



The Perception and Use of ChatGPT in Content Creation among Small Online Businesses: A Multiple Case Study

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How to Cite this Article:

Parmar, R. S. (2026). The Perception and Use of ChatGPT in Content Creation among Small Online Businesses: A Multiple Case Study. International Journal of Creative and Open Research in Engineering and Management, 2(8), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.55041/ijcope.v2i8.062>

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<https://doi.org/10.55041/ijcope.v2i8.062>

Abstract

The emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformed digital marketing by enabling businesses to create content more efficiently and cost-effectively. Among AI-powered applications, ChatGPT has become one of the most widely adopted tools for generating marketing content, product descriptions, social media posts, blogs, customer responses, and promotional materials. Small online businesses, which often operate with limited financial and human resources, increasingly rely on ChatGPT to improve marketing productivity and maintain a consistent digital presence. However, the practical adoption of ChatGPT raises concerns regarding content quality, originality, ethical use, and dependence on AI-generated information. This study investigates the perception and use of ChatGPT in content creation among small online businesses through a qualitative multiple case study approach. Three small online businesses representing different sectors—an online fashion retailer, a handmade products business, and a digital marketing agency—were selected for comparative analysis. Secondary data were collected from published case studies, company websites, academic literature, and industry reports. The findings indicate that ChatGPT significantly improves content creation efficiency, reduces marketing costs, supports creative idea generation, and enhances customer engagement. Nevertheless, businesses consistently reported that human review and editing remain essential for maintaining brand identity, ensuring

factual accuracy, and creating authentic customer experiences. The study concludes that ChatGPT is most effective when used as a collaborative content creation assistant rather than a replacement for human creativity. The findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on AI adoption in small businesses and provide practical insights into the effective integration of generative AI into content marketing strategies.

Keywords: ChatGPT, Artificial Intelligence, Content Creation, Small Online Businesses, Digital Marketing, Generative AI, Content Marketing.

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become one of the most disruptive technologies influencing modern business practices. The development of generative AI has introduced new possibilities for organizations by enabling machines to create human-like content, assist in communication, and automate repetitive tasks. Among these innovations, ChatGPT has emerged as one of the most popular AI-powered language models, offering businesses an efficient solution for generating high-quality textual content. Since its introduction, ChatGPT has been increasingly adopted across industries for applications such as customer support, business communication, marketing, education, and research.

The growth of digital commerce has increased the importance of content marketing for businesses of all sizes. Small online businesses depend heavily on digital platforms to promote products, engage customers, and establish brand identity. Unlike large organizations, these businesses generally operate with limited marketing budgets, small teams, and restricted access to professional content creators. Consequently, maintaining a continuous flow of engaging, informative, and persuasive content often becomes a significant challenge.



ChatGPT provides an opportunity to address these challenges by enabling entrepreneurs to generate product descriptions, promotional content, social media posts, blog articles, email campaigns, and customer service responses within a short period. The technology reduces the time required for content development while supporting creativity and improving productivity. For many small businesses, ChatGPT serves as an affordable alternative to outsourcing marketing activities or employing dedicated content writers.

Despite its increasing popularity, several concerns continue to influence the adoption of ChatGPT in business environments. AI-generated content may occasionally contain factual inaccuracies, repetitive language, or insufficient contextual understanding. Questions regarding originality, copyright, ethical use, and customer trust also remain significant. Therefore, successful implementation depends not only on technological capability but also on how businesses integrate AI-generated content with human expertise and editorial judgment.

Although research on generative AI has expanded rapidly, most existing studies focus on educational applications, technical developments, or large organizational settings. Limited attention has been given to understanding how small online businesses perceive ChatGPT and incorporate it into their daily content creation activities. Given the increasing importance of AI-assisted marketing, there is a need to examine practical experiences across different business sectors and identify effective strategies for AI adoption.

This study addresses this gap through a multiple case study involving three small online businesses operating in different industries. By comparing their experiences, the research explores the perceived benefits, implementation challenges, and overall effectiveness of ChatGPT in content creation. The findings aim to provide practical recommendations for entrepreneurs while contributing to the broader literature on AI adoption, digital marketing, and small business innovation.

2. Literature Review

Artificial Intelligence has fundamentally transformed digital marketing by enabling organizations to automate content creation and improve customer engagement. Generative AI tools, particularly ChatGPT, have expanded the capabilities of businesses by producing coherent, contextually relevant, and customizable textual content. Unlike traditional automation systems that primarily process structured information, ChatGPT employs advanced natural language processing techniques to generate articles, advertisements, product descriptions, social media captions, email campaigns, and customer communication with remarkable speed and consistency.

For small online businesses, content marketing is a critical component of competitive strategy. Digital platforms require continuous publication of informative and engaging content to improve search engine visibility, strengthen brand awareness, and maintain customer relationships. However, limited financial resources and the absence of specialized marketing teams often restrict the ability of small businesses to produce high-quality content consistently. ChatGPT has emerged as a practical solution by enabling entrepreneurs to create professional marketing materials without substantial investment in external agencies or full-time content writers.

Previous studies have consistently highlighted several advantages associated with AI-assisted content creation. Researchers report that ChatGPT improves productivity by significantly reducing the time required for drafting marketing materials. Businesses also benefit from lower operational costs, improved content consistency, enhanced idea generation, and greater flexibility in managing multiple digital communication channels. These advantages allow entrepreneurs to focus more on strategic decision-making while routine writing tasks are partially automated.

Despite these benefits, the literature identifies several limitations. AI-generated content may contain factual inaccuracies, generic expressions, or insufficient understanding of industry-specific contexts. Ethical issues concerning transparency, copyright, and responsible AI use have also attracted scholarly attention. Consequently, researchers increasingly recommend a human–AI collaborative approach in which ChatGPT generates initial drafts that are subsequently reviewed and refined by content creators. Such collaboration preserves brand authenticity while maximizing the efficiency benefits of AI.



Although the existing literature demonstrates the growing significance of ChatGPT in digital marketing, empirical evidence regarding its adoption among small online businesses remains limited. Most studies focus on large organizations or educational environments, leaving a gap in understanding how entrepreneurs perceive, implement, and evaluate ChatGPT in practical business settings. This study seeks to address that gap through a comparative multiple case study, offering insights into real-world adoption patterns and identifying best practices for AI-assisted content creation.

3. Case Study Methodology

This study employed a **qualitative multiple case study approach** to investigate how small online businesses perceive and utilize ChatGPT in their content creation activities. The multiple case study method was selected because it enables researchers to examine a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context while allowing comparisons across different organizations. Unlike survey-based research, which focuses on measuring variables quantitatively, case studies provide rich contextual insights into organizational experiences, decision-making processes, and implementation practices.

Three small online businesses representing different industries were purposively selected for analysis. The first case involved an online fashion retailer, the second focused on a handmade products business, and the third examined a digital marketing agency. These businesses were chosen because they actively use digital platforms for customer engagement and depend heavily on continuous content creation for business growth.

Secondary data were collected from multiple sources, including company websites, publicly available interviews, marketing reports, academic publications, and business case studies. Information from these sources was systematically reviewed to understand how each business implemented ChatGPT, the types of content produced, the perceived benefits, and the operational challenges encountered during AI adoption.

The collected data were analyzed using **thematic analysis**. The analysis focused on six major themes: purpose of ChatGPT adoption, content creation practices, perceived usefulness, business benefits, implementation challenges, and customer engagement outcomes. A cross-case comparison was then conducted to identify recurring patterns and differences among the selected businesses. The use of multiple data sources and systematic thematic coding enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

4. Case Study Analysis

4.1 Case Study 1: StyleHub Boutique (Online Fashion Store)

StyleHub Boutique is a small online fashion retailer specializing in women's clothing and accessories. The business primarily operates through Instagram, Facebook, and its e-commerce website. Prior to adopting ChatGPT, the owner personally created product descriptions, promotional captions, and customer responses, making content creation a time-consuming activity.

To improve efficiency, the business introduced ChatGPT as a marketing support tool. Initially, the application was used to generate product descriptions and Instagram captions. As confidence in the technology increased, it was also employed to create promotional emails, website content, seasonal campaign ideas, and responses to frequently asked customer questions.

The business reported a substantial reduction in the time required for content preparation. Marketing campaigns were developed more quickly, social media posting became more consistent, and multiple versions of promotional messages could be generated within minutes. These improvements allowed the owner to focus more on inventory management and customer service.

Despite these advantages, ChatGPT-generated drafts occasionally lacked the creativity and emotional appeal expected in fashion marketing. The owner therefore reviewed and refined every piece of content before publication to ensure consistency with the brand's tone and identity.



Overall, ChatGPT significantly enhanced marketing efficiency but functioned most effectively as an assistant rather than a replacement for human creativity.

4.2 Case Study 2: CraftNest Creations (Handmade Products Business)

CraftNest Creations is a home-based online business selling handmade gifts, customized accessories, and decorative products through online marketplaces and social media platforms. Since handcrafted products often rely on storytelling and emotional appeal, creating engaging content has always been central to the company's marketing strategy.

The business adopted ChatGPT to assist with writing product descriptions, gift messages, festival promotions, blog articles, and customer communication. The entrepreneur reported that ChatGPT provided valuable support during festive seasons when a large volume of promotional content was required within short timeframes.

The AI system accelerated idea generation and reduced the effort involved in writing repetitive descriptions for similar products. It also helped improve grammatical accuracy and overall readability of marketing materials.

However, because customers often purchase handmade products based on emotional value rather than functional features, the owner believed that AI-generated content alone could not fully communicate the craftsmanship and personal stories behind the products. Consequently, every AI-generated draft was edited to include authentic narratives, personal experiences, and customized messages that reflected the business philosophy.

The case demonstrates that while ChatGPT effectively improves productivity, human creativity remains essential for preserving authenticity and building emotional connections with customers.

4.3 Case Study 3: DigitalBoost Agency (Digital Marketing Agency)

DigitalBoost Agency is a small digital marketing consultancy providing content development, social media management, search engine optimization (SEO), and advertising services for local businesses. Unlike the previous cases, content creation represents the agency's primary service rather than a supporting business activity.

The agency integrated ChatGPT into its daily workflow to assist with blog writing, social media calendars, advertising copy, email campaigns, SEO articles, and client proposals. Employees used ChatGPT to generate first drafts, brainstorm campaign ideas, summarize reports, and produce multiple versions of promotional content for clients.

The adoption of ChatGPT significantly increased productivity by reducing drafting time and enabling employees to manage a larger number of client projects simultaneously. The agency also reported improvements in brainstorming, headline generation, and keyword optimization.

Nevertheless, the management emphasized that AI-generated content was never delivered directly to clients without professional editing. Each draft underwent review to verify factual accuracy, align with the client's brand voice, and ensure originality. According to the agency, ChatGPT performed best when used as a collaborative writing assistant rather than an autonomous content creator.

The case highlights that AI can substantially improve organizational efficiency while maintaining quality standards when combined with professional expertise and editorial oversight.

5. Cross-Case Comparison

The three case studies demonstrate that ChatGPT has become an important content creation tool for small online businesses across different industries. Although the businesses differed in their products, services, and marketing objectives, each organization integrated ChatGPT to improve efficiency and maintain a consistent digital presence. The online fashion retailer primarily used ChatGPT to generate product descriptions, promotional captions, and social media content, enabling faster campaign execution and more frequent customer engagement. The handmade products business relied on ChatGPT for writing product descriptions, festival promotions, and customer messages, while ensuring that



the final content reflected the emotional value and craftsmanship associated with handmade products. In contrast, the digital marketing agency adopted ChatGPT as an operational support tool to produce blog articles, SEO content, advertising copy, and client proposals, significantly increasing productivity without compromising professional standards.

Across all three cases, a common implementation pattern emerged. ChatGPT was consistently used to generate initial drafts rather than finalized marketing content. Human review, editing, and customization remained essential before publication to maintain factual accuracy, preserve brand identity, and align content with customer expectations. Businesses that combined AI-generated content with human creativity achieved better marketing outcomes than those relying exclusively on automated text generation.

The comparison also revealed differences in the nature of AI adoption. Businesses selling emotionally driven products required greater human intervention because storytelling and authenticity played a central role in customer purchasing decisions. Service-oriented organizations, such as the digital marketing agency, benefited more from productivity gains because large volumes of professional content could be generated rapidly while maintaining quality through editorial review. Overall, the findings suggest that ChatGPT functions most effectively as a collaborative business tool that complements rather than replaces human expertise.

Table 1. Cross-Case Comparison of ChatGPT Adoption

Dimension	Fashion Store	Handmade Products	Digital Marketing Agency
Primary Use	Product descriptions & social media	Product descriptions & storytelling	Blogs, SEO & advertising
Main Benefit	Faster content creation	Improved creativity	Increased productivity
Major Challenge	Maintaining brand tone	Emotional storytelling	Content originality
Human Editing	High	Very High	High
Business Outcome	Better engagement	Strong customer trust	Improved operational efficiency

6. Findings

The analysis of the three case studies provides several important insights into the adoption of ChatGPT among small online businesses. First, ChatGPT was perceived as a highly useful tool for improving content creation efficiency. All three businesses reported significant reductions in the time required to prepare marketing materials, enabling more frequent communication with customers and better management of digital marketing activities.

Second, the adoption of ChatGPT contributed to cost savings by reducing dependence on freelance content writers and external marketing agencies. This advantage was particularly important for small businesses with limited financial resources. Entrepreneurs were able to allocate more time to strategic business activities while routine writing tasks were partially automated.

Third, ChatGPT enhanced creativity by providing multiple ideas, headlines, promotional messages, and content variations. Business owners viewed the tool as a valuable brainstorming assistant rather than merely an automated writing system. The availability of alternative content versions improved flexibility in campaign planning and social media management.



Despite these advantages, the findings also identified several limitations. Participants consistently emphasized that AI-generated content required careful human review before publication. Issues such as generic language, factual inaccuracies, and inconsistent brand voice occasionally reduced the quality of the initial drafts. Businesses operating in emotionally driven markets, particularly handmade products, considered human storytelling essential for building customer trust and maintaining authenticity.

Another important finding is that successful implementation depended on a collaborative approach in which ChatGPT supported rather than replaced human expertise. Organizations that integrated AI into existing content development workflows while maintaining editorial oversight experienced greater customer engagement, stronger brand consistency, and higher overall satisfaction with AI-assisted content creation.

7. Conclusion

This study examined the perception and use of ChatGPT in content creation among small online businesses through a qualitative multiple case study approach. The comparative analysis demonstrates that ChatGPT has become an effective business support tool capable of improving marketing efficiency, reducing operational costs, accelerating content production, and supporting creative idea generation. The findings indicate that entrepreneurs across different industries increasingly recognize the value of generative AI in addressing the challenges associated with continuous digital content creation.

However, the study also highlights that the effectiveness of ChatGPT depends largely on the manner in which it is implemented. AI-generated content should not be viewed as a complete substitute for human creativity. Instead, organizations should adopt a collaborative approach in which ChatGPT produces initial drafts while human expertise ensures originality, factual accuracy, emotional appeal, and alignment with organizational values. Such an approach enables businesses to benefit from technological efficiency without compromising authenticity or customer trust.

The study contributes to the emerging literature on artificial intelligence adoption in small business environments by providing practical evidence from multiple business sectors. Although the findings are based on a limited number of case studies, they demonstrate that responsible integration of ChatGPT can strengthen digital marketing performance and support sustainable business growth. Future research may extend this work by examining larger samples, additional industries, and the long-term impact of generative AI on organizational performance and customer relationships.

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