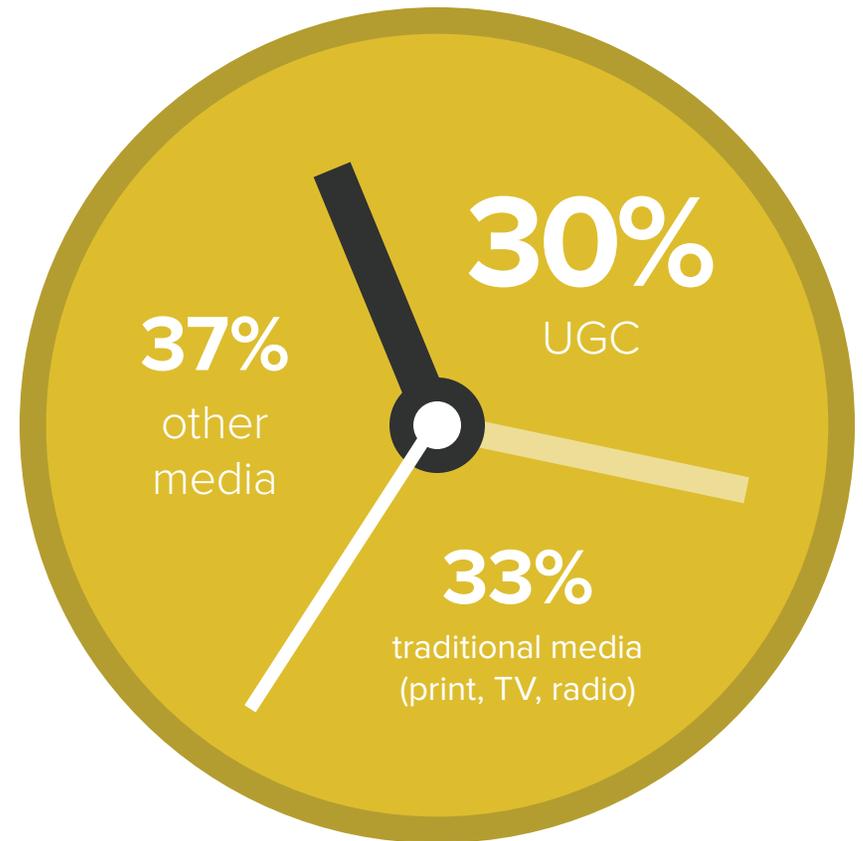
TIME SPENT

Millennials are Prolific Creators & Consumers of UGC

Millennials spend nearly 30 percent of their total media time with content that's created and shared by their peers, a number that rivals the amount of time they spend with traditional media formats — including TV, print and radio — combined.*

Further, Millennials are spending more time engaging in social channels, which are dominated by UGC, than they are watching TV. In fact, the platforms that command the largest share of Millennial users are all focused on content creation and curation. Per a 2015 [comScore](#) study, Snapchat leads all platforms with 71% of users falling within the Millennial cohort. Tumblr has the second-highest share of Millennials (53%), and Vine is the third most Millennial-favored platform (51%).

*Source: Ipsos MediaCT & Crowdtap Study, 2014



Want to learn more about Millennials & UGC?

Download the complete Ipsos MediaCT & Crowdtap study [here](#).

“User-generated content will continue to grow as a critical component of brands’ creative strategies. As content creation tools become more ubiquitous and powerful on mobile devices, UGC will elevate as a more viable platform to build bespoke, high-quality creative assets.”



MATT BRITTON

CEO & Founder, MRY

Author of *YouthNation: Building Remarkable Brands in a Youth-Driven Culture*

[@mattyb](#)

70M

Average number of photos posted on Instagram in a given day

Source: Instagram, January 2015

500M

Average number of tweets published per day on Twitter

Source: Twitter, July 2015

72M

Average number of links shared on Facebook per day

Source: Statistic Brain, July 2015

1.5B

Number of Vine loops played daily

Source: GigaOm, January 2015

UGC

A Day in the Life

Self-publishing has become a part of consumers' daily routines, and this is especially true among Millennials and Gen Z. With the proliferation of these content-driven conversations comes a proliferation of content-driven conversations about brands, and brand experiences, in particular. Inspiring people to tell their stories in the ways that are natural to them is a powerful way for marketers to spread authentic brand truths.

INFLUENCE

People Trust UGC More Than They Do Other Media

According to **Nielsen**, 92% of consumers trust peer recommendations above all forms of advertising. **Our research** with Ipsos MediaCT, which focused on Millennials in particular, found that consumers ages 18 to 36 trust UGC 50% more than they do traditional media. The study also found that UGC is 20% more influential when it comes to purchase decisions and 35% more memorable than other types of media.

With consumer trust in traditional media falling and time spent with UGC on the rise, more and more marketers are shifting dollars to programs and opportunities that drive earned media impact. Beyond the business payoff of word-of-mouth as a standalone tactic, a recent study also found that WOM programs can amplify the impact of paid media by 15%.

Source: WOMMA Return on WOM Study, 2014



“Just 1% of Millennials say a compelling advertisement would make them trust a brand more.”

Source: Elite Daily, January 2015

***“other media” includes traditional media and other non-UGC media*

“The relationship between brands and consumers has changed. Brands just aren’t believable anymore on their own — they don’t have full control of the messages consumers receive and, subsequently, they don’t have full control of brand perception.

UGC lends a relatable and authentic voice to brands. Every brand has cheerleaders! Give those advocates a voice that delivers against the objective of brand love. Driving equity and emotional connectivity is now a pre-requisite to sales growth. The new definition of success will be innovation that is co-developed and cosigned by consumers. You want, in fact need, that credibility and scale.”



BRITTANY CURRY

Senior Associate Brand Manager, LISTERINE,
Johnson & Johnson

IMPACT

UGC Outperforms Paid Media Across Major Brand Metrics

People are spending more time creating and consuming UGC and report that content that comes from their peers is more influential and more trustworthy than traditional media formats — but are these trends moving the needle on the overall health of brands?

Crowdtap Test UGC v. Vertical Norms*: Overall Audience



Seeking an answer to this question, Crowdtap partnered with Millward-Brown Digital to compare the impact of user-generated content with that of standard digital ad units on key brand metrics. The first-of-its-kind study measured the performance of UGC that was shared by a friend (versus shared by a brand or media property), and thus factored in the source of the content (a person vs. a brand or advertiser), in addition to the content itself.

The UGC exceeded Millward-Brown Digital norms for the ad units across all brand metrics measured: aided brand awareness, online ad awareness, brand favorability and purchase intent. See chart below.

*Crowdtap study utilizes forced-exposure methodology; data shown as directional comparison only.
MarketNorms Q3/14, Last 3 yrs (Category: CPG, 1 Exposure, Baseline Adjusted, N=625 campaigns)

IMPACT

UGC Outperforms Paid Media Across Major Brand Metrics

Here are some additional findings from the Crowdtap and Millward-Brown Digital study:

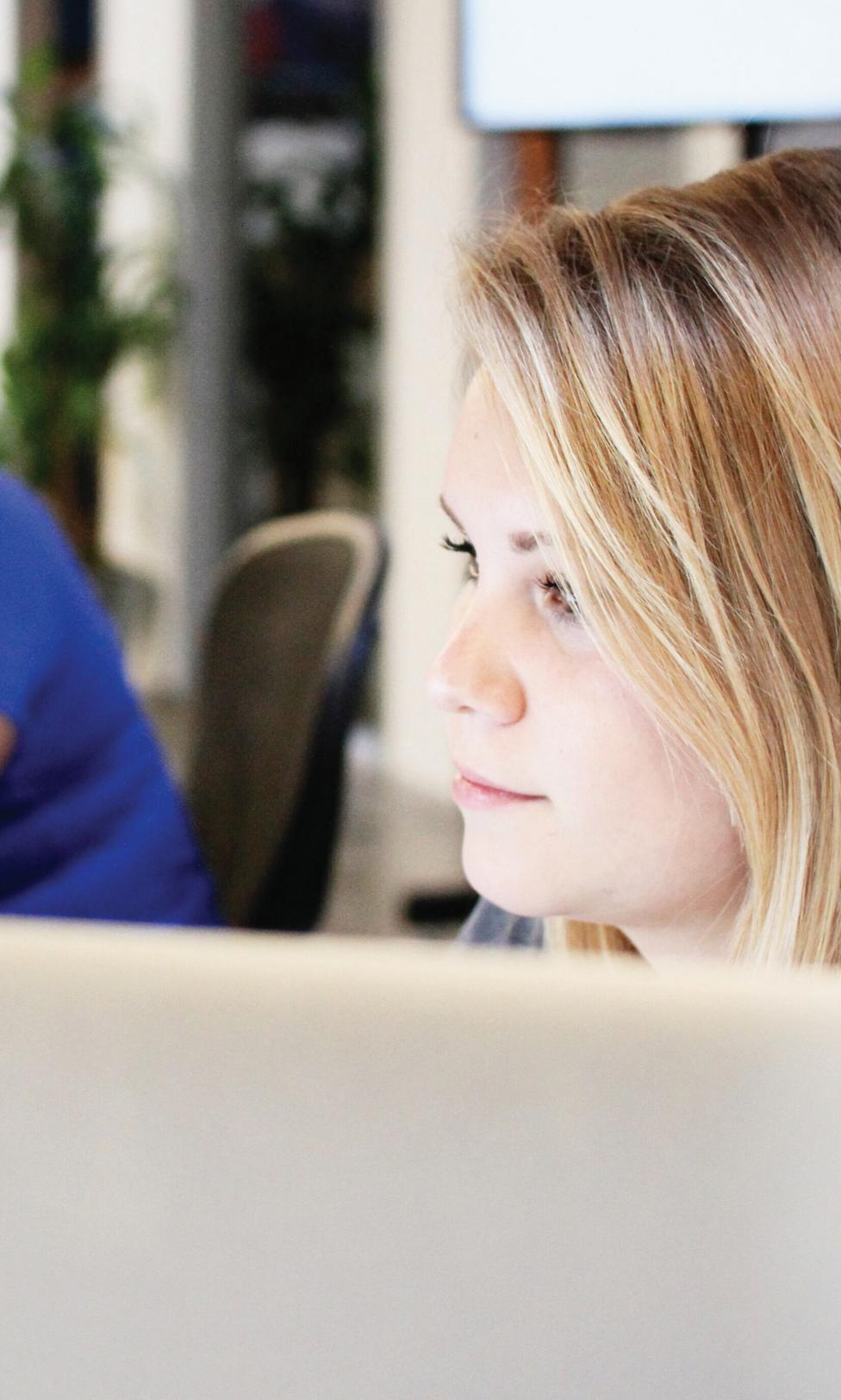
- 1 The test UGC drove significantly stronger awareness even among consumers who claim to not frequently purchase the category, or who reported purchasing competitive brands.
- 2 The test UGC drove significantly stronger awareness even among consumers who claimed that they do not typically discover products via friends' social posts.
- 3 The test UGC drove significantly stronger awareness even among those who say they are neutral or not receptive to sponsored ads that showcase products and services.

Research Methodology:

Millward-Brown Digital gathered two sets of consumers (250 people in each set). One set was not exposed to any stimuli, and the second set was exposed to test UGC which featured a new product from a leading CPG brand.

In order to provide the same test UGC to all survey respondents, Millward-Brown engaged a technology partner to replace a real friend's story on the Facebook News Feed with simulated UGC containing a CPG product. This allowed Millward-Brown to create an environment in which participants were exposed to branded test UGC that was shared by a real friend (versus from the brand itself).

Each set of consumers were then asked the same series of questions to assess the impact of the UGC on their unaided brand awareness, online ad awareness, favorability and purchase intent. The research was fielded December 2014–January 2015.



Best Practices for Using Consumer Content to Fuel Earned, Owned & Paid

Your customers are already creating UGC as part of their daily social media routine, so the opportunity is ripe for brands to leverage existing consumer behavior to fuel their marketing programs. By enlisting real people to play an active role in your brand's story, marketers can help shape conversations around a specific topic while strengthening relationships along the way. Moreover, the UGC generated from these programs can be used to fill a brand's content library with authentic and efficient media that can be put to work across earned, owned and paid channels.

Tips for Extending UGC Across Earned, Owned & Paid

Here are some best practices to keep in mind when it comes to amplifying the impact of your UGC programs across earned, owned and paid channels.

1 Provide specific guideposts for branded content creation.

By using strategic directives, you can shape conversations around targeted themes and ensure that the UGC created aligns with the tone and core messaging of your campaign. Inspire your community to improve their output by elevating exemplary instances of consumer-created content via owned and paid channels.

2 Use technology to activate UGC campaigns at-scale.

Community-based platforms, like Crowdtap, allow you to target and activate the right people for the right initiatives. By engaging relevant brand enthusiasts on an ongoing basis, consumers can become an active part of your brand storytelling over time, inspiring advocacy and driving valuable insights to optimize future efforts.

3 Build out UGC programs with collaboration in mind.

Consider tools that encourage collaboration across teams, agencies and stakeholders. Communicate processes for vetting and sharing content so that cross-functional teams can easily — and quickly — deploy content across all marketing channels.

4 Build terms of sharing into your UGC programs from day one.

Clearly communicate legalese with consumers before asking them to produce content, so that it can be repurposed without the need to ask for permission down the road. Most people will welcome the recognition that comes with having their content prominently featured and amplified by a brand. Note that most expert creators will require proper attribution in the form of a tag, credit or URL.

“UGC will continue to be an important component of the content marketing mix as brands seek effective and compelling ways to engage with consumers in a way that can help strengthen brand affinity and engagement. As UGC is used in different ways for different purposes, it will remain important to understand all legal considerations prior to activating a campaign to ensure that all requirements are met.”



SUSAN BORST

Director of Industry Initiatives, IAB

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Utilizing UGC as Part of Your Earned, Owned & Paid Content Strategy

Earned Channels

THIRD-PARTY CONTENT SHARED BY CONSUMER CREATORS

By inspiring real people to create and share content about your brand in earned channels, marketers can shape conversations and maintain ongoing, always-on conversations in social.

EXAMPLES:

- Product ratings and reviews that can be syndicated across social channels or featured on brand and retailer websites
- Social media content that aligns your brand with a specific theme or topic (e.g. DIY or health)
- Branded content created by a topical influencer that reaches a targeted lifestyle group

Owned & Operated Channels

WEBSITES, NEWSLETTERS, SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES

Employ UGC to infuse personality and authenticity into your content strategy in owned channels. Create and curate a library of content that can be leveraged across brand and agency teams — and even across markets.

EXAMPLES:

- Websites that feature real life product usage via photo & video content (e.g. a CPG brand showcasing creativity in the kitchen)
- Websites that include consumer photos, ratings & reviews within individual product pages
- Curated microsites that celebrate consumers' creativity around a specific campaign or initiative

Paid Channels

PRINT, TV & DIGITAL MEDIA FORMATS, INCLUDING PAID SOCIAL

Inject authenticity into your paid media strategy. Using UGC helps marketers maintain reach and employ targeting while delivering content that resonates with consumers who are increasingly wary of traditional advertising.

EXAMPLES:

- TV or print ads that feature fan-created content or showcase an influential content creator (vs. a celebrity endorser)
- Display ads that showcase a consumer-created meal vs. a professional product shot
- Paid social media that amplifies fan photos and/or videos

Best Practices for Brands Partnering with Expert Creators

While influencer marketing was born out of the blogger revolution, today's crop of savvy content creators are increasingly using microformats — think Snapchat stories, Vines and the like — to get their messages across, which means there are new rules of the road for brands.

1 Respect content creators as trusted subject-matter experts.

Partnering with an influencer is not like a traditional media buy — you are not simply buying an “audience.” Before approaching a creator simply because they command a large social following, consider the topics that have built them trust with their audience and how those topics are brought to life. The established themes of the creator should align with your own brand storytelling.

2 Give influencers guidelines, and then grant them creative autonomy.

Communicating expectations is the most important step in any brand-influencer partnership. Provide content creators with a brief that clearly outlines your brand essence and campaign objectives, but refrain from playing the role of creative director. Influencers are open to collaborating with brands, but want the freedom to create in their own style.

Meet some of today's most influential content creators:



RY DOON
vine.co/RyDoon
 3.2M followers
 1B loops
(Vine video plays)



ELIZABETH KEENE
instagram.com/elizabethkeene
 66.1K followers



JASON NASH
vine.co/JasonNash
 1.9M followers
 1B+ loops

Best Practices for Brands Partnering with Expert Creators

3 Treat content creators as you would any other publisher.

Influential content creators are business people — publishers in their own right — and therefore deserve equal consideration when it comes to planning for and executing on branded content programs. Set realistic milestones from the start to avoid last-minute scrambles and timing shifts that can threaten future partnership opportunities and affect the quality of content created.

4 Reach beyond your wallet to form true partnerships.

While compensation is almost always part of the equation, at the end of the day, creators are also looking for meaningful and rewarding partnerships. When marketers provide additional value — beyond the dollar — the relationship is strengthened, forming a stronger foundation for future programs.

One way to offer incremental value to creators is to amplify their content via your brand's established paid, earned and owned channels. In particular, pushing branded content with paid media can be a tremendous value add for creators looking to extend their reach to new audiences in social.

“Nothing kills an influencer’s creativity quite like hearing a marketer hastily say, ‘I don’t get it.’ Even if you don’t completely understand the creator’s voice, go into the process with an open mind, as there are literally millions of people who do get it. Trust the influencer as the expert on his or her audience.”

RY DOON

Comedian & Celebrity Content Creator

Elevating the Role of UGC in Brand Storytelling

UGC Powers Whirlpool's Largest Advertising Campaign To-Date

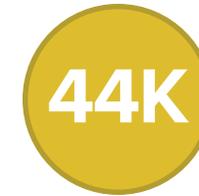
How can a century-old brand buck the product-focused marketing trend of its category and shift to a more emotional approach?

For Whirlpool's largest integrated advertising effort to date, the brand sought to separate itself from the pack by elevating and celebrating all of the wonderful ways in which real people experience Whirlpool in their everyday lives. The appliance manufacturer's primary challenge was surfacing authentic consumer stories – and doing so at-scale. Whirlpool knew that heartfelt experiences with its brand were occurring on a daily basis, but they needed a way to encourage people to share those stories openly in social media.

To inspire people to share their own stories, Whirlpool and DigitasLBI partnered with Crowdtap to build a



increase in sales
(in 6 months following campaign launch)



pieces of authentic user-generated content created



lift in social brand sentiment

network of more than 17,000 brand advocates, called the #CareCrowd. This engaged community powered content for the integrated campaign by creating and sharing simple moments of care in their own households. User-generated content was curated and featured within a dedicated campaign microsite and amplified across paid and earned channels.

Whirlpool's Every Day, Care™ effort struck a chord with consumers who appreciated the inherent authenticity of the brand's new approach. Real stories from real people flooded the brand's earned, owned, and paid channels — from promoted social posts on Facebook and Twitter to television spots and everything in between — and inspired a broader wave of consumers to get in on the conversation.

Inspiring UGC While Delivering Rich Consumer Experiences

Absolut Brings One-of-a-Kind Nightlife Experience to Fans Across the U.S.

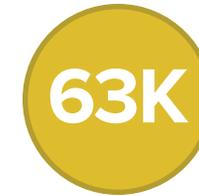
How does a spirits brand make itself more accessible in a space where flashy ads and aspirational messages are the norm?

ABSOLUT was throwing an epic party at Brooklyn's trendiest music club, but since the brand is all about accessibility, the team wanted to bring the unique nightlife experience to more people. Working with ForeverBeta and Crowdtap, the brand used technology to bring the party to whoever wanted to attend — no matter where they were — and then activated impassioned advocates to share their experiences shared in social media.

ABSOLUT shot the world's first 360-degree trailer, and then doled out 5,000 free Google Cardboard VR headsets to music and technology-lovers nationwide.



virtual livestream parties



social media engagements



earned media impressions in social

With headsets and apps in-hand, faraway fans had everything they needed to experience the live show themselves. Further, Crowdtap built and assembled a custom branded community, which granted ABSOLUT with access to participants before, during and after they experienced the event.

With a direct line of contact to its Absolut Reality community, ABSOLUT was able to spark buzz ahead of the event and capture authentic UGC across the spectrum of social influence, from everyday consumers to hand-picked content creators who were commissioned to share the experience through their own creative lenses. Moreover, insights gleaned from the community provided actionable feedback to the brand that can now be used to inform future nightlife activations.

“What marketers have been missing is a way to weaponize word-of-mouth, so it can move with the same speed and scale that traditional media does. Platforms like Crowdtap do exactly that — providing brands with a relevant army of advocates to help spread the story of your brand in a rich, authentic way.”



AFDHEL AZIZ

Brand Director, ABSOLUT Labs, Pernod-Ricard

[@afdhelaziz](#)

If You Remember Five Things...

1 UGC is the next iteration of WOM.

People have been sharing stories about brands for decades. What's changed is that technology has made it easier to produce more and better content through which to tell these stories.

2 UGC is proliferating across the spectrum of social influence.

Not all content creators share the same reach or skill level. Brands should consider utilizing a mix of everyday peer influencers and expert content creators as part of their overall strategy.

3 UGC is ubiquitous, influential & impactful.

Consumers are spending up to five hours a day with UGC, and they also say that peer-created content is memorable and more trustworthy than traditional advertising. For these reasons, Forrester cites UGC as an effective "brand-builder."

4 UGC requires respecting people as you would publishers.

Remember that partnerships with expert content creators are different than a standard media buy. Respect their editorial visions and calendars to forge lasting, mutually beneficial relationships.

5 UGC can power your end-to-end content strategy.

When executed correctly, peer-created content can be ported across your entire marketing program and fill your content bucket across earned, owned and paid channels. Keep in mind the legal watch-outs before fully diving in.

To learn more about UGC and people-powered marketing, visit

blog.crowdtap.it

Crowdtap, the People-Powered Marketing Platform, is a new operating system for brands powered by the people who love them. Crowdtap makes it easy for marketers to build open brands by accelerating customer feedback and inspiring content and conversations at-scale.

In 2014, Crowdtap was named one of the 100 Most Promising Companies in America by Forbes and the No. 54 fastest-growing private company in the Inc. 500 List. The company has been ranked one of the Top 10 Places to Work in Marketing & Advertising by Fortune, the No. 3 Best Place to Work in New York by Crain's, and the No. 6 Best Tech Company to Work For by Mashable.

With a growing community of passionate members, Crowdtap works with leading brands including General Mills, Heineken, Kraft Foods, P&G, Verizon, Walmart and Yum Brands.

Headquartered in New York, Crowdtap has raised \$15 million through the Foundry Group, Tribeca Venture Partners, Alta Communications and The Mustang Group.

Visit corp.crowdtap.com for more information.

Contact us to schedule a demo and learn how you can put the power of UGC to work for your brand.

info@crowdtap.com

What Motivates People to Create & Share Digital Content

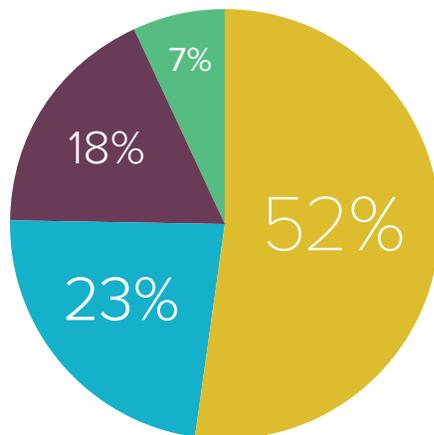
New Research from Crowdtap

Crowdtap surveyed 500+ people to better understand what motivates consumers when it comes to creating and sharing content online. The findings provide a glimpse into what compels people to share and uncovers takeaways for marketers embarking on content-driven campaigns.

WE ASKED:

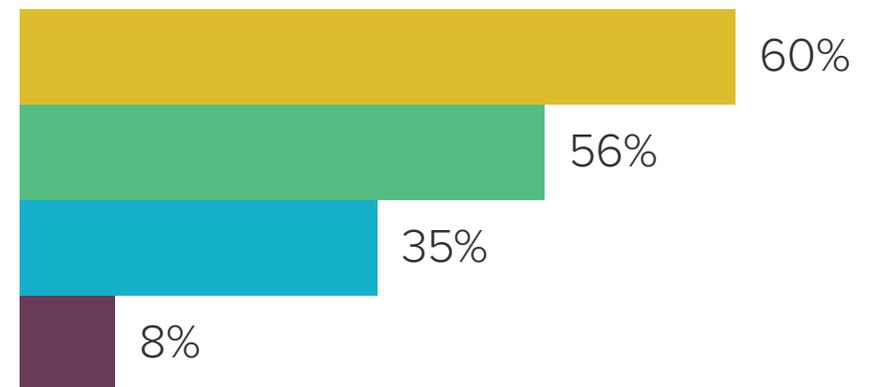
How often do you create content in social media and why?

Half of respondents said they post content once per day; 23% post 2 to 5 times daily.



- Once Per Day
- 2 to 5 Times Per Day
- Less Than Once Per Day
- More than 5 Times Per Day

A desire to connect with others was the most-cited reason for producing content.

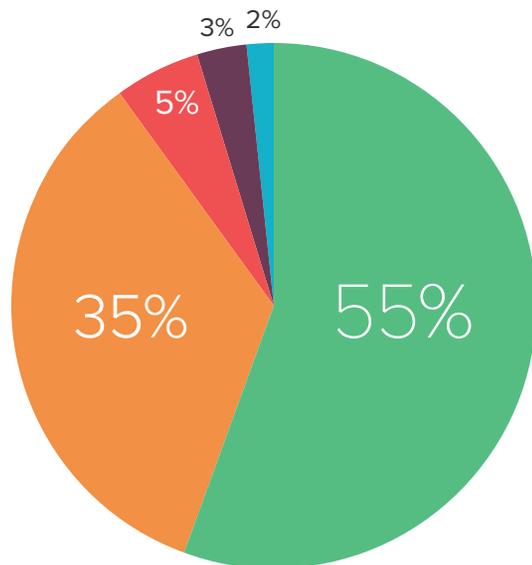


- Connectivity: Keeping friends, family, and/or networks up to date
- Creativity
- Self-Fulfillment / Identity
- None of the above / Something else

WE ASKED:

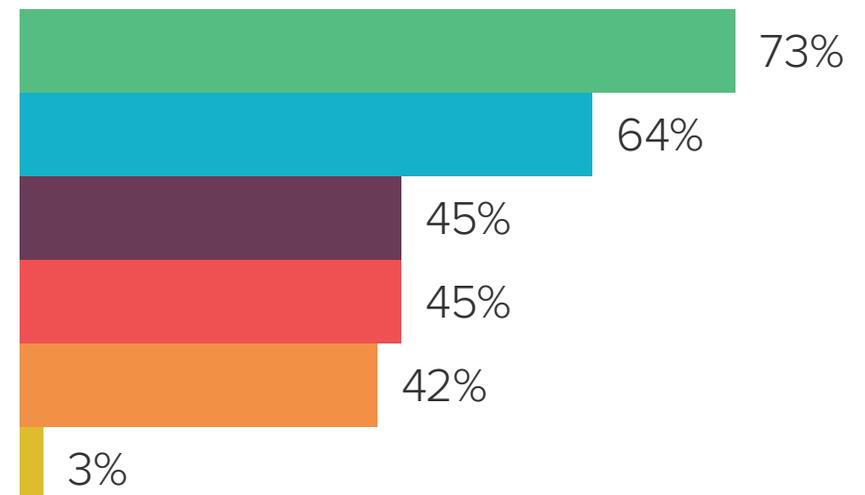
What emotion makes you most likely to share content, and which factors do you take into account when sharing digital content?

Respondents said they are most likely to share content that amuses or inspires them.



- Laughter or Amusement
- Awe or Surprise
- Anger or Outrage
- Empathy
- Sadness

Respondents said they are most likely to share content if they believe it will inform or entertain their friends.



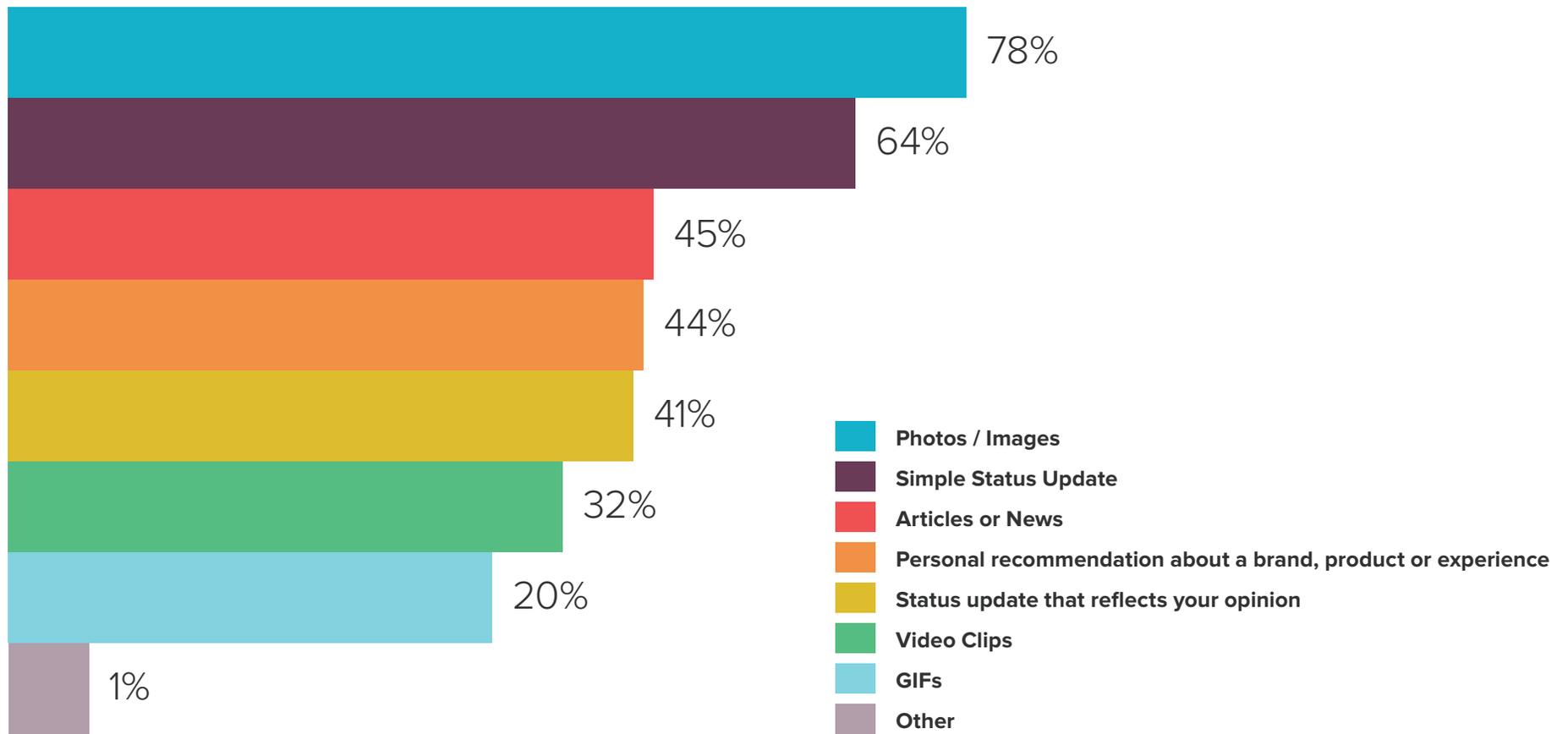
- It's informative
- It's entertaining
- It moved me emotionally
- It reflects my own beliefs or point of view
- It's inspiring
- None of the above / Something else

Respondents were able to select more than one reason.

WE ASKED:

What types of digital content are you likely to share?

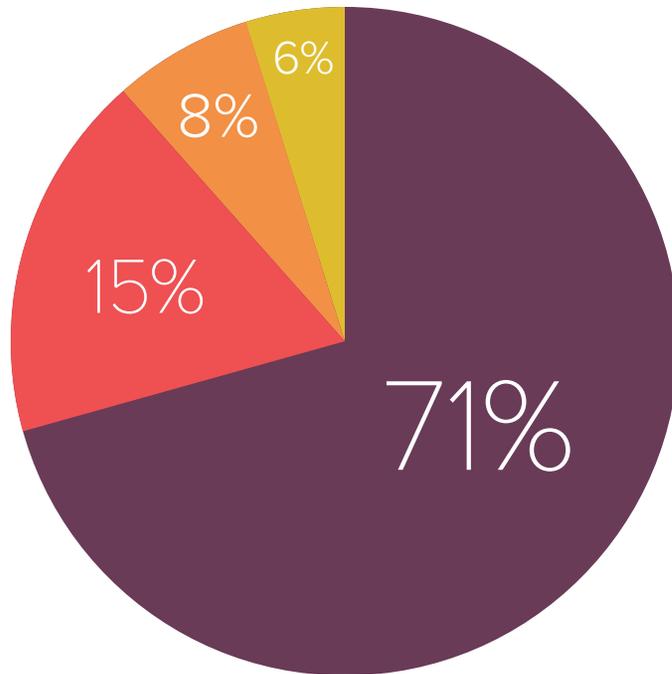
Most respondents cited photos & simple status updates as content formats they are likely to share; 43% are likely to share brand-related content.



Respondents were able to select more than one format.

WE ASKED:

If you posted about brands in social, what compels you to do so?



-  I want to inform others about my experiences with brands and/or products
-  I like to show my creativity
-  I want people to know I am a fan of the brand
-  I feel connected when I share my experiences about brands or products

PER OUR STUDY:

90% of consumers say they have posted about an experience with a brand or product in social media.

So, what did we learn from this study?

1 People are generally thoughtful when it comes to the content they create.

More than half of respondents said they create content just once daily, with 23% saying that they create more frequently — two to five times per day. Conversely, 18% of people we surveyed are “lurkers,” creating content less than once per day, on average. The key motivations for creating content are the desire to connect with others and the ability to showcase creativity.

KEY TAKEAWAY: Understand what motivates your audience to create in order to effectively activate them to create UGC.

2 People are most likely to share content that amuses or inspires them.

Moreover, they are most likely to share content if they believe it will inform or entertain their friends. When asked the types of content formats they are likely to share, most respondents cited photos and simple text (status) updates. News articles were also a popular format (45% said they'd be likely to share), as were updates about experiences with brands and products (44%).

KEY TAKEAWAY: Consider what drives sharing when you create branded content that you want people to spread in social.

3 People post about brands in social primarily due to their desire to inform their friends about product experiences.

Secondarily, they view brand-related posts as an opportunity to showcase their creativity (e.g. how they utilize a CPG product in the kitchen), and 8% of respondents said they post about brands because they want people to know they are a brand advocate.

KEY TAKEAWAY: Provide advocates with inspiration for sharing brand experiences in social media. For example, a home improvement brand might ask fans to showcase their best DIY triumphs on Instagram.