Employee Generated Content (EGC) By the Owner of Shaera Coffee on Tiktok

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Abstract. TikTok is one of the platforms that encourages companies to utilize digital content as part of their marketing strategy. One effective approach is Employee Generated Content (EGC), which is content created voluntarily by internal employees. EGC content is considered more authentic and trustworthy by the audience. Shaera Coffee is a culinary business that uses TikTok through the @ininabizu account by posting content created directly by its owner as an example of EGC. This study aims to evaluate how the interaction, authenticity, originality, and credibility of the content created by the owner of Shaera Coffee on TikTok @ininabizu contributes to building trust with the audience. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The research shows that the owner's direct involvement in creating content results in active interaction, authentic content, and a higher level of credibility in the eyes of the audience. Therefore, EGC plays an important role in building trust and a sustainable relationship between Shaera Coffee and its TikTok audience.

Keywords: Employee Generated Content (EGC), Interaction, Authenticity, Originality, Credibility

1. Introduction

The development of social media, especially TikTok, has changed the way companies communicate with their audiences. TikTok is now not only used as an advertising medium, but also as a tool for storytelling and a place for direct interaction between brands and users. Social media enables two-way communication and fosters closer and more emotional relationships between brands and users through various content formats such as short videos, stories, and live interactions [1]. The format and style of social media content influence user engagement and perceptions of brand authenticity [2]. Employee Generated Content (EGC) has been proven to increase consumer trust and strengthen a brand's positive image [3]. The current trend in digital communication is increasingly moving towards social commerce trust, an approach that prioritizes trust in building relationships between brands and audiences [4].

Recent analysis shows that marketing through social media greatly influences the level of trust in a brand, especially if the content is informative, consistent, and relevant to the audience [5]. This strategy reinforces the perception that the brand is not only focused on sales but also emphasizes transparency in operations, honesty, and responsibility towards consumers [6].

Many local businesses find it difficult to transform their conventional advertising methods into authentic and transparent digital communication. Most SMEs still face challenges in implementing digital marketing strategies [7]. As a result, many small businesses still rely on one-way advertising methods that are ineffective in reaching customers. Therefore, it is important for small businesses such as cafes to consistently use content created by employees or business owners to overcome this challenge and build more authentic relationships with their target audience. An effective digital communication strategy must maintain message consistency, encourage two-way interaction, and connect various platforms so that audiences not only receive one-way promotions but also feel actively involved [8]. Audience interaction patterns in the digital age are forcing brands to develop more personalized, authentic, and consistent communication strategies. However, practical experience shows that many businesses still lack understanding of how to create content that balances advertising objectives with message authenticity [9].

Tiktok offers great opportunities as a digital communication medium. However, many audiences still show low levels of trust in promotional video content because it is considered too contrived and feels like an advertisement. Tiktok was selected as the research context because its short-form video format emphasizes spontaneity, storytelling, and real-time engagement. The platform's algorithm also prioritizes authentic and relatable content. Making it suitable environment to examine EGC practices and authenticity perception. This

causes audiences to be selective, skeptical, and even ignore the messages conveyed by brands. EGC is seen as relevant in addressing this issue because it presents the real experiences of business actors directly.

Findings from previous studies further confirm that the EGC approach is highly relevant for implementation, as it emphasizes transparency, personal closeness, and tangible communication between brands or businesses and their audiences, while also supporting digital Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) strategies with consistent messaging and active interaction across various platforms. The EGC concept and strategic digital communication have great potential, but their implementation in the local business world has not always been consistent, especially among cafes that are active on TikTok. While prior research emphasizes the effectiveness of EGC in fostering trust and authenticity there remains a noticeable gap between its theoretical promise and its actual implementation among local SMEs. In practice, many cafe business continue to prioritize conventional promotional approaches that lack interactive and relational communication elements. Therefore, this study highlights how the owner of Shaera Coffee Cirebon manages EGC and how the audience evaluates their account. This study aims to analyze how authenticity, originality, crediblity, and interaction within EGC practices contribute to building social commerce trust in a local SME context.

2. Literature Review

Previous studies have shown that content originality and integrated digital communication strategies are important foundations for building audience trust. The following are the results of previous studies related to the topic of Employee Generated Content (EGC). In addition, this study also highlights unanswered questions in previous research, which is why further research is needed, particularly in the application of EGC in the context of local businesses, such as Shaera Coffee Cirebon.

Employee Generated Content (EGC) can increase consumer trust and strengthen brand image through original content created directly by employees or business owners [3] Unlike User Generated Content (UGC) which is produced voluntarily by consumers, EGC originates from internal business actors. It is also different from influencer marketing, where external individuals are compensated to promote a brand and from formal branded content which is strategically designed for advertising purposes. The core strength of EGC lies in its perceived authenticity and experiential foundation. In the context of social commerce platforms, consumer trust in TikTok is highly dependent on the quality of reviews, social support, and the transparency of content presented to the audience [4]. Social commerce trust in this study is grounded in relationship marketing teory which emphasizes long-term relational exchange based on credibility, transparency, and consistents communication. Trust in digital platforms emerges when audiences perceive both competence and honesty from the conten creator. Furthermore, in a broader context, it emphasizes that the integrity and consistency of messages in integrated marketing communications (IMC) across channels will have a significant impact on customer satisfaction and positive perceptions of retail services [8]. On the other hand, authentic and interactive digital public relations (PR) strategies on social media can enhance an institution's image and strengthen emotional ties with audiences, even in different cultural contexts [10]. Another research [11] Discussing innovation in digital promotion, namely the use of QR codes as an effective promotional tool to connect consumers with product information quickly and efficiently.

As the basis for integrated marketing communication, this study uses the concept of Integrated Marketing Communication as a strategic communication process [12]. The main objective of IMC is to influence audience behavior, either directly, for example by making purchases, or indirectly, such as shaping perceptions, images, and brand loyalty. This view is reinforced by other studies which state that IMC is an integrated communication strategy that combines various promotional channels in a planned manner to convey a consistent brand message to the audience [13].

In addition to the above discussion, IMC emphasizes three main points: message consistency, two-way interaction, and interconnectivity between platforms [8]. Meanwhile, cross-platform integration ensures that campaign messages run smoothly across various digital media and create a consistent communication experience for the audience. IMC must encourage connections between platforms, consistent messaging, and direct interaction with the audience so that marketing strategies become more relevant, responsive, and user-centered [14].

In IMC practice, digital marketing has become an integral and indispensable channel. Digital marketing is a marketing strategy that utilizes digital technology and social media platforms to expand brand reach and increase engagement with its target audience. This study also shows that social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are important channels for digital marketing, offering a variety of content formats, including videos, images, and interactive content [15]. The study emphasizes the important role of content creators in digital marketing strategies in building brand awareness and emotional connections with audiences. Content creators are considered capable of delivering advertising messages in a more creative, warm, and accessible way, so that they do not feel like ordinary advertisements.

Effective digital promotions must present clear, relevant, and easily accessible information to create two-way communication that allows brands to interact directly with consumers, such as through comment sections, messaging features, live streaming, or other forms of interaction [11]. Digital marketing strategies are crucial for SMEs in Indonesia to increase their competitiveness. Therefore, for small businesses, especially in sectors such as cafes, combining digital marketing with authentic and interactive content is essential to face the challenges of the digital era [16].

Trust is a key element in transaction-oriented digital interactions. Trust in social commerce is influenced by three main factors, namely review quality, social support, and content credibility within the platform. Informative reviews and social support from the community help consumers evaluate products and increase their sense of security before making a purchase. In addition, the credibility of content that is presented accurately and convincingly is also an important aspect in building audience trust in a brand [4]. On platforms such as TikTok, this aspect is very important because video content is real-time and it is easy to tell whether it feels natural or artificial. Transparent content and active interaction can build a more authentic relationship between companies and their audience. Thus, honesty and two-way interaction are important elements in building consumer trust on social commerce platforms such as TikTok.

Based on the context of digital marketing and social commerce, advertisements that are formal in nature and often considered too "salesy," Employee Generated Content (EGC) actually emphasizes transparency, spontaneity, and emotional closeness. Researchers emphasize that the main strength of EGC lies in its authenticity and human touch, because the content comes from people who are genuinely involved in the business. This makes it much easier for audiences to trust and feel emotionally connected [3].

Two-way interaction is an important part of implementing EGC because it strengthens the emotional connection between the brand and the audience [10]. Thus, the EGC approach is particularly relevant on platforms such as TikTok, which prioritize storytelling and real experiences, as consumers today are more interested in content that feels real, personal, and not contrived. Trust in social commerce is built through seller credibility, community reputation, and active peer-to-peer interactions [17]. This is particularly important for EGC content strategies on platforms such as TikTok, as EGC can be a strong indicator of trust when it reflects the real activities and open interactions of the company's own employees.

3. Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method to gain an in-depth understanding of how the owner of Shaera Coffee Cirebon applies Employee Generated Content (EGC) on TikTok as a communication strategy to build audience image and trust. The subject of this study is the owner of Shaera Coffee Cirebon as the party who directly creates and shares EGC content. Meanwhile, the object of the study is the video content and audience interactions found on the TikTok account @ininabizu, which represents the business communication activities and promotional strategies carried out personally by the business owner. Shaera Coffee was selected as an analytically significant case because the owner actively manages the tiktok account independently and consistently applies EGC practices. This makes the case suitable for examining how authenticity and trust are constructed through owner driven content.

In this study, researchers used data collection techniques to obtain research data through methods tailored to the context and objectives of the study [18]. The data collection techniques used by the researcher are as follows: a). Observation, the researcher conducted non-participatory observation by observing the TikTok account @ininabizu without participating in its activities. : b). Interviews: The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the owner of Shaera Coffee Cirebon and the audience of the TikTok account @ininabizu to explore the aspects of authenticity, originality, credibility, and interaction between the owner and the audience behind the creation of content (EGC) on TikTok. and c) Documentation, the researcher collected screenshots, videos, and audience comments from the TikTok account @ininabizu as supporting data to analyze the aspects of authenticity, originality, credibility, and interaction between the owner and the audience in the published EGC content. Authenticity was operationalizes through indicators such as openness, realism of content, and absence of scripted advertising tone. Trust was interpretd through audience responses, including expressed confidence, positive comments, and willingness to visit the cafe.

This study used purposive sampling, which is a technique of deliberately determining samples based on certain considerations relevant to the research objectives [18]. In this study, samples were determined based on the following criteria: a). Shaera Coffee owners or employees who actively create or manage EGC content on TikTok; and b). Audiences or consumers who have watched, interacted with, or responded to Shaera Coffee's TikTok content. Audience evalutions was analyzed through interpretation of comment sections, engagement patterns, and interview with selected followers.

Data analysis using Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model in [19] which consists of three stages, namely: a). Data Reduction: in this stage, researchers select, simplify, and focus on relevant data from the results

of observations and documentation of the content of the TikTok account @ininabizu. : b). Data Presentation: the reduced data is then presented in the form of narrative descriptions or quotations that illustrate communication patterns, message delivery styles, and interactions between the owner and the audience on social media; and c). Drawing Conclusions: drawing conclusions based on the findings that have been analyzed. The conclusions focus on how EGC is used to build trust and closer relationships between business owners and audiences on TikTok.

4. Result

Shaera Coffee is a culinary business that uses TikTok as a digital marketing tool through its owner's account, @ininabizu. On this account, Nabila Zuraida utilizes an Employee Generated Content (EGC) strategy to promote her business. Based on observations of the TikTok account @ininabizu and interviews with the owner and other sources of information, the research results show that Shaera Coffee consistently uses an Employee Generated Content (EGC) marketing strategy. The owner is directly involved in the entire content creation process. She explains that her presence in the content is intended to build an emotional connection with the audience.

4.1 Authenticity of Content Owner Shaera Coffee

Based on the interview results, the owner shared his daily activities in managing the business, including aspects that are rarely shown by other brands.

Figure 1. Authenticity Content
Source: Tiktok account @ininabizu

Figure 1 shows how the owner honestly explains to the audience that the products on display are not suitable for sale. In the video, the owner explains that the cakes on display were made three to four days ago, so they are not safe for consumption in order to maintain their quality and safety. This is in line with the owner's statement that he deliberately shows the business as it is: "I deliberately show my business as it is because I want to show that the business journey is not always glamorous or perfect" (interview with Nabila as a key informant, 2025). Additionally, another informant stated that "the content feels authentic it's real, honest, and often highlights customer enthusiasm" (interview with Silvi as a supporting informant, 2025).

This openness has a direct impact on the emotional connection between the brand and its audience. Based on information from the study, informants stated that content that appears natural makes them feel they are seeing the "human side" of the business owner. This encourages the formation of long-term relationships between owners and audiences due to a high level of trust and greater emotional connection [20].

4.2 Originality of Content Owner Shaera Coffee

Originality refers to content created directly by employees or owners based on real experiences, not formal advertising [3]. The interview results show that all TikTok content on the @ininabizu account is created

independently without the help of a team. The owner stated that the content creation process is done independently, from the idea, video shooting, to editing. "I do all the TikTok content on the @ininabizu account entirely by myself without the help of a special team" (interview with Nabila as a key informant, 2025). The owner also emphasized that the content posted is based on real experiences in running the business, not the result of an advertising scenario: "I do not create fake scenarios or portray situations that did not actually happen" (interview with Nabila as key informant, 2025).

In addition, the audience felt that this content was more honest because it reflected their own experiences when visiting the cafe. One informant stated that "the content makes me believe it because I can see the process of making it, not just advertisements or claims, so it feels more convincing" (interview with Elsa as a supporting informant, 2025). This is reflected in local brand research which shows that honest and open social media marketing is closely related to higher customer satisfaction [21]. According to [22] Employee Generated Content (EGC) produced by owners can strengthen consumers' emotional connection with the brand. The interview results show that the audience feels involved and supportive of the business's development. Thus, the owner's personal branding serves as a strategic asset that strengthens the brand's value in the long term.

4.3 Credibility of Shaera Coffee Content Owner

Credibility is the level of trust that the audience has in the honesty, competence, and consistency of content creators in conveying information about the business [3]. Based on the interview results, the owner's credibility is assessed based on a combination of consistency, professionalism, communication style, and reputation, all of which are evident in the published content. One informant stated that "The owner's consistency in creating content and his persistence in developing the cafe made me believe in him even more" (interview with Resti as a supporting informant, 2025). This strategy is in line with research showing that honesty and credibility in digital content can increase interaction and trust levels [23].

The audience appreciates the owner's relaxed yet informative communication style and his ability to explain things clearly. "His content delivery style is relaxed, personal, educational, natural, and not pushy" (interview with Wafa as Key Informant, 2025). This is in line with research [24] which shows that transparent content can foster empathy and closeness. Shaera Coffee's credibility comes not only from its communication strategy, but also from social interactions and real customer experiences that prove the brand's integrity. Previous research shows that media content that displays transparency and reality increases trust in the brand and strengthens buyers' desire to purchase products [20].

4.4 Interaction with Shaera Coffee Owner

Interaction is a two-way communication between content creators and audiences that strengthens trust through responsiveness, engagement, and openness [3]. The interaction between the owner of Shaera Coffee and the audience on the TikTok account @ininabizu shows active, responsive, and more humanistic communication. She not only shares content about her business, but also directly responds to comments, criticism, and questions from the audience.

Figure 2. Two-Way Interaction Content
Source: Tiktok account @ininabizu

Figure 2 shows how the owner of Shaera Coffee actively encourages interaction with the audience through video responses to questions and criticism that arise. For example, when there was a question about the use of gloves. In the video, he explained the need for gloves to be mobile when making drinks, while emphasizing that hygiene procedures were still being maintained. This interaction made the audience feel involved and more trusting of the brand. The informant stated, "I myself am interested in the content because it makes me even more curious and eager to visit the place" (interview with Resti as a supporting informant, 2025).

5. Discussion

In this study, Employee Generated Content (EGC) is conceptualized as a strategic component within the broader Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) framework. Rather than functioning as isolated promotional content EGC operates as a tractical execution that supports IMC principle particularly message consistency, cross-platform coherence, and dialogic interaction with audiences. Throught the owner's active involvement in content creation EGC reinforce integrated communication efforts by aligning brand narratives, strengthening relational engagement, and fostering long-term trust. Authenticity in digital communication relates to the audience's perception that content is presented honestly and realistically. Studies show that openly disclosing the actual business situation strengthens audience trust. Content that does not present an overly idealistic picture creates a deeper emotional connection because the audience receives realistic information [20].

These findings show that the way Shaera Coffee's owner creates content using the Employee Generated Content (EGC) concept fulfills the main characteristic of authenticity, which is providing information openly and recounting business experiences honestly. This authenticity is very important in building trust and emotional connections between the owner and the audience in digital marketing through social media.

In addition to authenticity, the EGC practices carried out by owners also highlight the originality of content as an important element in building audience trust. The originality of content can be seen from the direct involvement of owners in content creation and the presentation of real experiences without fabrication. These findings are in line with the concept of Employee Generated Content (EGC), which emphasizes that content from within the company is more trusted because it reflects the direct experiences of business actors [3].

The content displayed by Shaera Coffee's owner shows that EGC is not only used as a promotional tool, but also as a means of communication that reflects the real situation in business operations. Thus, authenticity becomes an effective communication strategy in building a brand image that is more familiar, relevant, and trusted by readers.

Authenticity and originality are two concepts that are interrelated but have different emphases. Authenticity refers more to the audience's perception of the honesty, openness, and realism of the message being conveyed. Meanwhile, originality emphasizes the source and production process of content that truly originates from the owner's direct experience without fabrication. In the context of EGC, authenticity relates to how the message is perceived by the audience, while originality relates to who created the content and how it was produced.

The originality of content in EGC practices consistently carried out by the owner is an important foundation in building credibility in the eyes of the audience. The owner's credibility is shaped by consistency, professionalism, and the ability to convey information clearly and transparently. Research shows that audiences assess credibility not only from the message conveyed, but also from the extent to which the content matches real-

life experiences. This is in line with research stating that transparency and honesty in digital content can increase audience trust [23]. In the EGC concept, the credibility of Shaera Coffee's owner forms the basis for long-term trust. This credibility stems not only from the communication style used, but also from the owner's consistent attitude in presenting the actual conditions that can be directly validated by the audience.

The impact of EGC carried out by the owner is clearly felt in terms of emotional connection. Content that displays EGC and shows the owner's struggles honestly is recognized by the audience as a form of personal and relatable communication, thereby building empathy and closeness. This is in line with research [24] which shows that transparent content can foster empathy and closeness.

The trust and emotional closeness formed through the credibility of the owner is then reflected in the pattern of interaction between the owner and the audience on TikTok. Two-way interaction between the owner and the audience is an important part of digital strategy. Research findings indicate that the owner's active response to comments and criticism can enhance audience engagement and help build long-term relationships. This aligns with the concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), which emphasizes the importance of message interaction across various platforms to build relationships with the audience [8].

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This study contributes to SME digital transforfation literature by demonstrating how owner-driven EGC can function not merely as promotional content but as a relational trust-building strategy in local business contexts. Based on the findings of the study, researchers recommend that local businesses, especially MSMEs, make EGC their primary digital communication strategy. Owners are advised to actively engage in content creation, showcase the business processes and conditions in a realistic manner, and respond to audience comments consistently and openly. This strategy can be used as a guideline for managing social media accounts to build trust, increase audience engagement, and strengthen brand image in a sustainable manner.

6. Conclusion

Research shows that interactions between owners and audiences are active, open, and responsive. Owners not only respond to comments, but also provide explanations through videos to address criticism. Credibility is built on honesty, transparency, and the willingness of owners to demonstrate their practices directly in content creation. Overall, original, authentic, and easy-to-understand content is able to build bonds and trust between customers and the Shaera Coffee brand.

From a practical point of view, this study provides several important points for small businesses. First, EGC has proven to be an effective means of communication for SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) because it emphasizes the human side of entrepreneurs. Second, TikTok can be a very efficient medium for building trust and emotional bonds with viewers through simple but consistent interactions. Third, honesty and transparency in content help increase consumer trust and can provide additional benefits for developing brands.

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