

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING CONTENT ON BRAND ADVOCACY IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE FACULTY OF TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY AT HUFLIT, VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT— This study investigates the complex dynamics between social media marketing content and higher education brand outcomes in the tourism and hospitality sector by examining the impact of firm-generated content (FGC) and user-generated content (UGC) on brand advocacy (BA) through the mediating mechanism of emotional attachment (EA), while considering the moderating influence of Brand credibility (BC). Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from 223 valid responses from students and alumni of the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality at HUFLIT via a stratified online survey. Data analysis conducted in SPSS 24.0 showed that both FGC and UGC strongly influence learners' and alumni's emotional attachment, which, in turn, influences brand advocacy. Additionally, the findings show that brand credibility moderates the relationship between UGC and emotional bonds, highlighting the mediating role of emotional attachment. These results provide higher education institutions, particularly those in the tourism and hospitality sector, with strategic insights into leveraging multi-source digital content to cultivate deep-seated brand advocacy within a specific academic community.

KEY WORDS— Brand equity, social media marketing, brand credibility, emotional attachment, brand advocacy

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions' (HEIs) branding is no longer just about recognition; it is vital for institutional competitiveness and stakeholder engagement in today's higher education market. This is especially true for specialized sectors like Tourism and Hospitality. This research examines how social media marketing content influences brand advocacy among students in the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality at HUFLIT, a pioneer in foreign-language and informatics-based education. Beyond proposing strategic enhancements to the faculty's digital presence, the study explores a conceptual model in which brand credibility serves as a moderator between social media marketing efforts and students' emotional attachment. The findings aim to provide actionable strategies for enhancing brand equity in a digital educational environment, especially in the tourism and hospitality sector. In the competitive environment where higher education institutions expand globally, HEIs in many countries have focused on branding in which they foster effective and meaningful dialogues about HEI's brand values to prospective students (Nguyen et al., 2020)[1]. Emerging Asian countries also acknowledged the importance of branding as they are increasingly becoming the emerging education hubs (Panda et al., 2019)[2]. Higher education sectors in emerging Asian countries witnessed an unprecedented expansion to meet the growing demand from domestic and international students (Anabila, 2019)[3]. So, HEIs in emerging Asian countries are trying to differentiate themselves while developing branding strategies to attract prospective students (Yousaf, Mishra, and Bashir, 2018)[4]. Although Asian HEIs' administrators recognize the need for branding to distinguish themselves from competitors, HEIs in emerging Asian countries still struggle with their branding strategies to reach out to targeted prospects (Sobaih et al., 2016)[5]. There are relatively few studies that empirically explain the specificities of the brand equity development process in higher education sectors. Attempts to understand this phenomenon more holistically have, so far, resulted in models which are purely conceptual or lack empirical support in the Asian market.

Recently, the younger generation showed a high adoption rate of social media (Liu et al., 2021)[6]. It was estimated that over 90% of prospective students use social media (Aldahdouh, Nokelainen, and Korhonen, 2020)[7]. As such, social media marketing has become particularly important for HEIs to connect with prospective students (Lacka and Wong, 2019)[8]. Whilst social media marketing is well established in emerging Western countries, a comparative analysis of the factors that motivate customers in emerging countries is lacking in the literature (Choi et al., 2017)[9]. What remains unclear is how social media marketing and brand credibility create and enhance brand equity for HEIs. Perera, Nayak, and Nguyen (2022)[10] demonstrated that social media and online platforms are effective strategies for increasing brand equity in developing nations. Digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are instrumental in enhancing brand awareness, building user communities, and connecting the institution with potential learners. Leveraging these platforms will help the faculty increase its online presence and capture students' and industry stakeholders' attention. For the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality at HUFLIT, cultivating and maintaining a reputable image is paramount. This necessitates not only a strong brand but also a brand personality that aligns with students' expectations, particularly those

with clear career orientations in tourism and hospitality. Student satisfaction regarding educational quality remains a cornerstone for building loyalty and reinforcing the faculty.

Enhancing the brand of the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality at HUFLIT is both a necessity in a competitive climate and a vital factor for long-term value creation and sustainable growth. Moreover, maintaining a solid reputation alongside student satisfaction and loyalty will enable the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality at HUFLIT to build a formidable brand that attracts talent and sustains its competitive position. Although prior studies have analyzed factors affecting brand image and trust - such as faculty expertise, facilities, curriculum, and tuition fees - confirming their role in increasing emotional engagement and advocacy, gaps remain. Specifically, few studies have deeply analyzed the moderating effects of faculty brand credibility on emotional attachment and institutional trust. This research addresses these gaps by examining the mechanisms through which social media marketing content translates into institutional loyalty within the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality at HUFLIT. The primary objective is to evaluate the distinct impacts of Firm-Generated Content (FGC) and User-Generated Content (UGC) on tourism and hospitality students' emotional attachment and subsequent brand advocacy. Central to this study is the investigation of the moderating role of brand credibility, determining how a Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality's perceived trustworthiness influences the relationship between marketing efforts and emotional resonance. By addressing the research question - how do FGC and UGC drive brand advocacy through the mediation of emotional attachment, and to what extent does brand credibility moderate these effects? - This study intends to provide a comprehensive framework for enhancing brand equity in a specialized, highly competitive higher education institution in the tourism and hospitality sector.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

Higher education institutions are increasingly utilizing social media to discuss, interact, and work together with students while creating branding initiatives (Nguyen et al., 2020)[1]. The capacity to reach millions of consumers with brand-related material and engage them in dialogue has led to an increase in the usage of social media as a marketing channel in recent years (Lacka and Wong, 2019)[8]. According to Alawadhi and Al-Daihani (2019)[11], social media marketing is the efficient use of social media networking platforms for executive marketing activities. Higher education institutions are increasingly utilizing social media to engage, interact, and work together with students while creating branding strategies (Nguyen et al., 2020)[1]. According to Rambe and Moeti (2017)[12] and Fearon et al. (2018)[13], social media helps prospective students have a better grasp of higher education institutions, including their reputation, the quality of their education services, the relevance of their courses, and the profiles of their lecturing experts. User-generated content (UGC) and firm-generated content (FGC) are two ways that social media marketing is developed to create and share brand information with target customers (Raji, Mohd Rashid, and Mohd Ishak, 2018; Müller and Christandl, 2019)[14, 15]. FGC is defined as "the content created by marketers on official brand pages on social media channels" (Colicev, Kumar, and O'Connor, 2019)[16], while UGC is defined as "media content created or produced by the general public, rather than paid professionals and primarily distributed on the Internet" (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019)[17]. Students frequently use social media to seek information and guidance from others to cultivate positive attitudes on building brand equity. Additionally, to improve credibility, FGC allows customers to compare HEIs to other HEIs (Colicev, Kumar, and O'Connor, 2019)[16].

Meanwhile, the Covid-19 lockdown situation alters the purchasing habits of potential customers. According to Sobaih, Hasanein, and Abu Elnasr (2016)[5], they use social media sites more regularly to stay up to date on COVID-19 problems, seek guidance, and engage with others. HEIs must use social media more for academic purposes and marketing communications to keep up with this trend (Sobaih, Hasanein, and Abu Elnasr, 2016)[5]. On the one hand, social media use enables higher education institutions to consistently provide high-quality educational services to relevant interested parties about academic issues (Dutta, 2020)[18]. However, the growing use of social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram for marketing might highlight their brand performance and increase brand recognition among potential students (Mason et al., 2021)[19]. As a result, several Asian higher education institutions have begun to shift into a new era of education by developing innovative solutions to the same problems (Joaquin, Biana, and Dacela, 2020)[20]. Chinese universities have developed and continuously enhanced the use of social media for many forms of online learning (Mok et al., 2021)[21]. In a similar vein, universities in Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia have turned their attention to online platforms for marketing and instructional purposes (Yang and Huang, 2020)[22].

B. EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT

The attachment theory developed by Bowlby (1982)[23] is where the idea of emotional attachment originated. Emotional attachment is a key idea in marketing literature because it clarifies the strength of the connection customers have with the brand. This relationship then affects consumer behavior, which promotes customer

lifetime value and business profitability (Thomson et al., 2005; Theng So et al., 2013)[24, 25]. According to Thomson et al. (2005)[24], one of the many definitions of emotional attachment is the favorable emotional effects of a close bond between a customer and a brand. Consumers can form emotional attachments to a variety of marketable entities, including material goods (Kleine and Baker, 2004)[26], gifts (Mick and DeMoss, 1990)[27], celebrities (Thomson, 2006)[28], social media (Dwivedi et al., 2019)[29], and brands (Percy et al., 2004; Slater, 2000)[30, 31]. Thomson et al. (2005)[24] described emotional brand attachment as the favorable emotional results of a close bond between a customer and a brand, among other definitions. By understanding it as emotional bonding, the level of affection, passion, and connection, they were the first to develop emotional brand attachment measurements. Subsequent studies revealed that brand attachment reflected the brand and self-connection, capturing both emotional and cognitive bonding (Japutra et al., 2014; Park et al., 2010)[32, 33]. The accumulation of experience over time and the numerous exchanges between the customer and the brand led to this emotional connection.

C. BRAND ADVOCACY

According to Walz and Celuch (2010)[34], brand advocacy is the highest degree of approbation of the relationship between a consumer and a brand, as well as the promotion or defense of a company, product, or brand by one consumer to another. According to Wilk et al. (2021)[35], brand advocacy has been defined as positive brand communication, brand recommendation to others, or brand defense in the event of an assault. According to Khamwon and Masri (2020)[36], it may be described as when a brand's client speaks highly about the company and its products. Positive evaluations of a company's brand or product are left by brand advocates. They also produce material for the company and recommend new clients. According to several researchers (Jones and Taylor, 2007; Wragg, 2004; East et al., 2008)[37-39], brand advocacy is like the WoM and suggestions made by highly engaged or connected consumers. Brand advocacy can be viewed as an active involvement that entails investing significant effort in promoting the brand, even if marketers view customer brand advocacy as comparable to positive word-of-mouth (Jillapalli and Wilcox, 2010)[40]. Advocacy is akin to the ultimate test of the quality of the link between customers and companies; in fact, it is a consumer who is prepared to defend the brand against critiques and detractors, whereas word-of-mouth can be viewed as informal communication between consumers (Walz and Celuch, 2010)[34].

D. EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT

Poulis et al. (2019)[41] carried out a thorough investigation of the interaction between user-generated content (UGC) and firm-generated content (FGC) on social media, finding that FGC had a favorable effect on UGC. In a similar vein, Vieira et al. (2019)[42] found that UGC-generated impressions enhance FGC. While Vieira et al. (2019)[42] emphasized the critical roles of FGC and UGC in influencing customer acquisition, Thornhill et al. (2017)[43] found a favorable influence of both firm-generated content (FGC) and user-generated content (UGC) on brand purchase within the social media context. Together, these results lend credence to the following theories:

H1: Firm-generated content (FGC) has a significant positive impact on emotional attachment (EA).

H2: User-generated content (UGC) has a significant positive impact on emotional attachment (EA).

E. EFFECT OF EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT ON BRAND ADVOCACY

Emotional attachment has been found to positively influence consumer behavior, including brand loyalty (Ghorbanzade and Rahehagh, 2021)[15]. Furthermore, purchase satisfaction and repurchase intention are significantly impacted by emotional attachment (Singh, 2022)[44]. According to Japutra et al. (2014)[32], consumers who have a strong emotional attachment to a brand tend to overlook its drawbacks, exhibit resilience in the face of unfavorable information about it, and defend it on social media. According to Chelminski and Coulter (2011)[45], consumers with high emotional brand attachment are predicted to engage in behavioral intentions that are regarded as affective representations of consumer advocacy, such as supporting the brand, spreading positive word of mouth, and participating in the brand community. Customers can protect and uphold the brand through emotional attachment, increasing members' awareness of the company's customer satisfaction efforts and serving as brand ambassadors. According to Coelho et al. (2019)[46], brand advocacy refers to a solid and strong bond of trust and affection between the consumer and the brand, which is reinforced by emotional attachment. Thus, the following is hypothesized:

H3: Emotional attachment (EA) significantly influences brand advocacy (BA).

Through the intervening effect of emotional attachment, it is possible to claim that brand reputation influences behavioral intention (Thakur and Kaur, 2016; Japutra et al., 2014; Amis, 2003)[32, 47, 48]. According to Bıçakcıoğlu et al. (2018)[49], brand-loving consumers are more likely to communicate "good words" to their peers. Because brand love and emotional brand connection are similar, according to experts such as Moussa (2015)[50]. Additionally, brand reputation is thought to have a significant impact on consumers' emotional attachment, which results in favorable reactions including the desire to buy, recommend, return, and defend (Japutra et al., 2014)[32]. Brand advocates may be motivated to add valuable insights to the company's customer profiles by the emotional connections that a brand's reputation creates. Therefore, enthusiastic customer

reactions (such as brand advocacy) that are built on brand reputation can be strengthened through emotional attachment. In view of this knowledge, we assume that:

H4: Emotional attachment (EA) mediates the relationship between firm-generated content (FGC) and brand advocacy (BA).

H5: Emotional attachment (EA) mediates the relationship between user-generated content (UGC) and brand advocacy (BA).

F. BRAND CREDIBILITY AS MODERATING VARIABLE

According to Rather et al. (2022)[51], brand credibility is the degree to which consumers trust a brand based on their comprehension and believe in its information, promises, and actions. Consumer trust can be gained from a variety of sources, including eWOM, product expertise, public figures, and many more. According to Erdem and Swait (1998)[52] and Alias and Rasdi (2015)[53], marketers utilize cues as signals to convey brand-related information to generate favorable outcomes of purchase and loyalty in the context of intense competition. Additionally, by building deeper customer-brand relationships, brand credibility can reduce brand switching intents and is a crucial tool for developing word-of-mouth for a company (Sweeney & Swait, 2008)[54]. A few others have connected it to innovation and purchase intentions (Shams et al., 2017)[55], and an attempt has been made to investigate its connections with brand equity (Spry et al., 2011)[56]. This way, we believe the relationship between brands and the customers can be further strengthened where learners perceive brands to be more credible. Thus, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

H6: Brand credibility (BC) moderates the relationship between firm-generated content (FGC) and emotional attachment (EA).

H7: Brand credibility (BC) moderates the relationship between user-generated content (UGC) and emotional attachment (EA).

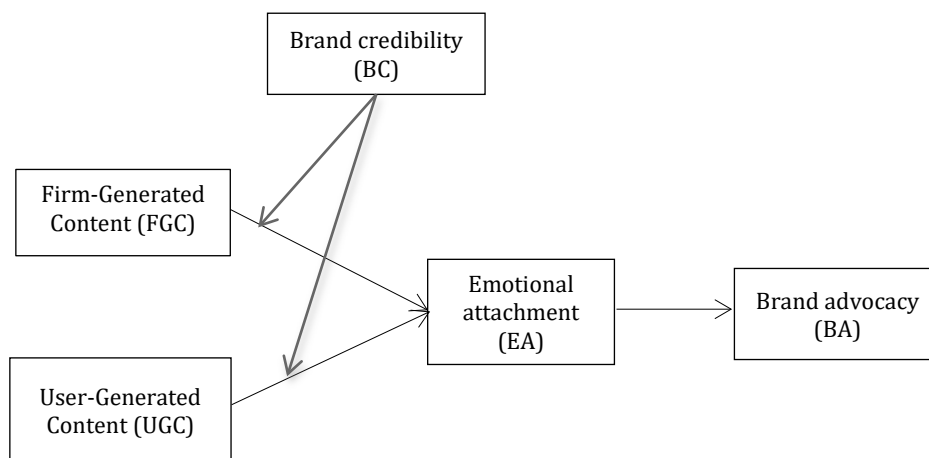


Figure 2-1. Conceptual Framework – Authors work

III. METHODOLOGY

A. SAMPLE

The study focused on Ho Chi Minh City University of Foreign Languages - Information Technology (HUFLIT), specifically students and alumni enrolled in the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality. The researchers made sure that all five subgroups - freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and alumni - were represented by using a stratified random sample technique. An online poll was used to collect data, which was disseminated via social media and internal university channels. After a thorough screening process, 223 valid samples (n = 223) out of the 253 collected replies were retained for final analysis.

B. MEASUREMENT SCALES

Through social media and travel-related networks, a structured, self-administered questionnaire was disseminated and distributed in person at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality. Firm-generated content (FGC), user-generated content (UGC), and brand credibility from Perera et al. (2022)[10]; emotional attachment from Ghorbanzadeh and Rahehagh (2021)[15]; and brand advocacy from Ahmadi and Ataei (2022)[57] are examples of validated higher education branding and social media marketing studies from which the measurement scales were adapted. The measurement items were translated into Vietnamese and contextualized for the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, with instrument clarity and reliability subsequently verified through a pilot study. Every item was scored by respondents on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

With Cronbach's alpha values more than 0.70, every construct showed adequate internal consistency. After data screening, 223 genuine questionnaires from the official survey, which took place between October and December 2025, were used for study out of the 253 responses.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

A. DATA ANALYSIS

1. DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

The descriptive analysis of the 223 respondents reveals a sample predominantly composed of females (62.3%) and Freshman students (38.1%), with the majority majoring in Tourism and Travel Services Management (70.4%). While a significant portion of the participants work part-time (39.4%), the vast majority are based on HCMC (86.5%). Regarding outreach, students primarily learned about the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality through the official HUFLIT website (24.5%) and word of mouth from friends or relatives (24.1%). (see Table 4-1).

Table 4-1. Descriptive statistical analysis

Demographics		Number of respondents	%	Rank
Gender	Men	84	37.7%	2
	Women	139	62.3%	1
Year of study	Freshman	85	38.1%	1
	Sophomore	22	9.9%	4
	Junior	35	15.7%	3
	Senior	72	32.3%	2
	Alumnus	7	3.1%	5
	Other	2	0.9%	6
Major	Tourism and Travel Services Management	157	70.4%	1
	Hotel Management	66	29.6%	2
Do you work while studying?	Yes, part-time	149	39.4%	1
	Yes, full-time	7	1.9%	2
	No	7	1.9%	2
Place of residence	An Giang	4	1.8%	4
	Ca Mau	1	0.4%	6
	Can Tho	1	0.4%	6
	Dak Lak	4	1.8%	4
	Dong Nai	9	4.0%	2
	Dong Thap	1	0.4%	6
	Khanh Hoa	1	0.4%	6
	Lam Dong	2	0.9%	5
	Quang Tri	1	0.4%	6
	Tay Ninh	5	2.2%	3
	TP.HCM	193	86.5%	1
	Vinh Long	1	0.4%	6
	How did you learn about the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality at HUFLIT?	Friends/Relatives	112	24.1%
HUFLIT official website		114	24.5%	1
Faculty fanpage		87	18.7%	3
Lecturers/academic or administrative staff at the University/Faculty		38	8.2%	6
HUFLIT events (e.g., Open Day, campus tour, etc.)		49	10.5%	4
Alumni/current students of the Faculty		40	8.6%	5
Other		25	5.4%	7

Based on the data from Tables 4-2 through 4-6, the faculty demonstrates high performance across all student perception metrics, with mean scores consistently exceeding 4.0 out of 5.0. Students show the highest engagement with User-Generated Content, particularly in following social media to learn about upcoming activities (mean = 4.35). Brand Credibility is also exceptionally strong, with students giving the faculty high ratings of 4.30 for

trustworthiness and ability to deliver on promises. Furthermore, the faculty has fostered deep Emotional Attachment, evidenced by a great pride score (mean = 4.34), which effectively drives Brand Advocacy through direct positive word-of-mouth (mean = 4.22).

Table 4-2. Descriptive statistical for Firm-Generated Content

Observed variables	Mean	Standard deviation
Firm-Generated Content (n=223)		
1. I follow the information posted by this faculty on their official social networking sites to get the updated information about the university	4.25	0.910
2. I follow up by communicating with the faculty's official social networking sites to get more information about the faculty.	4.20	0.903
3. I will follow the information on the faculty's official social networking sites if the university-related information is interesting	4.33	0.864

Table 4-3. Descriptive statistical for User-Generated Content

Observed variables	Mean	Standard deviation
User-Generated Content (n=223)		
1. I follow the faculty's social networking sites to learn more about the upcoming activities of the university.	4.35	0.801
2. Within these social networking sites, the content shared by other users about my faculty on meets my expectation.	4.24	0.872
3. Within these social networking sites, the content shared by other users about my faculty is very attractive.	4.27	0.834
4. Within these social networking sites, the content shared by other users about my faculty is better than other faculties.	4.17	0.884

Table 4-4. Descriptive statistical for Brand Credibility

Observed variables	Mean	Standard deviation
Brand Credibility (n=223)		
1. The faculty does exactly what they promise.	4.30	0.808
2. The quality promoted by this faculty is trustworthy.	4.30	0.808
3. I can count on the brand of this faculty.	4.30	0.842
4. The faculty reminds me of a graduate who is equipped with enough skills and knowledge and knows what they are doing.	4.22	0.871

Table 4-5. Descriptive statistical for Emotional attachment

Observed variables	Mean	Standard deviation
Emotional attachment (n=223)		
1. I have a unique relationship with my faculty.	4.07	0.915
2. I identify with what this faculty stands for.	4.24	0.819
3. I feel a sense of belonging in regard to my faculty.	4.20	0.852
4. I am proud to be a consumer of my faculty.	4.34	0.827
5. My faculty fits my personality.	4.20	0.899

Table 4-6. Descriptive statistical for Brand advocacy

Observed variables	Mean	Standard deviation
Brand advocacy (n=223)		
1. I recommend to other people they would support this faculty.	4.20	0.904
2. I talk directly to other people about my experience with this faculty.	4.22	0.877
3. I suggest to others that they should buy this faculty.	4.08	0.950

2. RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

According to Nunnally (1978)[58] and Hair (2011)[59] a scale is considered reliable when the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is 0.7 or higher. Observed items in the scale are acceptable if their Corrected Item-Total Correlation coefficients are 0.3 or above. Some studies even suggest stricter cut-off values of 0.4 or 0.5 or higher (Cristobal et al., 2007)[60]. All five constructs in Table 4-7 show satisfactory reliability. Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0.890 (Firm-Generated Content) to 0.932 (Emotional attachment), with User-Generated Content (0.907), Brand Credibility (0.925), and Brand advocacy (0.904) all exceeding the 0.70 threshold. At the same time, all Corrected Item-Total Correlation coefficients are consistently above approximately 0.50. Therefore, no item was deleted, and all scales are deemed reliable for subsequent analyses.

Table 4-7. Reliability analysis

Latent construct	Items	Corrected item-total correlation
Firm-Generated Content (Cronbach's alpha = 0.890)		
	1. I follow the information posted by this faculty on their official social networking sites to get the updated information about the university	.777
	2. I follow up by communicating with the faculty's official social networking sites to get more information about the faculty.	.825
	3. I will follow the information on the faculty's official social networking sites if the university-related information is interesting	.754
User-Generated Content (Cronbach's alpha = 0.907)		
	1. I follow the faculty's social networking sites to learn more about the upcoming activities of the university.	.707
	2. Within these social networking sites, the content shared by other users about my faculty on meets my expectation.	.857
	3. Within these social networking sites, the content shared by other users about my faculty is very attractive.	.823
	4. Within these social networking sites, the content shared by other users about my faculty is better than other faculties.	.778
Brand Credibility (Cronbach's alpha = 0.925)		
	1. The faculty does exactly what they promise.	.780
	2. The quality promoted by this faculty is trustworthy.	.851
	3. I can count on the brand of this faculty.	.835
	4. The faculty reminds me of a graduate who is equipped with enough skills and knowledge and knows what they are doing.	.843
Emotional attachment (Cronbach's alpha = 0.932)		
	1. I have a unique relationship with my faculty.	.775
	2. I identify with what this faculty stands for.	.821
	3. I feel a sense of belonging in regard to my faculty.	.864
	4. I am proud to be a consumer of my faculty.	.827
	5. My faculty fits my personality.	.821
Brand advocacy (Cronbach's alpha = 0.904)		
	1. I recommend to other people they would support this faculty.	.840
	2. I talk directly to other people about my experience with this faculty.	.802
	3. I suggest to others that they should buy this faculty.	.786

3. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Testing hypotheses H1-H3 with a sample of $n = 223$ indicates that all direct relationships posited in the hypotheses are highly statistically significant and supported. Specifically, for H1 and H2, Firm-generated content impact on emotional attachment (H1) ($\beta = 0.194$, $p < 0.05$) and User-generated content impact on emotional attachment (H2) ($\beta = 0.613$, $p < 0.001$). Essentially, while official faculty posts are effective, content created by peers, fellow students, and alumni is nearly three times more influential in building an emotional bond with the faculty. So, H1 and H2 were supported. Support for Hypothesis H3 ($\beta = 0.864$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that emotional attachment is the primary driver of brand advocacy among students and alumni. With a high beta coefficient of 0.864, the relationship is exceptionally strong, suggesting that as students develop a deeper sense of pride, belonging, and identification with the faculty, they become significantly more likely to recommend it and share their positive experiences with others. This result underscores that a strong emotional bond is far more than just

a feeling; it is a critical precursor that transforms students into active promoters and advocates for the faculty's brand. (see Table 4-8).

Table 4-8. Regression results for direct relationships

Independent variable	Dependent variable	
	EA	BA
Model (direct)	1	2
FGC (H1)	<i>0.194*</i>	-
UGC (H2)	<i>0.613***</i>	-
EA (H3)	-	<i>0.864***</i>
R²	0.612	0.746
Adjusted R²	0.609	0.744
F	171.484***	647.872***

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; Italicized numbers = β = standardized regression coefficient; $n=223$; The results in Table 4-9 indicate that all indirect effects in hypotheses H4 & H5 are statistically significant; in each case, the 95% confidence interval lies entirely on one side of zero, confirming the mediating roles of emotional attachment. Firm-generated content and User-generated content both exert very strong indirect effects on brand advocacy through emotional attachment (H4: effect = 0.620; H5: effect = 0.659). The data imply that the faculty's brand success relies heavily on its ability to turn digital information into deep-seated pride and belonging among its students. In conclusion, H4 & H5 were supported.

Table 4-9. Indirect effects in the mediation model

Path	Effect (SE)	LL 95% CI	UP 95% CI
FGC - EA - BA (H4)	0.620 (0.070)	0.476	0.749
UGC - EA - BA (H5)	0.659 (0.071)	0.520	0.797

Note: $n=223$

Table 4-70. Regression results for the moderating role of BC on the relationship between FGC and EA (H6)

Independent variable	Dependent variable
	Emotional attachment
FGC	<i>0.188**</i>
BC	<i>0.640***</i>
Int_FGCxBC	<i>-0.031</i>
R²	0.672
Adjusted R²	0.668
F	304.630***

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; Italicized numbers = β = standardized regression coefficient.

The regression results in Table 4-10 and 4-11, and Figure 4-1 indicate that brand credibility plays a significant moderating role in the relationship between user-generated content and students' and alumni's emotional attachment at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, HUFLIT. H7 is supported by brand credibility, which significantly moderates the relationship between user-generated content and emotional attachment ($\beta = -0.043$, $p < 0.05$). However, H6 is rejected ($p > 0.05$). The negative interaction in H7 indicates that user-generated content's impact on emotional bonding decreases as brand credibility rises, underscoring its crucial role as a trust substitute, especially for less well-known firms. On the other hand, when a brand has established a solid reputation in consumers' minds, the importance of user-generated content in driving emotional attachment tends to saturate and diminish, as trust is now anchored in the brand itself. The analysis in Figure 4-1 indicates that brand credibility negatively moderates the relationship between user-generated content and emotional

attachment. This figure shows that when brand credibility is low, the impact of user-generated content on emotional attachment is greater. When the Faculty brand has high credibility, the slope becomes flatter, suggesting that the influence of user-generated content begins to saturate and diminish as consumer trust is already firmly anchored in the brand’s intrinsic reputation. In conclusion, H7 was supported, meanwhile H6 was rejected.

Table 4-11. Regression results for the moderating role of BC on relationship between UGC and EA (H7)

Independent variable	Dependent variable
	Emotional attachment
UGC	<i>0.531***</i>
BC	<i>0.680***</i>
Int_UGCxBC	<i>-0.043*</i>
R ²	0.698
Adjusted R ²	0.694
F	653.959***

Note: * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001; Italicized numbers = β = standardized regression coefficient

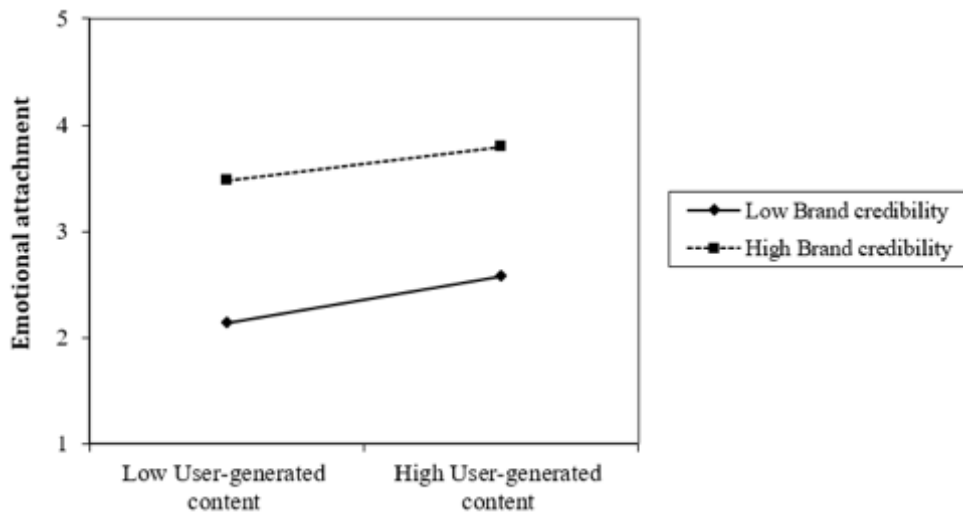


Figure 4-1. Moderating effect of brand credibility on the relationship between user-generated content and emotional attachment (H7)

B. FINDINGS

The empirical results demonstrate that both FGC and UGC serve as potent drivers of brand advocacy among HUFLIT tourism and hospitality students and alumni by cultivating strong emotional attachment [42, 43]. However, brand credibility only serves as a significant moderator of the relationship between user-generated content and emotional attachment. UGC serves as a crucial alternative source of trust for organizations or situations where brand credibility is poor, having a far greater impact on emotional connection and helping close the credibility gap. This dependence on user-generated content decreases and eventually saturates as brand credibility grows, since the emotional connection is increasingly fueled by the faculty’s well-established intrinsic reputation rather than peer approval. To put these findings into practice, the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality at HUFLIT should intentionally prioritize user-generated content during times of reputation management or brand growth. This is because user-generated content is an essential alternative source of trust that fills the emotional void when institutional credibility is still growing. The faculty should actively encourage students and alumni to share testimonials to leverage the increased influence of peer validation during low-credibility phases, even though firm-generated content remains a reliable source of emotional attachment. As the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality’s brand credibility grows, management’s attention may increasingly shift toward strengthening the university’s inherent identity through official channels, as the emotional connection becomes increasingly rooted in the institution’s well-established reputation rather than external approval. In the end, the best way to turn students and alumni into devoted Faculty brand advocates is to employ a well-rounded approach that uses genuine user-generated content to establish trust and high-quality firm-generated content to sustain it.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This work makes numerous significant theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it suggests an integrated approach that, in the context of higher education, particularly in the tourist and hospitality sectors, concurrently integrates social media marketing, emotional attachment, and brand promotion for the first time. Second, by defining the affective link between marketing content and advocacy, the study offers important quantitative evidence for the mediating function of emotional attachment. Importantly, the results validate the moderating role of brand credibility, showing that user-generated content has the greatest effect on emotional attachment when credibility is low, serving as a proxy for trust. Empirically, these findings serve as a strategic reference for other higher education institutions in the tourism and hospitality sector, as they are the first study conducted in the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality, HUFLIT, using data from 223 students and graduates. There are still a few restrictions, though. First, generalizability may be limited because the data were collected from a single faculty at HUFLIT. Consequently, these insights may not fully capture the experiential variance of the entire student body, suggesting that future research should adopt a multi-faculty approach to broaden sample representativeness. By encompassing all other departments, future inquiries will be able to offer more robust and universally applicable insights. Second, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) has not yet been conducted to examine the factorial structure within a stricter covariance-based framework, even though the measurement model was evaluated in SPSS 24.0 using pertinent reliability indices. Before retesting structural links, future research should supplement the existing methodology with a full CFA to provide more substantial evidence of measurement robustness. Further research could also increase sample size and diversity to confirm the moderating effect of brand reputation in various academic fields.

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TÁC ĐỘNG CỦA NỘI DUNG TIẾP THỊ TRUYỀN THÔNG XÃ HỘI ĐẾN SỰ ỦNG HỘ THƯƠNG HIỆU TRONG GIÁO DỤC ĐẠI HỌC: TRƯỜNG HỢP TẠI KHOA DU LỊCH & KHÁCH SẠN, HUFLIT, VIỆT NAM

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TÓM TẮT— Nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu mối quan hệ động lực phức tạp giữa nội dung tiếp thị trên mạng xã hội và các kết quả thương hiệu giáo dục đại học trong lĩnh vực du lịch và khách sạn. Cụ thể, nghiên cứu xem xét tác động của nội dung do thương hiệu tạo ra (FGC) và nội dung do người dùng tạo ra (UGC) đối với sự ủng hộ thương hiệu (BA) thông qua cơ chế trung gian là sự gắn kết cảm xúc (EA), đồng thời xem xét ảnh hưởng điều tiết của uy tín thương hiệu (BC). Sử dụng thiết kế nghiên cứu định lượng, dữ liệu được thu thập từ 223 mẫu hợp lệ trên tổng số 253 phản hồi ban đầu bao gồm sinh viên và cựu sinh viên Khoa Du lịch - Khách sạn tại HUFLIT thông qua khảo sát trực tuyến phân tầng. Kết quả phân tích dữ liệu bằng phần mềm SPSS 24.0 cho thấy cả FGC và UGC đều ảnh hưởng mạnh mẽ đến sự gắn kết cảm xúc của người học và cựu sinh viên Khoa Du lịch - Khách sạn, từ đó thúc đẩy sự ủng hộ thương hiệu. Ngoài ra, các phát hiện cho thấy uy tín thương hiệu đóng vai trò điều tiết thành công mối quan hệ giữa UGC và các mối liên kết cảm xúc, đồng thời nhấn mạnh vai trò trung gian quan trọng của sự gắn kết cảm xúc. Những kết quả này cung cấp cho các cơ sở giáo dục đại học trong lĩnh vực du lịch và khách sạn những góc nhìn quan trọng về cách sử dụng nội dung kỹ thuật số đa nguồn nhằm nuôi dưỡng lòng trung thành thương hiệu sâu sắc trong một cộng đồng học thuật chuyên biệt.

Từ Khóa: Giá trị thương hiệu, tiếp thị truyền thông mạng xã hội, uy tín thương hiệu, gắn kết cảm xúc, ủng hộ thương hiệu



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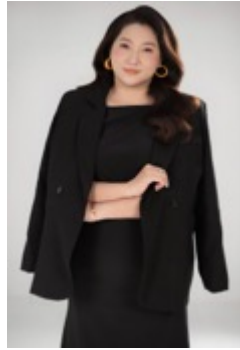


sustainability principles into hotel management training programs.

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