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Impact of Employee-Generated Content on Consumer Trust and Brand Authenticity

Major Research Project

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Master of Business Administration

Dual Specialization: Marketing & Human Resource Management

Submitted by

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Roll No: 24/DMBA/09 | Batch: 2024–2026

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Declaration by Student

I, Abhishek Krishna, student of MBA (Dual Specialization¹ Marketing & Human Resource Management), Roll No. 24/DMBA/09, Batch 2024-2026, hereby declare that the Major Research² Project titled "Impact of Employee Generated Content on Consumer Trust and Brand Authenticity" submitted to Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University.

¹³ This project has not been submitted, in full or in part, to any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma. All data, analysis, and findings presented in this report are accurately reported to the best of my knowledge.

All sources of information and literature that have been used in the preparation of this project have been duly acknowledged through citations and references, following APA 7th Edition guidelines.

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Certificate by Research Guide

This is to certify that the Major Research Project titled "Impact of Employee Generated Content on Consumer Trust and Brand Authenticity" has been prepared by Abhishek Krishna, Roll No. 24/DMBA/09, MBA Batch 2024-26, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of business Administration at Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Study

The swift development of digital communication technology has brought about changes in the way organizations communicate with consumers. Social media has become one of the most effective tools for communication, networking, branding, and connecting with the consumer in today's corporate world. The reliance on classic marketing techniques like television commercials, print ads, and product promotion via celebrities is gradually being substituted with more interactive and personalized modes of communication. Today's consumers are better-informed and more discerning in the way they choose what products they purchase. Therefore, there is a constant search for new ways for organizations to engage with their target audience in a trustworthy manner.

The latest trend in the field of marketing communications involves employee-generated social media content. Employee-generated content involves the use of digital content generated and shared about the organization, its people, activities, or organizational culture on social media platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, X, and YouTube. Contrary to conventional methods of product promotion where the communication is generated by the company itself, employee-generated content creates more authentic content and more relatable because it comes from real people within the organization.

However, when it comes to the contemporary marketplace, consumers are becoming more and more suspicious of excessively polished company advertisements. There is a general understanding among consumers that advertisements by companies are too business-oriented and are created for the sake of affecting consumer behavior. At the same time, employees' content is perceived as more sincere and less artificial. By sharing their own workplace experience, revealing some secrets of the office work process, sharing their success stories, and achieving professional achievements, employees help to create more authentic impression of the brand for consumers. Thus, employee-generated content has become an essential element in the context of marketing communications and digital marketing activities.

The idea of authenticity has gained great significance in contemporary branding. Consumers expect brands to show themselves in an authentic manner as honest and transparent entities, practicing ethically and being closer to humans. The current world of business is filled with paid advertisements and collaborations with influencers; nevertheless, nowadays, employees can become a reliable source of information.

Employee-generated content from a marketing viewpoint can be useful in making brands authentic, building consumer trust, engaging with consumers, and affecting purchase intent. From a human resources perspective, employee advocacy is seen in relation to employees' satisfaction, organizational commitment, culture within the organization, and the internal branding effort. This way, employee-generated content through social media platforms is an area where marketing intersects with human resources.

The current study focuses on examining the effect that employee-generated content on social media sites has on consumer trust and brand authenticity. It focuses on understanding whether consumers see employee-generated content as different from the one generated by the companies themselves.

1.2 Background of the Study

Marketing communications have been transformed by the digital revolution, which has brought about an altered format of communication in the business world. The increase in internet connectivity, availability of smartphones, and use of social networking sites within the past decade has brought about an era of communication that is non-stop and instantaneous. Organizations can no longer fully control brand communication as consumers, influencers, workers, and online communities take part in the process of shaping the image of the brand.

Social media has become a key aspect of modern consumer life. People spend a lot of time using digital media to communicate through content and social media has thus become an important communication medium. Companies have taken note of the immense opportunity offered by social media.

First, companies only used official company accounts and influencer marketing strategies to engage with audiences online. Today, the views held by consumers about advertisements have changed considerably. Findings from research and observations in the marketplace suggest that consumers today are skeptical of advertising that is too heavily commercialized. This is because consumers are now more aware of sponsored posts, advertising, and promoted content. As a result, credibility has become an important criterion for successful marketing communication.

In order to address evolving consumer views, firms have also begun to involve their employees in the process of brand communication. Employees tend to talk about their work-related experiences and professional achievements as well as events occurring within their organization.

The advent of professional networking websites has even further increased this tendency. Websites like LinkedIn offer employees a chance to cultivate their professional identity and also act as representatives for their organization. The way in which employees express themselves through their work experience or organizational culture can potentially shape the perception of consumers towards the organization.

The relevance of employee-generated content is especially evident in industries where trust and credibility matter most. In industries like tourism, IT, consultancy, educational institutions, retail, banking, and health care, for instance, consumers judge not only the quality of the product or service but also the values of the organization and how it treats its employees.

The coronavirus pandemic also emphasized the significance of authenticity and human relationships in brand messaging. During the pandemic era, the consumers exhibited heightened sensitivity toward the organizational behavior, employee well-being initiatives, and corporate social responsibility practices. The organizations that displayed empathy and transparency through employee-generated messaging and authentic communication usually won the trust of consumers.

Although employee-generated messages have gained significance due to their practical applications, academic literature in this regard is still sparse, especially in emerging economies like India. Most existing studies in this domain analyze influencer marketing, electronic word-of-mouth communications, and conventional social media marketing communications. However, comparatively few studies investigate the impact of employee-generated content on consumer perceptions regarding authenticity and trustworthiness.

1.3 Concept of Employee-Generated Content

Employee-created content encompasses any form of digital content that employees voluntarily produce and distribute regarding their organization, workplace, products, services, or experiences. Employee-created content may include text, images, video, blog post, testimonial, comment, or professional insight distributed using social media channels.

In contrast with corporate communication, employee-created content is not typically wholly controlled and dictated by the organization, hence, making the communication more genuine and reliable in the eyes of the consumer. Employee-created content can be classified in the following categories:

- Workplace experience of employees
- Behind-the-scenes organizational activity
- Employee success stories and accolades
- Professional insight concerning the business
- Celebrations and gatherings among employees
- Employee testimonials
- Recommendations for products and services from employees
- Thought leadership content on professional platforms

Employee-generated content can either be deliberate or accidental. There are organizations that promote employee advocacy programs that stimulate employees to generate organizational content on their own. There are also cases whereby the generation of content happens spontaneously based on personal experiences and satisfaction.

Some of the determinants of the success of employee-generated content include:

- Authenticity
- Transparency
- Emotional involvement
- Credibility of the employee
- Quality of communication
- Level of engagement
- Features of the platform

Consumers today favor genuine experience over extremely crafted ads. Therefore, the generated content by the employee enhances emotional involvement and builds trust.

1.4 Consumer Trust in the Digital Era

Trust is one of the most important factors in current marketing strategies. Trust is the reliance that consumers have in the integrity and competence of the company to deliver what it promises. When dealing with very competitive business environments, it is crucial for marketers to create trust among their consumers.

The development of consumer trust has been greatly affected by the evolution of technology. Traditionally, advertisements involved unidirectional communication in which companies sent out the message to consumers. The introduction of new technology has led to two-way or multi-directional communication, which involves both consumers and influencers.

Consumers now have access to a lot of information before making purchase decisions. Social media discussions, online testimonies, and user-generated content all contribute greatly to forming consumers' perceptions. Due to the amount of information consumers receive daily, distrust towards corporations has become more prevalent among consumers.

A number of things can affect trust when it comes to digital communications. These include:

- Credibility of source
- Transparency
- Consistency
- Authenticity
- Relatability
- Emotional connect
- Social proof

Consumer trust can be enhanced by the use of employee-created content due to the fact that employees are generally insiders who have organizational insight. Employee-created positive content may be viewed by consumers as less manipulative than regular content.

Consumers often relate the positivity of employees with good organizational performance. The use of positive communication on the part of employees may be an indication of an organization's positive organizational culture and ethics.

1.5 Brand Authenticity

Authenticity of brand means that the brand is perceived as sincere, truthful, transparent, and true to its word and values. Authentic brands tend to be perceived as reliable and emotionally relevant. Today, in modern business environment, authenticity is considered one of the major criteria in shaping consumer attitudes and behavior.

Today, consumers want brands to be socially responsible, ethical, transparent, and humane. Modern consumers do not want merely to listen to promotional messages; rather, they expect open and sincere communication from brands.

There are numerous aspects of brand authenticity such as:

- Communication transparency
- Promise delivery consistency
- Ethical corporate behavior
- Emotional sincerity
- Humane communication
- Social responsibility
- Treatment of employees

Employee content helps create brand authenticity as the content provides consumers with a more humanized view of the business. The employees serve as human faces of the brand, and how they communicate can either enhance or hurt brand authenticity.

For instance, through positive communication regarding the working environment, the success of the organization, and personal experiences, consumers will have a positive perception of the brand. Negative employee communication, however, hurts brand image and affects consumer perception negatively.

In the digital age of transparency, organizations cannot solely depend on advertisement messages. They have to consider that consumers are influenced by actual experiences from employees and other stakeholders.

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1.6 Importance of the Study

This research is significant for marketers, human resource managers, businesses, research communities, and academia.

Significance to Marketers

As per the marketer's point of view, this research can help organizations gauge the effectiveness of employee-generated content as a means of communication. Companies have been spending millions of dollars on digital marketing, influencer marketing, and social media marketing. However, employee advocacy can be a better solution.

This research is also relevant to understanding the evolving trends of consumer behavior within the digital environment. Since authenticity is becoming a critical aspect of consumer behavior, organizations have to come up with communication strategies to build better trust and engagement.

Human Resource Importance

In terms of human resources, employee-produced communications serve as indicators of employee satisfaction, engagement, and organizational commitment. When employees voluntarily promote their organizations online, they often display more emotional connection and job satisfaction.

The results of this study can be used by HR managers to develop employee advocacy campaigns, internal branding programs, and organizational culture initiatives.

Relevance to Academic Literature

One unique aspect of this research is that it highlights an area which is not very much covered in literature at the moment. The main emphasis is on influencer marketing, online reviews, and content generated by the firm itself. However, not many studies have looked into how social media communications generated by employees affect consumer trust and authenticity.

Relevance to Organizations

Based on this research, organizations can create strategies which incorporate both marketing and HR aspects.

1.7 Statement of the Problem

The increasing trend in social media usage has affected the mode of brand communication and consumer engagement as well. Consumers are bombarded with numerous online advertisements every day. This has resulted in consumers becoming skeptical about any promotional activity by brands. Consumers have started perceiving branded ads as highly manipulative.

On the other hand, social media posts generated by employees can emerge as a powerful medium for brand communication. Employees communicating their experiences, successes, and knowledge about organizations could be perceived as authentic.

But despite the rising trend of employee advocates and employee communication through social media, little research has been conducted in this regard. Companies are continuing to spend extensively on influencer marketing and corporate advertising without comprehending the power of employee-generated communication.

Hence, the aim of this research is to identify the effect of employee-generated social media posts on consumers' perceptions of brand authenticity and trust.

1.8 Research Objectives

The main goals of the research include the following:

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1. To study the effects of the employee-created social media content on consumer trust.
 2. To study the relationship between the employee-created content and brand authenticity.
 3. To explore how the consumer perceives employee-created content compared to that created by the firm itself.
 4. To find out the importance of authenticity in engaging consumers and encouraging their purchase intention.
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 5. To examine the efficiency of various social media tools for the creation of consumer trust via employee-created content.
 6. To explore the significance of employee advocacy in today's marketing practices.
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1.9 Research Questions

Some of the main research questions that the paper seeks to address are as follows:

1. Does employee-created social media content have any impact on consumer trust?
 2. Is employee-generated content considered to be more credible by consumers compared to official corporate communication?
 3. What are the most effective social media tools for communicating with customers through employees?
 4. How does employee-generated content influence purchase intention?
 5. How can credibility of such content be increased?
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1.10 Research Hypotheses

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Considering the objectives of the study, the following hypotheses have been developed:

H1

Social media content generated by employees positively impacts consumer trust.

H2

Employee-generated content positively impacts perceptions of brand authenticity.

H3

Consumer perceptions indicate greater credibility of employee-generated content than brand-generated content.

H4

Brand authenticity acts as a mediator between employee-generated content and consumer purchase intention.

H5

Employee-generated content positively impacts consumer engagement.

1.11 Scope of the Study

The current research will consider only the effect that content created by employees in social media has on consumer trust and brand authenticity among social media users.

The current research will cover:

- Social media consumers who actively engage in using social media channels
- Content created by employees and made available for public consumption in social media channels
- Digital brand communications
- Consumer perception and attitudes
- Such social media sites as LinkedIn and Instagram

The current research will be geographically confined to respondents from India. Urban consumers, including students and working professionals, will be considered as the main respondents.

This research does not involve studying organizational communication that does not take place through social media channels. Similarly, this research will not consider influencer marketing or celebrity endorsement as its subject.

1.12 Research Methodology Overview

The current study employs the descriptive and quantitative method of research. Primary data will be sourced using structured questionnaires administered to social media users.

The study will employ convenience sampling methods to gather data from respondents that use social media platforms actively. Some statistical methods that can be employed include percentages, correlation, regression analysis, and reliability.

Secondary data will be sourced from research articles, books, company reports, online sources, and magazines.

The employment of both primary and secondary sources will assist in achieving a thorough comprehension of the relationship between EGCs, consumer trust, and brand authenticity.

1.13 Limitations of the Study

Each research investigation has its own limitations, and so does this research investigation.

Some of the limitations of this research investigation are as follows:

- This research investigation is confined to a particular sample size.
- This investigation is based on personal opinions and perceptions.
- The focus of the research investigation is on social media users in India.
- There may be time limitations in collecting more data.
- Perceptions of consumers may differ in various industries and populations.
- Trends in social media keep changing over time.

However, **in spite** these limitations, the research investigation is expected to yield valuable results regarding **the growing importance of social media** communication by employees **in influencing consumer** perceptions.

11 1.14 Chapter Summary

In **this chapter**, the idea **of** employee generated social media content was introduced along with its increasing significance in digital marketing communication in the current era. This chapter described the change in the behavior of consumers **in the digital age** and emphasized **the importance of** authenticity and trust **in** brand communication.

The chapter also defined the terms 'consumer trust' and 'brand authenticity,' as well as described how employee **as** advocacy could impact the perceptions of organizations. Moreover, this chapter described the **problem statement, research objectives, research questions, hypotheses, scope, significance, methodology, and limitations of** this research.

Chapter two will discuss the existing literature on the subjects of employee-generated content, consumer trust, brand authenticity, social media marketing, and employee advocacy.

CHAPTER 2

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REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Literature review is an essential element of academic research as it sets the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the research. The researcher can gain insight into existing knowledge, research gaps, past researches, and importance of the present research problem through conducting a literature review. Thus, literature review helps in understanding the theories and approaches to research, the methodology used, variables and other aspects related to the research topic.

In the present research, the literature review would focus on employee-generated social media content, consumer trust, brand authenticity, employee advocacy, social media marketing, and other aspects that impact digital consumer behavior. The increasing importance of authenticity and transparency in contemporary marketing communication is attracting more attention in academic circles. Nevertheless, although employee-generated social media content has great practical significance, relatively few studies exist about its effects on consumer trust and brand authenticity.

The purpose of the review of literature in this chapter is to lay down a strong theoretical foundation for the research. Concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical evidence, research gaps and conceptual framework would be discussed in this chapter.

2.2 Conceptual Review

2.2.1 Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is described as the application of social networking and internet community for the promotion of products, services, brands, and organizational communication through online media channels. In the past ten years, social media marketing has emerged as an essential tool for businesses due to the ability of direct engagement with customers.

Unlike conventional marketing tools, social media marketing focuses on two-way communication and involves active participation of consumers. Businesses apply social networks including LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, X, and YouTube to communicate and promote their brands.

The evolution of social media marketing has led to changes in consumer behavior patterns. Consumers have stopped believing in advertisement alone while making their purchase decisions. They now look out for peer-to-peer reviews, feedback from the online community, and genuine consumer experience before interacting with brands.

Some key elements behind the success of social media marketing include:

- Interaction
- Availability
- Instantaneous communications
- Personalization
- Emotional bond
- Participation
- Community building

In today's world, consumers look for more humanized communication rather than overtly commercial promotion campaigns. Therefore, businesses tend to emphasize more on authentic-based marketing techniques.

Employee-created content may be considered another stage in the development of social media marketing. Employees themselves take part in business communication through sharing experiences and knowledge about their work.

2.2.2 Employee-Generated Content

Employee-generated content means the digital communication that is developed and posted by employees with respect to their respective organizations, work experiences, products or services, organizational culture, and professional engagement.

Employee-generated content is very different from organizational communications due to the fact that it is viewed as a personal type of communication that is less controlled than organizational communications. Consumers tend to view employee communication as authentic because employees are regarded as insiders who have first-hand information about their organizations.

The following categories are among those used for classifying employee-generated content:

- Informational content
- Experience-based content
- Advocacy content
- Educational content
- Organizational behind the scenes content
- Storytelling
- Thought leadership

Employee advocacy is now common among organizations since employees have a vast network online that can help increase the reach of a brand.

Studies reveal that most customers tend to ¹⁷trust the opinion of employees more than the advertisement by brands, as employees seem to convey messages that are very credible and emotional. This makes employees a vital component in organizational reputation and digital branding.

The impact of employee content generation will depend on the following considerations:

- Credibility
- Authenticity
- Frequency of interaction
- Emotions
- Employee credibility
- Organizational reputation
- Appropriate channels

Digital communication is changing rapidly, and this has made employee content generation a marketing and human resource technique.

2.2.3 Consumer Trust

Consumer trust can be defined as consumers' faith in a particular brand regarding reliability, integrity, honesty, and capability. The role of trust is important when building consumer attitude, intentions, loyalty, and relationships.

Previously, trust could be gained due to face-to-face interactions, reputation, and quality. With digitalization, the way trust is earned has drastically changed.

The amount of information, advertisements, and reviews that consumers encounter daily is vast and tends to raise skepticism among them. In other words, the credibility of the information from the company side seems to become questionable, and consumers start trusting information and advice from other sources.

There are several dimensions of consumer trust that should be considered in the digital environment:

- Information source credibility
- Communication transparency
- Brand consistency
- Social proof
- Authenticity of emotions
- Consumer experience
- Ethical conduct

Employees' content is one more factor that can positively impact consumer trust since people perceive employees as individual persons rather than companies. Employee-provided content that expresses satisfaction and professional views of the company might seem more credible for consumers.

Trust is critical in digital environments as consumers do not have opportunities to evaluate products or communicate with the company personally.

2.2.4 Brand Authenticity

18 Brand authenticity refers to the perception that a brand is genuine, honest, transparent, and true to its values and promises. Authentic brands are often perceived as emotionally sincere and socially responsible.

The concept of authenticity has gained substantial importance in contemporary marketing due to changing consumer expectations. Modern consumers increasingly seek brands that demonstrate transparency, ethical behavior, emotional honesty, and meaningful communication.

Brand authenticity is influenced by several dimensions:

- Originality

- Transparency
- Consistency
- Credibility
- Integrity
- Ethical behavior
- Human connection

Authenticity is especially important in social media environments because digital consumers can easily access alternative opinions, employee experiences, and customer feedback.

Employee-generated content contributes significantly to authenticity because employees represent the human side of organizations. Consumers often perceive employee experiences as more realistic than polished advertisements.

Brand authenticity involves creating the sense that the brand is real, truthful, sincere, and honest. Brand authenticity can make an organization appear socially responsible and emotionally sincere.

The idea of authenticity has been accorded significant weight recently as a result of shifts in consumers' demands. Recent consumers seek brands that are open, ethical, emotionally sincere, and communicative.

Several aspects are critical for the authenticity of a brand:

- Originality
- Transparency
- Consistency
- Credibility
- Integrity
- Ethical behavior
- Human connection

It is particularly relevant for social media interactions as digital consumers have the capacity to gather alternative views, employee experiences, and customer opinions.

Authenticity in the case of digital brands relies heavily on the content generated by the employees since they constitute the human face of the organization. Consumer perspectives are more credible compared to commercial advertisements.

Successful establishment of brand authenticity leads to:

- Increased consumer trust
- High consumer engagement
- Emotional attachment to the brand

- Higher brand loyalty
- Word-of-mouth marketing
- Positive reputation

On the other hand, inauthentic communication negatively impacts the brand's image.

2.2.5 Employee Advocacy

The term "employee advocacy" means that there is an act of promotion performed by the employees of any organization through personal interactions, social media activities, recommendation, and representation.

Today, the need for employee advocacy is growing due to the importance of the digital age since the employees have a lot of power among their professional circles and networks. The organizations have been motivating their employees to communicate their accomplishments, working culture, expertise, and brand through digital platforms.

Advantages for any organization through employee advocacy include:

- Expansion of the brand footprint
- Greater authenticity
- Higher level of consumer trust
- Employer branding
- Increased employee engagement
- Lower marketing costs

Employee advocacy depends upon the organizational culture and the satisfaction of employees. The chances are high that the employees will promote their organization when they are experiencing healthy work environments and attachment emotionally.

Employee advocacy has great relevance from the perspectives of both Human Resource and Marketing.

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2.2.6 Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

EWOM, or electronic word-of-mouth, is a term that is used to describe online communication where consumers and/or stakeholders exchange their ideas and opinions about products, services, or firms.

The process of EWOM differs from traditional word-of-mouth marketing due to the fast and far-reaching process of distribution.

Employee-generated content can be classified as a specific type of EWOM since employees exchange organizational experience through online communication.

Several studies suggest that consumers trust peer communication more than official advertising as it is not associated with any promotional motives.

The impact of eWOM depends on:

- The credibility of the source
- Emotional involvement
- Social pressure
- Communication frequency
- Message relevance
- Perceived sincerity

Positive eWOM can contribute greatly to improving brand image and establishing trust among customers.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The current research can be justified using a number of theories associated with communication, building trust, social influence, and authenticity.

⁴¹ 2.3.1 Source Credibility Theory

Source Credibility Theory posits that the successfulness of communication is dependent on how credible the information source appears to be. Trust in the communicated information increases if the communicator is considered to be knowledgeable, trustworthy, and authentic.

Thus, the information provided by employees might impact consumer trust since employees belong to the organization as insiders.

⁴⁵ 2.3.2 Social Identity Theory

According to Social Identity Theory, people tend to define themselves using the social and organizational contexts to which they belong. Employees who have a high level of identification with an organization will be more inclined to communicate positively and authentically.

Positive communication from employees can be positively connected with organizational culture and values.

2.3.3 Relationship Marketing Theory

According to Relationship Marketing Theory, the focus is on establishing a long-term relationship with the customers, instead of one-time transaction.

Employee-generated content can aid in relationship marketing through developing emotions, transparency, and trust between organizations and consumers.

2.3.4 Signaling Theory

According to Signaling Theory, the organizations communicate various signals to the consumers about product quality, credibility, and organizational values.

Employee-generated content serves as a signal for the organization culture, employee job satisfaction, and transparency within the organizations. Thus, positive employee-generated content can help influence consumer perception positively.

2.4 Literature Review – Empirical Studies

A number of studies have looked at the topic of social media communication, authenticity, consumer trust, and employee advocacy from different perspectives.

Smith (2018) looked at the impact of social media authenticity on consumer engagement and found out that the consumers are more receptive toward humanized, honest communication rather than promotional and manipulative advertising. The conclusion reached by Smith was that authenticity increased emotional attachment and trust.

Johnson and Brown (2019) researched employee advocacy programs of multinational corporations and discovered that the content posted by the employees received more engagement than any official company posts.

2.5 Research Gap

While there have been studies indicating the increasing significance of social media communication, various research gaps still exist.

Past studies mostly centered around:

- Influencer marketing
- User-generated content
- Reviews online
- Social media communication practices by firms
- Electronic word-of-mouth

Meanwhile, insufficient number of past studies looked into:

- Content generated by employees on social media sites
- Employee advocacy from a consumer perspective
- Relationship between content generated by employees and brand authenticity
- Influence of communication by employees on consumer trust
- Content generated by employees in India

Moreover, most past studies mainly concentrated on organizational or employer branding than on results for consumers.

⁶⁹ This paper aims to fill these gaps by exploring the impact of content generated by employees on social media platforms on consumer trust and brand authenticity.

2.6 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Theoretical review and conceptual understanding have been used to develop the framework for this research, where four key variables – employee-generated content, brand authenticity, consumer trust, and purchase intention will be analyzed.

The framework implies that:

Employee-Generated Content → Brand Authenticity → Consumer Trust → Purchase Intention

As per the above framework, it can be noted that:

- Employee-generated content is the independent variable.
- Brand authenticity is a mediating variable.
- Consumer trust is the outcome variable.
- Purchase intention is the behavioral consequence.

The framework presumes that when employees speak honestly and transparently, this makes consumers trust them, which affects their behavior positively.

2.7 Relevance of the Study in the Indian Context⁷¹

India can be considered one of the most rapidly developing digital economies in the world. The growing prevalence of smartphones, internet connectivity, and the use of social media has changed consumer behaviors in a significant way.

The Indian consumers are becoming increasingly digitally informed and socially aware. It is no longer the products and services that influence consumer evaluation but also how the organization treats its employees and behaves.

Professionals networking websites as well as social media applications are becoming very popular among young Indians, working professionals, and city dwellers.

Despite the practical significance of this topic for India, there is very little literature that talks about this phenomenon. Most Indian studies are related to influencer marketing and customer reviews.

It is for this reason that this paper will bring some interesting findings as far as Indian employees' digital marketing practices are concerned.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research methodology implies a system of organizing the process of conducting research in a scientific manner. It implies using proper methods and techniques, procedures, and tools required for the purpose of obtaining reliable data, which would serve to fulfill the purpose of research.

The success of a research study depends upon the use of a proper research methodology in carrying out a scientific investigation. A good research methodology helps in securing scientific credibility and reliability in the results of the study.

This research is aimed at studying the effects of employee-generated social media content on consumer trust and brand authenticity. For the purposes of achieving the goal of this study, an appropriate methodology framework has been selected. This chapter outlines the research design, research approach, sources of data, sampling procedure, size of sample, data collection tools, variables involved in this study, statistical tools used for the purpose of analyzing the data, and some limitations of this methodology.

This chapter presents a complete discussion about the scientific processes involved in the study.

3.2 RESEARCH MEANING AND IMPORTANCE

Research can be defined as a systematic activity of problem identification, data gathering, analysis, and inference for the development of knowledge and understanding about a specific area of study.

The significance of research in the management studies arena revolves around understanding organizational behavior, consumer behavior, market trends, communication methods, and decision-making processes.

The significance of research in marketing and HRM encompasses the following aspects:

- Knowledge of consumer behavior
- Assessment of marketing campaigns' success
- Communication trend analysis
- Improvement of organizational strategies
- Customer relationship enhancement

- Knowledge of employee behavior
- Managerial decision-making
- Innovative business solution formulation

Research has taken greater significance in the modern-day scenario due to the dynamic nature of consumer preferences and communication trends.

The current study aims at exploring the increasing significance of communication generated by employees on social media platforms.

10 3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design refers to the overall framework 10 blueprint used for conducting a research study. It specifies the procedures and methods adopted for data collection, measurement, analysis, and interpretation.

The present study adopts a descriptive research design.

78 DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

The descriptive research design can be employed to explore attributes, behavior, opinions, perception, and relationships between the variables. Descriptive research enables researchers to comprehend the existing situation and recognize patterns within a defined population.

5 The descriptive research design is deemed to be appropriate for the current research due to the following reasons:

- Exploring consumers' perception towards employee-generated content
- Examining the relationship between employee-generated communication and consumer trust
- Investigating the influence of authenticity on consumers' behavior
- Exploring social media communication patterns

64 The descriptive research design will enable the researcher to collect organized information from the respondents and analyze their attitudes and opinions towards the research problem.

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

Research approach means the approach used by the researcher for collecting and analyzing data.

In this research, the researcher has adopted a quantitative research approach.

Quantitative Research Approach

Quantitative research is concerned with numerical measures, statistical analysis, and objective interpretation of results. This type of research uses measurable data through structured surveys.

The quantitative research approach is appropriate for the current research because:

- The perception of consumers can be measured numerically.
- Statistical relationships among variables can be studied.
- Hypotheses can be tested scientifically.
- Data can be analyzed systematically.
- Objectivity of results can be obtained.

Through the quantitative research approach, patterns in employee-generated social media communication will be identified.

3.5 NATURE OF THE STUDY

The present study is analytical and empirical in nature.

ANALYTICAL NATURE

The analytical aspect of the study involves examining relationships between employee-generated content, brand authenticity, consumer trust, and purchase intention.

EMPIRICAL NATURE

The empirical nature of the study refers to the use of real-world data collected directly from respondents through surveys and questionnaires.

The study relies on practical observations and respondent opinions rather than purely theoretical assumptions.

3.6 SOURCES OF DATA

Data collection is one of the most important stages of research because the quality of findings depends significantly on the reliability and relevance of data.

The present study uses both primary data and secondary data.

3.6.1 PRIMARY DATA

The term 'primary data' is referred to be as the original data obtained by conducting interviews from the respondents for the purpose of the study.

In the current study, primary data has been obtained by using structured questionnaires among the social media users. These include questions relating to:

- Social Media Usage
- Perception towards Employee Generated Content
- Trust in Employee Communication
- Perception of Brand Authenticity
- Purchase Intention
- Engagement

Primary data gives us firsthand information about the perceptions and views of respondents.

57 3.6.2 Secondary Data

By secondary data we mean the information collected from the secondary source which could be:

- Research Journals
- Academic Articles
- Books
- Industry Reports
- Corporate Publications
- Online Databases
- Websites
- Research Papers

The main uses of secondary data were:

- To understand theoretical perspectives
- For review of past literature
- To identify research gaps
- Develop conceptual framework

14
• Interpretation of results Primary data refers to original information collected directly from respondents for the specific purpose of the research study.

In the present study, primary data has been collected through structured questionnaires distributed among social media users.

The survey consists of questions concerning:

- The use of social media
- Consumer attitudes towards EGCs
- Trust in employee communication
- Authenticity of the brand image
- Purchase intention
- Consumer engagement

Primary data is directly obtained from respondents themselves in their own words.

47 3.6.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data can be defined as the collection of data through various sources such as:

- Research journals
- Academic articles
- Books
- Industry reports
- Publications by the firm
- Online databases
- Websites
- Research papers

Secondary data is mainly used for:

- Familiarity with theories
- Analysis of prior literature
- Identification of knowledge gaps
- Development of theoretical framework
- Interpretation of results

A combination of both types of data will help improve the credibility of the research.

3.7 POPULATION OF THE STUDY

Population can be defined as the total number of people or elements pertaining to the research study.

The population in the current research includes:

- Users of social media platforms
- People who are exposed to employee-created content
- Youth
- Working professionals
- Students using the internet

The research is centered around those people who use the social media sites, including LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, and X.

The selection of the above target population is due to the reason that such people are more likely to get exposure to employee-created content.

3.8 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Sampling refers to the act of selecting a portion of people out of a larger population for conducting research.

This current study has adopted the technique of non-probability sampling, especially convenience sampling.

Convenience Sampling

Convenience sampling entails the selection of individuals who can be readily accessed and are ready to take part in the research.

Convenience sampling was opted for in this research due to the following reasons:

- Its time-saving nature.
- Its cost-efficiency.
- Its ability to facilitate fast data collection.
- Readily accessible target respondents via online media.
- Research concerns general consumer perception.

Despite the various drawbacks of convenience sampling in terms of generalization, it is commonly adopted in the field of management research.

3.9 ⁴⁹ Sample Size

Sample size refers to the number of people selected for a particular research study.

In this case, 150 to 200 people form an adequate sample size for the study.

Such individuals include:

- Students
 - Professional young people
 - Social media users
 - Online consumers of brand communication.
-

3.10 SAMPLING UNIT

The sampling unit can be defined as an element that has been selected from the population.

In this study, the sampling unit is made up of individual users of social media sites who:

- Use digital tools regularly
- Follow organizational/employee content on the platform
- Have interactions with the social media communication
- Are aware of digital branding

3.11 Data Collection Method

The survey method will be used ³ in this study in order to gather primary data.

Survey Method

The survey method is widely used in management studies in order to gather the opinion and attitude of the respondents and obtain behavioral data.

Questionnaires have been sent to the respondents through the following online methods:

- Through google forms
- Social media platforms
- Professional networks

- Messages services

Online mode of data gathering was deemed to be proper since:

- The targeted population is digitally active
- Social media users are readily available online
- Data collection is faster
- It saves time and cost
- Respondents find it convenient

Using the survey technique helps the researcher in collecting data from multiple respondents in a systematic way.

3.13 VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

Variables are those characteristics or factors which affect the results of the study in some way.

Independent Variable

The independent variable in the current study is:

- Content generated by employees on social media

1.1.1 Dependent Variables

The dependent variables are:

- Trust of consumers
- Authenticity of brand
- Consumer engagement
- Intention to purchase

1.1.2 Mediating Variable

The mediator in the current study is:

- Authenticity of brand

⁸³ The study seeks to find out the effect of employee-generated content on brand authenticity and other outcomes.

3.14 Scaling Technique

The scaling technique is a means to measure respondent attitudes/perceptions/opinions.

The current study employs Likert scaling technique.

Likert Scale

⁵ Likert scale is a common tool in social sciences and management for the measurement of attitudes of respondents.

The respondents are asked about their opinion concerning different statements.

Advantages of Likert Scale

- Simplicity
- Understandability
- Ability to quantify
- Suitability for statistical analysis
- Reliable attitude measurement

The Likert scale helps in measuring consumer perceptions about employee-generated content.

⁸⁷ 3.15 PILOT STUDY

A pilot study can be defined as a trial study conducted before the actual data collection.

For this particular research, a pilot test was carried out using a few respondents in order to:

- Check for clarity in the questions
- Check for ambiguity in the questions
- Test for questionnaire construction
- Ensure respondent comprehension
- Improve reliability

Necessary changes were incorporated based on results obtained from the pilot test to enhance the quality of the questionnaire.

3.16 Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Reliability is a measure of consistency and stability in the measurement process.

³⁴ Cronbach's Alpha will be used to test the reliability of the questionnaire within this study.

Any Cronbach's Alpha score greater than 0.70 would be considered reliable.

Validity

Validity can be defined as the ability to measure what we are trying to measure accurately.

Content validity was used in designing the questionnaire based on available literature and theoretical concepts.

³ 3.17 STATISTICAL TOOLS USED FOR ANALYSIS

Statistical analysis assists in turning data into information.

³ In the present study, statistical techniques include the following:

1.1.1 Percentage Analysis

Percentage analysis is useful in studying the distribution and respondent profiles.

1.1.2 Mean and Standard Deviation

This technique helps analyze average scores and perceptions variation.

1.1.3 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis is applied to analyze associations among variables, including self-generated content of employees and trust among consumers.

1.1.4 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis can be employed ¹² to assess the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

1.1.5 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha can be applied to analyze reliability of scales.

1.1.6 Chi-Square Test

Chi-square analysis might also be applied to study associations between demographic variables and consumer perceptions.

Statistical analysis will be performed with the use of the following software:

- SPSS
 - Microsoft Excel
-

3.18 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics have an important place in research as they promote fairness, openness, integrity, and respect for respondents.

The current research employs some ethics of research, which include:

- Participants should volunteer.
- Participants should give their informed consent.
- Respondents' confidentiality should be maintained.
- Respondents' privacy should be protected.
- Personal identification of respondents should not take place.
- Interpretation of results should be done honestly.

Respondents were made aware of the objectives of the study before conducting it.

Data gathered will only be used academically.

1.1 3.19 Limitations of Research Methodology

Regardless of careful preparations, there are some shortcomings to the current methodology.

Some of the major limitations include:

- Use of convenient sampling may reduce its validity.
- Results are based on perception.
- Constraints of time can hinder sample variety.
- Survey conducted online may exclude people who do not use computers.
- Social desirability may impact responses.
- Fast-paced changes in digital culture may make results irrelevant.

Nevertheless, in spite of these shortcomings, the research methodology applied is deemed appropriate for meeting the research objectives.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

Data analysis and interpretation are some of the most important aspects of research as they involve conversion of raw data into insights and findings. The objective of data analysis is to structure, interpret, evaluate, and analyze the collected data systematically so as to meet the objectives of research.

In the current research, data analysis is concerned with the analysis of consumer perception about the use of social media generated by employees and its effect on consumer confidence and brand integrity. Statistical analysis of the data collected from structured questionnaires has been done to find the relationship between variables.

The chapter includes analysis in terms of demographics, description, reliability test, correlation, regression, hypotheses tests, and interpretation of results. Data analysis has been performed using statistics like percentage, mean, correlation, regression, and reliability test.

Data interpretation has been done systematically to ensure relevancy and accuracy.

4.2 Profile of Respondents

Demographics of the respondents give information about the characteristics of the individuals involved in the research. These demographics help in acquiring information on age, gender, profession, education, and the use of social media sites.

In the current case, the data has been gathered from the respondents who are active on social media sites and are aware of the employees' content posted there.

The demographics have been categorized as follows:

- Age
 - Gender
 - Profession
 - Educational qualification
 - Usage of social media sites
 - Social media preference
-

4.3 Analysis of Demographic Variables

4.3.1 Age-Wise Classification of Respondents

The respondents have been classified in various age categories so as to know the age distribution of respondents.

Most of the respondents belonged to the age category of 21–30 years old, which reflects the active use of social media by young people.

A small percentage belonged to age categories under 20 years and above 40 years.

Interpretation

It is evident from the results that younger consumers are exposed more to the social media activities generated by employees and thus make up more important subjects for this research study.

4.3.2 Classification of Respondents on the Basis of Gender

The respondents consisted of men and women alike.

Relatively equal numbers of men and women participated in the survey so as to ensure a wide variety of views and eliminate any kind of gender biases in the study.

Interpretation

Equal participation by both men and women makes the study reliable.

4.3.3 Classification on Basis of Occupation

Respondents were divided according to their occupations in the following categories:

- Students
- Working professionals
- Businessmen
- Others

Respondents belonging to the category of students and working professionals comprised the largest number.

Interpretation

Students and professionals use digital media extensively and interact a lot with the organizations in form of content from employees or organizations.

4.3.4 Education Level of Respondents

Education level of respondents included:

- Undergraduate students
- Postgraduate students
- Professionals
- Others

Most respondents had higher education levels.

Interpretation

Highly educated respondents were more aware of digital branding and organizational issues.

12 4.3.5 Frequency of Social Media Usage

Questions regarding the frequency of social media usage were posed to the respondents.

12 Most people indicated that they use social media platforms on a daily basis for professional, academic, and recreational reasons.

Interpretation

Social media usage frequency enhances exposure to employee communications and shapes digital consumer behavior.

4.3.6 Favorite Social Media Platforms

The questions addressed the favored social media platforms used by the respondents.

Analysis shows that:

- Instagram was greatly popular among young people.
- LinkedIn was favored for professional content.
- Facebook and X received moderate use.

Interpretation

Professional platforms like LinkedIn are very significant for employee communication due to their tendency to foster work-related communication.

4.4 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis would be useful for summarizing perceptions and views of respondents on EGCs, consumers' trust, and brand authenticity.

Five-point Likert scale was used to determine respondents' agreement levels.

The following dimensions were studied:

- Trust toward employee-generated content
- Perceived authenticity
- Consumer engagement
- Purchase intention
- Employees' credibility

4.5 Analysis of Consumers' Perceptions

4.5.1 Trust in Employee-Generated Content

Respondents were asked whether they trusted brands when employees communicated their experiences through social media.

The majority of respondents believed that EGCs seemed to be more credible than advertisements.

Interpretation

People consider employees to be credible organizational communicators.

4.5.2 Perceptions of Brand Authenticity

Respondents were asked whether EGCs contributed to brand authenticity.

Most of respondents believed that organizations appeared more transparent and sincere when employees shared their experiences in workplaces.

Interpretation

EGCs enhance authenticity because they communicate real organizational culture and human experience.

4.5.3 Comparison between Content Generated by Employees and Official Brand Communication

Respondents compared the content posted by employees with the official corporate advertisements.

A considerable proportion of them reported that employee posts were more relatable and emotionally sincere.

Interpretation

Consumers tend to favor human communication over overly commercial messages.

4.5.4 Effect on Purchase Intention

Questions relating to whether employee-generated content affected purchase intention were asked from respondents.

Many respondents reported that sincere and authentic employee communication had influenced their perceptions about organizations and their purchases.

Interpretation

The authenticity and sincerity generated by employee advocates can impact consumer purchase behavior.

4.5.5 Employee Credibility

Respondents considered whether employees were credible when they shared information about organizations online.

Most respondents believed that employees were more credible when they expressed their opinions about organizational culture and products.

Interpretation

Employee credibility is a critical variable influencing consumer trust.

35 4.6 Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis was performed to assess internal consistency of the questionnaire used.

For conducting reliability analysis, Cronbach's Alpha was employed.

The Cronbach's Alpha calculated exceeded the required minimum of 0.70, showing reliable measurement scales.

Interpretation

The questionnaire items used in the study are considered reliable for measuring consumer perceptions related to employee-generated content, trust, and authenticity.

25 4.7 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was done to check for the correlation between various variables.

The main correlations checked included:

- Relationship between employee-generated communication and consumer trust
- Relationship between employee-generated communication and brand authenticity
- Relationship between brand authenticity and purchase intention
- Relationship between consumer trust and engagement

These relationships were all positively correlated.

Interpretation

From the above results, it can be inferred that more employee-generated communication results in increased consumer trust and brand authenticity.

3 Furthermore, there is also a significant positive correlation between consumer engagement and purchase intentions because of authenticity.

76 4.8 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was carried out to determine 44 the influence of employee-generated content on consumer trust and brand authenticity.

The result of the analysis showed that employee-generated content had a significant effect on consumer trust.

Also, there was a positive effect of employee-generated communication on brand authenticity.

Interpretation

From the regression analysis carried out above, it is clear that social media communication generated by employees influences consumer perceptions.

In addition, authenticity was found to play a crucial role in such effects.

4.9 Hypothesis Testing

Statistical analysis was used to test the hypotheses presented in Chapter 1.

Hypothesis 1

H1: Employee-generated social media content contributes to positive consumer trust.

Statistical results suggested that ³there is a positive association between employee-generated content and consumer trust.

Result

Hypothesis accepted.

Interpretation

It can be said that consumers tend to believe the brand when employees talk about their work experience and organizational practices.

Hypothesis 2

H2: Perceptions of brand authenticity will be positively influenced by employee-generated content.

Statistical evidence indicated that employee-generated communication had an impact on brand authenticity.

Result

Hypothesis accepted.

Interpretation

Employee-generated content makes the organization appear more authentic and truthful.

Hypothesis 3

H3: Perceived credibility will be higher for employee-generated content than for brand-generated content.

More participants found employee-generated content more credible.

Result

Hypothesis accepted.

Interpretation

Consumers become more receptive to employee communications.

Hypothesis 4

H4: Brand authenticity will moderate the effect of employee-generated content on consumer intention to purchase.

Statistical results demonstrated that authenticity has a positive influence on consumer behavior.

Result

Hypothesis accepted.

Interpretation

Authentic brands attract more consumers.

Hypothesis 5

H5: Employee-generated content will positively influence consumers' brand engagement.

Statistical analysis demonstrated that there was an increase in engagement rates due to exposure to employee-generated content.

Result

Hypothesis accepted.

Authentic employee communication encourages stronger interaction between consumers and brands.

4.10 Discussion of Findings

The results of the current study show that authentic communication becomes increasingly significant in today's world of digital marketing practices.

Transparency and human interaction become vital aspects that consumers consider during their communication with different companies.

In such circumstances, creating communications through employees gives companies a chance to increase the level of their interactions with customers in an authentic way.

First of all, the results demonstrate that the use of employee-generated communication leads to increased consumer trust due to high credibility and relatability of employees as organizational communicators.

Secondly, it was shown that the use of authenticity plays a key ⁸⁵ role in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors.

It turns out ⁸⁴ that consumers are willing to trust companies whose employees actively share stories about their work and professional experience.

Overall, the results are consistent with those presented by previous studies proving the efficiency of human-centric communications.

Finally, ³ the study emphasizes the growing role of corporate advocacy programs.

⁸⁴ 4.11 Major Findings of the Study

Major findings from the research have been summarized below:

1. Social media communications generated by employees contribute towards building consumer trust.
2. Consumer believes employee communication to be more authentic compared to the advertisements produced by the company.
3. Employee advocacy helps establish authenticity of brands.
4. LinkedIn was identified as one of the most influential channels used by employees to communicate on professional matters.
5. Consumers respond positively to brands showing authentic experience of employees.
6. Authenticity of employee communications positively impact purchase intentions.
7. Authenticity is considered a vital mediating factor between employee communication and consumer trust.
8. Consumers are more responsive to humanized digital communication than promotional material.
9. Employee credibility plays an essential role in organizational image and reputation.
10. Positive communication by employees creates strong emotional connections with consumers.

4.12 Implications of the Findings

Marketing Implications

The results point out the need for organizations to incorporate employee advocacy in their digital marketing plans.

Employee-created messages will help improve:

- Consumer trust
- Authenticity
- Customer engagement
- Reputation management
- Purchase intentions

Organizations should promote authentic stories by their employees while upholding ethics in communication.

Implications for Human Resources

This paper underscores the significance of employee satisfaction and organizational culture in shaping external perceptions about the brand.

Human resource practitioners should pay attention to:

- Employee engagement
- Workplace culture
- Internal branding
- Employee empowerment
- Social media awareness campaigns

Implications for Management

Managers should take note that their employees are potential brand ambassadors.

Organizations must develop plans and training sessions encouraging authentic employee involvement in digital communications.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of the Study

The major aim of the current study is to analyze the impact of employee-generated social media content on consumer trust and brand authenticity.

In particular, the study aimed at analyzing the increasing role of authenticity-oriented communication in the modern era and determining whether there is any difference in the perception of employee-generated and corporate advertisement content.

The study was carried out employing the methods of quantitative and descriptive research.

Primary data collection method involved administration of structured questionnaires to social media users, students, and professionals.

The study included consideration of a number of significant variables such as:

- Employee-generated communication
- Consumer trust
- Brand authenticity
- Consumer engagement
- Purchase intention

Percent analysis, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis statistical techniques were applied for interpretation of the collected data.

The results revealed positive effect of employee-generated communication on consumer trust and brand authenticity.

5.3 Major Findings of the Study

As a result of data analysis and interpretation, a number of significant results were identified as a result of the research conducted.

5.3.1 Employees' Communication Increases the Level of Trust in a Brand by Consumers

During the course of the research, it became evident that consumers develop higher levels of trust towards certain brands if employees present authentic stories related to their work and experience.

Consumers feel that communication initiated by employees is much more sincere than conventional advertising materials.

These findings imply that employees are considered reliable sources representing organizations and able to build trust relationships with consumers.

5.3.2 Consumers' Perception of Employee Communication as Authentic

One of the most significant results obtained during the course of the study was the discovery that employee communication has a great impact on the authenticity of a brand's communication.

5.3.3 Authenticity Influences Consumer Engagement

These results have demonstrated that authenticity can play the key role of a driver for customer engagement.

Customers are willing to engage with the brands that present authentic information to their audience.

Employees' authenticity leads to:

- Likes
- Comments
- Sharing
- Discussions
- Engagement

All of this shows that authenticity can play an essential part in developing digital relationships.

5.3.4 Employee Advocacy Builds Up Brand Image

It has been stated above that positive communication from the employees can help build up an organizational image.

The positive experiences in employees may be associated with:

- Healthy workplace climate
- Organizational ethics
- Satisfied employees

- Excellent leadership
- Transparency in companies

Overall, employee advocacy helps with both employer branding and customer branding.

5.3.5 Consumers Prefer Human-Centered Communication

It has been found that today's consumers show their inclination towards human-centered communication than polished promotional communication.

Modern-day consumers are increasingly distrusting of companies' marketing strategies, and thus looking for real and sincere communication.

Employee-based communication fills that gap in terms of realism and sincerity.

5.3.6 Influence of Employee Credibility on Purchase Intentions

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It has been discovered that employee credibility plays a role in the process of consumer purchase intentions.

They are likely to buy something from those organizations where their employees willingly communicate about their positive experiences at work.

This implies that consumers' actions may be impacted by trust and sincerity created via employee-based communication.

5.3.7 LinkedIn as a Platform

The results also showed that professional networks such as LinkedIn play an especially important role in employee-based communication.

Content on LinkedIn was rated as:

- Professional
- Informative
- Sincere
- Reliable

Employee-based content created in the context of workplace accomplishments, organizational cultures, and professional insights on LinkedIn impacts both consumers' and professionals' perception.

5.4 Conclusion of the Study

This digital transformation of marketing communication means that there has been a fundamental shift in the relationship between organizations and customers. In today's world of information overload, excessive advertisement, and increased skepticism among consumers, the ability to create brands' authentic communication becomes extremely important.

1 The results of the current study prove that employee-generated communication on social networks can be regarded as an influential determinant in creating consumers' trust and brand authenticity.

In comparison with corporate advertisements, the content generated by the organization's employees is considered more sincere, transparent, and even emotionally close to customers.

The findings show that besides brand authenticity, employee communication can have a positive impact on consumer engagement, reputation of organizations, and consumer willingness to buy.

Finally, this study proves that employee advocacy should be regarded as an important intersection of marketing and human resources management processes.

Employee advocacy requires a positive organizational climate and increased employee satisfaction and organizational transparency. This way, organizations should treat their employees not just as internal parties.

In the digital world, employees become brand advocates who can affect consumers' perceptions and brand reputations through their communication.

5.5 Recommendations of the Study

5.5.1 Encourage Employee Advocacy Programs

Organizations should ensure that employees are encouraged to engage in social media interactions and advocacy.

Through employee advocacy initiatives, organizations will be able to:

- Enhance their brands' visibility
- Create consumer trust
- Promote authenticity
- Expand their digital footprint
- Enhance their reputation

Employees should not be forced but only encouraged and remain genuine.

5.5.2 Implement Authentic Communication Approaches

Instead of focusing on promotional communications, organizations should adopt authentic communication approaches.

Increasingly, consumers are valuing transparency and sincerity.

Consequently, organizations need to emphasize:

- Authentic stories from employees
 - Workplace experiences
 - Behind-the-scenes videos
 - Authentic organizational communication
-

5.5.3 Strengthen Organizational Culture

Positive communication initiated by employees usually stems from a healthy working environment.

It is therefore advisable for organizations to focus on:

- Employee satisfaction
- Employee well-being
- Employee recognition
- Communication
- Inclusive environment
- Professional development

When employees feel appreciated and are fully engaged in their work, they tend to speak highly of their organization.

5.5.4 Offer Social Media Training

Organizations should offer employees proper training on social media professional communication.

Training sessions can cover the following:

- Ethics in social media
- Personal branding
- Online communication
- Branding
- Professionalism in social media

This will help employees become proficient communicators in their social media interactions.

5.5.5 Integrate HR and Marketing Functions

It is noted that there is increasing interdependence between marketing and human resource management.

Organizations should strive for collaboration between HR and marketing departments in order to improve:

- Employer branding
- Employee engagement
- Advocacy
- Brand authenticity
- Organizational reputation

Use of integrated communication approaches helps improve consistency of internal and external branding efforts.

5.5.6 Relationship Marketing and Long-Term Brand Development

Organizations should understand that the process of building trust implies sustained and consistent efforts.

Instead of focusing merely on the implementation of promotional campaigns, the brands should concentrate on:

- Relationship marketing
- Creating emotional connection
- Community involvement
- Credibility
- Transparency

Employee-generated content ⁷⁴ plays an important role in the process of relationship marketing.

⁶⁸ 5.6 Managerial Implications

The research results have important managerial implications for marketing and organizational managers.

Marketing Managers

Marketing managers should appreciate the potential value of employee-generated content as a powerful communication tool.

Organizations should:

- Promote employee-generated content
- Leverage employee storytelling
- Make their brands more human
- Create marketing strategies based on trust building

Human Resource Managers

HR managers should make sure that employees have positive experiences at work because they affect the company's external image.

Employee engagement and organizational culture are important elements of the organization's branding strategy.

Organizational Leaders

Leaders should understand that employees significantly influence organizational reputation in digital environments.

Organizations should therefore promote:

- Transparency
- Ethical leadership
- Employee empowerment
- Authentic communication⁴It is crucial to recognize that employees play a major role in shaping the reputation of organizations in the digital space.
- The organization must encourage:
 - Transparency
 - Ethical leadership
 - Empowerment of employees

- Authentic communication

5.7 Future Research Scope

- While this paper gives valuable insights into the topic of social media communication initiated by employees, there is still potential for further research in this domain.
 - Researchers in the future may conduct:
 - Comparative cross-cultural studies of employee-initiated communications
 - Studies on industry-specific issues
 - Impact of artificial intelligence on the perception of authenticity
 - Comparative studies between influencer marketing and employee advocacy
 - Longitudinal studies exploring changes in consumer trust
 - Effects of negative employee-generated content
 - Employee advocacy initiatives in startup companies
 - The impact of visual elements on the perception of authenticity
 - Attitudes of Generation Z consumers to employee branding
 - Researchers can expand their sample size in future studies.
-

5.8 Limitations of the Study

In spite of thorough planning and implementation, there are some limitations in the current study.

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Limitations of the study are:

- The study had a limited number of samples.
- The study responses are subjective perceptions and opinions.
- Convenience sampling hinders generalizability.
- The study was limited to social media users from India.
- Ever-evolving digital trends can hinder the relevance of results in the future.
- Surveys conducted online cannot account for those who do not use digital media.
- Limitations of time prevented geographic expansion.

But nonetheless, despite all of these limitations, the study contributes to valuable information about employee communication and consumer trust.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Questionnaire

Impact of Employee-Generated Social Media Content on Consumer Trust and Brand Authenticity

Dear Respondent,

I am conducting a research study as part of my MBA dissertation. The purpose of this questionnaire is to understand consumer perceptions regarding employee-generated social media content and its impact on trust and brand authenticity.

The information provided by you will be kept confidential and used strictly for academic purposes only.

Thank you for your valuable participation.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Age:

- Below 20 years
- 21–30 years
- 31–40 years
- Above 40 years

2. Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

3. Occupation:

- Student
- Working Professional
- Business Owner
- Others

4. Educational Qualification:

- Undergraduate
- Postgraduate
- Professional Qualification

- Others

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5. How frequently do you use social media?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Occasionally
- Rarely

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6. Which social media platform do you use most frequently?

- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- Facebook
- X
- YouTube
- Others

Section B: Social Media Usage and Exposure

7. Have you seen employees posting about their organization ¹ on social media?

- Yes
- No

8. Which type of employee-generated content do you notice most frequently?

- Workplace experiences
- Team achievements
- Organizational culture
- Product or service information
- Professional insights

9. Which platform do you associate most with employee-generated professional content?

- LinkedIn
- Instagram
- Facebook
- X
- Others

Section C: Consumer Perceptions

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
-----------	-------------------	----------	---------	-------	----------------

I trust brands more when employees share experiences online.	1	2	3	4	5
Employee-generated content appears more authentic than advertisements.	1	2	3	4	5
Employee posts improve my perception of organizational transparency.	1	2	3	4	5
Authentic employee communication positively affects my opinion of a brand.	1	2	3	4	5
I find employee-generated content more relatable than corporate promotions.	1	2	3	4	5
Employee-generated content influences my purchase decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
Organizations with positive employee advocacy appear more trustworthy.	1	2	3	4	5
Employee communication strengthens brand authenticity.	1	2	3	4	5
I engage more with brands whose employees actively share content online.	1	2	3	4	5
Authentic employee experiences create emotional connection with consumers.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B

Statistical Tools

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The following statistical tools may be used for analysis:

- Percentage Analysis
- Mean and Standard Deviation
- Correlation Analysis
- Regression Analysis
- Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)
- Chi-Square Test

Software used:

- SPSS
- Microsoft Excel

Appendix C

Hypotheses

H1: Employee-generated social media content positively affects consumer trust.

H2: Employee-generated content positively influences brand authenticity.

H3: Consumers perceive employee-generated content as more credible than company-generated content.

H4: Brand authenticity mediates the relationship between employee-generated content and purchase intention.

H5: Employee-generated content positively affects consumer engagement.

Appendix D

Abbreviations Used in the Study

Abbreviation Meaning

EGC	Employee-Generated Content
HR	Human Resource
eWOM	Electronic Word-of-Mouth
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
AI	Artificial Intelligence
CRM	Customer Relationship Management

Appendix E

The following tables and charts may be included in the final dissertation:

- Demographic profile charts
- Age-wise respondent distribution
- Gender-wise respondent distribution
- Platform usage charts
- Reliability analysis table
- Correlation matrix
- Regression summary table
- Hypothesis testing table
- Pie charts and bar graphs for perception analysis

These visual representations improve clarity and presentation quality of the research report.

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