

Major Research Project

A Study on Growth of User-Generated Content in Marketing

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Mr Varun , Roll No. 24/DMBA/259 has submitted the Major research project “A Study on Growth of User-Generated Content in Marketing” in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, New Delhi during the academic year 2025-26.

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STUDENT DECLARATION

I, Varun , MBA (2024–2026) Student, Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, do hereby certify that the Major Research Project titled: "A Study on Growth of User-Generated Content in Marketing " is an original work submitted by me as partial fulfilment of the Master of Business Administration degree requirements. This project work has been accomplished by me, and the research findings included herein are based upon my own effort and analysis. To the best of my belief and knowledge, this work is not submitted for any other university or institution to any degree, diploma, or certificate.

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Executive Summary

Digital technology is changing fast and people are using social media more than ever. This has completely changed the way companies talk to customers and how customers make decisions about what to buy. User-Generated Content, which is anything that people create and share online like reviews or videos is becoming a powerful tool. It helps people trust brands. Decide what to buy. The thing about User-Generated Content is that it feels real and honest unlike the stuff that companies make to sell their products. People are not just listening to what companies have to say they are also talking to each other. Sharing their own experiences. This is why User-Generated Content is so important. This study wants to figure out how User-Generated Content affects what people buy how they feel about brands and how much they trust them.

This study used a kind of research that involves numbers and is descriptive and analytical. We made a questionnaire on Google forms. Sent it to people who use social media a lot. We got 68 people to answer it. We chose these people because they use media every day and see a lot of User-Generated Content. The questionnaire asked them about themselves and how they feel about things like how much they trust brands and whether they would buy something based on what other people say. We also asked them to compare User-Generated Content to advertising. This helped us understand how people feel about User-Generated Content compared to kinds of advertising.

For understanding the demographic and behavioral profile of the respondents, the data was analysed by using percentage analysis and to know the level and consistency of agreement between the individual survey items, the mean and standard deviation analysis was used, and to check the effect of UGC on the purchase behavior, Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted with Consumer trust, Brand perception as independent variables and Purchase intention as dependent variable. In addition to the statistics, there is also a qualitative trend that can be seen within the responses: Consumers are being attracted to content that is more human, more spontaneous, more experiential. Testimonials and reels are among the most commonly used UGC formats, reflecting a greater psychological reality that in today's world, consumers want to be seen as themselves, and brands who allow them to be their own voice are viewed as more authentic and believable than those who only promote their own products.

Results of the study were consistent and sufficient for each of the three constructs studied. The mean scores of the composite scores were all in the strong agreement range on a five-point scale, with Purchase Intention at 4.24, Brand Perception at 4.27 and Consumer Trust at 4.14. Most items had standard deviations of 0.5 or less, indicating good internal consistency in the responses in this sample. The construct that was most significantly influenced by UGC was found to be Brand Perception, thus indicating that the net effect of UGC on the attitude of consumers towards the brand has a significant impact. The qualitative side of this result is just as important: the more authentic peer content consumers see linked to a brand, the more it affects their brand image, and more so than any amount of advertising they could ever see. Consumer Trust and Purchase Intention were trailing closely behind, confirming that trust – created by UGC content in the consumer's mind – is a crucial link between UGC exposure and purchase decision.

On the basis of the above, Multiple Linear Regression analysis was used to investigate the predictive relationship between constructs of UGC and consumer purchase behavior. Therefore, Multiple Linear Regression analysis was carried out to examine the predictive relationship between constructs of UGC and consumer purchase behavior, with Consumer Trust and Brand Perception as the independent variables and Purchase Intention as the dependent variable. The overall model was statistically significant ($F = 9.75$, $p < .001$) with R^2 of 0.2308, which means that the Consumer Trust and the Brand Perception have an R square of 23.1 per cent. Both predictors, Brand Perception and Consumer Trust, had statistically significant and independent contributions to the model, with Brand Perception being a strong predictor ($\beta = 0.4823$, $p = .001$) and Consumer Trust being a moderate predictor ($\beta = 0.2428$, $p = .038$). The results of this study support the core hypothesis by showing that UGC has a measurable and statistically significant impact on consumer purchase intention, while at the same time influencing consumer trust and brand perception.

Finally, this study proves that the UGC is not simply an additional component of digital marketing but plays a vital and vital role in consumer behavior. When combined with the larger behavioral trends in the data, the picture emerges of a new consumer world where authenticity, peer validation and experiential content are the coins of the realm of influence. Brands and marketers feel the same: the best marketing communication in the digital era is not about a brand, but about what its customers say about it. This research is a valuable addition to the existing knowledge on UGC and consumer behaviour, and offers a valuable starting point for further research that is broader in scope, more diverse and more methodologically sophisticated.

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
What is User-Generated Content?	1
Why is User-Generated Content Important?.....	1
Types of User-Generated Content	3
1.2 Problem Statement	4
1.3 Objectives of the Study	4
1.4 Scope of the Study	5
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.1 Introduction.....	6
2.2 Conceptual Foundations of UGC and Consumer Empowerment	6
2.3 Credibility and Trust in UGC	7
2.4 UGC and Purchase Intention	7
2.5 Comparative Effectiveness of Content Types.....	8
2.6 UGC and Brand Perception	8
2.7 Gaps and Limitations in the Literature	9
2.8 Variables of the study	9
2.9 Variable and Question Mapping	10
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	10
3.1 Introduction.....	10
3.2 Sampling Technique	10
3.3 Questionnaire Design.....	11
4. Data Analysis and Interpretation	13
4.1 Percentage Analysis of Demographic Profile	13
4.2 Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis.....	16
4.3 Regression Analysis.....	19
4.4 Model Fit and Variance Explained	20
4. Achievement of Research Objectives	21
5. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	22
5.1 FINDINGS.....	22
5.2 Recommendations.....	22
6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY.....	24
7. CONCLUSION.....	25
8. REFERENCES	26

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Content is where I expect much of the real money will be made on the Internet, just as it was in broadcasting" — this was the prophetic opening of Bill Gates' 1996 essay, *Content is King* (Gates, 1996). The foresight he had, credited to Bill Gates, has come true. Nowadays everything on the internet is based on content, from blog posts and videos to 3D models and augmented reality. The impact it has when used by a brand can either make or break the business, particularly in the e-commerce sector. The reality is enhanced by the User-Generated Content: UGC, which includes consumer-generated content such as photos, videos, and honest product reviews, provides an authentic perspective often viewed as more trustworthy than traditional brand-generated content (Usman & Wijaya, 2025), and can have a greater impact on the success or failure of a product with potential customers

The marketing world has seen many changes and innovations over time reflecting the evolution of the world and consumer behaviour. Marketing has been the impetus behind practically every major consumer trend; from Kellogg's Tony the Tiger teaching consumers that cereals were part of a balanced breakfast and embedding Kellogg's in the public mind as a fun, wholesome brand (Ovrut, 2006), to the Marlboro Man campaign, which debuted in 1955 and featured rugged masculine figures — including cowboys, lifeguards, sailors, and construction workers — to reposition filtered cigarettes as an appealing choice for men (Smithsonian Institution, n.d.)

Content strategies started with fictional stories that used to have the point of view of the product. Coca-Cola did this for years with their famous Santa Claus and polar bear commercials. The brand famously helped shape the modern image of Santa Claus through its 1930s advertisements, commissioning artist Haddon Sundblom in 1931 to depict a wholesome, jovial Santa — an image that became instantly popular and ran for over three decades (The Brand Hopper, 2026). In 1993, Coca-Cola introduced the animated polar bear as part of its "Always Coca-Cola" campaign, featuring the bears in a groundbreaking commercial called "Northern Lights," which quickly became one of the most recognised symbols in Coca-Cola's advertising history (The Coca-Cola Company, n.d.)

What is User-Generated Content?

User-Generated Content (UGC) is content that is published by an individual who is not paid to help a site or platform. It can be a picture, a video, a blog post, a forum contribution, a poll or a comment on a social media site. The traditional model of communication is one-to-many: One source gives information to multiple receivers, such as an advertisement on a television channel, a newspaper article, or a book. Media organisations can, however, build their entire business model on UGC and invite and encourage unpaid contributors to create content which can then be republished, promoted, and monetised by the media organisation.

Why is User-Generated Content Important?

As social networking sites have grown in popularity, user generated and organically-generated content has increased in popularity. This brand-specific content is largely created by customers or brand loyalists and it is crucial in shaping the buyer's journey. Here are some of the best ways that UGC can help a brand: In today's competitive online landscape, brands

can capture appreciative attention, sentiments, and reviews from their customers that boost their authenticity. UGC can also help to increase the reach and growth of social media platforms, as most consumers are more likely to accept product and service recommendations from other users rather than from the brand. Apple, for instance, promoted the idea of a hashtag #ShotOniPhone6 with the release of the iPhone 6, as a way for people to share their normal photos using Apple's phone. Apple chose the top photographs and featured them in various print and digital media outlets and countries, receiving lots of feedback and praise for the product.

UGC creates brand loyalty: This is because the content is made by consumers, not by the brands themselves. By taking the audience into account and involving them in the creation of the brand's image, companies can gain considerable trust from their audience.

Cost-effectiveness: UGC is an affordable solution for businesses who wish to promote their brands without investing a ton of money in promotions and television commercials. A majority of UGC is produced naturally by customers who wish to share their experience, connect with kindred spirits or take advantage of some features

Building a strong brand reputation: Great customer reviews and testimonials can help build a good reputation for a brand, which boosts search engine optimisation (SEO). UGC is frequently uploaded by the consumers to blogs which link to a product website, and by studying consumers' search phrases and keywords, brands can enhance their keyword optimisation strategies. Each social media site has its own culture, design and features. They are applied to many tasks and used in different ways. UGC can be a text, image, video, audio and multimedia content and is shared across platforms such as Facebook, YouTube or personal blogs. It's also associated with software or application updates, such as virtual world add-on packs, mobile app updates, or programs that are associated with public databases. Open source projects and encyclopaedias like Wikipedia are also examples of UGC. With the increasing importance of UGC, countries around the world are looking for policy frameworks that foster and manage the production and dissemination of UGC, valuing its role in creativity, innovation and economic growth. Some users have the opportunity to monetize their content through donations, selling merchandise, advertising, and/or licensing. Another key statistic is that many consumers heavily rely on user reviews and feedback before making purchase decisions, further underlining the worth of UGC. Unquestionably, social media has become a marketing tool, especially for the fashion industry and service-based businesses. People can share their opinions, experience and sway purchases with the internet.

All of the following are types of UGC: comments, photos, videos, likes, profiles, and more, via websites or applications. It should be noted that, in general, paid advertisements are not considered UGC. People freely give back and offer help to online communities, and often create content that is original and creative, and might be created collaboratively, away from the “professional” setting. A significant expansion of scope and impact of UGC has been driven by the advent of Web 2.0. This was a time of openness, interaction and sharing – a time that changed the way people interact with the internet and how content is created. In 2018, UGC has been used in various ways to create and share text, images, audio, and video on platforms such as blogs, Facebook, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter), continuing its trend of popularity. There's also more high-quality video content being created online, thanks to the increased ubiquity of smartphone cameras.

Types of User-Generated Content

UGC is not limited by a company's size, industry affiliation, or product offerings. From luxury brands to everyday household products, user-generated content can resonate with all kinds of audiences. The main types of UGC include:

- **Images:** Unpaid customer photos of products posted on social media, blogs, and other online platforms.
- **Videos and live streams:** GoPro videos, YouTube content, Instagram Stories, natively shot videos, and live video streams on Facebook and other platforms that the creator is not being paid to produce. These may also include product unboxing videos and hauls.
- **Social media content:** Any social media message regarding a brand, such as a tweet, Instagram post, or Facebook update.
- **Product reviews and testimonials:** Customer reviews on a product's website or third-party platforms such as Yelp, Google, TripAdvisor, or G2.
- **Blog posts:** Product tutorials or reviews that bloggers publish without receiving payment for them.
- **Q&A forums:** Public forums where customers and the brand can engage in discussions and answer questions about a product.
- **Case studies:** Detailed, unpaid customer reviews that examine the pros and cons of products and services.
- **Surveys:** Customer-provided views or descriptions of a specific feature or product.

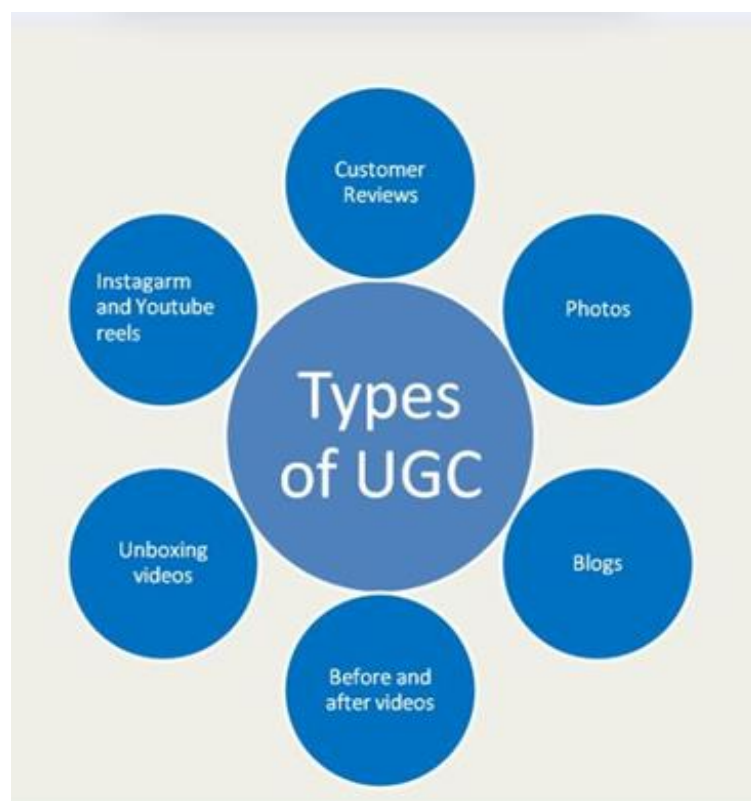


Image no. 1 (Types of UGC)

1.2 Problem Statement

Nowadays, in the changing panorama of digital marketing, a major evolution has happened in the brand content from traditional to user generated content (UGC). Content that is created by a brand will be consistent and professionally selected, but it may not be authentic enough for the public's taste. This type of content is produced by in-house creatives, in line with brand guidelines and aligned to the brand's strategic messaging and aesthetic. While this is an attractive appearance, it can feel scripted and overly commercialised.

User-Generated Content is a way to market things because it is created by real people. It is like when someone makes a video about a product they bought and shares it with their friends. This kind of content is real and honest. People trust it more than they trust what companies say. More and more people are looking at media and listening to what their friends say before they buy something. This makes User-Generated Content really valuable. Companies are starting to realize that User-Generated Content can help them build relationships with their customers and create a community around their brand. It is also cheaper. Gives them a better understanding of what their customers want. The problem is that we do not know enough about how to use User-Generated Content. This study wants to figure out how User-Generated Content can help companies sell more what the benefits are and how companies can use it to make their customers happy and build trust. To sum it up this study is, about how User-Generated Content gives people the power to influence what others think about brands and how it is changing the way companies market themselves.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this research is to examine the evolving role of user-generated content (UGC) in influencing consumer behaviour, brand perception, and digital marketing strategies. The study is structured around the following key objectives:

1. To assess how user-generated content (UGC) shapes consumer trust and overall brand perception, with a focus on perceived authenticity and credibility in comparison to traditional advertising.
2. To examine the extent to which UGC influences consumer purchase intentions, including identifying the types of content (such as reviews, short-form videos, and unboxing content) that are most impactful.
3. To analyze the role of UGC in enhancing consumer engagement with brands, particularly in terms of interactions such as likes, shares, comments, and participation in brand-led activities.
4. To identify the key attributes that contribute to the effectiveness of UGC, including factors such as authenticity, relatability, emotional appeal, and informational value.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The present study is aimed at studying the influence of User-Generated Content on consumer behaviour in the digital and social media environment. This study specifically looks at three dimensions of consumer behaviour, consumer trust, brand perception, and purchase intention, and examines the impact of each of the four types of UGC – reviews, testimonials, reels, and blogs – on the dimensions of the three mentioned behaviours among online consumers.

Geographically, the study is not restricted to a particular area or location. The survey was sent out online via social media channels, so the respondents were not limited to a certain geographical area. The results are however most relevant for young and digitally active consumers who frequently consume social media content, as is typical of convenience sampling and the sample age composition.

The study is so short in time that the results are only valid for the time of the data collection and consumer perceptions and behaviour at this time. This study cannot encompass longitudinal trends or changes in consumer behavior over time as digital consumer behavior is constantly evolving.

Conceptually, the study's focus is the connection between UGC and consumer behavior and does not include any related topics like the use of influencers, paid digital advertising, or algorithmic content distribution, though these may overlap in reality. The study also does not look at platform-specific behaviour, so the conclusions apply to understanding the effect of UGC in general, not any one social media platform specifically like Instagram, YouTube or Twitter.

The academic and practical applications of this study are targeted at audience members including students, researchers, marketing professionals, and brand managers who are interested in exploring how user-generated content can affect consumers' behaviors in digital markets. The results are especially pertinent to companies in sectors where online reviews and peer influence impact buying choices—such as consumer-focused services. Although the study is exploratory and does not make definitive causal statements, it does offer a solid foundation for future, larger-scale and more in-depth studies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Social media and digital platforms have revolutionized consumer-brand relationships and the way consumers make buying decisions. User-generated content (UGC), in its general sense, refers to any content that consumers voluntarily generate and share on digital channels, apart from professional brand communication. Over the last few years, academics across disciplines of marketing, consumer psychology, and information systems have devoted more research to comprehending the impact of such user-generated content on behaviour, trust, and brand perception. The literature review aims to share the results of three important studies, namely O'Hern and Kahle (2013), Müller and Christandl (2019), and Bahtar and Muda (2016). Taken together, these creations trace the evolution of UGC scholarship, ranging from initial conceptual mapping to empirical comparative studies, and together they provide the theoretical and practical framework of relevance to the understanding of the power of UGC on consumers' behavior and perception.

2.2 Conceptual Foundations of UGC and Consumer Empowerment

The best-known benefit of UGC and consumer empowerment is that it provides information. The most famous upside of UGC and consumer empowerment is that it offers information. One of the key issues in the UGC literature is the definition and relevance of UGC, especially in the realms of marketing theory and practice. O'Hern and Kahle (2013) contend that the content that consumers create in digital environments is a significantly-seeming shift in power from the firm to the consumer, and suggests a taxonomy of UGC that includes the goals that consumers have and the type of knowledge flows stimulated during the creation of digital content. The contribution was important because it provided the field with a common conceptual language when UGC was being examined in various isolated fashion in different subdisciplines of the field. The authors note that the distinction between consumers and firms is becoming less distinct, as users perform creative and communicative activities traditionally carried out by businesses. The finding has profound consequences for the way that the scholars and practitioners interpret the role of brand communication. When consumers can create content that is reaching audiences that is as large or larger than the official brand content, it's hard to maintain the assumption that brands control their own story. Building on this work, Bahtar and Muda (2016) investigate UGC specifically in the context of product reviews, as users' experiences are shared online by previous users of the product, which are in turn used by future users who can use them as information inputs in their purchasing decisions. This framing goes beyond just conceptualizing UGC as a way of self-expression and makes it a functional part of the consumer decision-making process, through an information function that is structurally less able to be fulfilled by conventional advertising.

2.3 Credibility and Trust in UGC

There is a lack of credibility and trust in UGC. Lack of credibility and trust in UGC. The common thread between the three studies is that UGC is believed to be more credible than content created by the companies themselves. Such a benefit is based on the consumers' sense of independence and authenticity. If a brand is talking about itself, consumers know that the message is a commercial and are going to take it with a grain of salt. If another consumer shares an experience, there is no business motivation considered, and the message is comparatively trusted. It has been found that consumers are more likely to trust UGC as opposed to the produced content because UGC is not produced by the producer (Bahtar and Muda, 2016), and the perception of risk differs among the consumers and affects the degree of reliance on UGC when purchasing items (Yue and Chen, 2016).

This sense of credibility is not shared by every consumer and every content, but it's still a fundamental edge that peer generated content enjoys in most of the online transactional world. This is followed by Muller and Christandl (2019) who make an interesting comparison between UGC and sponsored content, finding that sponsored content elicits more negative perceptions on the consumer level which is due, they argue, to the commercial nature of sponsored content becoming apparent once consumers realize it is a promotion. This is especially significant because it demonstrates that there is more to credibility than the mere fact that it was created by the source of the content and that perceptions of commercial motives are also a factor in determining how credible a content is or is not.

The credibility advantage of the content can be lost even when the content is coming from a consumer source, but the financial relationship with a brand is disclosed. Other consumers can also influence the marketing world, as O'Hern and Kahle (2013) point out, especially when consumers believe that their peers are more credible than the company's marketing representatives; this one of the main ways in which UGC is changing the marketing landscape.

2.4 UGC and Purchase Intention

All three studies have UGC being a key variable in the study and each study has a particular take on the relationship between UGC and consumer purchase intent. They construct a multi-level understanding of the nature of UGC as a motivator for the purchase. Based on the findings from Bahtar and Muda (2016), the conceptual framework that links UGC with online purchase intention is developed through two mediating constructs: perceived credibility and perceived usefulness. The authors believe that when consumers find UGC credible and useful, it will have a significant impact on their decisions to make purchases online.

The theoretical concepts in this framework are based on the literature on technology acceptance and information adoption and have been adapted to the unique context of social commerce and online product reviews. The authors also point out attitude as a linking variable. They propose that a positive attitude towards UGC will result in the intention of a consumer to purchase, while this attitude will change depending on the various factors of behaviour, motivation, demographics, reference groups and the overall experience of the online shopping. This indicates that the path from exposure to purchase decision is not linear—it involves a consumer's general attitude towards peer messages which may differ greatly from consumer to consumer and also from platform to platform. Müller and Christandl (2019) provide empirical support for this discussion by proving that brand-related UGC as a part of brand communication has a central role in electronic word-of-mouth and brand communication within social networks, as it helps to create product awareness, brand awareness, and affects the purchasing decisions of peer-consumers.

The experimental design of the studies enables them to isolate content type effects, and this helps improve the causal evidence in this area compared to many previous conceptual or survey based studies. Purchase intention is not explicitly addressed by O'Hern and Kahle (2013) but it is included in a larger discussion for their argument regarding the power of the consumer and the role UGC plays in shaping consumer evaluations of firms' products and brands. UGC's influence on purchase intentions may be informational as well as social.

2.5 Comparative Effectiveness of Content Types

One of the more unique contributions that Müller and Christandl (2019) have brought to this literature is that it allows the systematic comparison of UGC with other content forms, namely content marketing by brands and sponsored content in commercial relationships with third parties. This comparative approach is useful because it goes beyond the mere question of whether UGC has an effect on consumers to the question of how UGC compares to the other channels that marketers have at their disposal. However, their research shows that UGC generates higher engagement in terms of consumer brand responses, while transparency and trust are key factors that can impact the way that content is received, and sponsored content is faring worse than UGC in terms of negative consumer impressions when the commercial aspect of the content is clearly visible to the audience.

The impact has direct strategic implications for how brands are spending their content, and how brands are defining relationships with paid creators. It also identifies that buying intention, trustworthiness perception, and brand trust are key constructs in social commerce and that how the content is sourced and presented is crucial to influencing these constructs and in turn, has implications for downstream business outcomes. What this suggests is that brands don't have the ability to mimic the benefits of organic UGC by engaging in paid UGC techniques—the source and perceived reason behind content falls into the persuasion equation as well. This comparative perspective adds to O'Hern and Kahle's previous theoretical work. While O'Hern and Kahle (2013) pinpointed UGC as a disruptive presence and a threat to a firm's control over its own communication, Müller and Christandl (2019) lend empirical proof of exactly how and to what extent this disruption occurs when various content types vie for the consumers' attention and trust.

2.6 UGC and Brand Perception

UGC influences in a larger and more remarkable way the perception of brands as a whole and in the long run. This is the sum of all consumer reviews, social media posts and shared experiences which is visible to the public and influences potential consumers who find it while searching for information about a brand's performance. Based on the findings of Bahtar and Muda (2016), the UGC which the consumers come across plays a significant role in shaping their perceptions about the brand and, when shared by consumers with positive experiences, the content has positive effects on consumers' consumption behaviours and has also improved the consumers' confidence in the brand. This represents a cumulative and social impact of UGC on brand perception: meaning that each piece of UGC isn't isolated from one another but works together to create a collective impression that can influence the perception of the brand amongst the wider audience who may not have had any direct interaction with the business. One of the most difficult consequences of consumer empowerment for companies is managing negative UGC, and O'Hern and Kahle (2013) note that brands must strike a balance between being able to organize and shape consumer reactions to negative content and not appearing manipulative or contrived. This is especially true for brand reputation management, where faux replies to negative reviews can end up creating a second wave of negative UGC, adding to the initial harm. This picture is confirmed by Müller and Christandl (2019), who reveal that the source of

content is an important factor influencing consumers' brand evaluations, and that UGC content yields more positive consumer brand reactions than sponsored content in most cases. This is a blessing and a curse for brand managers as organic positive UGC is one of the most effective marketing levers for building brand perception, but can't be manufactured up and is only indirectly influenced by product quality, customer experience and community engagement.

2.7 Gaps and Limitations in the Literature

This section covers gaps and limitations in the literature. This section address gaps and limitations in the literature. The contributions of the three studies are great, but it is important to recognize a few key limitations in the literature they portray. The typology proposed by O'Hern and Kahle (2013) is conceptually well-developed, but is not tested empirically, instead being illustrated with examples from the existing literature. There is a question of how far their framework extends to other platforms, product types, and cultures, and how these parts were explored in the future will be subject of further research.

While well grounded in concept, the study by Bahtar and Muda (2016) does not go far enough in testing empirically. The constructs they propose in the model are theoretically defensible but the results need to be replicated by other consumer groups before they can be argued as causal. However, they did not consider other social commerce contexts, which affects the generalizability of their results. While the most empirical of the three, Müller and Christandl (2019) do so in the context of a specific experimental setup that may not fully represent the complexity of real-world SRL contexts where content types might be mixed, algorithmic curation influences exposure, and consumers can be simultaneously engaged in a multitude of contexts. In all three studies, there is the shared drawback of the relatively limited scope of the consumer journey, confined to the pre-purchase phase. While this body of work has laid the foundations for understanding UGC's impact on post-purchase behaviour, brand loyalty, and the potential for satisfied consumers to create more UGC, the question of how UGC influences these areas is still not fully developed and worthy of further study.

2.8 Variables of the study

Table no. 1

Variables	Type	Authors Cited
PURCHASE INTENTION	Dependent Variable	O'Hern and Kahle (2013); Bahtar and Muda (2016); Müller and Christandl (2019)
CONSUMER TRUST	Independent Variable	Bahtar and Muda (2016); O'Hern and Kahle (2013); Müller and Christandl (2019)
BRAND PERCEPTION	Independent Variable	Bahtar and Muda (2016); Müller and Christandl (2019); O'Hern and Kahle (2013)

2.9 Variable and Question Mapping

Table no. 2

Variables	Question Number
PURCHASE INTENTION	Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10
CONSUMER TRUST	Q11, Q12, Q13, Q14, Q15
BRAND PERCEPTION	Q16, Q17, Q18

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology used to explore the effect of the User-Generated Content (UGC) on consumer behavior, specifically consumer trust, brand perception and consumer purchase intention. This study uses a quantitative research method and descriptive and analytical type. The primary data was collected by using a structured questionnaire prepared on the Google forms and circulated to the users of social media and online consumers. Convenience sampling was employed in the process of obtaining data which involved 68 respondents.

The collected data was analyzed using statistical methods such as percentage analysis, mean, and standard deviation. Multiple Linear Regression analysis was performed using the Consumer Trust and Brand Perception as independent variables and Purchase Intention as dependent variable, to check the effect of UGC on consumer purchasing behavior.

The methodology is structured to systematically collect, analyze and interpret the data, which would help in understanding the influence of UGC on today's consumer decision-making process.

3.2 Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling is the major sampling technique used in this study. The respondents were chosen because they were accessible and agreed to participate with the study, which was limited by time and resources. The target group is social media users and online consumers who will be exposed to User-Generated Content frequently. The sample size $n = 68$ was considered acceptable for the aim of this exploratory study. The survey was sent out online via social media to reach people who are active in social media content and digital shopping.

3.3 Questionnaire Design

A questionnaire was made to get information about User Generated Content and consumer behavior. The questionnaire was easy to understand. Had different parts. The first part asked about the persons age, gender and social media use. The second part asked about User Generated Content like reviews, videos, blogs and testimonials.

The main parts of the questionnaire used a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree. The questions were about things like trust how people see brands and what people buy. There were questions to make sure the answers were reliable. At the end there was a question that asked for peoples opinions about User Generated Content. The questionnaire was made to help with the study and to analyze the data.

Section A: Demographic Information

Q1. Name

Q2. Age Group

- 18 – 24 years
- 25 – 34 years
- 35 – 44 years
- 45 years and above
-

Q3. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

Q4. How often do you use social media?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Occasionally
- Rarely

Q5. Are you aware of User-Generated Content (UGC) such as reviews, reels, and testimonials?

- Yes
- No

Q6. What type of UGC do you engage with the most?

- Reviews
- Testimonials
- Reels
- Blogs

Section B: Consumer Trust

Level of agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Q7. UGC feels more authentic than traditional advertisements.

Q8. I trust content created by other users more than brand promotions.

Q9. I trust online reviews before making a purchase.

Q10. UGC is more reliable than brand advertisements.

Section C: Brand Perception

Level of agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, where
1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Q11. UGC positively influences my perception of a brand.

Q12. UGC helps me compare different products.

Q13. Brands with more UGC appear more trustworthy.

Q14. Negative UGC affects my opinion about a brand.

Q15. Brands using UGC appear more trustworthy.

Section D: Purchase Intention

Level of agreement with the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, where
1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Q16. UGC influences my buying decisions.

Q17. I check reviews/recommendations before purchasing.

Q18. Positive UGC increases my likelihood of buying a product.

Section E: Comparative Preference

Q19. Which do you trust more?

- UGC
- Traditional Advertising
- Both

Q20. Which influences your purchase decision more?

- UGC
- Traditional Advertising

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Percentage Analysis of Demographic Profile

The following section presents a percentage analysis of the respondents' demographic characteristics, including age group, gender, social media usage frequency, awareness of User-Generated Content, and the type of UGC they engage with the most. A total of 68 respondents participated in the study.

Age Group

The age distribution of the respondents indicated that the age group 18 to 24 years old with 42 respondents (61.8%) is the largest age group of the respondents. The next age group, 25-34 years, consists of 19 respondents (27.9% of the sample). The 35 to 44 year old age group is the second largest with 5.9% (4 respondents), and the eldest age group, 45 years old and above, is the smallest with 4.4% (3 respondents). The data shows that the study mainly reflects the opinions of young adults, reflecting the target group of people who use social media and are online consumers.

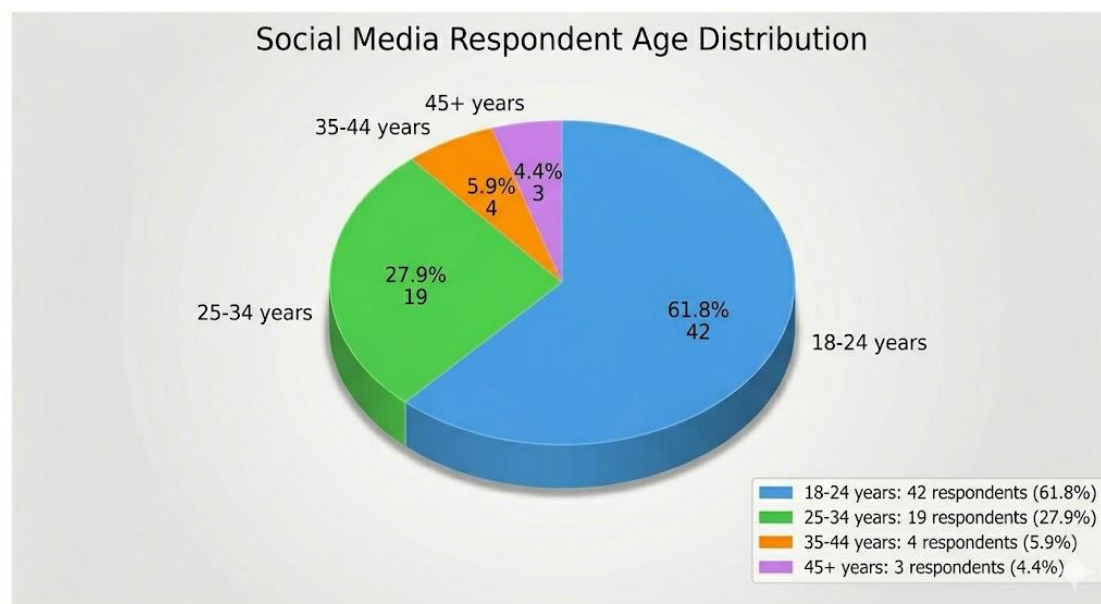


Image no. 2

Gender

In terms of gender, the respondents are mostly male with 42 respondents making up 61.8% of the total respondents. The rest of the respondents (38.2%) are female, which included 26 individuals. The gender distribution of the sample is male-dominated, yet large enough for both male and female groups to be analyzed.

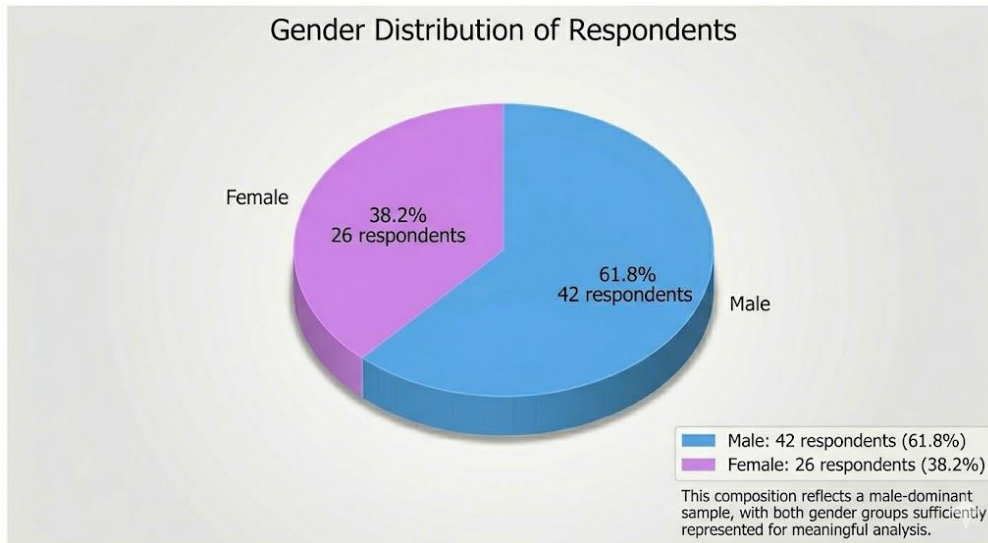


Image no.3

Frequency of Social Media Usage

The analysis of social media usage frequency indicates that a significant majority of respondents are highly active on social media platforms. Specifically, 49 respondents representing 72.1% of the sample reported using social media on a daily basis. A further 18 respondents, accounting for 26.5%, indicated weekly usage. Only 1 respondent, constituting 1.5% of the sample, reported occasional usage. These findings confirm that the sample is well-suited to the research objective, as the respondents are regular consumers of digital content including UGC.

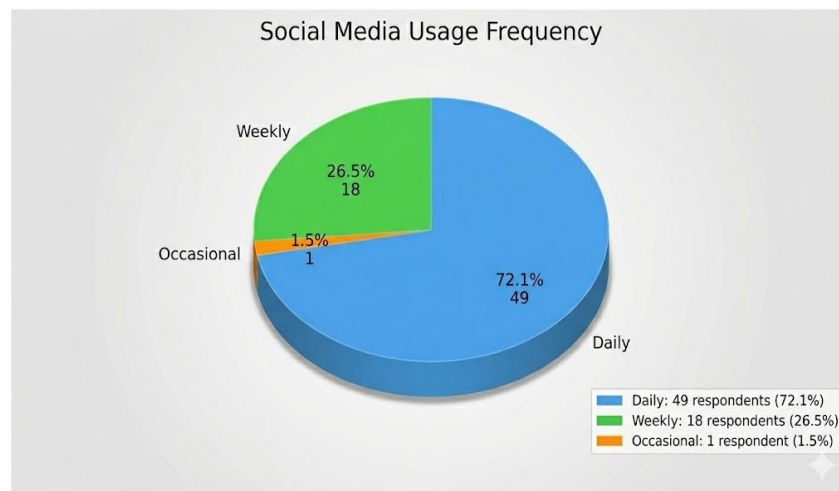


Image no.4

Awareness of User-Generated Content

All 68 respondents (100%) indicated that they are aware of User-Generated Content (UGC), which can take several forms, including reviews, reels, and testimonials. This discovery is useful in establishing a solid foundation for the study because it provided confidence that each of the respondents had enough background to be able to answer the following questions.

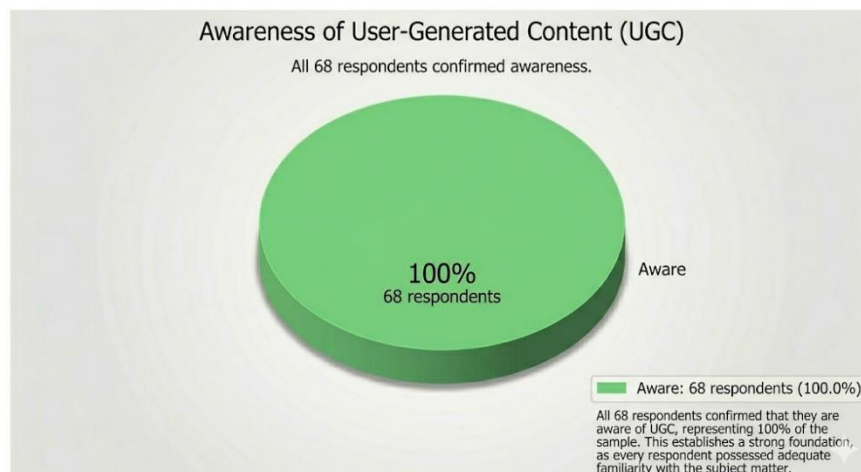


Image no.5

Type of UGC Engaged with the Most

According to the analysis of frequency of use of social media, the majority of the respondents are highly active and using social media. In particular, 49 respondents (72.1% of the sample) indicated that they use social media at least once a day. Another quarter of respondents (18, or 26.5%) used it weekly. Occasional use was only reported by 1 (1.5%) respondent. The results indicate that the sample is appropriate for the study objective because the respondents are regular users of digital, which is one of the requirements for an appropriate sample in the study.

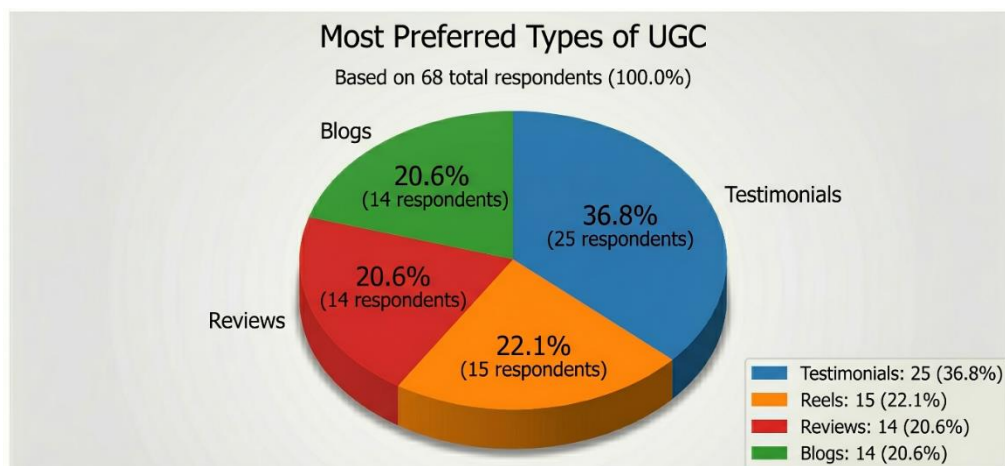


Image no.6

4.2 Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis

To assess respondent agreement with statements related to Consumer Trust, Brand Perception, and Purchase Intention, mean scores and standard deviations were computed for each item on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represents Strongly Disagree and 5 represents Strongly Agree. A mean score of 4.0 and above is interpreted as strong agreement, while a score between 3.5 and 3.99 reflects moderate agreement.

Consumer Trust

The four statements under Consumer Trust had a strong level of consensus among the respondents with consistently high mean scores. The mean score for “UGC feels more authentic than traditional advertisements” was 4.16 with a standard deviation of 1.02, showing that people generally feel that UGC is more genuine than traditional ads. People generally agreed on some things about User Generated Content. They thought User Generated Content was more authentic than ads. They also thought that what other people say is more credible than what brands say. People trust reviews when they are making a purchase. They also think User Generated Content is more reliable than brand ads. This shows that User Generated Content is important for building trust with consumers.

Table no.3

Item	Statement	Mean	Std Dev	Interpretation
CONSUMER TRUST (Items T1–T4)				
T1	UGC feels more authentic than traditional ads	4.16	1.02	Strong Agreement
T2	I trust user content more than brand promotions	4.22	0.94	Strong Agreement
T3	I trust online reviews before purchasing	4.12	1.07	Strong Agreement
T4	UGC is more reliable than brand ads	4.04	1.08	Strong Agreement

Brand Perception

The Brand Perception construct had the highest composite mean of all three constructs at 4.27 (SD = 0.39) with a strong and consistent effect of UGC on the perception of brands. The results for "UGC positively influences my perception of a brand" was 4.34 with a standard deviation of 0.82, which indicates the tendency of UGC to influence the perception of a brand positively. User Generated Content also affects how people see brands. People think that User Generated Content makes a brand look better. They use User Generated Content to compare products. If a brand has a lot of User Generated Content people think it is more trustworthy. If there is negative User Generated Content it can hurt a brands reputation. People also think that brands that use User Generated Content are more trustworthy and transparent. This is what the study found out about User Generated Content and consumer behavior. User Generated Content is very important, for brands and consumers. User Generated Content can help brands build trust and credibility with consumers.

Table no.4

BRAND PERCEPTION (Items B1–B5)				
B1	UGC positively influences brand perception	4.34	0.82	Strong Agreement
B2	UGC helps in comparing products	4.12	1.07	Strong Agreement
B3	Brands with more UGC appear trustworthy	4.26	1.03	Strong Agreement
B4	Negative UGC affects brand opinion	4.21	0.86	Strong Agreement
B5	Brands using UGC appear more trustworthy	4.44	0.78	Strong Agreement

Purchase Intention

The composite mean score for the Purchase Intention construct was 4.24 (SD = 0.50), which shows that the respondents had a high intention to purchase products based on the information in the UGC. The mean for the statement "UGC influences my buying decisions" was 4.25 (SD = 0.95) indicating a large proportion of the respondents agree that UGC has a direct effect on their buying decisions. Within this construct, the item I check reviews or recommendations before purchasing had the highest mean (4.34; SD = 0.82) showing that the practice of reviewing before purchase is a well-known behavior among online consumers. The mean score for the statement 'Positive UGC increases my likelihood of buying a product' was 4.12 (SD = 1.07) which indicated that the presence of positive user generated content had a significant impact on a purchase decision.

Table no.5

PURCHASE INTENTION (Items P1–P3)				
P1	UGC influences buying decisions	4.25	0.95	Strong Agreement
P2	I check reviews before purchasing	4.34	0.82	Strong Agreement
P3	Positive UGC increases purchase likelihood	4.12	1.07	Strong Agreement

Overall Interpretation

In all three constructs, all items had a mean score of greater than 4.0, which is considered strong agreement. Most of the items have low to moderate standard deviations, suggesting that there was not much variation in responses and therefore reliability in the findings. Both Purchase Intention and Consumer Trust were cited less frequently but were the most strongly agreed upon construct by Brand Perception. This suggests that overall, User-Generated Content has a significant and positive effect on consumer behavior in all three aspects tested in this study.

4.3 Regression Analysis

Multiple Linear Regression: Consumer Trust and Brand Perception as Combined Predictors

To evaluate the simultaneous predictive power of Consumer Trust and Brand Perception on consumer buying behavior, a multiple linear regression analysis was performed. In this model, Consumer Trust and Brand Perception were specified as the independent variables (predictors), while Purchase Intention served as the dependent variable.

Table no.6

Statistic	Value
Intercept	1.1699
β — Consumer Trust	0.2428
β — Brand Perception	0.4823
R ²	0.2308
Adjusted R ²	0.2071
F-Statistic	9.7522
p-value	0.0002

Individual Predictor Significance:

Table no.7

Predictor	β	Standard Error	t-value	p-value	95% confidence level
Consumer trust	0.2428	0.1145	2.1201	0.0378	[0.0141, 0.4715]
Brand perception	0.4823	0.1446	3.3360	0.0014	[0.1936, 0.7710]

Table no.8

COEFFICIENTS TABLE						
Variable	Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardised Beta (β)	t-Statistic	p-value	Significance
Consumer Trust	0.223	0.1053	0.2428	2.118	0.038	Significant
Brand Perception	0.5565	0.1615	0.4823	3.447	0.001	Significant

Table no.9

ANOVA TABLE (Analysis of Variance)						
Source of Variation		df	Mean Square (MS)	F-Statistic	p-value	Significance
Regression		2	1.5657	9.75	< 0.001	Significant
Residual		65	0.1606			
Total		67				

4.4 Model Fit and Variance Explained

The F-test indicated that the overall regression model is statistically significant, $F = 9.75$, $p < .001$. This confirms that the combination of Consumer Trust and Brand Perception accounts for a meaningful proportion of the variance in consumer Purchase Intention. Specifically, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.2308$) demonstrates that approximately 23.1% of the total variation in Purchase Intention is explained by the joint effects of the two independent variables.

$$\text{Purchase Intention} = 1.1699 + 0.2428(\text{Consumer Trust}) + 0.4823 (\text{Brand Perception})$$

Evaluation of Individual Predictors

- Consumer Trust:** Held a significant positive relationship with the dependent variable ($\beta = 0.2428$, $t = 2.12$, $p = .038$). This implies that for every one-unit increase in Consumer Trust, Purchase Intention is expected to rise by approximately 0.24 units, assuming Brand Perception is held constant. The reliability of this estimate is supported by the 95% confidence interval [0.0141, 0.4715], which excludes zero.
- Brand Perception:** Emerged as the stronger predictor of the two variables, displaying a larger effect size and a higher level of statistical significance ($\beta = 0.4823$, $t = 3.34$, $p = .001$). Holding Consumer Trust constant, a one-unit improvement in Brand Perception yields an estimated 0.48-unit increase in Purchase Intention. The 95% confidence interval for this coefficient [0.1936, 0.7710] resides entirely above zero, indicating high estimation precision and confirming its dominant role in shaping consumer intent.

4. Achievement of Research Objectives

Objective 1: To assess how UGC shapes consumer trust and brand perception

This goal was achieved by looking at Consumer Trust and Consumer Brand Perception. These were measured using a Likert Scale questionnaire. The average score for Consumer Trust was 4.14. This shows that people strongly agree that user-generated content (UGC) is more real than advertising. They also think that content made by peers is more believable than content made by brands. The highest score was for "Brands using UGC appear more trustworthy" at 4.44. The highest overall score was for Brand Perception at 4.27. The results support the idea that UGC has an effect on how people trust and view brands online.

Objective 2: To examine the extent to which UGC influences consumer purchase intentions

To achieve this objective we looked at Purchase Intention and used Multiple Linear Regression analysis. The average score for Purchase Intention was 4.24. This means that people strongly agree to read user reviews before making a purchase. They also think that positive UGC influences their buying decisions. The regression model was significant. Showed that Consumer Trust and Brand Perception can predict Purchase Intention. Brand Perception was the predictor. Consumer Trust also had an effect. We also found that 83.8 percent of respondents said UGC was more effective than advertising in influencing their buying decisions.

Objective 3: To analyze the role of UGC in enhancing consumer engagement with brands

We examined this objective by looking at the demographics and behaviors of respondents. We also looked at engagement data from Section A of the questionnaire. We found that 72.1 percent of respondents use media every day. All 68 respondents were aware of UGC in its forms. The high engagement with content formats like testimonials and reels shows that people are participants in online conversations about brands. They are not passive observers.

Objective 4: To identify the key attributes that contribute to the effectiveness of UGC

We achieved this by looking at both numbers and words from the results. The item "UGC feels more authentic than advertisements" was ranked high. It was the consistently referenced characteristic. Respondents also highlighted that testimonials are the engaged UGC format. All of these indicate that content which is deemed real and useful to the consumer is more effective, in UGC.

5. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 FINDINGS

This study looked at how User-Generated Content or UGC affects what consumers buy. It did this by asking 68 people a set of questions and then analyzing their answers. The questions were about Consumer Trust, Brand Perception and Purchase Intention. Most of the people who answered were adults who use social media every day and know what UGC is. They mostly use UGC in the form of testimonials and short videos. These are also the most popular types of UGC online. The answers showed that UGC has an impact on how consumers think and feel about brands. Consumers trusted UGC more than advertising and said it directly affects what they buy. The study found that UGC makes consumers think positively about brands and also makes them more likely to buy. The results also showed that consumers are consistent in their responses, which makes the findings stronger. The study used a method to see how much of an impact Consumer Trust and Brand Perception have on Purchase Intention. It found that these two factors explain 23 percent of why people buy things. Brand Perception was the important factor and Consumer Trust was also significant. This proves that UGC has a positive impact on what consumers buy. The study concludes that UGC is now a factor in what consumers decide to buy. Brands and marketers need to use UGC to build trust improve brand perception and drive purchases.

5.2 Recommendations

Encourage and Actively Facilitate UGC Creation

The study found that people trust testimonials and reviews the most.

Brands should ask consumers to write reviews after they've bought something. This can be done through feedback campaigns or social media. By getting UGC brands can build trust with potential buyers. This is because UGC makes brands seem authentic.

Prioritise UGC Over Traditional Advertising in Digital Strategy

Most people, 83.8 percent said that UGC is more influential than advertising. This is a finding, for brands that spend a lot on traditional ads. They should focus more on UGC. Use real customer experiences in their marketing.

For businesses, it's advisable to refocus digital marketing efforts on UGC, viewing it not as an add-on, but as the mainstay of communication, such as using real customer experiences, testimonials, and user-generated reels.

Leverage Short-Form and Experience-Based Content Formats

The study found that short videos and testimonials are the popular types of UGC. They make up 59 percent of what people interact with. This means that consumers want content that is engaging, short and based on experiences. Brands should work with their customers and micro-influencers to create videos that show real product experiences.

This kind of content tends to be more relevant to audiences and will likely sway purchasing decisions, while well-produced brand content can seem less genuine.

Monitor and Respond to Negative UGC Proactively

The analysis showed that the negative UGC significantly influences the consumer's brand perception, and the mean of the corresponding item was 4.21. As the discovery here highlights, the impact of UGC isn't solely positive, and that any negative content can have a meaningful impact on brand reputation. Brands are advised to create targeted social listening policies for tracking consumer-generated content from various social platforms. Quick, honest, and proactive responses to negative reviews or comments can help limit reputational damage and, in some instances, even turn the tide of opinion for the brand and transform any dissatisfied customers into brand advocates.

6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The current research provides relevant information on the impact of UGC on consumers' behaviour, but it has some limitations that should be highlighted. First, the number of respondents is fairly small (68) for the purposes of robust statistical analysis and generalizability.

Second, convenience sampling results in possible sampling bias because the respondents were not randomly chosen but selected for convenience, thus limiting transferability of results to the larger population of online consumers.

Third, the data was gathered solely by way of a self-administered questionnaire, which means that the results may be subject to possible response bias and subjective interpretation.

Fourth, the sample was weighted toward the 18-24 age bracket, and this can make the study results less representative of the views of the older consumer groups.

Fifth, UGC was analyzed at a general level without separating out the impact of various formats, limiting the amount of format-level analysis. Sixth, the cross-sectional nature of the study only measures consumers' perceptions at a single time point and does not measure attitude or behavior changes over a long time.

Lastly, no geographic or platform-specific targeting allowed for regional/ cultural differences in UGC consumption behavior to be explored. These constraints should be taken into account when interpreting the results and provide clear directions for further in-depth research in the future.

7. CONCLUSION

The digital platform and the rapid development of social media have dramatically changed consumer information access, opinion building and purchasing behaviour. In this constantly changing environment, user generated content is one of the most powerful trends affecting consumers and it is a trend that is gradually taking the place of traditional advertising as an important source of information for a large number of internet users. The objective of this study was to gain insight into the nature of this influence, as well as its extent, and the answers are conclusive: UGC is not a side-issue in the digital world but an important part of consumer decisions.

The difference between UGC and traditional marketing communication is the authenticity it can be perceived as. Brands are now producing content which consumers are more wary about, as it is seen as promotional and self-serving. However, product was created by other customers, such as a review or a short form video, is so much more relatable to today's consumers. This authenticity equates to trust, and trust as this study proves is the basis for brand relationships and purchase decisions. If a potential buyer sees an honest review or another person's experience, the psychological hurdle is drastically reduced, and UGC can be one of the best and most compelling marketing tactics brands have at their disposal today.

The marketing implications are significant from a marketing perspective. Brands that keep sticking to their traditional advertising ways stand to become unengaged from the very consumers they hope to engage. The modern consumer doesn't want to be talked at, they want to be talked to. UGC is just that – it's a two-way exchange that's not the sole domain of marketing messages, but the domain of active participants who help build the brand story. Brands who are ahead of the curve are already understanding this, and are incorporating user-generated content as a way to foster community, increase credibility, and generate organic growth in their marketing efforts. The findings of this study confirm and reinforce this direction.

User-Generated Content is a two way thing. It can really help a brand when people say things about it and it can hurt a brand when people say bad things. This makes it very hard for brands to deal with User-Generated Content. They have to think about it as a way to market themselves. Also as a way to take care of their customers. Brands cannot just use User-Generated Content they have to build a relationship with their customers by talking to them being honest and making sure they are happy.

So User-Generated Content has changed the way brands and customers interact with each other. Now customers have a voice and can talk to lots of people easily. In the world of games where being relevant is very important User-Generated Content is a key part of how businesses market themselves and communicate with people. This research shows just how powerful it can be when a happy customer talks, about a brand. User-Generated Content is very important for marketing and brands need to pay attention to it to stay relevant and remembered.

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