

## User Generated Content

### USER GENERATED CONTENT

User generated content (UGC, often hyphenated), also known as Consumer Generated Media (CGM) or User created Content (UCC), refers to various kinds of media content, publicly available, that are produced by end-users.

The term entered mainstream usage during 2005 after arising in web publishing and new media content production circles. It reflects the expansion of media production through new technologies that are accessible and affordable to the general public. These include digital video, blogging, podcasting, news, gossip, research, mobile phone photography and wikis. In addition to these technologies, user generated content may also employ a combination of open source, free software, and flexible licensing or related agreements to further diminish the barriers to collaboration, skill-building and discovery.

Sometimes UGC can constitute only a portion of a website. For example on Amazon.com the majority of content is prepared by administrators, but numerous user reviews of the products being sold are submitted by regular visitors to the site.

Often UGC is partially or totally monitored by website administrators to avoid offensive content or language, copyright infringement issues, or simply to determine if the content posted is relevant to the site's general theme.

### Characteristics and development of UGC

The advent of user generated content marks a shift among some media organizations from creating on-line content to creating the facilities and framework for non-media professionals (i.e., 'ordinary people') to publish their own content in prominent places.

User generated content has also been characterized as 'Conversational Media', as opposed to the 'Packaged Goods Media' of the past century.[citation needed] The former is a two-way process in contrast to the one-way distribution of the latter. Conversational or two-way media is a key characteristic of so-called Web 2.0 which encourages the publishing of one's own content and commenting on other people's.

The notion of the passive audience therefore has shifted since the birth of New Media, and an ever-growing number of participatory users are taking advantage of the interactive opportunities, especially on the Internet to create independent content. Grassroots experimentation then generated an innovation in sounds, artists, techniques and associations with audiences which then are being used in mainstream media. The active, participatory and creative audience is prevailing today with relatively accessible media, tools and applications, and its culture is in turn affecting mass media corporations and global audiences.

### The OECD has defined three central characteristics for UGC:

- a) Publication requirement: While UGC could be made by a user and never published online or elsewhere, we focus here on the work that is published in some context, be it on a publicly accessible website or on a page on a social networking site only accessible to a select group of people (eg, fellow university students). This is a useful way to exclude email, two-way instant messages and the like.
- b) Creative effort: This implies that a certain amount of creative effort was put into creating the work or adapting existing works to construct a new one; i.e. users must add their own value to the work. The creative effort behind UGC often also has a collaborative element to it, as is the case with websites which users can edit collaboratively. For example, merely copying a portion of a television show and posting it to an online video website (an activity frequently seen on the UGC sites) would not be considered UGC. If a user uploads his/her photographs, however, expresses his/her thoughts in a blog, or creates a new music video, this could be considered UGC. Yet the minimum amount of creative effort is hard to define and depends on the context.

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- c) Creation outside of professional routines and practices: User generated content is generally created outside of professional routines and practices. It often does not have an institutional or a commercial market context. In extreme cases, UGC may be produced by non-professionals without the expectation of profit or remuneration. Motivating factors include: connecting with peers, achieving a certain level of fame, notoriety, or prestige, and the desire to express oneself.

Mere copy & paste or a link could also be seen as user generated self-expression. The action of linking to a work or copying a work could in itself motivate the creator, express the taste of the person linking or copying. Digg.com, Stumbleupon.com, leaptag.com is a good example where such linkage to work happens. The culmination of such linkages could very well identify the tastes of a person in the community and make that person unique through statistical probabilities.

### Adoption and recognition by mass media

The British Broadcasting Corporation set up a user generated content team as a pilot in April 2005 with 3 staff. In the wake of the 7 July 2005 London bombings and the Buncefield oil depot fire, the team was made permanent and was expanded, reflecting the arrival in the mainstream of the 'citizen journalist'. After the Buncefield disaster the BBC received over 5,000 photos from viewers. The BBC does not normally pay for content generated by its viewers.

In 2006 CNN launched CNN iReport, a project designed to bring user generated news content to CNN. Its rival Fox News Channel launched its project to bring in user-generated news, similarly titled "uReport". This was typical of major television news organisations in 2005-2006, who realized, particularly in the wake of the 7th July bombings, that citizen journalism could now become a significant part of broadcast news. Sky News, for example, regularly solicits for photographs and video from its viewers.

User generated content was featured in Time magazine's 2006 Person of the Year, in which the person of the year was "you", meaning all of the people who contribute to user generated media such as YouTube and Wikipedia.

### Different types of user generated content

1. Discussion boards
2. Blogs
3. Wikis
4. Social networking sites
5. News Sites
6. Trip planners
7. Customer review site
8. Experience or photo sharing sites
9. Any other website that offers the opportunity for the consumer to share their knowledge and familiarity with a product or experience

### Prominent websites based on user generated content

- Associated Content
- Brickfish
- Dailymotion
- Digg
  
- eBay

## User Generated Content

- Epinions
- Facebook
- Flickr
  
- Friends Reunited
- Helium.com
- MySpace
- Newgrounds
  
- Orkut
- Outloud.TV
- Piczo
- Revver
  
- Second Life
- TripAdvisor
- Urban Dictionary
- Wikipedia
  
- Wix
- Woophy
- Yelp
- YouTube

### Criticism

The term "user generated content" has received some criticism. Some commentators assert that the term "user" implies an illusory or unproductive distinction between different kinds of "publishers," with the term "users" exclusively used to characterize publishers who operate on a much smaller scale than traditional mass-media outlets. Such classification is said to perpetuate a distinction that some argue is diminishing because of the prevalence and affordability of the means of production and publication.

User generated content has also come under fire from established media outlets such as the New York Times. Critics complain that the quality of user-generated content is not up to par with the quality produced by formally trained writers and is contributing to the decline of standards in publishing, especially news. Supporters might respond that because UGC allows many more people to publish, while there is undeniably a lot of low-quality content being generated, there is also some high-quality content being created, and consumers learn to filter out low-quality content, which they don't tend to do with old media.

Another concern often raised is relating to privacy, with social networking sites encouraging users to share their personal information and messages in publicly viewable areas.

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A recent example of criticism arising is the closing of the Disney MMO "VMK". VMK, like most games, has items that are traded from user to user. Many of these items are rare within the game. Users are able to use these items to create their own rooms, avatars and pin lanyard. It is set to close at 10 PM CDT on May 21, 2008.