



**THE CHARACTERISTICS OF UGC COMMUNITY  
IN POLAND**

**STUDY REPORT**

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## INTRODUCTION

The study was ordered by Legalna Kultura Foundation and was convened among the UGC community in April and May 2013. The main focus of the study was the activity of web users in which they publish their work on the Internet, mostly artistic in character (music, movies or photos), but the term *user-generated content* also refers to thematic blogs (e.g. culinary, fashion, etc.).

Our study had a foremost explorative character – it was aimed at gaining knowledge on what the basic characteristics of this community are, what are the behaviours of its members, what's their attitude towards making content available on the Internet and the authors' motives, how much do they know about the benefits and restrictions of such activity and what are the most popular websites. Both creators and consumers of such content were considered. Our knowledge on the first group is based foremost on the focus group interview (FGI) study in which mainly artists representing different fields of art took part and that means that the data collected has a qualitative character. However, our knowledge on the consumers of such content is based on an Internet questionnaire (some quantitative data on the UGC creators have also been used).

The study was convened for the European Commission, WG2 – *User-Generated Content*. We hope that our report will help understand in greater detail how the UGC community functions in Poland.

## RESULT ANALYSIS OF THE UGC CONSUMERS (THE NORMALS)

The quantitative study mostly on content consumers was convened through an Internet questionnaire between 7th and 9th May 2013. The respondents were web users with the monthly range of 70% of Polish web users (simple random and quota sampling). They represent a group of 1000 people aged 15 and above. The sample structure was corrected with the use of analytical weight function so that it represents the structure of Polish web users aged 15 and above in all key factors for the study. Social and demographic variables such as sex, age, education, population of place of living and life style were taken into consideration in creating the weight measures.

Even though the results presented below represent all respondents (both the consumers and creators of UGC), the percentage of people who publish their works on the Internet and perceive themselves as artists is low. That is why, slightly generalizing, this part of the study should be treated as an answer analysis of the UGC consumers.

### UGC CREATORS AND CONSUMERS. PRELIMINARY DIFFERENTIATION.

In the very beginning of this study, a preliminary differentiation of the UGC users into consumers and creators has been made. The first question was general in character and concerned active web usage and to be precise – publishing different content understood as pieces of artistic work. According to the answers the respondents gave it appears that every one in four respondents (26%) publishes his work (e.g. photos or songs) on the Internet. Nearly half of them (49%) post comments on different types of events in the web and take part in discussions etc. Only 5% of all respondents write their own blog.

While using the Internet, do you...	TOTAL
Publish any of your work (pieces of art) – photos, movies, pictures, audio, book or movie reviews?	26%
Write your own blog	5%
Post comments, take part in Internet threads, assess products etc.	49%
Amount of respondents	1000

Base rate: all respondents

Taking the above results into consideration, the answers to the following questions seem interesting (*Taking into consideration the content you publish on the Internet, would you consider yourself as a creator?*). It turns out that only 6% of respondents declared so, with nearly two thirds of the respondents (73%) declaring otherwise. The remaining 6% was not able to give an unequivocal answer. Based on these results it may be concluded that for many Polish UGC users having an active

virtual life (publishing different content and commenting) is not tantamount to being a creator – an artist.

Taking into consideration the content you publish on the Internet, would you consider yourself as a creator?	TOTAL
Yes	6%
No	73%
I don't know / hard to say	21%
amount of respondents	1000

Base rate: all respondents

### UGC CREATORS AS PERCEIVED BY UGC CONSUMERS

Another part of the questions concerned how the UGC creators are perceived by the consumers. The respondents were asked to answer questions on motivation of such conduct. More than half of them (60%) point to selflessness of the author – they publish content “to share their work with others, because they take pleasure in what they do”, nearly one third (32%) believe that the creators want „to meet interesting people who share their interests and passions (other creators)” and 22% of them are of the opinion that the motivation behind this is the need for dialogue with the consumers and meeting their needs. However, the respondents also notice the benefits the creators may enjoy due to their creativity. 51% of all respondents believe that such activity is aimed at gaining popularity, 39% think that this is a good way to “promote one’s work and later on earn money on it” and not quite a quarter of them (22%) consider this activity to be only for money’s sake.

Why do you think people publish their works of art on the Internet?	TOTAL
To gain popularity / be famous or recognizable	51%
To promote ones work of art and later earn money on them	39%
Mainly to sell one’s works and earn money on one’s works of art	22%
To meet interesting people who share the same interests and passions (other creators)	32%
To meet their audience (and its needs) and be able to talk to them (know their opinion)	22%
To share their work with others, because they take pleasure in what they do	60%
For other reasons	7%
Amount of respondents	1000

Base rate: all respondents

What is the role of the Internet in terms of UGC? The biggest number of respondents (80%) believe that the Internet is the place for creators to gain popularity. A similar number of them (79%) are of the opinion that “without Internet there wouldn’t be many artists, because they couldn’t bear the costs of promotion etc.” 64% of all respondents are of the opinion that the publishing attractive

content by the creator on the Internet carries with it the purchase of these goods in the real world by the satisfied consumers. However, as many as 40% of respondents are of the opinion that “it’s unprofitable to publish content on the Internet since people will steal it anyway (download for free)”. By analysing these results the distinction between how web users assess the creators’ motives (and potential benefits thereof) and the real threats and restrictions arising in the web becomes visible.

How much do you agree with the following statements? [Top 2 Boxes]	TOTAL
Internet is the place to gain popularity	80%
without Internet there wouldn't be many artists, because they couldn't bear the costs of promotion etc.	79%
At the present it's unprofitable to publish content on the Internet since people will steal it anyway (download for free)	40%
If the creator publishes really cool stuff, people will buy the original even if they can download it from the Internet	64%
Amount of respondents	1000

Base rate: all respondents

Questions: “decidedly yes”, “rather yes”, “rather no”, “decidedly no”, “hard to say”

Results for Top 2 Boxes (the sum of “decidedly yes” and “rather yes” answers)

This issue may be pictured in more detail in reference to the next question. Nearly half of the respondents (48%) think that publishing content on the Internet is just as dangerous as it is beneficial. According to nearly one fourth of them (24%) there are more benefits to it, as opposed to 7% who think otherwise.

Do you think that publishing content on the Internet is for its creator ...	TOTAL
more beneficial than dangerous	24%
Just as beneficial as dangerous	48%
More dangerous than beneficial	7%
I don't know / hard to say	21%
Amount of respondents	1000

Base rate: all respondents

## UGC CONSUMERS' BEHAVIOURS

The respondents have also been asked to rate their attitudes towards UGC, as well as the attitudes of other Internet content consumers.

Downloading content for one’s personal use is generally perceived as neutral, with 41% of respondents believing it to be normal (even if not entirely legal) and that’s how it’s supposed to be. The situation changes when the downloader later on tries to profit from what he has downloaded – 52% of all respondents condemn such behaviour. More than one fourth (26%) of respondents believe that “downloading any content without the permission of the creator should be forbidden”, whereas 23% deem it acceptable when the content is used for inspiration.

As will be shown below, these results do not represent the declared behaviours of the respondents and the reason for this is mostly not *male fides*, but the lack of knowledge (e.g. on whether the source of the download is legal or not).

With which of the below listed statements do you agree?	TOTAL
Downloading content for one's personal use is normal (even if not entirely legal) and I think it should stay that way	41%
Downloading content for inspiration and using it in my own work is in my opinion acceptable	23%
If someone downloads something from the internet, even if it's for free, and later on tries to sell it and make profits, that person is a thief (his conduct is unethical)	52%
Downloading any content without the permission of its creator should be forbidden	26%
I don't know / hard to say	13%
Amount of respondents	1000

Base rate: all respondents

What is the consumer of the UGC allowed to do? 83% respondents consent to copying the content for one's personal use and more than a fourth of them (27%) also agree for its further distribution. However, only 3% of respondents deem acceptable gaining profit from such material.

In your opinion, what can and what cannot a consumer do with web content?	TOTAL
Copy and resell it	3%
Copy it, but only for personal use	83%
Forward it	27%
Comment it in an offensive manner	12%
Amount of respondents	1000

Base rate: all respondents

### UGC CONSUMERS' BEHAVIOURS

Those were the declarations. How do the respondents behave? Most of them download music from the Internet (51%), followed by: school and work related material (36%), photos (28%), games and software (25%), movies and TV series (24%), short movies (18%) and books (15%).

Interestingly, as much as one fourth (25%) of all respondents declare not to have downloaded anything from the Internet. In this context and based on previous web user studies this number seems not credible. It may therefore be suspected that not all respondents admit to what they're really doing on the Internet or they have a specific understanding of downloading UGC (e.g. downloading movies for personal use may not be considered as something necessary to mention in the study).

What content do you download form the Internet?	TOTAL
Full length movies / TV series	24%
Short movies for e.g. YouTube	18%
Photos	28%
Music	51%
Games / software	25%
Books / publications	15%
School or work related material	36%
Other content	5%
I've never downloaded content from the Internet	25%
Amount of respondents	1000

*Base rate: all respondents*

The above mentioned data is interesting when the follow-up questions are taken into consideration ("When you download content (like music, photos, movies, fragments of articles and/or books) from the Internet do you think about the legality of your actions?"). As much as 19% of all respondents admit to not even considering it and 7% cannot give an unequivocal answer. 14% of respondents always check the source of the downloaded content and 15% of them declare never to consider the legality of their actions, because they "download only content that is not covered by copyright".

When you download content (like music, photos, movies, fragments of articles and/or books) from the Internet do you think about the legality of your actions?	TOTAL
Yes, always	14%
Yes, sometimes	20%
No, I've never considered it	19%
No, I download only content that is not covered by copyright	15%
I don't know / hard to say	7%
The respondent doesn't download content from the Internet	25%
Amount of respondents	1000

*Base rate: all respondents*

If the negative and "unsure" answers are added up, it will become clear that nearly half of the respondents (46%) may be downloading content from illegal sources. It is therefore probable that in many cases presented above the respondents are unaware that the source may be illegal. It remains unknown how the large amount of respondents evoking copyright should be treated – what is their true knowledge on the matter? They may be gaining such knowledge from the website's declaration...

## CONSUMERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS PAYING FOR DOWNLOADING CONTENT FROM THE INTERNET

The question of the respondents' attitudes towards paying for content downloaded from the Internet need to be touched upon. Also in this case lack of ramification in the respondents' declarations is visible. When asked whether the use of UGC should be paid, more positive answers are given than in the case of personal questions ("How often do you pay for content downloaded from the Internet?"). This is not particularly surprising, since, as we know, "your point of view depends greatly on your perspective". Let's look at the differences.

Even though more than half of the respondents (54%) declare that such channels should not be paid, as opposed to nearly altogether a quarter of those who are of a different opinion (4% believe that "this is a channel like any other and the author has to make a living" and another 20% consider that UGC needs to be paid for, but less than in the real world).

Should the use of the content published on the Internet (e.g. movies, music, etc.) be paid for?	TOTAL
No, the contents of Internet belongs to everybody	54%
Yes, this is a channel like any other and the author has to make a living	4%
Yes, but the price should be much lower than in the real world	20%
I don't have an opinion / I don't use such websites	22%
Amount of respondents	1000

Base rate: all respondents

How do the respondents behave? Only 5% of them always or nearly always pay for content. Another 5% pay more often than they don't pay. 39% download only free content and 21% search for it (don't pay more often). This means that compare to a quarter of respondents declaring the need for content to be paid for, only 5% of UGC consumers pay for it for sure...

How often do you pay for content downloaded from the Internet?	TOTAL
I always or almost always pay	5%
I pay more often than I don't pay	5%
I don't pay more often (I search for free content)	21%
I download only free content	39%
I don't know / hard to say	4%
The respondent doesn't download content from the Internet	25%
Amount of respondents	1000

Base rate: all respondents

The quantitative study results are interesting in at least two ways. First of all, they give a lot of information that allows for a characterisation of preliminary attitudes and behaviours typical for representatives of the studied group. Secondly, they show the above mentioned lack of ramification and lack of understanding for many problems arising from the publishing of UGC. To recapitulate,



it needs to be observed that further and more in depth studies of this topic should be convened. For such projects as Legalna Kultura this poses both a field for exploration, as well as for convening educational ventures among the UGC community.

## UGC CREATORS RESULTS ANALYSIS

Many different kinds of creators and representatives of various types of actions on the Internet took part in the qualitative study (FGI). Those were foremost filmmakers, photographers, musician, actors and bloggers.

In the beginning the respondents were asked to describe their path **to becoming UGC creators**. Those paths are various. Sometimes, as is the case of bloggers, it's started with "just writing" on the Internet. With time this activity became more and more professional. The respondents understand this not only in terms of earning money, but also as subject orienting their blogs, publishing content regularly or observing the readers and meeting their needs. The professional criterion is the content quality and the author's image. When filmmakers, musicians and photographers are considered, there are usually two options – they are either professionals in the real world and Internet activity supplements their artistic work, or they have a different profession and the published UGC is treated as a hobby (in their own opinion they are not artists but amateurs). Frequently the publishing of content and making it professional is supplemented by collaboration with other artists and managers. Moreover, the characteristic of certain activities allows only for parts of the work to be published (e.g. theatre plays). Some respondents begun to function in this manner just recently, other have been publishing their work for years and are choosing places where they publish their work more carefully. In the UGC community there are both young people as well as experienced artists present at the scene for quite some time. The ways of reaching the web audience concern creating own websites and social network profiles to present one's work, as well as using popular thematic websites which guarantee large audience (e.g. YouTube / Vimeo). To some creators the presence at some social networks, like Facebook, is enough. The respondents also sometimes admit they have little influence on what is being published on the web and that they come across fragments of their own work which they didn't publish. At times their popularity rises thanks to this, although according to them it's not always welcome (e.g. the "borrowed" songs reach music producers' websites whose offer doesn't fit the artist's profile, aspirations and expectations as to how their work should be published on the Internet).

As far as the **places where UGC creators present their projects are concerned** the possibilities are numerous. Below are presented the results of the quantitative study. The respondents declared where they publish their content both in terms of particular websites and categories to which they attribute their work.

Where on the Internet do you publish your work? [categories]	TOTAL
Social networks	35%
Blog	7%
Photos	27%
Movies	9%
Music	5%
Comments, forum	7%
Texts	2%
Images	2%
Drawings, paintings, handicraft, art	3%
Hobby	6%
Science	2%
News	1%
Books	4%
Culinary	0%
Travel	0%
Other	7%
I don't know / hard to say / I don't remember	10%
Amount of respondents	280

Base rate: content creators

Based on these results it becomes clear that most Polish UGC creators publish their work to social networking sites (35%). 27% of the respondents are authors of photographs, 9% - filmmakers, 7% bloggers and forum commentators and 5% represent people dealing with music. The table shows that the respondents who took part in the quantitative study understand creativity differently and its professionalization in terms of UGC – most of them do the same thing on the Internet as all other web users.

Where on the Internet do you publish your work? [pages]	TOTAL
facebook.com	57%
nk.pl	26%
Youtube.com	9%
photoblog.pl	4%
Blog.pl	2%
picassa.google.com	1%
Blogspot.com	2%
deviantart.com	2%
instagram.com	1%
Digart.pl	1%
Other	38%
I don't know / hard to say / I don't remember	3%
Amount of respondents	280

Base rate: content creators

As seen above, the greatest popularity enjoy such websites as: Facebook (57%, more than a half of the indications), nk.pl (26%), YouTube (9%) and photoblog.pl (4%). Other websites (blog.pl,

picassa.google.com, blogspot.com, deviantart.com, instagram.com and digart.pl) gained between 1 and 2% of votes respectively. Other users (38%) published their content on other web pages.

Do the FGI study respondents share this opinion? Not necessarily. In direct conversation we encounter concrete creators and not people who declare themselves as such. The respondents are provided with anonymity, but it is known who they are and what artistic profile they represent. Moreover, the qualitative study provides a deeper understanding of motives; justifications and descriptions of benefits and problems arising from the presence on different websites. Our respondents publish their content on Facebook, but this website is not the one to be mentioned most often. They tend to more professional websites and/or create their own pages. Why do they choose such places and not other ones? There are various reasons for this. For example: our respondents find YouTube considerably controversial. For some, it's a website unsuitable for presenting their work – mostly full length movies – and the producers do not wish to undergo the procedure of selective viewing. They believe, moreover, that such method of presenting and perceiving creates the wrong atmosphere. For others, YouTube is an excellent promotional channel for not only fragments of work, but also for whole works (in case of some musician among others). One of the respondents noticed that sometimes an artist manages to lead "parallel lives" in the web what for many of them is an ideal situation. This poses a possibility to combine a pastime with professional work (in many cases concerned with earning money and promotion on official pages of producers or managers). Should this optimal situation not be possible, however, the creators publish their work both on their own web pages as well via popular websites (such as e.g. those from the quantitative study). As one of our respondents points out, the Internet has changed greatly in recent years – from the informative channel it has become an important element of the public domain – different types of social media and tools have evolved. The change of media type also influences the UGC creators who build places on the Internet allowing them to talk to their audience and create their image. That's why personal pages have such a big meaning and it's not so much a matter of creators' popularity (this is achieved mainly through presence at renowned general or thematic websites), as being their virtual cards. The respondents underline that in the case of popular websites their work "has a life of its own" more often and on their own pages they have more control over what happens to the content they published (e.g. ability to ban certain commentators on blogs).

**What is the UGC creators' motivation?** Why and for what reason do they publish their content on the web? The study shows that there are diversified needs and expectations of presenting one's work on the Internet. The respondents point to other reasons of publishing content than the consumers studied in the questionnaire. Rarely the reason for activity is the satisfaction gained from

being in contact with the audience (although most of the creators feel genuine joy). The Internet is a place to promote oneself and one's work. Frequently such activity supplements (nowadays it may be found necessary) their professional activity. More and more often this is combined with earning money on the Internet. Many creators don't want to publish their whole works on the Internet for various reasons: they are afraid, e.g., that the consumers will download the content for free and won't buy the material (be it a CD or a book) in the real world (although it needs to be mentioned that the FGI respondents' opinions are divided on this matter and the most frequently evoked example is the one of Radiohead and their album's market success which it gained due to this strategy) or they simply don't want their work to be cognizant in the improper manner and unsuitable atmosphere. Not every place on the Internet is found appropriate – motives are thus combined with a careful choice of a place to present one's work. The respondents underline that the awareness of the creator and his goals are important due to the fact that the Internet can be used as well as for promotion and social activity and communication. One can just share his work or take advantage of web's marketing possibilities (some creators try to combine those two types of activity). The thing is to be aware of the possibilities and risks the Internet creates – also those which are independent of the creators. Anxieties that are not directly linked to the personal activity on the web arise, as one of the FGI study respondents notices: "There is a battle for the Internet going on right now, new media arise, but they don't swallow the former ones. The Internet glues all the other media together. As far as copyright is concerned – big companies want to take over the Internet; there are interest groups who want to take the Internet for commercial reasons". That's why the Internet activity motivation of the creator doesn't always stay the same – artists rely on complex outside conditions both in the real world and in the virtual one.

**Is the UGC creator interested in his work's „further life“?** Mostly yes, but they are aware of the fact that their influence over content published on the Internet is very limited. This is due to the characteristics of this media type, the manners of the consumers and their knowledge (e.g. on copyright) the respondents evoked numerous examples of wanted and unwanted popularity waves in their digital lives (a good example is viral marketing which may be both intentional and due to the consumers' unaware behaviour). During the study there was a debate on a theft incident of content published on culinary blogs. This theft led to publishing a book. The respondents were disgusted that the case was not publically condemned (the book was at first withdrawn from the bookshops, but when things got quiet, it reappeared on the shelves). The respondents also follow the audience ratings especially when they directly profit from them. Frequently this is a hard task, because the content published on the Internet by the creators is copied on various websites and this

cannot be fully brought under control (although, as the respondents notice, there are tools on the Internet that facilitate it greatly).

The most concerns evoked **the problems and restrictions which the creators face when presenting their work**. And there are a lot of them ...

One of the problems is the moral dilemma and choosing between creating on the Internet for one's own satisfaction and making these actions commercial (e.g. placing ads on blogs). The second option, as is the opinion of FGI study respondents, bears a threat of "pulpiness" and frequently lowers the quality of content, but at the same time unifies it as part of predefined and desired contemporary models. Making the content commercial allows the artists to pay their bills and their websites to exist. Frequently this is the price they have to pay, but, as creators underline, those are not easy decisions. With the commercialization of content comes another threat – the monopolization of content published by big websites, such as Google and Facebook. The necessity of "becoming part of the system" allows the content to become mass-produced, and art is being governed by tough market rules. Creators that do not agree with this become more and more non-compromising outsiders in the web and thus cannot profit from their work. There is another difficulty at hand – the distribution of work on the Internet. If a creator does not conform to the rules, he has to take the limited access to some channels into account, which makes the distribution possibilities of certain products lower, and, as the respondents underline, are still limited due to a wide scope of offers on the Internet. This means that even the creators who are willing to make concessions may encounter serious barriers, one of them being positioning the trade mark and the product, just as in the real world. However, it seems that for many artists the commercialization and monopolization are foremost ideological – they want to be aware co-creators of culture and this appears to be impossible or very hard to do. One of the respondents points that out and underlines the need for UGC to be paid for: "When we become addicted to advertisements and websites, we lose the influence on culture. The key fact here is the awareness of the consumer that he may have influence on culture by participating in its consumption. Paid distribution improves the quality and relying only on advertisements and product placement influences our work negatively". The respondents add that due to the changes on the Internet, the quality of artistic work suffers. The degeneration of creativity follows suit, which is a result of the artists conforming to the requirements of the digital market. The level of published content deteriorates systematically also due to the fact that anyone can publish their work. The creators point out that on the Internet anyone can be an artist and call their work art (also when those are low-quality adaptations of someone else's work or the usual comments on different phenomena encountered in the web that have nothing new about them). Another issue is connected with the former one – the inability of full control over the published content and its independent, virtual life. The respondents understand that such processes are

inevitable and wouldn't like to rid the consumers of their autonomy and the possibility to exchange views. The consequence of such tolerance for the diversity of web users' conducts and behaviours is frequently illegal downloading of content, modifying it, copying parts thereof and even copying whole works. The creators who took part in the study underline that such actions often result from the fact that in Poland creativity is unappreciated and not valued. As one female respondent believes: "Ideas are not valued in Poland, there are no patents on those ideas, and there is no awareness that this is important". The effect of such behaviour is the illegal use of content. The basic problem is the lack of knowledge, especially on copyright, which results in such behaviours. We lack education and information, concrete instruments are inexistent (the applicable legal articles are often faulty and poorly adapt to the changing culture and market). The respondents also described situations in which the binding legal instruments were not enforced, because the aggrieved artist or the judge didn't know how to use them. What is worse, the creators not always know their rights and duties (although their knowledge is often greater than the one of an average web user) and they are learning how to behave in dubious legal situations.

It may be concluded that the web gives the UGC creators many attractive possibilities to publish their work, but at the same time it creates barriers and threat of which the users are more and more aware.

## STUDY SUMMARY

Both groups – the Polish UGC creators and consumers – understand slightly differently creativity on the Internet. Moreover, artists and bloggers who took part in the FGI study have a greater knowledge of how copyright in Poland functions. They are aware that their audience does not possess the same knowledge as they do and that's why they frequently resign from demanding the so called "justice" in cases of unjustified or even illegal use of their work. The statements of the so called "normals" show foremost the inconsequence in assessment and lack of cohesion of behaviours and conduct. It also seems that this group of respondents does not understand the needs and limitations which the artists have to face on the Internet. On the other hand, the opinions from the quantitative study show that the works of art are highly valued on the Internet, at least symbolically (because the situation changes when one has to pay for the work of art... ) and are less and less frequently treated as second-class artistic work as compared to real life work. This may represent a valuable contribution to the future changes in the Polish UGC community.