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Submitted

March 7, 2017

Approved

November 20, 2017

© 2018

Communication & Society

ISSN 0214-0039

E ISSN 2386-7876

doi: 10.15581/003.31.1.147-167

www.communication-society.com

2018 – Vol. 31(1)

pp. 147-167

How to cite this article:

Çınar, N. (2018). An evaluation of
source effects in consumer
generated ads. *Communication &
Society* 31(1), 147-167.

This article is adapted from the author's
doctoral dissertation. The author would
like to thank his Ph.D. thesis supervisor
Prof. Dr. R. Ayhan Yılmaz.

An evaluation of source effects in consumer generated ads

Abstract

The continuous advancement in information and communication technologies transforms the media and its audiences. The new media environment has provided the audiences with a great control power over the media consumption process. Interaction and participation are the connatural features of new media, therefore this environment offers brand new opportunities to the audience regarding content creation and distribution. This environment also reshaped the interaction between consumers and brands, and enabled active participation of consumers. Therefore, consumer-brand relationships have become more complex and interactive than ever before. The phenomenon of consumer generated ads (CGA), which is the main focus of this study, is one of the most remarkable examples of high level consumer participation to brand-related content creation. This phenomenon has attracted more and more attention from scholars in recent years. As of the second half of 2000s, the academy directed its attention to CGA and a limited number of studies have been covered since then. Most of those previous studies' findings have shown that disclosing consumer source may lead to less favorable ad evaluations. This study is conducted in Turkey and employed both experimental design and semi-structured interviews. Unlike the previous studies, this study has shown that disclosing consumer source leads to more favorable ad evaluations. Besides, another significant finding of this study shows that consumer generated ad (CGA) is perceived to be "creative work of an amateur" rather than being a "persuasion attempt" and "communication of the brand".

Keywords

New media, consumer generated ad, attitude toward the ad, skepticism, credibility, creativity.

1. Introduction

Traditionally, advertising is a means of communication originating from clients or their respective ad agencies that pay to have these ads broadcasted or published in the mass media with the specific intention to persuade the target consumers (Barton, 1950: 928). For a long time, consumers have been passive recipients of ad messages. However, with

the advancements in internet technologies, the media has become more interactive and participative than ever before. Such transformations triggered new types of ads, which, in return, reshaped consumers' relationship to ads. Approaching the definition of advertisement in line with such transformations points to three main challenges (Tuten, 2008: 2). First, there is the concept of "mass communication" by definition. The internet is composed of more than a billion niche websites, yet websites that literally manage to reach masses –such as Google, Facebook– are relatively rare. This is why the number of targeted users by online ads may vary. Some examples are, permission based personal advertising; ads oriented at small online groups gathered around various interests; or social media advertising to reach mass audiences. It is impossible to address the boundaries of target groups of ads on the internet. Second, is about advertisement being a paid-for communication. Consumer generated brand oriented online content as well as viral ads point to availability of unpaid or indirectly paid communication media. Third, is the traditional approach to advertisement as one-way communication. Thus, the interactive and participative nature of the internet strengthened the role of consumers –passive receivers of ads– and, paved the way for consumers to become active participants in brand communication. In addition to these challenges suggested by Tuten (2008), a fourth challenge could be the stress on the traditional definition of advertising regarding the designated origins. Traditionally, as to clients' request, ads are produced by clients themselves or their respective ad agencies. However, in the online realm, advertisement production is not monopolised by clients or ad agencies. This new medium, where the user can generate and broadcast content, ensured active participation of consumers to create ads. Specifically, advertising sector is undergoing a transformation process, parallel to advancement and dissemination of internet technologies.

Indeed, the above listed four challenges point to unique advertising opportunities invested in this new medium. The ads we see in this new media that brought a new dimension to the communication between brands and customers also reflect the characteristics of this medium. Among which, consumer generated ads are quite striking. Thanks to the opportunities introduced with internet technologies and the new media, today consumers can create ads and share online with other customers.

Such changes influenced advertising sector; thus, paving the way for respective scientific research to focus on this subject. Internet oriented advertising research accelerated during the past 15 years (Kim, Hayes, Avant & Reid, 2001: 310). Very recently, research on the consumer generated advertising phenomenon has come to the forefront. It is a controversial subject how consumers evaluate the consumer generated ads, which has become a more frequent phenomenon in Turkey. Western-oriented studies reveal no consensus on the effectiveness of consumer generated ads. In the light of the afore stated developments, the problem that arises and forms the basis of this research is how consumers' attitude toward the ad is influenced by disclosing consumer source.

2. Theoretical background and hypothesis

For a long time, consumers have been passive recipients of ad messages. However, with the advancements in internet technologies, the media has become more interactive and participative than ever before. Consequently, the relationship between consumer, brand and ads has become more complicated and even more interactive. The internet has become an interactive, collaborative and participative environment than merely acquiring information. Currently, the internet is more about what people do with the technology than the technology itself; as, the internet is used to generate and consume information rather than accessing it, as well as creating added value for websites promoting participation. Thus, the contemporary approach to advertising is shaped by these transformations. Ads

are not one directional and passive means of communication anymore; consumers are provided with facilities to generate and share ads freely on internet. No longer clients or their respective ad agencies are the only agents privileged with ad production.

In advertising literature, this is named as "consumer generated ad" phenomenon. Consumer generated advertising (CGA) is a form of user generated content that points to consumers' producing brand oriented messages to inform, convince or prompt others (Berthon, Pitt & Campbell, 2008: 8). Today, consumers' participation to brand-relevant communications reveals itself in consumer generated advertising; thus, it is practiced alongside with traditional marketing communication of organizations- either supporting it, or objecting to it, or even teasing it (e.g., Vanden Bergh, Lee, Quilliam & Hove, 2011; Sabri & Michel, 2014).

2.1. Definition of CGA

The most significant change introduced with consumer generated ads is about control. That is, organisations' control over messages about their brands have decreased. The traditional distinction between consumer and creator as well as mass communication and individual communication no longer exists; therefore, conventional media management models are not functional any more. Naturally, organisations find it hard to adapt to the new order (Berthon, Pitt & Campbell, 2008: 7). Moreover, opportunities provided by consumer generated advertising phenomenon activated the marketing sector.

According to Steyn et al. (2011: 51) consumer generated advertising increasingly attracts the attention of marketers for a number of reasons: First, consumer generated ads require quite low costs than professional agencies. Second, consumers' feedback on the brand is precious in terms of brand management. Third, this unconventional form of advertising stands for a good alternative to traditional ads, which are hard to notice within the ad clutter. Fourth, internet is a means to raise brand awareness more by eWOM than by traditional advertising. Fifth, consumers can be quite skilled in their creation of brand-relevant communications.

In literature, the definition of consumer generated advertising underlines two main limitations. These are subject and dissemination (distribution). First, consumers may generate content on almost any subject (personal, family, friends, enemies, organisations, government, etc.), however the scope of consumer generated advertising is limited with brand-oriented ad messages. Second, consumers may generate brand-oriented ads; however, no possible influence is available before these are published. As to the above listed limitations, the operational definition of consumer generated advertising is "any publicly disseminated, consumer-generated advertising message whose subject is a collectively recognized brand" (Berthon, Pitt & Campbell, 2008: 8). Knoll (2016: 287) states that the distinguishing feature of CGA when compared to user generated content in general is that consumers make use of established advertising vehicles such as videos while creating the content along the line of professional commercials. In brief consumers explicitly imitate the style of commercials.

2.2. Research on CGA

Recently, there is a growing focus on consumer generated advertising both in academic world and in the industry. Advancements in communication technologies as well as the availability of internet to generate and share content are the factors that facilitated users to generate & disseminate ads. The increasing volume of consumer generated ads on the internet forced clients and their respective ad agencies to come up with new strategies to handle this new phenomenon.

Various recent academic studies on consumer generated advertising are also available. Preliminary studies discuss the operational definition and the scope of the concept, point to different aspects, and focus on the motivation of consumers to generate ads (Burroughs & Mick, 2004; Moreau & Dahl, 2005; Dahl & Moreau, 2007; Berthon, Pitt & Campbell, 2008). Later studies are an attempt to analyse the influence of the information about the ad creator and his/her motivation, on consumer evaluations (Brunel, Fournier, Lawrence, Guzman & Papavasileiou, 2007; Cheong & Morrison, 2008; Ertimur, 2009; Steyn, Wallström & Pitt, 2010; Lawrence, Fournier & Brunel, 2013; Steyn, Ewing, van Heerden & Windisch, 2011; Campbell, Pitt, Parent & Berthon, 2011; Pehlivan, Sarican & Berthon, 2011; Vanden Bergh, Lee, Quilliam & Hove, 2011; Ertimur & Gilly, 2012; Thompson & Malaviya, 2013; Chrysochou & Krystallis, 2013) or to analyse the effect of CGA on brand image and company's response strategies to different CGA types (Berthon, Pitt & Campbell, 2008; Vanden Bergh, Lee, Quilliam & Hove, 2011; Boon, Grant and Kietzmann, 2016).

Research on the field point to source effect of the ad creator variable to have significant impact on consumers' attitude towards ads. Many studies of Western origin reveal no consensus on, whether disclosure of a consumer source has influence on consumers' attitude toward the ad. Few research (Brunel, Fournier, Lawrence, Guzman & Papavasileiou, 2007; Chrysochou & Krystallis, 2013; Lawrence, Fournier & Brunel, 2013) introduce positive influence of disclosure of a consumer source on the attitude towards ads. Brunel et al. (2007) carried out content analysis of viewer responses to organically-created and contest-inspired CGA on YouTube. Moreover, an experimental study sought to reveal communication advantages of consumer generated advertising over professional ads produced by ad companies. Results of this study indicated to a positive influence of disclosure of a consumer source on the attitude towards ads as well as the perception of the quality of implementation. Chrysochou & Krystallis (2013)'s study involved an experiment where professional ads of a fashion brand are compared to ads generated by consumers. Results revealed that; when the source of ad is not disclosed to consumers, they make more positive evaluations of professional ads; however, when it is disclosed, they have a more positive attitude toward the consumer generated ad.

On the other hand, many research on the field deny the assumption that consumer generated ads are equal to WOM communication, yet, may lead to more positive consumer evaluations (Ertimur, 2009; Steyn, Wallström & Pitt, 2010; Steyn, Ewing, van Heerden & Windisch, 2011; Ertimur & Gilly, 2012; Thompson & Malaviya, 2013). Such research stressed consumers' tendency towards a skeptical approach to consumer generated ads.

In her research where she adopted a qualitative approach, Ertimur (2009), used netnography and in-depth interview techniques to collect data from online consumer sites, consumers and directors of companies. Findings signify that consumer generated advertising does not necessarily be on par with WOM communication and be assumed to be more persuasive, merely for being generated by consumers. Steyn et al. (2010) carried out an experimental research on source effect of consumer generated ads. The main aim of the research is to present how three specific source effects (ad creator, ad popularity and motivation for creation of the ad) influence evaluations on consumer generated advertising. The experiment resulted in no significant proof that consumer generated ads are preferred over professional ads, and that consumer generated advertising has positive influence on popularity of ads. Still, a significant increase in popularity of the ad is recorded when the observer is informed how much this specific consumer generated ad is favorited ("this ad is reviewed more than 1 million times in YouTube and received many awards"). Besides, the influence of the motivation of consumer to create the ad over the attitude towards the ad is tested. The same ad is shown to two separate groups under two different headings: to the first group, with "this consumer generated ad is produced for a contest" heading; and to the second group, with "this consumer generated ad is merely created as a creative statement".

Test results revealed no significant difference between two groups. In their research on source effect, Steyn et al. (2011) evaluated the impact of three source variables—ad creator, ad popularity and motivation for creation of the ad— by using Schlinger's Viewer Response Profile (VRP). Findings confirm no evidence of a preference over consumer generated ads over professional ads created by ad companies. Thus, observations reveal that, given the clues for the creator of the ad, consumers tend to adopt a skeptical and critical approach. Similarly, consumers employed more critical approach in their assessments when they are aware of the motivation behind creating the ad. That is, the research results indicated more critical ad evaluations, when consumers are informed of the ad creator and the motivation.

To compare attitude towards consumer generated ads and ads created by professional companies, Ertimur & Gilly (2012) utilised netnography and in-depth interview techniques to collect data from consumers. Findings point to the fact that observers' perception of authenticity is triggered when they are disclosed with a consumer source. In dept interviews with consumers suggest that consumer generated ads are perceived to be more realistic for their "originality" and "non-profit" nature. Former studies underline a positive connection between "authenticity" and "credibility"; however, no traces of such a connection is detected in this study. In the context of trustworthiness, consumers assume a skeptical approach towards CGA. With regard to persuasion, CGA is similar to professional ads. Consumers have second thoughts on ad source and ad motivation, for the ad is created by consumer. Moreover, though they may be experienced users of the product, ad creators are assumed to be inexperienced in advertising business. In short, research findings point to positive influence of CGA on "authenticity" perception; but, no proof of positive impact on credibility and therefore persuasion.

Thompson & Malaviya (2013) proposed a skepticism-identification model of ad creator influence, with regard to source effect variable. This model suggests that disclosing a consumer source may trigger two opposing effects. First, there is consumers' skepticism about the competence of ad creator; second, consumers' identifying with ad creators. Parallel to the findings of Ertimur (2009), Steyn et al. (2010) and Steyn et al. (2011), research results revealed no difference in terms of trustworthiness perception, between ads created by consumers and professionals. This finding is contradictory with the opinion that CGA is processed in the same way as WOM communication. On the contrary, consumers are well aware of persuasion factor of ads; thus, they consider their perception of ad creator's competence, when evaluating effectiveness of ad messages. Therefore, informing the audience that an advertisement is consumer generated may negatively effect ad/brand evaluations. Second finding is the fact that disclosing a consumer source may trigger two opposing effects—skepticism about the competence of the ad creator and identification with the ad creator— and effectiveness of the ad is dependent upon factors that hinder skepticism and increase identification. When no background information is provided, or when consumers are disloyal and they share no commitment toward the brand, disclosure of consumer source backfires and affects ad evaluations negatively. Under these circumstances, consumers adopt a skeptical approach towards competency of ad creators. Research results indicated two possible ways to weaken the negative effect. First, high level of distraction during viewing limits consumers' ability to activate their critical thoughts; and second, when consumers identify with the ad source or when they are loyal to the brand.

Consequently, this study did not reveal enough evidence to support the assumption that disclosure of consumer source may lead to more positive consumer evaluations and consumer generated ads are equal to WOM communication. Rather, the findings suggest that consumers have a skeptical tendency towards ads generated by consumers.

2.3. Formulation of hypotheses and research questions

In light of the findings of former research on the subject, this study developed the below stated hypothesis and research questions; and analysed the quantitative and qualitative data gathered with experiments and semi-structured interview techniques.

H1: Informing the audience that an advertisement is created by the consumer has a negative effect on attitude toward the ad.

H2: Informing the audience that an advertisement is created by the consumer on request of the brand has a negative effect on attitude toward the ad.

In addition to the abovementioned hypotheses on the attitude toward the ad, it has also been analysed whether there is a difference with regard to gender variable.

The negative influence of skepticism on attitude toward the ad is frequently stressed in existing research on CGA phenomenon. Various research recorded consumer skepticism cases about either competency of consumer to create the ad or the degree the brand is involved in the creation process. From a broader perspective, in general consumer skepticism toward advertising is related with the attitude toward the ad, and increasing skepticism has a negative influence on the attitude toward the ad (Boush, Friestad & Rose, 1994; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 2005). Moving on from here, this study also provides an analysis of the relationship between consumer skepticism toward advertising and their attitude toward the ad.

H3: There is a linear relationship between consumer skepticism toward advertising and their attitude toward the ad.

In addition to H3, it has also been analysed whether the disclosure of a consumer source has any influence on the relationship between those two.

Finally, a semi-structured interview is conducted to unearth general evaluations on consumer generated ad, and to answer below stated questions.

Q1: What is the influence of disclosure of consumer source on consumer evaluations?

Q2: What is the influence of disclosure of consumer source for ads requested by brands, on consumer evaluations?

3. Methodology

This section focuses on the research model, universe and sample; data collection technique and tools; and data analysis.

3.1. Research model

This study utilised both quantitative and qualitative research methods. In the first phase, an experimental research is conducted by using post-test model with control group, which is a type of quasi-experimental design. In the second phase, qualitative data is gathered to explore the complexity and meaning of the social phenomena. Semi-structured interview technique is used to collect data, and a deductive approach is applied to analyse it.

3.2. Research sample

This study measures the consumers' skepticism toward advertising and their attitude toward the ad, and provides a descriptive analysis of ad evaluations. Consumers' attitude towards ads can be influenced by factors such as product category of the advertised brand, being a loyal or former user, and demographic characteristics of consumers (Schlinger, 1982; Steyn, Ewing, van Heerden & Windisch, 2011). Besides, demographic characteristics such as age, gender and education level are effective upon consumer skepticism (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998). The indicators used to determine the ad used in this research are: no gender-based differences in involvement level regarding the preferred product category;

participants' having no former using experience of the advertised product; and advertised brand being in the demographic range of participants. Therefore, among not probabilistic sampling methods purposive sampling is preferred to identify the sample of this study.

Experiments and semi-structured interviews are conducted with voluntary participants to comply with these criteria. This study is implemented at a university campus in Turkey; participants are selected among 18–30 age group, who are attending to faculties and academies other than Faculty of Communication Sciences and Faculty of Fine Arts. In order to comply with the criteria to have no former using experience of the advertised product, simply having no record of car ownership is stipulated among participating students. By doing so, factors that may influence attitude towards the ad and the brand are avoided. Sub-groups are identified randomly. The number of participants impartially assigned to each group are: 51 people (24 female, 27 male) to control group; 50 people (25 female, 25 male) to first experimental group (consumer); and 50 people (25 female, 25 male) to second experimental group (contest).

3.3. Identification of the ad

The factors considered to identify the ad to be screened to participants in the scope of the research are; demographic structure, socio-economic status of the participants and their involvement level regarding the respective product category. The literature point to a meaningful relationship between attitude towards the ad and advertised product' category involvement. Besides, it is highly probable that committed users have a positive attitude towards the brand whereas former users may adopt a negative attitude. Compared to others, consumers with no previous record with this brand will most likely have a neutral attitude (Steyn, Ewing, van Heerden & Windisch, 2011: 143). Schlinger (1982) suggests that the attitude towards the ad is highly associated with using that brand, and this association is stronger than demographic and situational variables. Participants are university students from 18–30 age group. Therefore, the preferred product category and brand's intended target audience should be young people; participants should have a neutral approach towards the product category; and involvement level of the product should have no gender based differences.

In the light of these, the selected CGA is created for Fiat 500 automobile brand that is shared on YouTube. As Knoll (2016: 289) suggested, the online video sharing platform YouTube seems to be the primary social media outlet when it comes to CGA. Although Davis and Rigaux (1974: 54) once suggested that in 1970s, men were dominant in making buying decisions of products such as automobile and TV set, as Belch & Willis (2002: 118) also stated, today automobile is equally important for both men and women. The motive behind selection of this specific product category is to avoid possible influence of gender based differences in product involvement level and therefore the attitude towards the ad as well as the brand. To ensure product category is intended at participants Fiat 500 brand is preferred, which is a brand oriented at young consumers. As mentioned above, consumers with no previous record with this brand and/or product increases the possibility to have a neutral attitude towards the brand/product. This is why simply having no record of car ownership is stipulated among participating students. In short, factors that may influence attitude towards the ad and the brand are avoided to ensure they don not interfere with research findings.

Separate experimental groups are provided with different manipulations while the designated ad is shown on tablet computer. Consumer source is not disclosed to the first group (control group), and they are given the impression that an ordinary TV commercial is screened. To ensure that impression, one of the national top-rated TV channels' logo is added to the video ad. By doing so the user is provided with the impression that they are

watching a TV commercial. The second and third experimental groups are informed that ad is created by the consumer and shared online on YouTube. Therefore, the original YouTube video is screened to participants from the second and third groups.

The designated CGA is produced by using *cut out* technique, which is a form of *stop motion* animation. *Cut out* animation technique requires using pieces of paper, cardboard, fabric or photography to create a collage, where the pieces are animated and photographed separately. Then, to create the animation, these photos are pieced together by using an editing software¹. This technique is highly preferred in CGA videos, as it does not require excessive costs.

Briefly this ad² highlights that Fiat 500 has various options of interior and exterior design that can be customized, and customers can freely design their own Fiat 500.

3.4. Pretest, before the main experiment

A pilot study with 60 participants is conducted to calculate internal consistency of scales used in this research; and to control whether statements on the scale are legible to participants, whether the ad is relevant, whether the manipulations are legible to the consumer, and whether the questions asked in semi-structured interviews are legible. Similar to the main experiment, participants are impartially assigned to three groups of 20 people each. Pilot study proved that identified ad is relevant, statements on the scale and interview questions are legible, and manipulations on ad are satisfactory. Reliability analysis of the experiment scales is conducted by using data gathered in piloting, and is presented below.

Attitude towards the ad scale: This research takes attitude towards the ad scale built by Biehal et al. (1992). 5 bipolar statements (good/bad, like/dislike, interesting/boring, creative/uncreative, informative/uninformative) of this scale is reviewed with regard to research purposes and restructured in line with the pretest data. The "good/bad" statement is removed, and two new statements are added- "ad is credible" and "ad's message is clear and legible. Researches conducted on the source effect of CGA indicate that source effect of the ad creator variable has significant influence on ad credibility. Therefore, "credible" statement is added to the original scale. Besides, ad creator's competence and to what extent CGA can successfully convey the brand message are underlined as factors to influence CGA evaluations in former researches. This is why the statement "ad's message is clear and legible" is included in the original scale. Revised scale for measuring attitude towards the ad is tested during pilot study. Cronbach's alpha method is used to evaluate internal consistency, and the results were significantly higher than the critical reliability threshold.

Consumer skepticism towards advertising scale (SKEP): SKEP scale with 9 statements, built by Obermiller & Spangenberg (1998) is used in this research to reveal participants' skepticism toward advertising.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients are identified to run reliability analysis for the scales. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for attitude towards the ad (*Aad*) scale is calculated to be .79, and for skepticism scale (*SKEP*) for .84. Both calculations point to reliability of both scales.

3.5. Data collection

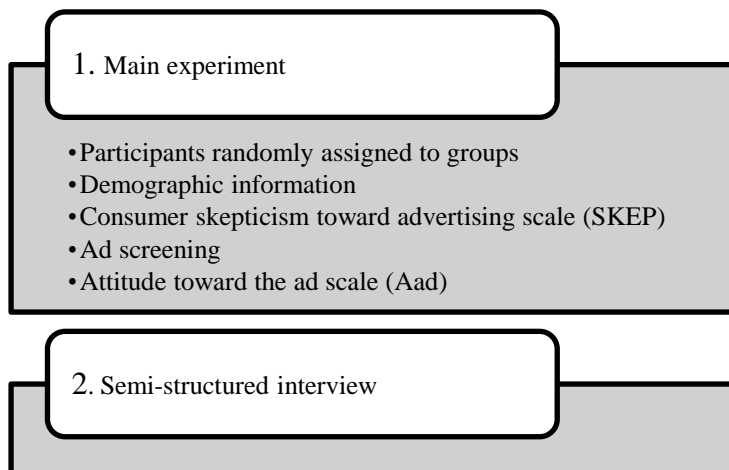
Data collection process involves the experiment and semi-structured interviews, and its phases are briefly depicted in Figure 1. In the main experiment where the quantitative data is collected, each participant is randomly assigned to groups. Upon identification of groups,

¹ http://facweb.cs.depaul.edu/sgrais/cutout_animation.htm (accessed October 02, 2014)

² <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSO-QzYM72k> (accessed May 23, 2014)

demographic information of participants is provided prior to conducting of skepticism scale (SKEP). Afterwards, regarding to their assigned groups the video ad is shown twice to participants. Finally, attitude towards the ad (Aad) scale is conducted regarding the screened ad. In the second phase, qualitative data is collected by conducting semi-structured interviews. Participants' ad evaluations are sought.

Figure 1. Steps of data collection process



3.6. Implementation of main experiment

A total of 151 university student from 18–30 age group participated to the experiment. As stated in the research model, 3 groups are identified– one control and two experimental groups. Participants are assigned to groups randomly. Participants are impartially assigned to each group – 51 people to control group; 50 people to first experimental group; and 50 people to second experimental group. As is described in the research model, data collection process involves conducting SKEP scale, screening video ad, conducting attitude towards the ad scale, and semi-structured interviews.

Tablet computer is used for easier data collection and for time–efficiency. Responding to the questionnaire in digital media, screening video ad, and voice recording semi-structured interviews are realised via *Doforms* mobile application. The researcher made face-to-face interviews with each participant at the university campus, and recorded the data to the tablet pc. As first step of interviews, participants' groups are assigned. *Doforms* mobile app randomly assigned each participant to one out of three groups. In the second step, participants' demographic information is recorded. In the third step, skepticism toward advertising scale (SKEP) is conducted. In the fourth step, regarding their respective groups, ad is introduced and then screened to participants. No introduction is made to the first group (control group), and the ad including the TV channel's logo is screened twice. The second group (experimental group 1) are informed that ad is created by a consumer and shared on YouTube. The third group (experimental group 2) are informed that Fiat announced an advertising contest on its website regarding Fiat 500 model, and the ad is created by a contestant consumer and shared on YouTube. The original ad without the TV channel's logo is screened twice to these two experimental groups. In the fifth step, attitude towards the ad scale (Aad) is conducted.

3.7. Implementation of semi-structured interviews

In the final step, a semi-structured interview is conducted to audio record consumer's evaluation of screened ad. In the final step, participants are asked to briefly evaluate the screened ad. Participants assigned to the second and thirds groups are reminded of introductory information on the ad, to retrieve more detailed results regarding the influence of such information on their respective ad evaluations.

4. Findings

This section provides analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected with the experiment and semi-structured interview techniques.

4.1. Analysis of attitude towards the ad with regard to source effect of the ad creator variable

One-way variance analysis (ANOVA) conducted to identify the influence of the introductory information regarding the source of ad on attitude towards the ad pointed to a statistically significant difference between means, as shown in Table 1 ($F=10.821$, $*p<.05$).

Table 1. Results of one-way variance analysis (ANOVA) conducted to identify whether attitude towards the ad (Aad) score change with regard to source effect of the ad creator variable

ANOVA Results										
Score	Group	N	\bar{x}	SD		SS	df	MS	F	P
	Control	51	3.17	.59403	Between G.	5.294	2	2.647	10.821	.000
	Consumer	50	3.58	.44574						
	Contest	50	3.56	.42440	Total	41.499	150			
	Total	151	3.44	.52599						

**significant at $p<.05$*

As depicted in post-hoc Scheffe test results -conducted to explore the differences among means, statistically significant differences are detected between the control group ($\bar{x}=3.17$, $SD=0.59$) and consumer group ($\bar{x}=3.58$, $SD=0.44$), and between control group ($\bar{x}=3.56$, $SD=0.42$) and contest group ($p<.05$), as shown in Table 2. Given the introductory information that the ad is created by a consumer, ("consumer" and "contest" groups) they have a heightened positive attitude towards the ad. Therefore, the hypothesis H1 and H2 are rejected. In addition to that, there is no statistically significant difference between when they are informed that the ad is created by a consumer ("consumer" group) and when they are informed that the ad is created by a consumer on request of the brand ("contest" group) ($p>.05$).

Table 2. Scheffe test results to identify how attitude towards the ad (Aad) score vary among groups with respect to source effect of the ad creator variable

Groups (i)	Groups (j)	$\bar{x}_i - \bar{x}_j$	SE	P
Control	Consumer	-.40169*	.09843	.000
	Contest	-.38989*	.09843	.001
Consumer	Control	.40169*	.09843	.000
	Contest	.01180	.09892	.993
Contest	Control	.38989*	.09843	.001
	Consumer	-.01180	.09892	.993

4.2. A gender-based analysis of attitude towards the ad with regard to source effect of the ad creator variable

Two separate one-way variance analysis (ANOVA) tailored for female and male participants are conducted to identify any gender based differences regarding the influence of introductory information about ad source on attitude towards the ad.

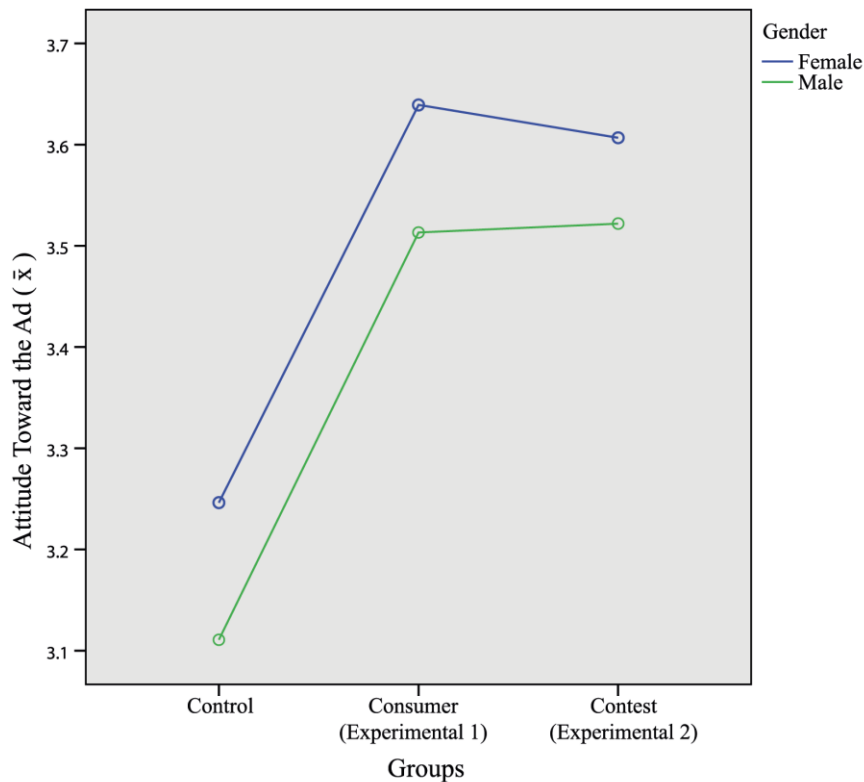
One-way variance analysis (ANOVA) for women pointed to a statistically significant difference between means ($F=4.648$, $p=.013$). As depicted in post-hoc Scheffe test results, statistically significant differences are detected between the control group ($\bar{X}=3.25$, $SD=0.61$) and “consumer” group ($\bar{X}=3.64$, $SD=0.43$) ($p=.027$), and between control group ($\bar{X}=3.61$, $SD=0.44$) and “contest” group ($p<.05$). No statistically significant difference between “consumer” and “contest” groups is detected ($p>.05$).

One-way variance analysis (ANOVA) for men pointed to a statistically significant difference between means ($F=5.966$, $p=.004$). As depicted in post-hoc Scheffe test results, statistically significant differences are detected between the control group ($\bar{X}=3.11$, $SD=0.58$) and “consumer” group ($\bar{X}=3.51$, $SD=0.46$) ($p=.017$), and between control group ($\bar{X}=3.52$, $SD=0.41$) and “contest” group ($p=.014$). No statistically significant difference between “consumer” and “contest” groups is detected ($p>.05$).

Additionally, independent groups t-test analysis is conducted to make gender-based analysis of attitude towards the ad for each control and experimental groups (“consumer” and “contest”) that constitute the experimental design. No statistically significant difference is detected between genders regarding attitude towards the ad ($p>.05$).

Findings are briefly presented in Figure-2, which shows means of attitude towards the ad scores with regard to introductory information about ad source (control, “consumer”, “contest”) and gender (male, female) variables.

Figure 2. Comparison of attitude towards the (Aad) scores with regard to group and gender variables.



In the diagram, vertical axis (Y) denotes to means of attitude towards the ad scores, whereas the horizontal axis (X) shows participant's assigned group as well as introductory information she/he has about ad source. As seen, participants' attitude towards the ad tend to be more positive when introductory information on consumer source ("consumer" and "contest" groups) is provided compared to the contrary ("control" group). There is no statistically significant difference between two experimental groups. Inclination of lines showing means of attitude towards the ad scores for female and male participants by groups are parallel and in same direction. As seen in independent groups t-test results by gender conducted for each group, there is no statistically significant difference between genders regarding attitude towards the ad.

4.3. An analysis of the relationship between consumer skepticism toward advertising and attitude towards the ad

Prior to random assignment to groups, consumer skepticism toward advertising (SKEP) scale is conducted for all participants. No statistically significant difference is detected in one-way variance analysis (ANOVA) conducted to identify whether means of the SKEP scores differ between groups ($p > .05$).

Simple linear regression analysis is done for each research group (control, consumer, contest) to analyse the relationship between participants' level of skepticism toward advertising and their attitude towards the ad.

Results of the simple linear regression analysis for control group point to a negative linear (-.646) relationship between skepticism toward advertising and attitude towards the ad. The regression model is statistically significant ($t = -4.570$, $p < 0.05$). Level of consumer

skepticism toward advertising explains 29.9% of changes in the attitude towards the ad ($R^2 = 0.299$) (Table 3). H3 hypothesis is accepted.

Table 3. Control group - regression model

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SE
1	.547	.299	.285	.50245

Table 4. Control group - results of variance analysis (ANOVA) conducted to check significance of R-value that shows the relationship between consumer skepticism toward advertising and attitude towards the ad

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Regression	5.273	1	5.273		
Fault	12.370	49	.252		
Total	17.643	50		20,887	.000

*significant at $p < .05$ level.

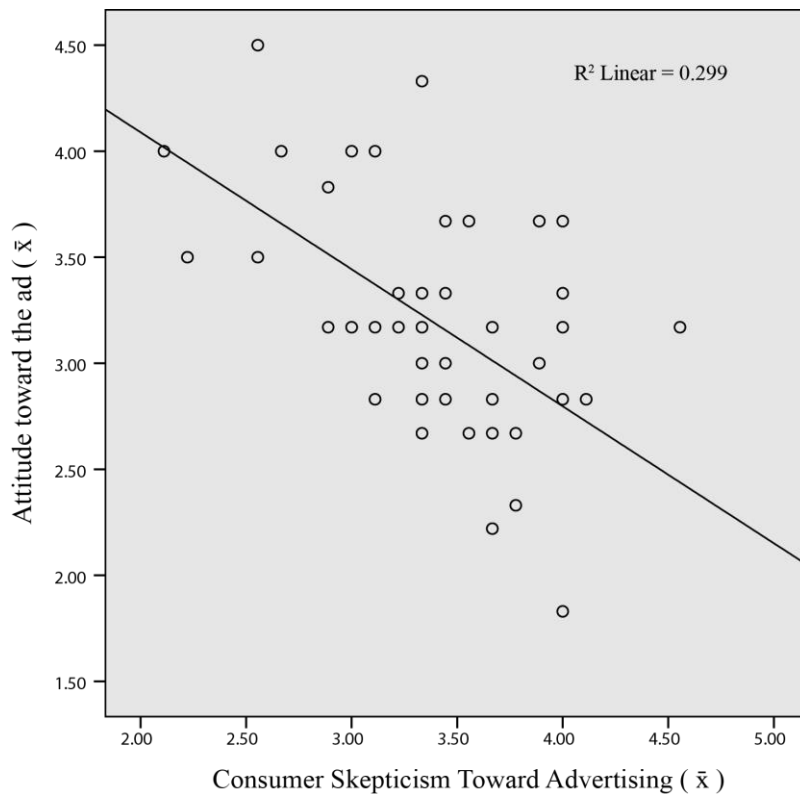
Table 5. Control group – regression coefficients table that show the direction of the relationship between consumer skepticism toward advertising (SKEP) and attitude towards the ad (Aad)

	b	t	p
(Constant)	5.381	11.029	.000
SKEP	-.646	-4.570	.000

Dependent variable: Aad

There is a negative linear relationship between the level of consumer skepticism toward advertising and attitude towards the ad.

Figure 3. Control group - line of regression



Results of simple linear regression analysis conducted among experimental groups where consumer source is disclosed, unlike the control group, no significant linear relationship is detected between consumer skepticism toward advertising and attitude towards the ad ($p > .05$)

In brief, while results of regression analysis conducted in "control" group where consumer source is not disclosed denotes a significant linear relationship between the level of consumer skepticism toward advertising and attitude towards the ad, there is no negative linear relationship between these two variables for "consumer" and "contest" groups, where consumer source is disclosed. Possible reasons regarding the difference between consumer skepticism toward advertising and attitude towards the ad for control and experimental groups ("consumer" and "contest") is presented in the final discussion section.

4.4. Descriptive analysis of general evaluations of participants about the screened CGA

A semi-structured interview is conducted among experiment participants, regarding their general evaluations on the screened ad. 117 out of 151 participants to experiment accepted to be interviewed. The collected audio data transcribed into written form and classified with respect to "credibility" and "creativity" themes that are identified in line with literature review and research objective.

4.4.1. Credibility of Ad Creator and Ad Content

Source credibility has been defined as the judgements made by perceiver concerning the believability of a communicator. Source credibility in advertising research has been studied in two contexts: endorser/celebrity and advertiser/corporate credibility. In contrast, CGA constitute a unique type of communication where the source of an ad is a consumer (Ertimur

& Gilly, 2011). Therefore, in the context of this research source credibility refers to the credibility of the ad creator.

On the other hand, ad credibility is the extent to which the consumer perceives claims made about the brand in the ad to be truthful and believable (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). Thus, ad credibility focuses on the advertisement and the consumer's evaluation of the truth and believability of the content of the advertisement (Cotte, Coulter & Moore, 2005).

Participants from both experimental groups ("consumer", "contest") stressed the credibility of ad creator and ad content frequently. Informing the audience that an advertisement is consumer generated enhances credibility.

Unlike consumer's foremost priority, the core aim of professional ads created by ad agencies is increased sales and profitability; this is why CGA is found to be more credible.

"This ad is more persuasive for it is prepared by a consumer; all in all professional agencies' goal is sales, they have a motive. However, the consumer does not have such a motive. This is why CGA seems more reasonable." ("Consumer" Group, Female)

"Since this ad is created by a consumer for a contest, user's expectations from Fiat 500 is depicted. That is, the consumer communicated his/her own demands in the ad, unlike professional ads. Professional agencies communicate what they want to highlight. And they seal those they avoid to highlight. Consumer created ads are different. This is why I believe consumer generated ads to be more authentic." ("Contest" Group, Male)

Most participants assert that they feel close to consumers to create the ad; accordingly -based on this identification- they assume the creator of the ad and the ad itself to be sincerer.

"No doubt it is sincerer and authentic, for it has significantly low budget than those created by ad agencies, and the ad creator is a person like me." ("Contest" Group, Male)

"Ad creator is one of us, so i believe he/she would know better what we expect." ("Consumer" Group, Male)

Moreover, audiences appreciate that the ad is created within limited facilities and requires individual efforts to produce. Participants evaluate the ad with regard to limited (technological, financial, professional) facilities of the ad creator.

"It is nice to see consumers struggling to create ads in their own right." ("Consumer" Group, Female)

"First of all, I liked it for it is created with individual efforts. This ad seemed more natural than those I see on TV. Others are more make-believe." ("Consumer" Group, Male)

Moreover, a small number of participants adopted a skeptic approach to CGA. Limited number of participants from "consumer" group that are disclosed with consumer source suspected brand relations to the ad. They assumed the ad to be a product of viral advertising or to be produced with Fiat's support. A limited number of participants from "contest" group suggested the main aim of the consumer to create the ad to be winning the contest or making an appearance. Skepticism about the motivation of ad creator leads to negative evaluations of the ad:

"It feels more of agency created ad. I didn't have the impression that it is a CGA. I believe it is created by professionals." ("Consumer" Group, Male)

"Doing something for the sake of winning a contest may change one's feelings & thoughts. Then, it may lost its trustworthiness" ("Contest" Group, Female)

In short, evaluations regarding the credibility of the ad creator and ad content show that participants perceive the foremost priority of consumers to create the ad to be different than that of clients' or their respective ad agencies' principal priority to sell, as well as their perception that the ad is created within limited facilities and requires individual efforts to produce enhanced the credibility of the ad, as they feel familiar and identify themselves with it.

4.4.2. Creativity

Participants rarely used the expressions "it's a creative ad" or "it's not a creative ad" when they evaluate creativity aspect of the ad. Rather, creativity aspect is expressed in a number of concepts that refer to sub-components of creativity in advertising. In this study, participants' creativity evaluations are analyzed with regard to three fundamental aspects of creativity (novelty-original subscale-, resolution-logical subscale-, elaboration and synthesis-well crafted subscale-) and their sub-components (fresh, unique, logical, relevant, skillful, well-made, etc.) indicated in White & Smith (2001)'s Creative Product Semantic Differential Scale (CPSS), which is developed to assess creativity.

Disclosing consumer source has an influence on evaluations on creativity in ads. Participants in "consumer" and "contest" groups frequently acknowledged creativity of consumer to create the ad. In their evaluations, participants usually compared the ad and its creator to professional ads and ad agencies:

"It is striking that consumer created the ad rather than the company. First I was shocked; it is quite unusual for the consumer to generate such a creative result." ("Consumer" Group, Female)

"It is not merely aiming to convince people to buy things. Maybe he/she had a unique idea to show us." ("Contest" Group, Male)

In their evaluations, most of the participants disclosed with consumer source underlined limited budget of ad creators. Frequently, they stressed their satisfaction with the result despite these limitations. Responses of participants from "consumer" and "contest" groups are similar:

"Sometimes I assume ads are exaggerated. As if they have put up the best car in the world on sale. Here, the consumer communicated his/her favorite characteristics in this car. No need to be flamboyant. This is a very good example that satisfactory results can be produced in advertising within a limited budget." ("Consumer" Group, Female)

"It is very good with regard to consumer's individual budget." ("Contest" Group, Male)

Most participants from "consumer" and "contest" groups provided positive evaluations on creativity of the ad, however a limited number provided negative evaluations. These participants asserted incompetency of the ad with regard to their general impression of and expectations from ads in automobile product category, and stressed the necessity of ad creator to have professional skills:

"This is quite basic compared to overall automobile ads." ("Contest" Group, Male)

"I have not raised my expectations as I knew this is a consumer generated ad; however, professional TV commercials are more attracting. I guess I am not quite satisfied for it is not created by a professional." ("Consumer" Group, Female)

Participants from "control" group -where consumer source is not disclosed- who pointed to creative aspect of ad stressed production techniques frequently:

"I liked this ad because I like stop motion technique." (Control Group, Female)

"It is an unusual approach to use pictures. This is why I liked it. This ad influences the audience for it is different than classic advertising." (Control Group, Male)

Participants from "control" group, who provided negative evaluations regarding creativity in the ad, frequently pointed to its simplicity. These participants from "control" group, who are not disclosed with consumer source therefore assumed it to be an ordinary commercial, indicated incompetency of the ad in terms of application and creativity, for this ad does not fulfill the elevated standards they are accustomed to in high-budget commercials created by professional agencies.

"It was ineffective for an automobile ad. It was not visually striking, rather very poor." (Control Group, Female)

"The last automobile ad I watched is Mercedes'. Compared to that, this one is quite simple. Needs to be improved." (Control Group, Female)

In short, disclosing consumer source generally triggers positive evaluations. Technological, financial and professional limitations of the ad is frequently underlined, thus, further claiming their satisfaction with the result (creativity in terms of 'good, interesting, unusual, pleasant, well-made, etc.) "despite limitations".

5. General Discussion

Taking former findings into account, this study -where sample and research techniques similar to that of former research in the field are adopted, most of which are of Western origin, and which is implemented in Turkey- is based on the prediction that disclosing consumer source would trigger skepticism. Contrarily, research results revealed that disclosing consumer source has positive influence on attitude towards the ad. Besides, observations revealed no significant difference between attitude towards the ad, in cases where consumer source is disclosed and where that an advertisement is created by the consumer on request of the brand (to compete in brand-initiated contest). Therefore, findings indicate positive influence of disclosing consumer source, whether or not requested by the brand.

Relationship between skepticism toward advertising and attitude towards the ad

This study also provided an analysis of the relationship between consumer skepticism toward advertising and their attitude towards the ad. The results of regression analysis conducted in "control" group where consumer source is not disclosed denotes a significant linear relationship between the level of consumer skepticism toward advertising and attitude towards the ad. That is, increasing skepticism toward advertising lead to more negative attitude towards the ad. Still, analysis conducted with participants from experimental groups (consumer and contest) that are disclosed with consumer source revealed to direct linear relationship between skepticism and attitude toward the ad. Disclosing consumer source cancels negative linear relationship between skepticism in advertising and attitude toward the ad.

It is clear that, the relationship between the attitude towards the ad and attitude toward advertising in general in the context of consumer generated advertising needed to be addressed in future studies. Since consumer generated ads are widely disseminated on internet, there is a need to be media-specific on attitude toward advertising in future studies on CGA phenomenon. The importance of this media-specific approach on attitude toward advertising is emphasized several times in literature (Wolin, Korgaonkar & Lund, 2002; Burns & Lutz, 2006; Tan & Chia, 2007).

Qualitative data provides us with clues to figure out "how" disclosing consumer source has positive influence on attitude towards the ad.

One of the reasons why disclosing consumer source has positive influence on attitude towards the ad is enhanced credibility of the ad. The ultimate aim of professional ads created by agencies is assumed to be increased sales and profitability; whereas the foremost priority of consumers to create the ad to be different than professional agencies' principal priority to sell. Consumer generated ads that are assumed to be non-profit are perceived as more credible and authentic. Moreover, it is generally believed that professional ads have a tendency to highlight some aspects of the brand as well as disclosing others, whereas CGA is believed to communicate the truth in a sincerer way.

Technological, financial and professional limitations of the ad as well as the efforts of the ad creator are acknowledged. CGA is evaluated in light of these limitations. With regard to implementation, participants frequently highlighted these "limitations" in contrast with professional ads. Therefore, "respect for labour" comes to forefront in ad evaluations.

Consumer generated ads are assumed to be more connatural and authentic, in line with the perception that they require considerable labour and are being created despite limitations.

Besides, participants feel familiar to and identify themselves with the consumer to create the ad. "One of us" and "public figure" are frequently used expressions about the consumer to create the ad. They perceived the ad to be sincerer, authentic and thrustworthy, for they identified with the creator.

Besides, observations revealed similarity between consumer evaluations about credibility, in both cases where consumer source is disclosed and where that an advertisement is created by the consumer on request of the brand (to compete in brand-initiated contest). Contrary to what is foreseen, brand interference to ad creation process did not trigger skepticism. Regardless of the role of the brand, consumer source has been the significant factor in these evaluations.

Disclosing consumer source has an influence on evaluations on creativity in ads. Technological, financial and professional limitations of the ad is underlined frequently, thus, further claiming their satisfaction with the result despite these limitations. It is observed that having a consumer source produced positive thoughts regarding creativity.

Cultural differences may be acting upon the difference between research results that of former Western-originated research.

The results of this study, which is conducted in Turkey, revealed positive influence of disclosure of a consumer source on the attitude towards the ad, and reminds of media trust surveys on the national and international level. *Trust Barometer* survey conducted in a vast geography covering 25 countries including China, Russia, USA, Brazil, India and Europe, conducted by international public relations company Edelman point to 53% overall global media trust, where Turkey has the lowest rank with 19%³. In addition to this striking result, although findings of global "media trust" surveys⁴ signified trust to traditional media to be higher than trust to new media, the results of "Media and Trust" survey conducted by Xsights Research and Consultancy company in 2013 on the national level indicated trust to new media to be 1.25 times more than trust to traditional media among Turkish public opinion.⁵ Results show that trust of Turkish public opinion to various media is different than that of international standards. Trust in traditional media in Turkey is much lower than global average, whereas trust in new media is higher than average, which indicates trust in user generated content, which consist of a significant part of information available online. It is probable that consumers' positive attitude towards consumer generated ads, which is a form of user generated content available online, might be related to high trust rating to new media content in Turkey.

This study, which is conducted in the light of limited number of studies regarding CGA phenomenon, provides a perspective on the subject and raised new questions, accordingly. Despite common findings in various former Western-originated studies, this study reveals that disclosing consumer source has positive influence on attitude towards the ad. Consumer generated ads are regarded to be "credible" and "creative". Thus, disclosing consumer source does not trigger "skepticism". The audience "identifies" with the consumer to create the ad. These findings are not in alignment with findings of similar Western-originated research, which further denote to the influence of cultural differences on the audiences' reaction towards CGA. Which points to the necessity of different cultures to

³ <http://www.edelman.com/post/freedom-of-the-press-and-trust-in-media/> (accessed January 09, 2015)

⁴ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/02_05_06mediatrust.pdf (accessed January 09, 2015)

<http://www.edelman.com/insights/intellectual-property/2014-edelman-trust-barometer/trust-around-the-world/> (accessed January 09, 2015)

⁵ <http://xsights.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Medya-ve-G%C3%BCven-Raporu.pdf> (accessed September 23, 2014)

conduct similar future studies. These future studies to be conducted by different cultures may enhance a deeper understanding of CGA phenomenon, provided that they focus on various variables that may influence the response to consumer generated ads, such as media consumption habits, media trust, trust to online sources, general attitude toward advertising and category of the advertised product.

Consumer generated ads are not perceived to be persuasive.

It is observed that ad evaluations of participants, who are disclosed with consumer source, mainly focus on "ad creator" and "his/her efforts"; whereas, evaluations of advertised product, brand and ad message are not as many. This is an indication that CGA is principally perceived as "a creative product of an amateur", rather than "a persuasive process" and "a form of brand communication". Analysis results regarding the relation between consumer skepticism toward advertising and attitude towards the ad also support this idea.

CGA being principally perceived as "a creative product of an amateur" bears risks.

CGA being principally perceived as "a creative product of an amateur", rather than "a persuasive process" and "a form of brand communication" requires to scrutinise the positive attitude towards the ad. Especially clients and their respective ad agencies that are supposed develop CGA strategies should make a detailed analysis of the contribution of these ads to brand communication. Since CGA is perceived as "a creative product of an amateur", it is probable that the audience may overlook brand message –a principal component of ads–, which bears the risk of failing to contribute to brand communication even if it fosters a positive attitude in the audience. No doubt it is possible utilise relevant communication strategies to turn such a risk in favor of the brand. More research on the field –effectiveness of CGA– is required to provide a clear answer to this question.

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