Consumer Generated Advertisements: The Ten Commandments

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INTRODUCTION

In this era of TiVo time shifting(TiVo: provides an electronic television programming schedule, and provides features such as Season Pass recordings, which ensures subscribers never miss an episode of their favorite shows) and fast changing consumer loyalty, advertisers are searching for new techniques of attracting consumer's interest. This unending quest for being different and innovative has brought advertisers to a new concept called CONSUMER GENERATED ADVERTISEMENT (CGA). CGA is the latest strategy where consumers are purposely involved to create ad campaigns for their favorite brands. They can be invited through electronic media ad campaign, print media, forums and digital media. This trend was given an official status when in December 2006, Time named 'you', that is, the consumer — as its Person of the Year, based on the growth and influence of user-generated content on the internet. CGA according to Michelle Zappa(www.trendwatchers.com) is defined as "the phenomenon of corporation creating advertisements in close co-operation with experienced and creative consumers, tapping into their intellectual capital, and in(and rewarding them for) exchange giving them a direct say in what actually gets produced, developed, designed or processed.". However, CGA cannot be taken just as a trend. If properly handled, this can be an inseparable part of advertising. CGA is basically "the process of purposely involving customers in order to create advertisements or suggestions which in turn brings changes in the running of that particular company and thereby increases brand loyalty, awareness and profitability of an organization". The difference today, of course, is that motivated amateurs not only come up with clever ad copy but also the acting, music, and video to go along with it, says Neil Perry, acting chief executive officer of XLNT ads, a consumer-generated-ad firm in Conshohocken, Pa. Consumer-generated advertising costs one-third to one-quarter as much as professional TV and Internet advertising does .The actors, instead of getting merchandise as compensation, expect to be paid. However, Perry says, "A small company could walk away with a finished piece of creative for \$60,000, whereas a 30-second spot on network TV would cost in the range of \$350,000 to \$375, 000," he notes. Then that result can be used on a company website or as a paid ad online, or a small company with a bigger ad budget could buy incremental television air time, perhaps in a local market.

Now, the question arises why a consumer would waste his precious time in creating ads for the company. For years, customers have been using the product and were forced intentionally or unintentionally to keep his suggestions to himself. However, due to the advent of new technologies, customers are rearing to give opinions to the company whose product he has been using for a long time. This query can also be answered by the fact that every human being wants recognition, reward and would love doing something for the brand he or she adores. Advertising companies are trying to explore this paradigm and are implementing it in their strategies to create profit. Organizations are experimenting with CGA after watching the results on internet, where user generated content created a flutter like never before. Companies are aware of the fact that **cohorti** (is the new generation of consumers who are creative and intelligent. They want to show their intellect and imagination. It is a phenomenon due to which there is an avalanche of user created content in web, electronic & print media. They are so active nowadays because they have the latest software, hardware and are dying to show their talent) is desperate to create. This urge of being creative and motivational factors can be explained by Pierre Berthon's model of motivational dimensions.

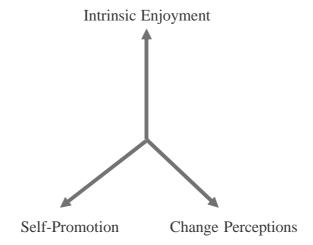
According to this model of motivation, consumers work on three motivation factors for a CGA campaign. Although these appear to be independent, customers who are motivated enough to participate in it are usually motivated by two or three of the given factors.

Intrinsic enjoyment: These members of cohorti are very creative and want to display their talent whenever they get the opportunity. These individuals create for the sake of creation. Usually tech savvy and artistically inclined, they create something for the playful enjoyment they get out of the process. What happens to the creation, the effect the creation has, are secondary to the intrinsic creative process.

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FIGURE1. Motivational Dimensions Underpinning Consumer - Generated Ads



Source: (Pierre Berthon UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY VOL. 50, NO. 4 SUMMER 2008 CMR.BERKELEY.EDU)

Self-promotion: These individuals create with the specific goal of self-promotion, perhaps to attract the attention of a potential employer such as an ad agency or client firm, or to have as part of a portfolio for admission to an educational institution. Here the ad is merely a means to the end of bringing the creator to the awareness of a specific group of people.

Change Perceptions: These individuals create because they intend the ad to have a specific effect on a target audience. Their goal is to change hearts and minds, to influence people. (Pierre Berthon).

These individuals directly can make CGA campaign a success. Most probable chance of a creation to be successful will be when members of intrinsic enjoyment are encouraged to have an inclination towards both selfpromotion and change perceptions.

During the 2007 Super Bowl, advertisers -Doritos and Chevy invested their most expensive media buy of the year in CGA. Many in the industry refute its stability factor. However, research companies such as PQ Media projects that annual spending on CGA will reach \$757 million by 2010. "There's an ever-increasing demand for advertising content for Web use," says XLNT ads CEO Neil Perry, whose background includes marketing roles at McDonald's and Monster.com. "The days of consumers being enamored with someone, who drives a beautiful car, parks it on the cliff, are over. It no longer speaks to the masses. Sites like consumer generatedmedia.com are doing brisk business."

All the sites attract a mix of users, from enthusiasts and ad students to those who already work in advertising. They also have all applications that allow users to send their videos to friends on and off the site. Brickfish, the most established of these sites has a cost per engagement model for users with every entry being reviewed and each having its own rating scale and email section. Brickfish also sponsors in-house campaigns, such as its photography shootout, where users were invited to submit photos (in no particular category). As of press time, the page had more than 2 million engagements; according to a company representative. Users can win rewards for entries, for sharing content online, reviews and votes. Rewards, which can take the form of cash, include the chance to win clothes and scholarships. When Givenchy asked the Brickfish community to create a slogan for its 'very irresistible' fragrance last August, it offered the winner a trip to New York for two to meet spokes model, Liv Tyler. According to a company representative, there were 200,000 interactions with the brand during the 45day campaign and a total of 798 entries.

Shahi Ghanem, chairman and CEO of Brickfish, says, "You can see your reach all over the world. The message is jumping multiple sites because the participants are promoting themselves and the brand."

India is relatively untouched by this phenomenon not because of lack of willingness of consumers but because advertisers are apprehensive of the concept itself. This is the right time for Indian advertising companies to experiment with CGA because we have the youngest population in the world and we are supposed to have the most creative youngsters. Indian companies might be new to this concept. However, if the TEN COMMANDMENTS are followed, the risk of failure decreases by a great amount.

Nowadays, virtually every brand in the west is inviting its customers to create ads. This phenomenon has occurred since long; however, it got recognition when Converse invited customers to create their own style of shoes. Some of the ad campaigns have been really successful like Converse, Apple, Nokia; however an issue arises when companies expect ad campaigns to make an impact on other customers. This was observed during Super Bowl where Doritos, NFL, Sony tried to launch their ad campaigns prepared by consumers. Cynics might say that the ad campaign was a failure; however, it gave signal to the dawn of a new kind of advertising. Issues surrounding CGA is that they are not technically sound. By being technically sound means that the professional aspects like softwares, video cameras might not be of great quality. The greatest effect of CGA was seen in the song at YouTube 'I love my Mac'. We are going to discuss what should be the primary and secondary aim of advertising agencies when they are preparing a CGA campaign. These Ten Commandments didn't come from the Mountain. And they're not carved on clay tablets, but on a high-tensile polyfiber instead. Yet, any marketer worth his or her salt must follow these **10 commandments** in order to find the Promised Land.

1st COMMANDMENT: THOU SHALT NOT IGNORE THE BASICS

Any **CGA** campaign must begin with conventional steps like selecting the aim, methodology, criteria, objectives and more. CGA tracking is done much before the campaign begins, not after it has been released. We have to know the awareness level and attitudes toward your products and services before you start tempting the unwashed with CGA messages. It would just be wastage of money if proper research is not done and an air of novelty is not there in the campaign. Tracking a CGA campaign after it begins can only lead to two catastrophes: The numbers can be short or towering and the client or customer will be excited or disappointed because he has done so well or poorly. Unfortunately, no person, no matter how much of an expert has any idea if the numbers have declined or increased, because we would never know if they were high or low to begin with.

First of all, we need to focus on the fact that while running a CGA campaign, we should make sure that customers understand the aim of our company. For this purpose, we need to clarify the policy and procedures of our organization. Secondly, there should be some guidelines set for the creation of ads so that the content received is not objectionable to the target audience. Thirdly, firms should realize before hand whether there is a brand image of a company to sustain a CGA campaign. By that we mean, small unknown companies might not create that much of an interest like big famous brands. For example, if a big company like IBM or Wal-Mart is starting a CGA campaign, millions of customers globally will be interested in it; however, at the same time, if a small retail shop tries the same concept, it will most possibly turn into a disaster. Customers will go for the ad campaign only if they can identify with the brand or if the reward is satisfying for them. So in order to create a good CGA campaign, we need to go back to the basics.

2nd COMMANDMENT: THOU SHALT BE AGGRESSIVE AND EXTRAVAGANT

The most important aspect that came into light looking at the past performance of CGA campaigns is that most of the successful strategies involved aggressive marketing. In order for a CGA campaign to succeed, advertising should be widespread and far-reaching so that customers are aware of the campaign. From April to October 2005, Itaú, Brazil's largest bank, launched a campaign titled "O Itaú quer ouvir você", which means (how refreshing!) "Itaú wants to listen to you". Through a massive ad campaign, and by using channels such as dedicated 0800 numbers, e-mail, and online chats, employees at their banks, and actual telephones at ATMs, Itaú went far beyond the usual concept of suggestion boxes. They even promised to get back to participants in five working days, commenting on suggestions made. First results: an average of 7,200 requests, complaints, and suggestions per month. This is the way every CGA campaign must be done.

Firms must follow the most aggressive model possible in order to make it a success. The one factor that they should not worry about is 'money'. Although a CGA campaign is considered cheap comparatively, still no amount of money should be enough to spread the message among customers.

3rd COMMANDMENT: THOU SHALT NOT IGNORE THE POWER OF THE INTERNET

When you consider past experiments with CGA, the thing that comes into mind is that nearly every successful campaign was done on the internet. When Converse came up with its strategy, it was considered vague. Eventually, it became a super hit strategy and Converse made millions out of it. Converse was very particular regarding the

ambience of the website. It was deliberately made simple and there were no frills attached with the way a user can do work on it. The software provided to users was very easy to operate and users enjoyed the experience thoroughly. Another example of internet usage is Nokia which got great designs from its customers when it asked for new designs for its mobiles. An American website, Vitrue hosts videos created by users like YouTube with an advertising point of view. Many companies are approaching Vitrue to find an amateur video for their company.

The reason, usage of different media is suggested because it is very easy for a customer to create ads over the internet, and at the same time, usage of electronic media is necessary because it creates awareness among the same. Cohorti needs independence and creative tools at the same time. This can only be satisfied with a manipulative media like internet.

At the same time, there are some disadvantages of the internet. For example, lets take the case of Daniel Lilac and Australian tourism department .Australian tourism department invited consumers to create ads for their campaign "so where the hell are you" and Daniel came with a hard hitting ad "so where the f**** hell are you" This created a flutter in Australian tourism department. Still, due to Daniel's parody, many more people became interested in watching the original advertisement.

CGA over the internet can be of two types: dedicated and rebellious. Dedicated ads are those which follow the companies or rather firm's policies and plans. The best example of these ads are Apple iPod and Nokia. Rebellious ads are those which go against the company's instructions and try to malign the company .Best examples are Australian tourism ad by Daniel and Starbuck ad by "poor bastard". These ads are also divided into two categories, beneficial and malignant. Although rebellious ads might be beneficial for the firm, still, they will not facilitate the user. Example: Pepsi and mentos (showing the reaction when mentos is inserted in Pepsi).

Beneficial (dedicated) ads are those which help in creation of brand image for the company. The paradox comes when rebellious ads turn out to be helpful for companies, as in the case of Starbucks. So, most of the times; CGA campaign on the Internet is proving to be beneficial for the company.

4th COMMANDMENT: THOU SHALT OFFER ALL RIGHTS TO THE CONSUMER

Some firms might be apprehensive about giving full rights like technology and knowhow to the customers; however, cohorti now-a-days has the power of internet and can decide what is good and what is bad. Firms should leverage the full creative power of the participants and should not set narrow guidelines on the creativity. The traditional media framework for inserting creativity is losing its effectiveness, even among the pros. Allow for flexibility in shape, form and raw spontaneity. At the same time, it should be kept as simple as possible. It should be easy to upload, simple to share, simple to embed on blogs and other community and video platforms. Let the customers become the allocating and unadulterated pipeline.

Converse campaign was a big success because the software provided on the website was easy and non-time consuming. If the firm is planning to do a CGA campaign regarding a new product launch or a new model design, every kind of leverage should be given to the customer so that he really thinks of himself as a king. The way Procter & Gamble organized their CGA campaign is laudable.

It's 'connect+develop' program is now contributing to 35% of the company's innovation. P&G's most successful 'connect+develop' products are Olay regenerist, swiffer dusters, crest spin brush and Mr. clean magic eraser (source: Harvard business review). The information that is appropriate for the customers is provided. Sometimes, they individually contact the customer to finalize the idea. This is the way every firm should handle idea generation of cohorti. The basic suggestion is that the customer should not feel bounded by certain guidelines and he should be free to use any kind of tool by which he is going to give his suggestions or advertisement. For example, New Line Cinema recently asked fans to create mixed versions of music from the movie called "Take the Lead" by selecting from material available on the film's official website. And as mentioned, in our In Focus, Home Depot, Chevy Tahoe and MasterCard have been pushing the genre towards similarly limited creative opportunities.

Although it is believed that engaging customers in CGA increases their brand loyalty and advocacy, it will be disastrous to give the telecast rights to the customers before any review or editing. Chevrolet had its fingers burned last year after it allowed visitors to its website to piece together images and text to create an ad for its new Chevy Tahoe sport utility vehicle. Anti-SUV activists seized the opportunity to make videos condemning the gasguzzling, environment-destroying properties of the Tahoe, and though Chevrolet claimed 84% of the content generated was positive, it was the 16% of negative responses that circulated rapidly online.

Chevrolet has learned from its mistakes and sought more control over its Super Bowl ad; this amount of control should be observed by the firms.

5th COMMANDMENT: HONOUR THY CUSTOMER AND REWARD RIGHTEOUSLY

The best thing that a company can do is acknowledge the creativity of cohort*i*. Sometimes, firms might feel that certain media generated by consumers might harm their image. The case of Pepsi and Mentos (YouTube ads) was like that. Although it became such a rage on YouTube, still Pepsi never acknowledged the creativity of the creator. Mentos after realizing the power of YouTube appreciated the ad in media. Pepsi eventually had to endorse the creativity of cohort*i* when similar type of ad having coke instead of Pepsi did not click.

The best way to attract customers to participate in the CGA campaign is by offering attractive compensation. Cohorti is attracted by two things primarily. They are **Rewards and Recognition.** If the customer will think that the reward is satisfying, he or she will participate in the campaign. Not all consumers engage in a CGA campaign to **shill** for their favorite products. Others are after the peculiar sort of fame that comes from being an online sensation. Some hope to parlay a video into a career in advertising. Others are simply after the cash prizes that marketers are increasingly offering for the best spot, such as the \$57,000 Heinz offered in its CGA campaign.

Nokia invited designers from all over the world to create a new model of phone. Although the reward was not that great but the recognition factor came into play. Designers from all over the world submitted their designs and eventually a Turkish designer, Tamer Nakiski, won with his wrist band style of phone. The thought of getting recognition from a big company like Nokia motivated cohort to submit their designs. Dutch supermarket chain, Albert Heijn, did something sensible in 2007. Instead of taking feed back from the customers, they invited them to give suggestions through websites, billboards and leaflets. 55,000 customers participated and 700 were rewarded by doing shopping for 1 minute free of cost. Hence it is not necessary that you need a big brand to implement a CGA campaign successfully. The only thing you need to make sure is that the reward is appropriate. While Nike was basking in the glory of Tiger Woods' winning shot at the Master Golf Tournament (GA), Joseph Jaffe immediately created and uploaded the modified video. Nike was so impressed by his work that it is going to be the next ad of Nike. This kind of acknowledgement should be followed by every firm.

6th COMMANDMENT: THOU SHALT NOT BE SLY AND STEALTHY

Companies should ensure that the process of selection is fair and there is no malpractice involved. The most appropriate way to ensure that is through a voting system. Here customers are allowed to vote for the best suggestion or advertisement. 'Write a priceless' ad by master card is also following the same strategy. They are uploading ads submitted by customers and website visitors can vote for which advertisement they liked the most. This way, customers will see the process of selection live and there would be no chance of malpractice. Ban, The Kaoowned deodorant brand recruited teen girls to upload a photo along with a corresponding expression, about something they would like to ban. For instance, one person submitted a picture of an exit sign along with the phrase "ban the easy way out." Ban received more than 4,600 submissions through its website, narrowed that pool to 50, and asked the girls to go online and vote for their favorite nine. The winning entries became a print ad that ran in a US Weekly magazine. "This campaign is about giving the girls control," says Steve Thibodeau, managing partner at Kirshenbaum Bond & Partners, the advertising agency that created the campaign. The voting not only ensures transparency but also wider participation of customers. However, this should depend on the base of customers you are going to target. This is going to be discussed in the next commandment.

7th COMMANDMENT: THOU SHALT SELECT THE TARGET PARTICIPANTS

Firms should select the type of customer base it wants. For example, Electrolux design forum invited designers from all over the world. 3058 designers from 88 countries including our very own India participated. They were given instructions to design appliances for 2020. 12 finalists participated in Stockholm in a six day design event, including workshops, model building and a competition for cash awards. Electrolux applied a smart strategy of involving only design students. The registration process was run via DESIGNBOOM, an industrial design community since they realized that CGA is not only about involving about 100s of millions of contributors. There

is no harm in targeting a particular segment of expert customers if our aim is producing something specific like the new campaign they are organizing inviting hospitality students to give a plan for "healthy eating habits in 2016".

This way, firms would not have to select a product from customers who are not aware of the product and at the same time they would be marketing their brand to the global audience. This kind of competition need not involve voting by customers who are not aware of the intricacies of the plan and should be decided by a panel of experts in the respective field. P&G also targets a certain group of moms to make new products in their CGA plan 'connect+develop'.

Core77, the industrial design site teamed up with watch maker Timex for a global watch design competition called TIMEX 2154: THE FUTURE OF TIME (celebrating the 150th anniversary of Timex). Designers from 72 countries explored and visualized personal and portable timekeeping 150 years from now, resulting in 600 entries. This seems to be a very small number. However, aim of Timex was to gain some innovative designs that it can implement later. Cadillac invited amateur film makers to submit a 5 second commercial, which illustrated its CTS-V model. One of the chosen directors will receive 5 second TV airtime and a brand new Cadillac CTS-V. Now, the reason why certain firms must adopt this strategy of selective participation is because members of cohorti who are looking forward to have a career in that particular field will do anything to impress the firm. This way, the outcome is much better. So it is very essential of a CGA campaign to decide on the type of participant needed from cohorti.

8th COMMANDMENT: THOU SHALT NOT LOATHE THY CRITICS

Firms should be prepared for criticism from either customers or the critics. Any kind of novelty is criticized; so instead of getting disconsolate due to it, the company should prepare for its new campaign. Heinz ketchup is running a contest where it is asking regular folks to make a Heinz commercial for the chance of winning \$57,000. This CGA campaign has been criticized severely by critics. Heinz has also become the target of angry commenters who accuse the company of being "lazy" and "cheap" for asking people to do advertising for free. We have to admit that ads were appalling if not grotesque. Even though it turns out that Heinz is still paying a lot for the advertising, it's quite annoying that Heinz is asking people to essentially create a viral video for them. One of the viewers of Heinz ketchup video, Mathew Peerin said "The Doritos ad that aired during the Super Bowl was pretty funny. The thing about ketchup is that it doesn't seem to have the built in audience that would really make ads. Honestly, I think people eat ketchup but aren't as dedicated to the Heinz brand of ketchup as the eaters of Doritos are. Same goes for Dodge - if you own one, you're probably fanatical about them. I don't see the same for ketchup, so to me it seems cheap. I don't mind the other user ads".

So people would question everything from consumer's loyalty to the brand image. Firms should be prepared for all eventualities.

Another issue involving CGA is quite contradictory to cohorti's behavior. Though most adults approve of companies that run "create our ad for us" promotions, a new survey from the AMA discovered that their children aren't necessarily buying it. Adults surveyed said companies that use consumer-generated ads in addition to traditional advertising were most customer friendly (68 percent), creative (56 percent) and innovative (55 percent), according to the AMA survey, reports Business Week (via Ad Jab). But their children were far more cynical. The survey found that respondents aged 18-24 said companies using consumer-generated ads were less trustworthy (21 percent), less socially responsible (20 percent), and less customer friendly (13 percent) - all those percentages were at least double of the 25-64 age group.

The AMA's chief marketing officer, Nancy Costopulos attempted to explain the findings: "Young adults' skepticism may be rooted in their desire to distance themselves from company-sponsored messages."

So firms need to ensure that ads selected are connecting with the youth. This survey might be an exception but these kinds of surveys will come and go. They once criticized sachet marketing as well and now it's a world wide phenomenon.

9th COMMANDMENT: THOU SHALT NOT IGNORE THE POWER OF PARODY

For long, advertisers has been ignoring or sometimes even fighting against spoof ads. Spoofs create awareness among customers which even traditional marketing cannot match. Parody advertisement goes back to the time first advertisements were created. The most noticeable thing here is that customers will create spoof of only those companies which are very successful. Greatest media for the exhibition of spoof ad is YouTube. Customers create their own spoof and showcase it on YouTube. This is the indirect marketing firms are enjoying without even investing a single penny. There are more than 100 million videos being watched everyday.

	Approximate figure	Percentage %
Total videos on YouTube	60,00,00,000	
All advertisements	24,400	<0.001
Parody ads	2,450	10% of all ads

Another noticeable thing is that top companies whose ads are spoofed mostly are among the Fortune 500 companies.

BRAND	NO. OF SPOOF ADS ON YOUTUBE
COCA-COLA	97
MICROSOFT	74
IBM	1
MCDONALDS	15
INTEL	6
NOKIA	6
TOYOTA	11

Source: Figures based on search "Spoof Ads": Top brands selected from Business Week Best Global Brand Survey 2007.

However, this strategy of spoof ads might as well be used by rival firms. The fourth most viewed video in YouTube was '1984 Hillary' where Hillary was shown as the big brother. It was the spoof of 'Apple 1984' advertisement. Democrat followers were shown as zombie like followers in this parody of legendary Super Bowl advertisement. Later it was discovered that the creator of the spoof was from the Obama campaign. So spoofs can be harmful as well but firms need to quickly identify the effect and if possible, take counter measures like creating spoof of their rivals.

10th COMMANDMENT: THOU SHALT NOT TAKE CGA AS YOUR PRIMARY STRATEGY

CGA is still in an infancy stage. Its history goes back 4 or 5 years; however it has grown at a tremendous speed. The basic reason why CGA cannot be the primary focus of advertisers is just because of lack of technology. If given proper technology, CGA campaigns by cohorti can be as competitive as traditional advertising. Biggest reason for the failure of Doritos, Chevrolet and NFL regarding their CGA campaign was that they overestimated its effect on the consumers although they received lots of pre-game buzz. All three failed to capitalize on that attention with a clear call to the Website, either in their TV spots or in paid search. "They all did a really good job leading up to the game but didn't reengage the community the night of the game via the search channel," says Josh Stylman, managing partner with New York-based Reprise. "It was like running the first 25 miles of a marathon and then stopping." All three were not able to capitalize on the target market because of lack of awareness among the customers. They could not properly market their respective websites, hence, could not generate appropriate CGA. This was the most expensive ad campaign for both Doritos and Chevrolet and it was released at the most precious time of the year. This is where they made the mistake. Hence, to make sure that your CGA campaign is not a flop, just ensure that your strategy aligns with well-defined goals and objectives, and creates a measurement framework for program planning, tracking, adjusting and evaluating. A consumer-generated campaign is not a license to veer into irrelevance or sloppiness.

CONCLUSION

These commandments will be most helpful for marketing and advertisement agencies. The purpose of this study was to ensure that Indian companies are educated regarding this phenomenon and encouraged to experiment with it. CGA seems to be an uncertain prospect; however, if implemented properly, it can prove to be very benefiting for the organization.

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