

**Louvain School of Management
and Vytautas Magnus University**

THE INFLUENCE OF USER- GENERATED CONTENT ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY

Author's:
Erika Starožinskytė

Master's thesis with the view of getting the degrees:
Marketing and International Commerce +
Master 120 credits in Management, Corporate Sustainable Management

Supervisor's:
Miglė Šontaitė-Petkevičienė

Academic Year 2025-2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SANTRAUKA	4
SUMMARY	5
INTRODUCTION	6
1. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY	8
1.1 The concept of user-generated content	8
1.2 Types and forms of user-generated content	11
1.2.1 Types of user-generated content	11
1.2.2 Forms of user-generated content	13
1.3 The effect of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour	14
1.3.1 Theoretical foundation of consumer buying behaviour	14
1.3.2 Consumer purchase decision process	18
1.3.3 Key mechanisms through which UGC influences buying behaviour	20
1.4 The role of user-generated content in the beauty industry	24
1.5 Concluding notes on theoretical analysis	27
2. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH OF THE INFLUENCE OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY	28
2.1 Research methodology	28
2.2 Presentation of research object	35
2.3 Review of previous research	35
2.4 Online survey results	39
2.4.1 Sample characteristics	40
2.4.2 Descriptive statistics	40
2.4.3 Reliability analysis	42
2.4.4 Correlation analysis	43
2.4.5 Regression analysis	45
2.4 Summary of empirical research results	47
3. PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BEAUTY BRANDS AND USER-GENERATED CONTENT CREATORS	48
3.1 Problematic aspects of the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry	48
3.2 UGC leveraging model for improving consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry ...	50
3.3 Recommendations for the beauty brands	53
3.4 Recommendations for content creators	55

3.5 Concluding notes on practical recommendations	58
CONCLUSIONS	58
REFERENCES	61
ANNEXES	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Erika Starožinskytė. VARTOTOJŲ KURIAMO TURINIO ĮTAKA VARTOTOJŲ PIRKIMO ELGSENAI GROŽIO INDUSTRIJOJE: Marketingo ir tarptautinės komercijos studijų programos baigiamasis darbas / Darbo vadovė: Doc. Dr. Miglė Šontaitė-Petkevičienė / Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, Ekonomikos ir vadybos fakultetas, Magistrantūros studijos. – Kaunas, 2026. – 82 psl.

SANTRAUKA

Baigiamojo darbo problema – kaip vartotojų kuriamas turinys gali būti panaudotas siekiant paveikti vartotojų pirkimo elgseną grožio industrijoje.

Baigiamojo darbo objektas – vartotojų kuriamo turinio įtaka vartotojų pirkimo elgsenai grožio industrijoje.

Baigiamojo darbo tikslas – remiantis teorine analize ir empirinio tyrimo rezultatais, išnagrinėti vartotojų kuriamo turinio įtaką vartotojų pirkimo elgsenai grožio industrijoje ir pateikti praktines rekomendacijas.

Tyrimo metodai – mokslinės literatūros analizė, internetinė apklausa, aprašomoji statistinė analizė, patikimumo analizė, koreliacijos analizė ir daugialypė regresinė analizė.

Tyrimo rezultatai: vartotojų sukurtas turinys tapo svarbia skaitmeninės rinkodaros priemone, daranti įtaką vartotojų pirkimo elgsenai grožio pramonėje. Su grožiu susijęs vartotojų sukurtas turinys, dalijamasi socialinės žiniasklaidos platformose, daro įtaką vartotojų pirkimo elgsenai grožio pramonėje. Empirinių tyrimų rezultatai parodė, kad informacinė vertė, socialinis įsitikinimas ir autentiškumas daro didžiausią įtaką vartotojų sprendimams pirkti grožio produktus.

Išvados: sukurtas vartotojų kuriamo turinio (UGC) panaudojimo modelis suteikia grožio prekių ženklams ir turinio kūrėjams praktines gaires, kaip pasitelkti autentišką, informatyvų ir socialiniu patvirtinimu grįstą turinį, siekiant stiprinti vartotojų pasitikėjimą bei formuoti vartotojų pirkimo sprendimus grožio industrijoje.

Šis darbas yra projektinis magistro baigiamasis darbas.

Raktažodžiai: grožio industrija, socialiniai tinklai, skaitmeninė rinkodara, vartotojų kuriamas turinys, vartotojų elgsena.

Erika Starožinskytė. THE INFLUENCE OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY: Final Master Thesis in Marketing and International Commerce / Supervisor: Assoc.Prof., Dr. Miglė Šontaitė-Petkevičienė / Vytautas Magnus University, Faculty of Economics and Management, Graduate studies. – Kaunas, 2026. – 82 psl.

SUMMARY

The research problem – addressed in this paper is how user-generated content can be used to influence consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

The research object – the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

The aim of the paper – based on theoretical analysis and empirical research, to examine the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry and provide practical recommendations.

The research methods – the analysis of scientific literature, online survey, descriptive statistics analysis, reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis.

Research results: user-generated content has become an important digital marketing tool influencing consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry. Beauty-related user-generated content shared on social media platforms influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry. The empirical research results revealed that informational value, social proof, and authenticity have the strongest influence on consumer purchase decisions related to beauty products.

Conclusions: the developed user-generated content (UGC) leveraging model provides beauty brands and content creators with practical guidance on how to use authentic, informative, and socially validated content to strengthen consumer trust and influence purchase decisions in the beauty industry.

This paper is practical solutions oriented final master's thesis.

Keywords: beauty industry, digital marketing, social media, user-generated content, consumer behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the topic and level of its scientific research. In recent years, social media has become an increasingly important part of consumers' everyday lives, influencing not only communication and entertainment but also purchasing behaviour. Consumers are no longer limited to information provided by brands, as digital platforms allow them to access product reviews, recommendations, tutorials, and personal experiences shared by other users. As a result, purchase decisions are increasingly shaped by information encountered online, particularly in industries where visual presentation, personal experience, and perceived product effectiveness play an important role.

One of such industries is the beauty industry, which continues to experience rapid growth worldwide. The global beauty and personal care market is among the fastest growing markets globally. The beauty industry includes many products and services, such as skincare, cosmetics, perfumes, haircare, and personal care items (Turcu & Brancu, 2024). When consumers purchase beauty products, they often want to see real results and hear experiences of others. For this reason, social media and digital platforms have become important sources of information, allowing consumers to compare products, explore reviews, and better understand whether a product meets their needs and expectations.

User-generated content (UGC) is becoming an increasingly important part of consumer decision-making. Consumers are no longer interested only in information created by brands, but also in the experiences, reviews, recommendations, and opinions shared by other users online. Through social media platforms, consumers can access photos, videos, tutorials, and product reviews, which often help them better understand product quality, usage, and suitability before making a purchase decision. Because of this, UGC is becoming an important source of information that may influence consumer buying behaviour, especially in industries such as beauty.

Scientific research increasingly examines the role of user-generated content in influencing consumer behaviour. Previous studies have analysed the impact of UGC on consumer trust, purchase intention, engagement, perceived value, and decision-making processes in different contexts (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Ismagilova et al., 2020; Filieri, 2016). Researchers highlight that user-generated content may influence how consumers evaluate product quality, reduce uncertainty, and form opinions before making purchase decisions, particularly in online environments where consumers cannot physically test products (Filieri et al., 2018; Park et al., 2007).

However, despite the growing role of social media and beauty-related content in influencing consumer choices, there is still limited scientific research examining which characteristics of user-generated content have the strongest influence on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry. As consumers are exposed to large amounts of beauty-related content daily, understanding which

aspects of UGC most significantly influence purchasing decisions becomes increasingly relevant for both researchers and businesses.

The problem of the research addressed in this paper is how user-generated content influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

The object of the paper is the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

The aim of the paper is – based on theoretical analysis and empirical research, to examine the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry and provide practical recommendations.

In order to reach the aim of the paper, the following **objectives** were set:

- I. To analyse the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry theoretically.
- II. Based on the prepared methodology to conduct empirical research to investigate the influence of user-generated content factors on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.
- III. To provide practical recommendations for leveraging user-generated content to influence consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

The paper is **structured** in 3 main parts.

The first part focuses on the literature review and discusses what scientific research has discovered. In this part of the paper, all the theoretical analysis of the research problem is presented, referring to the latest scientific literature.

The second part presents the methodology and the results of quantitative analysis done for this paper on the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry survey.

The third part discusses the problematic aspects in the beauty industry, strategic model and recommendations for the beauty brands and user-generated content creators. Finally, the paper ends with conclusions of the research.

Research methods. Theoretical literature analysis, a survey questionnaire was used. This quantitative research methodology was employed to collect the participants' attitudes and perceptions on the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry. Other methods for data analysis used are descriptive statistical analysis, reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis.

Information sources. Scientific journals, databases, research papers, and articles.

The usage of generative artificial intelligence and its tools. DeepL for translation, Grammarly to improve language, ChatGPT for referencing requirements.

1. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY

This section of the master's paper focuses on analysing scientific literature on the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry. Firstly, it discusses the concept of user-generated content and background information. Then, the main types and forms of user-generated content, as well as the effect of user-generated content on customer buying behaviour. Finally, the role of user-generated content in the beauty industry is discussed in this paper.

1.1 The concept of user-generated content

User-generated content (UGC) emerged as a transformative force, and completely changed how information is being created, shared, and consumed across different platforms such as social media or e-commerce (Denga et al., 2023). UGC refers to any form of content, such as textual, visual, audio, or video, created and published by users rather than professional content creators or organisations (Timoshenko & Hauser, 2019). The proliferation of Web 2.0 technologies has enabled ordinary individuals to participate actively in content creation, which led to new dynamics in communication, marketing, consumer engagement, and how knowledge is being shared (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). UGC is recognised for its authenticity, relatability, and ability to foster trust among consumers. This phenomenon often surpasses traditional advertising with its impact (Niu, 2025). Since UGC often reflects evaluations of brands, products, services, and technologies, many consumers rely on UGC to support their purchasing decisions (Baier et al., 2025).

This review synthesises key findings from recent literature to provide a holistic understanding of the concept of user-generated content (*see Table 1*).

Table 1

Definitions of the concept of user-generated content

Author	Definition
Kaplan & Haenlein (2010)	User-Generated Content (UGC) refers to all ways people make use of social media, encompassing various forms of media content, such as posts, videos, blogs, and reviews, created by individuals rather than professionals.

Author	Definition
Bolin (2021)	User-generated content is a concept used to describe media produced outside professional media institutions by everyday media users.
OECD, as cited in Li & Huang (2019)	UGC is defined as content made publicly available over the Internet, that reflects a certain amount of creative effort rather than the mere reproduction of pre-existing work, and that is created outside of professional routines and practices.
Mathur et al. (2022)	UGC as self-generated content by users based on their personal experience, expressed in the form of different mediums (such as texts, images, video recordings, sound recording, blog posts, testimonials, podcasting, forums) using different platforms with other users or firms.
Santos (2022)	UGC is defined as any text, data, or action produced by an online user, published and disseminated through independent channels, that creates an expressive or communicative effect either individually or in combination with other users' contributions.

The transition to Web 2.0 was supported by the increased accessibility to digital technologies and the development of user-friendly interfaces: search engines, video-sharing platforms, and social networking sites in the early 2000s (Balbi et al., 2021). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have accelerated both the production and dissemination of UGC (J. Wang, 2024).

User-generated content was first conceptualised in the early 1990s as a concept to describe media content produced outside of professional media institutions by everyday media users (Bolin, 2021). Since then, several definitions have been proposed in the academic literature. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010, p. 61) define UGC broadly as “the sum of all ways in which people make use of social media, emphasising active user participation,” emphasising active user participation. A similar definition was proposed by Santos (2022), UGC is defined as any text, data, or action produced by an online user, published and disseminated through independent channels, that creates an expressive or communicative effect either individually or in combination with other users' contributions. Mathur et al. (2022) further defined UGC as self-generated content by users based on their personal experience, expressed in the form of different mediums (such as texts, images, video recordings, sound recordings, blog posts, testimonials, podcasting, forums) using different platforms with other users or firms.

In addition, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (as cited in Li & Huang 2019), UGC can be defined as content made publicly available over the Internet that reflects a certain amount of creative effort rather than the mere reproduction of pre-existing work, and that is created outside of professional routines and practices. This definition

highlights three main key elements in the UGC definition: it must be publicly available online, involve a certain level of creative effort, and be produced outside professional routines. While these definitions converge on participation and creativity, they differ in the degree of intentionality and effort required (Baier et al., 2025).

However, the requirement of “creative effort” remains vague. Schröder et al. (2025) argue that UGC must involve some level of user contribution, but there is no clear agreement on how much effort is enough. For instance, simply copying existing content, such as reposting a newspaper article or movie clip, does not count as UGC, whereas original contributions, such as blog posts, reviews, or user-created media, clearly fulfil these criteria. This idea clearly highlights the complexity of defining UGC in an evolving digital environment (Santos, 2022).

The rise of social media has played a crucial role in the creation and distribution of UGC. “Social media is a platform that enables users to establish connections with others through content exchange” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It allows individuals to maintain relationships with existing contacts or form new relationships (Van Dijk, 2020). The emergence of social media has transformed public communication, breaking down social barriers and facilitating unhindered interaction. It also provides individuals with opportunities for self-expression. As a social network, social media wields significant influence over public opinion and societal discourse (‘User-Generated Content’, 2025).

Incorporating UGC into content marketing strategies offers several benefits. Firstly, it provides social proof, showing potential customers that others have had positive experiences with the brand. Reviews and testimonials, for example, can influence purchasing decisions by providing genuine feedback from real users. Active participation increases engagement and expands the brand’s reach as users share their content with their own networks. Furthermore, users are motivated to share their experiences and see their content featured by the brand (Isibor et al., 2025).

Motivations for generating UGC include self-expression, social interaction, ego-defensive needs, knowledge sharing, community belongingness, entertainment, and influence. Attitudinal factors mediate both consumption and creation behaviours. Intrinsic motivations (e.g., enjoyment) often outweigh extrinsic ones (e.g., rewards) (Daugherty et al., 2008).

The vast volume of UGC presents challenges regarding quality control, misinformation and fake reviews, ethical concerns around consent and representation, and balancing openness with reliability (Choudhary et al., 2024; Hermida & Thurman, 2008).

User-generated content gives everyday people the power to create media and distribute content via social media (Chung, 2025). This shift has broken down traditional barriers between media professionals and amateurs, fostering a “producers” culture where individuals simultaneously produce and consume content (Caled & Silva, 2022).

Despite its benefits, user-generated content (UGC) raises significant ethical and regulatory concerns. One of the main concerns is copyright and consent. Even though user-generated content is publicly available, it is often unclear whether marketers can legally reuse it without getting explicit permission (Sujatmiko et al., 2025). Another concern is that unmoderated content can contribute to the spread of false or misleading information, potentially harming individuals, brands, and public discourse. The authenticity of UGC is another concern, as fake reviews, manipulated media, and misleading endorsements can erode consumer trust ('User-Generated Content', 2025). Furthermore,

To sum up, user-generated content has emerged from the transition to a more interactive and participatory digital environment driven by Web 2.0 technologies. The literature broadly defines UGC as publicly available, user-created digital content based on personal expression or experience. There is still out-going debate in the academic literature regarding the level of creativity or effort that is required for UGC. Even though UGC offers authenticity and strong influence on consumer decision-making, it also raises important concerns about misinformation, content authenticity, and a lack of quality control, emphasising the need for more responsible management.

1.2 Types and forms of user-generated content

This chapter presents the main types and forms of user-generated content (UGC). It explains the differences between non-sponsored (organic) and sponsored UGC, as well as the most common forms of UGC used on digital platforms, including textual, visual, and video content.

1.2.1 Types of user-generated content

User-generated content (UGC) can generally be divided into two main types: non-sponsored (organic) and sponsored UGC. This distinction is mainly based on the level of brand involvement in content creation and perceived motivation behind the message. Unlike brand-generated content, which is created and controlled by companies for promotional purposes, UGC is created by consumers or content creators and is often based on personal experiences, opinions, and recommendations (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Davcik et al., 2022).

Non-sponsored UGC refers to content created voluntarily by consumers without any financial compensation or formal agreement with a brand (Davcik et al., 2022). Consumers often view this content as more genuine and less manipulative, as UGC creators promote products based on their personal experiences rather than paid promotions (Yang & Wei, 2025). As a result, it functions as a particularly influential form of electronic word-of-mouth, which shapes brand perceptions and purchase decisions through peer-to-peer communication (Aljarah et al., 2024).

In contrast, sponsored brand-related UGC refers to content created in collaboration with a brand. It involves some form of compensation, such as monetary payment, free products, discounts or other incentives (Kim & Lee, 2017). This type of content has become increasingly common on social media platforms, especially in industries such as beauty and fashion, where creators often integrate products into tutorials, reviews, or everyday content (Yang & Wei, 2025).

Sponsored UGC offers several advantages. It gives brands control over how their product is presented (Ntousi et al., 2025). Through sponsored partnerships, brands may guide the message, highlight specific product features, and ensure that content aligns with their brand image while maintaining a more relatable communication style than traditional advertising (J. Wang, 2024). In addition, because sponsored collaborations are campaign-based, brands are able to monitor performance indicators and evaluate the effectiveness of their promotional activities (Ntousi et al., 2025).

However, consumers may respond differently to sponsored content when commercial intent becomes visible. According to Mohammad et al. (2023) the presence of sponsorship in user-generated content (UGC) can trigger the audience's "persuasion knowledge," causing them to view the content as a marketing attempt rather than a genuine recommendation. Sponsored posts usually include sponsorship disclosures, such as "paid partnership" labels or hashtags including #ad, which increase consumers' awareness of commercial intent (Kim & Lee, 2017). Research suggests that when consumers recognise persuasive intent, they may become more sceptical towards recommendations and perceive sponsored content as less authentic (Mayrhofer et al., 2020; Müller & Christandl, 2019).

In comparison, non-sponsored UGC may be less likely to trigger persuasion knowledge because consumers often perceive it as a personal recommendation rather than promotional content (Sarhour, 2025). Consumers often perceive organic posts as more authentic because recommendations are typically associated with genuine product experiences rather than financial motives (Mohammad et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the Role of Credibility is also important for sponsored content to be effective. Highly credible content creators can mitigate resistance to sponsored posts, as their followers may still find the information valuable despite the financial motive (Belanche et al., 2021).

The increasing commercialisation of UGC may create challenges related to transparency and consumer trust, particularly when consumers find it difficult to distinguish between genuine recommendations and promotional content (Mayrhofer et al., 2020; Mohammad et al., 2023). This issue may be especially relevant in the beauty industry, where purchasing decisions are often influenced by creators' personal experiences, product demonstrations, and perceived authenticity (Garg & Bakshi, 2024; Yang & Wei, 2025). In response, brands increasingly encourage users to create organic-looking branded content through hashtags, challenges, or product-related campaigns in order

to integrate marketing messages more naturally into consumers' social media environments (Mayrhofer et al., 2020).

1.2.2 Forms of user-generated content

User-generated content (UGC) exists in several formats. Each format influences consumers in different ways. Different formats offer content creators and brands in the beauty industry opportunities to showcase new products, present information, and introduce new beauty trends in various ways, such as text, visuals, and videos.

Textual UGC refers to any written content created and shared by users on online platforms, for example: *product reviews, articles, customer testimonials, social media posts, comments, and forum discussions*. This form of UGC is often viewed as more informative, as it enables users to read about other users' experiences and obtain more detailed information about product characteristics and performance (Mohamed, 2025; Zhuang et al., 2023). Positive reviews and authentic user experiences can enhance consumers' perceptions of product quality and perceived value, leading to more favourable attitudes toward products. Previous studies have found that credible and high-quality user-generated content (UGC) positively affects consumer attitudes, which may increase purchase intention (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Textual UGC is especially important in contexts where consumers actively seek detailed information about products and services. As a result, it may help reduce uncertainty and support more informed purchasing decisions (Kostić et al., 2026). However, the usefulness of textual UGC depends on the quality and credibility of information, as misleading or low-quality reviews may negatively affect product evaluations (Zhuang et al., 2023).

Visuals include photos, images, before-and-after content, and other visual materials shared by users on digital platforms. This type of content is particularly important in visually driven industries such as beauty and fashion, where product appearance and visible results often influence consumer decisions (Qin et al., 2024). Unlike brand-produced content, visual UGC is considered more authentic and trustworthy as it reflects the real experiences of other users, allowing potential buyers to engage with relatable and credible insights that resonate more deeply than polished advertising messages (Niu, 2025). This perceived authenticity is especially valued in the beauty industry, where consumers increasingly respond more positively to peer-created content than to traditional advertising (Younis, 2025). Also, it enhances consumers' ability to evaluate product appearance, usage, and outcomes, which can positively influence purchase intentions (Sang et al., 2024). The literature suggests that such visual content supports heuristic decision-making by providing immediate, easily interpretable cues about product quality and suitability (Baier et al., 2025).

Videos are one of the most engaging forms of content on digital platforms. Examples of Video

UGC in the beauty industry include *product demonstrations, tutorials, presentations, unboxing videos, and vlogs*. Videos are commonly used to explain certain issues, demonstrate a product or service performance, or present a topic of interest to the target audience (Kumar, 2024). Short video platforms provide users with opportunities to quickly create videos by integrating functions such as video recording, editing, and sharing. Users can publish short videos according to their preferences by using beauty filters, video editing tools, background music, and subtitles (Zhang et al., 2025). Video has established itself as a more persuasive format than text and images for product communication in digital environments. In the digital age, text and images alone may no longer be sufficient to capture consumer attention, as dynamic, comprehensive, and multi-dimensional content is increasingly preferred in digital environments (Fan et al., 2024). This shift is supported empirically: short video user-generated content has been found to generate stronger purchase intention than graphic content, which combines text and images, with perceived value acting as a key mediating mechanism (Qin et al., 2024). The persuasive advantage of video lies in its multimodal structure, as unlike unimodal formats, short video simultaneously integrates textual, audio, and visual information, offering a more comprehensive basis for assessing its impact on consumer engagement and purchase behaviour (Xiao et al., 2025).

To sum up, textual, visual, and video UGC each influence consumer behaviour in different ways. While textual content supports detailed information search and product evaluation, visual content helps consumers assess product appearance and expected outcomes, and video content provides more comprehensive demonstrations and experiences. Together, these forms of UGC play an important role in shaping how consumers evaluate products and make purchase decisions in digital environments.

1.3 The effect of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour

This section analyses the theoretical foundations of consumer buying behaviour, the consumer purchase decision-making process, and the key mechanisms through which user-generated content influences buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

1.3.1 Theoretical foundation of consumer buying behaviour

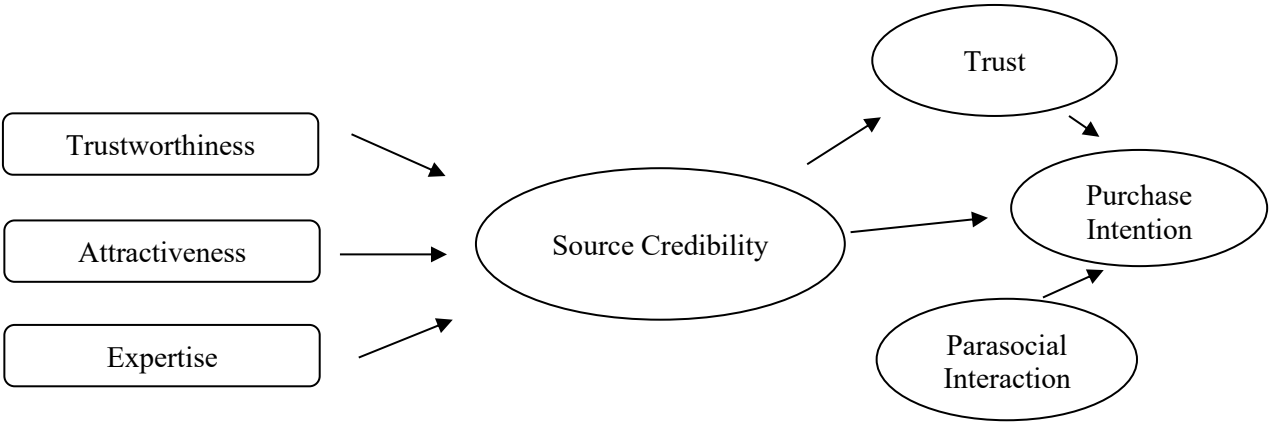
Source Credibility Theory is a foundational framework that explains how a communicator's characteristics influence a message's persuasiveness and the receiver's willingness to accept it (Ismagilova et al., 2020). In the context of the beauty industry, where consumers increasingly seek information online to reduce uncertainty, the perceived credibility of user-generated content (UGC)

plays an important role in helping consumers evaluate product recommendations (Tan & Md. Noor, 2025; Ismagilova et al., 2020). Credibility is generally defined as the judgment made by a perceiver regarding the believability of a communicator (Muda, 2021).

Source credibility theory, originally developed by Hovland and Weiss (1951), identifies expertise and trustworthiness as the two main dimensions of source credibility. However, as the beauty industry relies heavily on visual media like YouTube and Instagram, researchers have expanded this model to include attractiveness (Garg & Bakshi, 2024). The conceptual framework proposed by Garg and Bakshi (2024) is presented in *Figure 1*.

Figure 1

Beauty vloggers' credible attributes, parasocial interaction, and trust on consumer purchase intention



Source: Garg and Bakshi (2024).

Garg and Bakshi (2024) examined the impact of beauty vloggers' credibility, trust, and parasocial interaction on consumers' purchase intention in influencer marketing. Their conceptual framework is relevant to the present study because beauty vloggers create user-generated content that influences consumers' perceptions, trust, and purchasing behaviour within the beauty industry.

Source Credibility Theory suggests that individuals are more likely to accept information when the communicator is perceived as credible. This credibility is commonly conceptualised through three key dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Ohanian, 1990). In consumer behaviour, a highly credible source reduces perceived risk, increases message acceptance, and drives higher purchase intentions by appearing more trustworthy and knowledgeable (Sachu et al., 2025).

Expertise refers to the extent to which a source is perceived as being capable of providing correct information based on their knowledge, experience, or training (Ismagilova et al., 2020). In the beauty sector, a vlogger's expertise can be assessed through the quality of their makeup tutorials, the

number of reviews they have posted, and their proficiency with product applications. Expert sources are typically viewed as more persuasive because receivers have fewer reasons to doubt the information's technical accuracy (Muda, 2021).

Trustworthiness reflects the degree to which a source is perceived as honest, reliable, and unbiased. This dimension is particularly important in UGC contexts, as content is created by ordinary users rather than marketers. Prior research suggests that consumers often perceive UGC as more credible because it is seen as independent and less commercially motivated, which enhances perceived trustworthiness (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

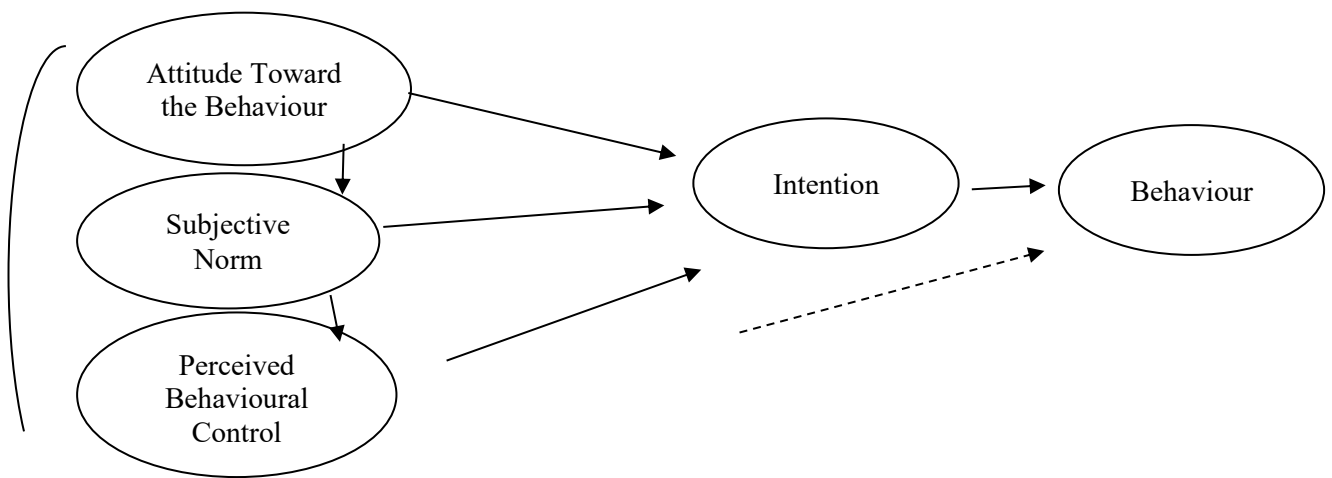
Attractiveness, within source credibility theory, extends beyond physical appearance to include factors such as similarity, familiarity, and likability (McGuire, 1985, as cited in Karimkhan & Chapa, 2025). In the context of UGC, attractiveness can be understood as relatability, where consumers are more likely to be influenced by individuals they perceive as similar to themselves (Ayoubi et al., 2024). This perceived similarity strengthens the message's persuasive impact and increases the likelihood of information adoption. Attractiveness is especially relevant in beauty vlogging. Attractiveness encompasses an endorser's physical attributes, likeability, and personality (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Because beauty products are intended to enhance physical appearance, attractive communicators often have a more positive impact on consumer attitudes and purchase aspirations (Muda, 2021).

UGC affects its *credibility* as a source and the usefulness of its information, as well as how it influences consumers' online purchase intention (Geng & Chen, 2021). Previous studies indicate that influencer credibility and parasocial interaction significantly influence consumers' purchase intention toward products promoted through user-generated content (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Furthermore, UGC can positively influence consumer trust, attitudes, and loyalty by sharing real user experiences. And this ability to boost brand trust and the credibility of information sources changes the relationship between consumers and brands, resulting in stronger commitment to products and increased purchase intentions (Niu, 2025).

The theory of planned behaviour (TPB), developed by Icek Ajzen, is one of the most widely used theoretical frameworks for predicting human intentions and subsequent behaviours (Rozenkowska, 2023). The model posits that consumer behaviour is driven by behavioural intentions, which are shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Consumer attitude refers to an individual's overall evaluation of a product or service and is widely regarded as a key determinant of behavioural intention (Ajzen, 1991). In consumer research, TPB model is widely applied to explain decision-making processes, particularly in contexts where behaviour is deliberate and information driven. The Theory of Planned Behaviour model proposed by Ajzen (1991) is presented in *Figure 2*.

Figure 2

Theory of Planned Behaviour model



Source: Ajzen (1991)

TPB provides a useful framework for understanding how online information influences consumer buying behaviour. Attitude toward the behaviour refers to an individual's overall evaluation of performing the behaviour and is considered a central determinant of intention. It is formed through beliefs about the likely outcomes of the behaviour and the value placed on those outcomes (Ajzen, 1991). A more favourable evaluation is expected to result in stronger behavioural intentions.

Attitude refers to an individual's favourable or unfavourable evaluation of performing a specific action, such as purchasing a beauty product (Rozenkowska, 2023). In beauty research, attitude is frequently found to be the most significant predictor of purchase intention (Echchad & Ghaith, 2022). For instance, in studies of organic coconut cosmetics and green beauty products, a positive attitude rooted in perceived health and safety benefits directly correlates with stronger purchase intentions (Photcharoen et al., 2020).

Subjective norms capture the perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a behaviour. This construct is based on normative beliefs regarding whether (e.g., family, peers) approve or disapprove of the behaviour, as well as the individual's motivation to comply with these expectations (Photcharoen et al., 2020). In the context of UGC, this construct is particularly relevant because social influence often shapes consumers' purchase decisions. Sources indicate that social influence often drives consumers to buy products to maintain relationships or achieve social functions. However, its influence can vary; while significant in green cosmetics (Echchad & Ghaith, 2022), it was found to be the weakest predictor for certain medical beauty products, suggesting that personal motives may sometimes outweigh social pressure (Mokhtar & Mokhlis, 2021).

Perceived behavioural control refers to the extent to which individuals believe they have the ability, resources, and opportunities to perform the behaviour. It is conceptually similar to self-efficacy and reflects both internal capabilities and external constraints. Perceived behavioural control not only influences behavioural intention but may also directly affect behaviour when actual control is limited (Ajzen, 1991). In the beauty industry, this may include the accessibility of products, the time required to research ingredients, or financial power (Photcharoen et al., 2020).

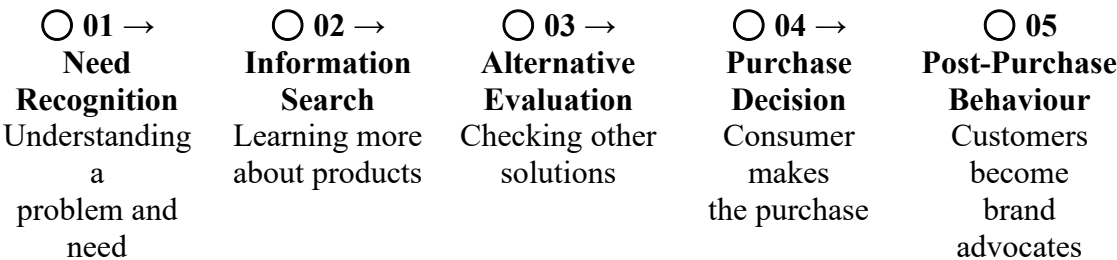
Attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control are the three components that determine behavioural intention, which is widely regarded as the most immediate predictor of actual behaviour in consumption contexts (Rozenkowska, 2023). The TPB framework, therefore, provides a structured approach to understanding how cognitive evaluations, social influences, and perceived control interact to shape consumer decision-making.

1.3.2 Consumer purchase decision process

The consumer purchase decision process is traditionally conceptualised as a five-stage framework that describes how individuals allocate resources to satisfy their needs. It explains how consumers recognise needs, gather information, evaluate alternatives, and ultimately make purchasing decisions (Gupta et al., 2023). In the modern digital landscape, this process has evolved into a dynamic and iterative customer journey, consisting of prepurchase, purchase, and post-purchase phases, where User-Generated Content (UGC) serves as a critical external influence at every touchpoint (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Modern consumers no longer act as passive recipients of brand messages but actively “pull” information from peers to navigate the journey from initial awareness to post-purchase advocacy (Court et al., 2009; Schröder et al., 2025). The consumer decision-making process is presented in *Figure 3*.

Figure 3

Consumer decision-making process



Source: adapted based on Gupta et al. (2023)

Need recognition:

Need recognition is the initial stage of the decision-making process, in which a consumer becomes aware of a discrepancy between their current and desired state. This stage, also referred to as problem recognition, can be triggered by either internal stimuli (e.g., physiological needs) or external stimuli (Gupta et al., 2023). In the beauty industry, UGC serves as a powerful external stimulus; for instance, unsolicited social media posts or peer recommendations can raise awareness and prompt a need for a product the consumer was not previously considering. Social media content is particularly effective at initiating awareness across all engagement levels, often sparking interest before a formal search begins (Schröder et al., 2025).

Information search:

Once a need is recognised, consumers seek information to reduce uncertainty (Gupta et al., 2023). During this stage, they actively seek information about products or services from various sources. In this stage, consumers rely on user-generated content (UGC), such as online reviews, ratings, tutorials, and user experiences, as a key source of information (Rachmiani et al., 2024). Moreover, social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram provide visual and experiential data, including tutorials and reels, which are essential for evaluating aesthetic products (Schröder et al., 2025).

Evaluation of alternatives:

After gathering information, consumers will begin the review of alternatives stage. During this stage, consumers compare various brands based on attributes such as price, quality, and features. When a consumer gathers details about a product or brand, they rate and assess the product (Gupta et al., 2023). UGC plays a critical role in this stage by providing experiential and comparative insights that go beyond objective product attributes. Consumers use peer-generated content to assess product performance in real-life contexts. During this stage, they are influenced not only by product-related information but also by others' perceived opinions and behaviours (Schröder et al., 2025).

Purchase decision:

The purchase decision represents the stage at which the consumer selects a product and proceeds with the transaction (Gupta et al., 2023). This decision is formed after evaluating information from multiple sources and determining which option best satisfies their needs. Product reviews on the website can reaffirm a consumer's confidence and mitigate frustrations during a complex checkout process (Schröder et al., 2025). However, research suggests that negative electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) from influencers or peers can swiftly damage brand loyalty. Exposure to unfavourable content can lead to brand dissatisfaction and abandonment, as consumers often find rejections of a product more contagious than positive choices (Hasrini et al., 2025).

Post-Purchase:

The post-purchase stage involves the consumer's evaluation of a product or service after use, which influences satisfaction, loyalty and willingness to recommend the brand in the future. In digital environments, consumers often share their experiences through UGC, such as reviews, ratings, or social media posts. This contributes to electronic word-of-mouth and provides additional information for prospective consumers, thereby influencing subsequent purchase decisions (Gupta et al., 2023). Furthermore, post-purchase behaviour contributes to a continuous feedback loop, as consumers who create UGC influence the decision-making processes of others, reinforcing the interconnected nature of the customer journey (Schröder et al., 2025).

In conclusion, for high-involvement products like those in the beauty industry, consumers typically move through all five stages, relying heavily on the volume, valence, and visual nature of UGC to navigate the journey from awareness to advocacy.

1.3.3 Key mechanisms through which UGC influences buying behaviour

a. Trust and credibility

Trust and credibility are widely recognised as important mechanisms through which UGC influences consumer buying behaviour. UGC, particularly in the form of user reviews and ratings, reduces perceived uncertainty and facilitates consumer decision-making, with trust functioning as a critical mediating mechanism between UGC exposure and purchase-related behaviour (Kostić et al., 2026). Consumers tend to trust peer-generated content more than traditional advertising because it is perceived as unbiased and free from commercial motivation (Al-Abdallah & Wright, 2025). Research confirms a significant direct and indirect pathway running from UGC through trust to purchase intention, with authenticity identified as the key driver of that trust (Bashir et al., 2025). This pathway is theoretically supported by the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which suggests that source credibility influences how consumers process persuasive information. Trustworthiness, defined as the extent to which a message receiver accepts and is confident in the message sender, makes consumers more likely to internalise recommendations perceived as unbiased (H. Li & See-To, 2024). At the empirical level, perceived credibility and trust in information mediate the influence of UGC on purchase intention, with tie strength and prior knowledge further moderating this relationship (Bashir et al., 2025). In the beauty context specifically, beauty vloggers' credibility attributes, including trustworthiness and expertise, help consumers build trust, which in turn leads to increased purchase intention, with trust confirmed as a significant mediator between source credibility and buying behaviour (Garg & Bakshi, 2024). However, trust in UGC may be weakened when consumers

perceive content as commercially motivated or question the authenticity of recommendations, particularly in cases involving sponsorship disclosures or highly promotional content (Mayrhofer et al., 2020; Mohammad et al., 2023). Nevertheless, trust and credibility remain important mechanisms through which UGC may influence consumer attitudes and purchase decisions, particularly when content is perceived as authentic and reliable.

b. Social proof and conformity

Beyond trust, UGC influences buying behaviour through social proof. Rooted in Cialdini's (2001) foundational principle, social proof describes the tendency of individuals to look to the behaviour and opinions of others as a guide for their own decisions, particularly in situations of uncertainty. Social influence involves processes such as conformity, persuasion, and peer influence, whereby consumers' decisions may be shaped by the behaviour and opinions of others, particularly when the information source is perceived as credible (Liang et al., 2024). In the context of UGC, this principle operates through normative and informational channels: both the informational and normative features of UGC significantly affect consumers' purchase intentions, with perceived value mediating the relationship between informational UGC features and purchase intention (L. Wang et al., 2025). Amblee & Bui discovered that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) among social communities, such as online ratings and reviews, is a useful and effective signal of product reputation for a shopper yet to have a purchasing experience (Abdul Talib & Mat Saat, 2017). Social proof theory is closely linked to consumer engagement. It suggests that social proof enhances consumer engagement by signalling the popularity and credibility of a product (Bhattacharyya & Bose, 2020). This effect is particularly relevant in the beauty and personal care industry, where applying social proof theory, consumers validate the appropriateness of their purchase decisions through social comparison with peers, making them more willing to act in ways consistent with how their friends and others have behaved (Zollo et al., 2021). Empirical analysis of real consumer review data further confirms that the normative features of UGC, such as review volume and community consensus, operate as powerful behavioural cues that guide purchase decisions, especially in product categories where consumers face high perceived uncertainty (L. Wang et al., 2025).

c. Perceived risk reduction

Another key mechanism is the reduction of perceived risk. Grounded in Perceived Risk Theory (Bauer, 1960), perceived risk refers to the uncertainty consumers experience regarding the potential negative consequences of a purchase decision, and is recognised as one of the most

significant barriers to online purchase intention (Phamthi et al., 2024). Consumers frequently rely on UGC before making purchase decisions, particularly in online environments where products cannot be physically inspected prior to purchase (S. G. Li et al., 2021). Informative and detailed online reviews serve to mitigate shopping uncertainty and strengthen consumer purchase intention, particularly for experiential products where quality cannot be assessed prior to purchase (Jia et al., 2023). eWOM credibility, quantity, and usefulness all play a role in this process, with perceived risk shown to significantly moderate the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention, with high-quality peer content attenuating risk perceptions and increasing consumer confidence in online purchase decisions (Bogdan et al., 2025). Ventre and Kolbe (2020) further demonstrated that the perceived usefulness of online reviews and trust positively influence purchase intention, while perceived risk remains a significant barrier in e-commerce settings, supporting the argument that UGC works partly by reassuring consumers that the product and its likely outcome are sufficiently reliable. However, the effectiveness of UGC in reducing perceived risk may depend on the reliability and transparency of the information provided, as misleading reviews, exaggerated product claims, or commercially motivated content may distort consumer expectations and reduce confidence in purchase decisions (Mayrhofer et al., 2020; Mohammad et al., 2023).

d. Emotional engagement

UGC also affects buying behaviour through emotional engagement. Unlike traditional advertising, peer-created content often includes personal stories, routines, frustrations, transformations, and lived experiences that allow audiences to relate emotionally to the creator (Halliday, 2016). Grounded in Emotional Contagion Theory, social interactions can trigger emotional contagion between individuals resulting in behavioural synchrony, making emotional resonance a powerful mechanism in digital persuasion (Herrando & Constantinides, 2021). UGC has a significant positive impact on both user emotions and purchase intentions, with user emotions confirmed as a key mediating mechanism between UGC exposure and buying behaviour (Sang et al., 2024). The relatable and personal nature of peer content is central to this process, as UGC and vlogs can foster emotional connections and communicate product information authentically, thereby influencing Generation Z's purchasing interest (Rahman et al., 2025)

More recent work supports the importance of emotional pathways in digital persuasion. Wang et al. (2025) found that relatability positively affects purchase intention through perceived emotional value, showing that emotionally resonant social media content can increase consumers' willingness to buy. Although this study focuses on social media fashion influencers rather than all UGC broadly,

it is directly relevant because UGC and creator-led content often operate through the same mechanism of relatability, emotional connection, and everyday storytelling (Rahman et al., 2025). The overall perceived value of UGC encompasses functional, social, and emotional dimensions, with emotional value playing a distinct and significant role in shaping consumer attitudes and subsequent purchase behaviour (Chung, 2025).

e. Informational influence

UGC exerts a strong informational influence by offering practical, experience-based knowledge about product performance (L. Wang et al., 2025). Grounded in the Information Adoption Model (IAM), as a form of UGC, eWOM shapes purchase intention through a sequential process in which information credibility drives information usefulness, which in turn influences information adoption and ultimately purchase intention (Ngo et al., 2024). Informational influence occurs when consumers adopt information, opinions, or recommendations from others to reduce uncertainty and guide their purchasing decisions (Leong et al., 2022). According to Husain et al. (2017), consumers' assessment of the usefulness of information found in comments or discussions on social media is key in determining whether the information is useful or not (Hussain et al., 2017). For consumers of e-commerce, it is impossible to evaluate the quality of the products, as they are unable to test them before purchase, especially with products in the beauty industry (Rosillo-Díaz et al., 2024). UGC, particularly consumer reviews, is identified as a key mechanism through which consumers access real consumption experiences that help bridge this knowledge gap (Wan & Zhao, 2025). Consumers may perceive non-sponsored UGC as particularly valuable in this process because information based on genuine product experiences is often considered more authentic and informative than commercially motivated recommendations (Mohammad et al., 2023; Yang & Wei, 2025). To make decisions, consumers actively seek information that incorporates evaluations and experiences from their fellow consumers, notably through online reviews. Studies indicate that more than half of consumers consider online reviews to be a critical source of information when deciding on a purchase (Ahn & Lee, 2024). Information quantity also represents the number of people who provide reviews about products, meaning that the products have good sales and good reputations, which reduces doubt when purchasing products (Ho et al., 2021). When the product information content is relevant to the consumer, there is a favourable influence on the consumer's intention to purchase the product (Alalwan, 2018).

1.4 The role of user-generated content in the beauty industry

User-generated content shared through social media has changed the way people interact with the beauty industry. From viral challenges to everyday users sharing their own experiences, these platforms provide a mix of trends and authentic stories that shape what consumers notice, try, and eventually buy (Liu, 2025). Due to the influence of social media and beauty-related user-generated content, online shopping has experienced a rise, leading to a significant increase in internet purchases (McClure & Seock, 2020).

Choi et al. (2017) found that younger consumers, particularly Generation Z, tend to trust traditional advertising less and are more strongly influenced by UGC when making purchasing decisions. This increased reliance on peer-generated content reflects broader shifts in consumer behaviour, where credibility and relatability are valued more highly than professionally produced promotional messages (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Following skincare trends without knowing their impact on one's skin could be hazardous. Skincare and beauty influencers have a significant effect on audiences' product-buying choices (Alamer et al., 2023).

One of the most widely used platforms in the beauty industry for showcasing products is TikTok. It is a rapidly growing social media platform, and its user base exceeded 1.562 billion in January of 2024. This platform is a visually oriented applications that allow users to record short videos ranging from a few seconds to several minutes, often accompanied by music tracks of their choice (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022). TikTok has emerged as particularly influential in the beauty sector due to several distinctive characteristics. The platform's recommendation algorithm creates unique opportunities for viral content while its youthful demographics align with core beauty consumers (Tian, 2025).

On TikTok, various types of video content are popular, such as product reviews (good or bad), makeup tutorials that demonstrate how to apply makeup, creative expression, or just vlogs that include daily routines, product reviews, and many others (Omar & Dequan, 2020). These formats provide both informational and emotional value, allowing consumers to observe product performance in real-life contexts. This type of content may support consumer evaluation of beauty products, particularly during the evaluation stage of the decision-making process (Rachmiani et al., 2024). In 2023, TikTok was the top social media platform for purchasing beauty products online in the United States, accounting for nearly 33 percent of sales. Instagram followed in second place with just over 28 percent (Statista, 2023).

TikTok livestreams integrate shopping and product demonstrations directly within the app, enabling users to interact with hosts and make purchases without leaving the platform (Ariffin et al., 2024). Bringing the experience of in-store shopping guides online means hosts can show off and talk

about products live to anyone watching, no matter where they are. These livestreams are not just about listing features. They are also about chatting with viewers, sharing opinions, and reacting to questions or emotions in the moment. It is a more personal way for people to learn about products and connect with others (X. Chen et al., 2023).

Furthermore, TikTok's advanced algorithm personalises content based on user interactions. TikTok's algorithm is designed to recommend content to users by analysing multiple signals, including user interactions (likes, shares, comments), content details (hashtags, captions), and device or account preferences. By combining collaborative and content-based methods, it curates a tailored "For You" page for each user (Zhou, 2024). This recommendation system significantly increases the visibility of UGC and facilitates the rapid spread of viral content. High engagement metrics, such as likes, comments, and shares, serve as indicators of popularity and function as social proof, reinforcing consumers' perceptions of product desirability (J. Wang, 2024).

In addition to the recommendation algorithm, TikTok allows users to find beauty-related content such as skincare routines or makeup tutorials, follow beauty influencers, and explore trending hashtags on the Discover page. These features help beauty brands amplify their reach and encourage consumers to participate in content creation through challenges and campaigns while amplifying brand messaging (Liu, 2025; Tian, 2025).

YouTube is an ideal platform for users to share their experience of buying and using products with other YouTube users. Fashion and beauty-related content, makeup and skincare tips, cosmetics hauls, and product reviews were among the most popular topics among the millions of contents on YouTube, with over 169 billion video views in 2018 (Clement, 2019). For example, Bhattacharya & Dhingra (2023) examined how unboxing videos on YouTube influence viewers' purchase intentions. Unboxing in their research is described as a social media phenomenon in which creators open and review products on video for their audience. The research showed that information-seeking was identified as the strongest predictor of purchase intention, particularly among viewers who seek detailed product information.

YouTube differs from TikTok and Instagram by functioning primarily as a search-driven, long-form content platform. In 2020, YouTube, a site that incorporates both streaming and social elements, had over 2 billion subscribers globally and was the second-largest search engine behind Google (Cooper, 2019). While TikTok/Instagram focus on immediate, viral reach via trending audio and visual aesthetics, YouTube rewards deeper engagement, retention, and educational, searchable content (Hayirli, 2025). YouTube is a popular video-sharing platform where reviewers can upload videos about products. This audio-visual format gives viewers a more engaging way to learn about items. Many of these reviews are both informative and entertaining (Le et al., 2025). In 2021, YouTube added a new feature that allows video creators (also known as YouTubers) to tag products

in their videos. Viewers can click on those tags to view information, related videos, and even purchase the products (Huang et al., 2022). According to Google, YouTube users are looking for various entertainment content by 57 percent, while 86 percent watch YouTube to find the latest sources of information (Febriyantoro, 2020). YouTubers upload reviews in an audio-visual format that enables consumers to generate sensory and nonsensory experiences of the reviewed product, such as product performance, colour, and type (Huang et al., 2022). YouTube product reviews often show the content creators themselves, speaking directly to the camera and sharing their experiences. To make their videos more engaging, YouTubers incorporate sensory elements such as visuals and voiceovers (Petit et al., 2019).

Instagram, in contrast, is an image-based platform which emphasises visual content as the primary form of communication, shaping new perspectives on beauty, lifestyle, and culture (Eka Putra & Afrilian, 2025). Instagram is known as a platform for aspirational fashion and lifestyle content. Different user groups, such as celebrities, influencers, individuals, and brands, often create carefully selected posts that highlight only the most appealing moments (Hund, 2017). The name, Instagram, is a portmanteau of “instant camera” and “telegram”, so Instagram allows users to upload digital images that can be edited with filters and organised by hashtags and geographical tagging (Uti & Marcella-Hood, 2025). Instagram uses images as its main way of communicating, which has made it especially popular with Millennials and Generation Z. These groups are more used to getting information through pictures and videos than through text (Uti & Marcella-Hood, 2025). Users often post selfies or pictures of things they like, such as products or favourite brands, and share them on their feed. Instagram focuses on curated visuals, lifestyle branding, and diverse visual formats like photos, stories, carousels, and reels. In contrast, TikTok highlights algorithm-driven discovery of short videos, while YouTube leads in long-form, searchable video content (Rajendran et al., 2024; Zannettou et al., 2023).

Visual attractiveness is an important aspect of visual content, and it can help to catch attention. However, studies show that attractiveness alone does not strongly influence purchasing decisions in the long-term, and credibility is more important than visual appeal. Consumers today are more aware of promotional content and may see highly polished content as less authentic. Instead, content that demonstrates expertise and honesty has a stronger and more lasting impact on consumer behaviour. This shift reflects a change in consumer behaviour, where credibility is valued more than appearance in digital marketing (Tan & Md. Noor, 2025).

In conclusion, social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram are essential in the beauty industry as they shape product discovery, provide experiential information, and build consumer trust through user-generated content. By combining visual appeal, peer influence, and interactive engagement, these platforms play a key role in influencing how consumers perceive,

evaluate, and ultimately purchase beauty products.

1.5 Concluding notes on theoretical analysis

User-generated content (UGC) has become an integral part of the shift from a static, information-driven internet to a more interactive and participatory online world. Platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram have transformed users from passive consumers into active creators, allowing people to share their experiences and perspectives with a global audience. While scholars define UGC in various ways, there's a common view that it includes any publicly accessible, user-created content that showcases personal expression or experience, though it is still debated how much originality or creativity is necessary for something to count as UGC.

Theories like source credibility and planned behaviour help explain why UGC has such a strong impact on how people make decisions online. UGC shapes what people buy and how they feel about brands in several ways by building trust, offering social proof, reducing perceived risks, sparking emotional connections, and providing useful information. These mechanisms operate across all stages of the consumer decision-making process.

To sum up, UGC plays a critical role in shaping consumer attitudes, reducing uncertainty, and influencing purchase intentions, particularly in online and social media contexts. However, the increasing professionalisation of content creation and the blurred distinction between organic and sponsored content raise concerns regarding authenticity and credibility. This highlights the need for further research into how consumers evaluate and respond to different forms of UGC in evolving digital landscapes.

2. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH OF THE INFLUENCE OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY

This part of the master's paper describes the methodology of the research: the aim, object, objectives, sampling, and data collection methods. It presents the results of quantitative analysis on the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

2.1 Research methodology

The aim of this empirical research is to examine how UGC influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

The empirical object of this research is the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

To reach the **methodology aim**, the following empirical objectives were set:

- To conduct quantitative research based on the prepared methodology.
- To analyse research results and make necessary conclusions.
- To summarise results and provide practical recommendations.

For this study, empirical research was conducted to examine how UGC influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry. In the theoretical part of this study, a comparative method based on authors' views in the scientific literature was used to identify the key factors influencing consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry. Particular attention was given to the role of user-generated content and its characteristics:

H1: Source credibility positively influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

H2: Perceived authenticity of non-sponsored user-generated content positively influences consumers' purchase behaviour.

H3: Social proof positively influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

H4: Perceived risk reduction positively influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

H5: Emotional engagement positively influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

H6: Informational value positively influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

Research type

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine how user-generated content (UGC) influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry. A quantitative design was considered appropriate because it allows relationships between variables to be measured and analysed in a structured way, making it possible to test the proposed hypotheses.

Research method

In this paper, the survey method was chosen. A survey method was applied using a one-time frame, a simple online questionnaire. The questionnaire was applied to participants online through Google Forms, which provided a user-friendly interface and gave the opportunity to choose from different types of questions.

Questionnaire surveys are a popular data collection method for academic or marketing research in a variety of fields. The online questionnaire option is a free method that allows for the reach of a wide variety of participants. Also, it is a great method to collect large amounts of data from participants in a short time frame (Regmi et al., 2017).

Every question of the survey consisted of five answer options on the five-point Likert scale to measure participants' attitudes, perceptions, and opinions. The original Likert scale is a set of statements(items) offered for a real or hypothetical situation under study. Participants are asked to show their level of agreement (from strongly disagree to strongly agree) with the given statement (items) on a metric scale (Joshi et al., 2015).

The validity of the research questions

The questions were divided into several sections: the first section provided screening questions (questions 1–2). The second section examined the impact and use of user-generated content in the beauty industry (questions 3–6). The third section assessed the source credibility (questions 7–11), and the fourth section assessed perceptions of sponsored and unsponsored user-generated content (questions 12–15). The fifth section examined social proof (questions 16–19), the sixth section assessed perceived risk reduction (questions 20–22), and the seventh section focused on emotional engagement (questions 23–25). The eighth section analysed the informational value of user-generated content (questions 26–28), and the ninth section examined purchasing behaviour (questions 29–32).

The tenth section assessed behavioural intention (question 33), and the final section included demographic questions (questions 34–36). Justification is provided in *Table 2* below.

Table 2

Justification of the questions

Questions group	Questions	Justification of questions
Screening questions	Q1. Have you purchased beauty products (e.g., skincare, makeup, haircare) online in the past 6 months? Q2. Do you use social media platforms?	The purpose of screening questions is to ensure that respondents belong to the study's target population. In this case, people who purchase beauty products online and use social media.
Social media usage and exposure to UGC	Q3. Which social media platforms do you use regularly? Q4. How often do you encounter beauty-related user-generated content? Q5. Which type of beauty-related user-generated content do you engage with the most? Q6. How much attention do you pay to beauty-related user-generated content about beauty products?	Social media interaction questions. These questions aim to identify respondents' social media usage habits, exposure to beauty-related UGC, and the types of content they engage with the most frequently.
Source credibility	Q7. I perceive beauty-related user-generated content about beauty products as honest Q8. I trust the opinions expressed in user-generated content about beauty products Q9. User-generated content creators are knowledgeable about beauty products Q10. User-generated content provides reliable information about beauty products Q11. I relate to people who create content about beauty products	Questions 7–11 aim to evaluate the perceived credibility of beauty-related UGC, including trustworthiness, expertise, reliability, and relatability of content creators. The questions are grounded in Source Credibility Theory. H1: Source credibility positively influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.
Sponsored vs non-sponsored UGC	Q12. I trust non-sponsored (organic) user-generated content about beauty products more than brand-created content Q13. Non-sponsored user-generated content about beauty products feels more authentic Q14. Sponsored user-generated content about beauty products	These questions seek to examine differences in consumer perception of sponsored and non-sponsored UGC. Regarding trust, authenticity, and willingness to follow recommendations. These questions are designed to test: H2: Perceived authenticity of non-sponsored

Continuation of Table 2

Questions group	Questions	Justification of questions
Sponsored vs non-sponsored UGC	(#ad, paid partnerships) feels less trustworthy Q15. Sponsorship reduces my willingness to follow recommendations about beauty products	user-generated content positively influences consumers' purchase behaviour.
Social proof	Q16. I am influenced by how many people like or share beauty products Q17. High ratings increase my trust in beauty products Q18. I prefer beauty products that are popular on social media Q19. I am more likely to try beauty products that many others recommend	These questions aim to assess the influence of social proof mechanisms, such as likes, shares, ratings, popularity, and peer recommendations on consumer buying behaviour. These questions are designed to test: H3: Social proof positively influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.
Perceived risk reduction	Q20. User-generated content reduces my uncertainty about beauty products Q21. User-generated content helps me avoid poor purchase decisions when buying beauty products Q22. User-generated content increases my confidence when choosing beauty products	These questions evaluate whether UGC reduces consumer uncertainty, increases confidence, and helps to avoid poor purchase decisions. These questions are designed to test: H4: Perceived risk reduction positively influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.
Emotional engagement	Q23. I feel emotionally connected to the creators of user-generated content about beauty products Q24. Personal stories about beauty products make them more appealing Q25. I trust content about beauty products that feels authentic and relatable	These questions aim to assess emotional connection, relatability, and authenticity in beauty-related UGC. These questions are designed to test: H5: Emotional engagement positively influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.
Informational value	Q26. User-generated content provides useful real-life information about beauty products Q27. User-generated content helps me evaluate the quality of beauty products Q28. User-generated content helps me understand whether beauty products suit my needs	These questions examine the informational influence of UGC by evaluating whether consumers perceive it as useful, diagnostic, and helpful when assessing product suitability. These questions test: H6: Informational value positively influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

Continuation of Table 2

Questions group	Questions	Justification of questions
Purchase Behaviour	Q29. I have purchased a beauty product after seeing user-generated content Q30. I searched for a beauty product after seeing it in user-generated content Q31. I have saved or bookmarked beauty products featured in user-generated content Q32. User-generated content plays an important role in my decisions to purchase beauty products	Questions 29-32 seek to evaluate the influence of UGC on consumer purchase related behaviour.
Behavioural intention	Q33. I intend to rely on user-generated content in the future when making beauty product purchases	The purpose of question 33 is to assess respondents' future intention to rely on UGC when purchasing beauty products. The question is based on the theory of planned behaviour.
Demographic questions	Q34. What is your age? Q35. What is your gender? Q36. How often do you purchase beauty products?	Questions 34–36 are included to identify respondents' demographic characteristics and purchasing frequency. These questions allow comparison of behavioural differences between respondent groups.

Sampling

The respondents were selected using convenience sampling due to the accessibility of participants through social media platforms and the practical constraints associated with distributing an online questionnaire. This sampling method was considered appropriate because the study focuses on active social media users who purchase beauty products and are therefore more likely to be exposed to user-generated content.

A two-step filtering process was applied in order to ensure that only relevant respondents participated in the survey. The first filter question determined whether the respondent had purchased beauty products, while the second filter question identified whether the respondent uses social media platforms. Only those who met both criteria were allowed to complete the full questionnaire.

The target group of the research consists of individuals who are both active social media users and consumers of beauty products, as these individuals are more likely to be exposed to and influenced by user-generated content. Due to time and resource limitations, the sample was not

controlled for demographic balance, which may result in uneven representation across different groups. However, considering the nature of the beauty industry, the sample remains relevant for analysing the influence of UGC on consumer buying behaviour. An additional limitation concerns demographic data collection, as the gender question was added after the questionnaire had already been distributed, resulting in a lower number of responses for this variable than the total sample size.

Since the target population of active social media users purchasing beauty products is large and difficult to determine precisely, the minimum sample size was calculated using the Paniotto formula with a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%: $1 / (\Delta^2 + 1/N) = n$. Where, n-required sample size, N-target population; Δ -margin of error. Based on this formula the minimum required sample size was determined to be 385 respondents (calculator.net, 2019). The survey collected 385 completed responses worldwide, which reaches the minimum required sample size and ensures the statistical reliability of the results.

Limitations of the survey

The main limitation of the survey is related to the sample and generalisability of the findings. Although the sample size of 385 participants is statistically sufficient and provides valuable insights, the findings may not be fully generalisable to the broader population of beauty consumers. The questionnaire was distributed through social media platforms and personal networks, which may have influenced the composition of the sample and introduced selection bias. Additionally, due to time and resource limitations, the sample was not evenly structured across all demographic categories, and convenience sampling was applied. Therefore, the findings may not fully represent the global population of beauty consumers. However, since the research focuses on the beauty industry, where social media usage and engagement with user-generated content are particularly high, the collected data remains relevant for analysing consumer behaviour within this context.

Another limitation is related to data collection. Since the study is based on self-reported data, respondents may not always accurately recall their purchasing behaviour or may provide socially desirable responses. An additional limitation concerns demographic data collection, as the gender question was introduced after the questionnaire had already been distributed, resulting in a lower number of responses for this variable ($n = 293$) than the total sample size ($N = 385$). However, this did not affect the overall sample size or the main statistical analysis of the study.

As the study was conducted using a cross-sectional survey design, the findings reflect respondents' perceptions and buying behaviour at a specific point in time. Therefore, the study may not fully capture changes in consumer attitudes, engagement with UGC, or purchasing behaviour over time.

Future research could complement quantitative findings with qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, in order to gain deeper insights into consumers' perceptions, motivations, and behavioural responses to beauty-related UGC. In particular, further research could examine how perceived authenticity, trust, emotional engagement, and reactions to sponsored versus non-sponsored content influence purchase decisions. Additionally, future studies could compare responses across different demographic groups, such as age and purchasing frequency, to determine whether the influence of UGC varies between consumer segments.

Data collection

In this research study, primary data were collected through a structured online questionnaire using Google Forms. The survey data was collected using the online questionnaire between 2026-04-16 and 2026-04-20 via Google Forms. It provided a user-friendly interface, allowed the formulation of different types of questions, open-ended, multiple choice, checkbox, and other types, which were necessary for this research. The open online questionnaire was strategically made available through different platforms. The questionnaire was distributed online through digital channels: Threads, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram.

Tools for Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were conducted using statistical software Jamovi, and included:

- Descriptive Statistics: Frequencies, means, and standard deviations.
- Reliability Test: Cronbach's Alpha to check internal consistency of constructs.
- Correlation Analysis: Pearson correlation to examine relationships between constructs.
- Regression Analysis: Multiple linear regression to identify the most influential predictors of purchase intention.

Ethical considerations

- Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and gave their consent voluntarily.
- Data confidentiality and anonymity were ensured.
- The responses were collected only for academic purposes and were not shared with any third party.

2.2 Presentation of research object

This study examines the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry from the perspective of the individual consumer. The research focuses on understanding how beauty-related user-generated content influences consumers during different stages of the purchase decision process and which characteristics of UGC have the strongest influence on consumer buying behaviour.

Based on the theoretical analysis, six key constructs were identified as central to understanding the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour: source credibility, sponsored versus non-sponsored content, social proof, perceived risk reduction, emotional engagement, and informational value (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Filieri, 2016; Ismagilova et al., 2020). These constructs formed the basis of the empirical research model and were operationalised and measured through an online survey questionnaire.

The research examines the buying behaviour of adult beauty consumers who purchase beauty-related products and engage with digital beauty content, without restrictions regarding age, gender, or other demographic characteristics. Consumer buying behaviour in this study is understood as a multi-stage process involving information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour (Court et al., 2009).

In summary, the research object of this thesis is the influence of beauty-related user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry, examined through six interrelated constructs: source credibility, sponsored versus non-sponsored content, social proof, perceived risk reduction, emotional engagement, and informational value.

2.3 Review of previous research

In this master's paper, empirical research was conducted based on previous research studies that examine different aspects of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour. In previous studies, authors have used a different set of methods and instruments to conduct research on how user-generated content influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

Prior research is one of the most important parts of any scientific study. It acts as a foundation which supports the entire research process. With the different approaches some authors have researched, interesting insights have been retrieved for analysis and taken into consideration for this research. It is important to highlight the relevance of analysing previous research as it helps to gather a deeper understanding of the topic.

For instance, according to Geng & Chen (2021), the interaction quality of user-generated

content positively influences consumers' purchase intention. The study results revealed that perceived usefulness and trust mediate the relationship between UGC interaction quality and purchase intention.

Another researcher, Mathur et al. (2022), collected a sample of 260 consumers through a structured survey to investigate the impact of brand engagement, perceived credibility, perceived benefit, and information quality on consumers' attitudes toward user-generated content (UGC). Also, they researched how the attitude towards UGC affects online purchase intention. The findings of the research revealed that brand engagement, perceived credibility, perceived benefit, and information quality significantly influenced consumers' attitudes toward UGC, and that these attitudes positively affected online purchase intention.

Furthermore, Zhuang et al. (2023) researched the factors that influence the helpfulness of UGC content on social media. The researcher collected 14,029 UGC posts from the Xiaohongshu platform and analysed them. The study revealed that the detail, readability, and objectivity of the content, as well as the creator's social recognition and popularity, all have a significant impact on UGC helpfulness. Furthermore, the results indicate that creator interactivity plays a vital role in building UGC helpfulness by moderating other factors.

In contrast, Mei (2024) examined the influence of user-generated content on the Xiaohongshu platform too; however, the research focus, methodology used, and findings were different. Mei's (2024) study focused specifically on UGC related to beauty and Generation Z Chinese women. For the research, a survey was conducted of 98 active users aged between 15 to 30 years old. The study found that visual content, textual reviews, and high interaction quality influence purchase decisions and strengthen long-term brand loyalty.

Chung (2025) assessed how user-generated content on social media platforms influences consumers' purchase behaviour from the perspective of consumption value theory. For the analysis, data were collected from 445 social media users via web-based and paper-based surveys across three big cities in Vietnam. The results show that functional, social, and emotional values significantly contribute to the overall UGC value. Furthermore, perceived overall value from UGC positively influences attitudes toward UGC and UGC adoption. Although there is no direct impact on purchase behaviour, the overall value of UGC indirectly influences purchase behaviour through both attitudes toward UGC and UGC adoption.

Niu (2025) examined the impact of user-generated content on consumer trust and brand loyalty within the context of social media marketing. The study uses a literature review method and draws on the theoretical frameworks of social cognitive theory and self-determination theory. The study found that UGC positively influences consumer trust and purchase intention, and that brands that proactively engage in UGC are more likely to be perceived as relatable and to foster a stronger relationship with consumer. In *Table 3*, six research papers by different authors that analysed a similar

topic were gathered to examine the research methods they used and their findings.

Table 3

Summary of studies analysing a similar topic

Authors	Title	Object	Method	Findings
(Smriti Mathur; Alok Tewari, Akanchha Singh, 2022)	Modelling the factors affecting online purchase intention: the mediating effect of consumers' attitude towards user-generated content	The impact of brand engagement, perceived credibility, perceived benefit, and information quality on consumers' attitudes toward user-generated content, and the influence of these attitudes on purchase intention, including the mediating role of attitudes toward UGC.	Survey	Brand engagement, perceived credibility, perceived benefit, and information quality have a positive effect on consumers' attitudes towards UGC. Consumers' attitude towards UGC positively affected online purchase intentions.
(Ruoshi Geng, Jun Chen, 2021)	The influencing mechanism of interaction quality of UGC on consumers' purchase intention – an empirical analysis	The effect of user-generated content interaction quality on source credibility, information usefulness, and consumers' online purchase intentions.	Survey	UGC interaction quality is positively related to purchase intention, and this relationship is mediated by perceived usefulness and trust.

Authors	Title	Object	Method	Findings
(Wei Zhuang, Qingfeng Zeng, Yu Zhang, Chunmei Liu, and Weiguo Fan, 2023)	What makes user-generated content more helpful on social media platforms? Insights from creator interactivity perspective	The influence of argument quality and source reliability on the helpfulness of user-generated content, with creator interactivity as a moderating factor.	Quantitative empirical research method based on data collection and statistical analysis.	The detailedness, readability, and objectivity of the content, as well as the social recognition and popularity of the creator, all have a significant impact on UGC helpfulness. Furthermore, the results indicate that creator interactivity plays a vital role in building UGC helpfulness.
(Xinyue Mei, 2024)	The Influence of User-Generated Beauty Content on Xiaohongshu on the Purchase Decisions of Generation Z Chinese Women	The influence of user-generated content on Xiaohongshu on the purchasing decisions and brand loyalty of Generation Z Chinese women within the beauty sector.	Survey	Content types like tutorials, product reviews, and regular updates play a critical role in fostering brand loyalty. It can drive purchase conversions and long-term brand loyalty.
(Du Thi Chung, 2025)	How user-generated content on social media platform can shape consumers' purchase behaviour? An empirical study from the theory of consumption values perspective	User-generated content on social media and its perceived value influence on consumer behaviour and purchase decisions.	Survey	UGC adoption is positively affected by perceived value and attitudes toward UGC.
(Yijun Niu, 2025)	The impact of user-generated content on consumer trust and brand loyalty	User-generated content effect on consumer trust and brand loyalty.	Literature review method	UGC has the potential to markedly enhance brand trust and purchase intention, and that brands that proactively engage in UGC are more likely to be perceived as relatable.

In conclusion, a review of previous research is important because it provides a strong theoretical and empirical foundation for the current study. Earlier studies helped to identify the key factors and research methods relevant to this research. The studies showed that interaction quality, credibility, emotional value, and consumer engagement influence consumer behaviour on social media platforms. However, many studies focused only on specific platforms, industries, or demographic groups. Therefore, previous research supports the current study and helps to better understand how UGC influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

2.4 Online survey results

For the interpretation of the results from the survey, descriptive statistics, reliability, correlation, and regression were conducted for each construct. The use of multiple visual tools was crucial to showcase the results in a way that makes them understandable and easy to interpret the results. Tables were used to show the correlation and regression matrixes, and the scatter plot graph shows a visual representation of the strength of the correlation in a linear way.

The statistical open-source software Jamovi provided different tools and options to interpret the dataset collected from the results of the survey. In this case, the correlation and regression options were the most optimal as it helps to provide the best statistical results for the hypotheses formulated. Also, the correlation and regression analyses allowed us to create easy-to-understand scatter plots to further explain the correlation in an interactive visual manner.

The interpretation of results for this research was reviewed under a careful examination to prevent any errors in the interpretation. Each table and figure had to be thoroughly explained to understand the data. Each of the values and visual representations of the correlation and regression is displayed. The magnitude and direction of each of the values from the analysis provided valuable insights that indicated the level of correlation among different constructs. This interpretation of results focused on having easy-to-understand data, coefficients, and visuals that determine the significance of the correlation.

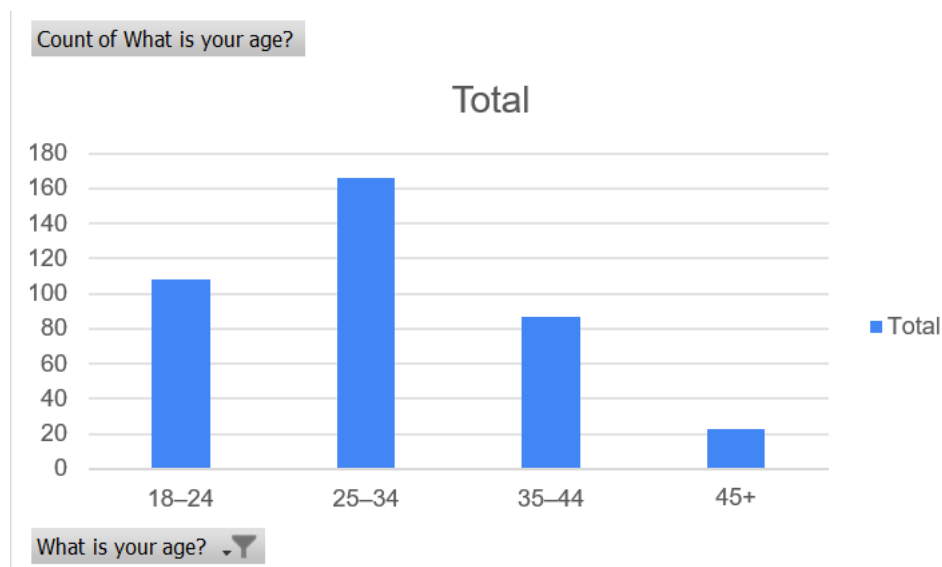
This chapter presents the results of the survey conducted to examine the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry. The findings are structured as follows. First, the demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented. Second, descriptive statistics of the main variables are reported. Third, a reliability and correlation analysis was performed. Finally, regression analysis is used to test the proposed hypotheses.

2.4.1 Sample characteristics

A total of 387 respondents participated in the survey, but only 386 passed the filter questions. The sample consisted of 46,4% female, 45,1% male, 4,4% non-binary, and the remaining 4,1% prefer not to answer the question about their gender. In terms of age, the majority of participants were between 25-34 (43,3%), followed by 18-24 (28,2%), then 35-44 (22,5%), and a minority (6%) were more than 45 years old. *See Figure 4.*

Figure 4

Age Distribution in the Survey



Regarding social media usage, 386, which is (99,7%) of respondents answered that they use social media platforms. Furthermore, (96,4%) indicated that they purchase beauty products online, and only (3,6%) answered that they do not. These two questions served as a filter, and if the answers were negative, the survey ended.

2.4.2 Descriptive statistics

Participants of the survey were asked which social media platforms they use regularly, and the majority, 294 which is (76,2%) answered that they use Instagram regularly. Then follows Facebook with 177, which is (45,9%). Similar results were between TikTok 146 answers (37,8%) and YouTube 140 (36,3%), and the minority being (0,3%) Pinterest.

People were also asked which type of beauty-related UGC they engage with the most, and the majority of the respondents answered 228 (59.1%) were social media posts or photos, followed by

product reviews 196 (50,8%) and tutorials 140 (36,3%). Unboxing videos consisted of 120 answers (31,1%), and the minority reported before-and-after results, 111 (28,8%). Also, (0,3%) added Google Ads and the rest (0.3%) stated that they do not engage with UGC content, but they do when their partner is watching YouTube videos. Also, when asked how often they encounter beauty-related UGC, the majority answered often 146 (37,8%), sometimes 111 (28,8%), very often 76 (19,7) and rarely said 38 (9,8%) and very rarely said 15 (3,9%).

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to provide an overview of respondents' perceptions towards the main study constructs. The analysis included the mean, median, standard deviation, minimum value, and maximum value for each construct. The results are in *the table 3*.

Table 3

Results of descriptive analysis

Descriptives							
	Source credibility	Sponsored UGC	Social proof	Risk reduction	Emotional engagement	Informational value	Purchase behaviour
N	385	385	385	385	385	385	385
Mean	2.85	3.68	3.49	3.37	3.32	3.44	3.52
Median	3.00	4.00	3.75	3.33	3.33	3.67	4.00
SD	0.988	1.14	0.884	0.885	0.888	0.876	0.942
Minimum	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

N = *Number of respondents*

The highest mean value was observed for the Sponsored vs Non-Sponsored UGC construct (M = 3.68, SD = 1.14), indicating that respondents generally perceived non-sponsored user-generated content as more trustworthy and authentic than sponsored content.

The Purchase Behaviour construct also demonstrated a relatively high mean score (M = 3.52, SD = 0.94), suggesting that beauty-related user-generated content had a noticeable influence on respondents' purchasing behaviour.

Moderate mean values were identified for Social Proof (M = 3.49, SD = 0.88), Informational Value (M = 3.44, SD = 0.88), Risk Reduction (M = 3.37, SD = 0.89), and Emotional Engagement (M = 3.32, SD = 0.89).

These findings indicate that respondents generally perceived beauty-related user-generated content as informative, socially influential, and helpful in reducing uncertainty during the purchasing process.

The lowest mean score was observed for the Source Credibility construct ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 0.99$), suggesting more neutral perceptions regarding the honesty, trustworthiness, and reliability of beauty-related user-generated content.

2.4.3 Reliability analysis

Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha to assess whether the questions within each construct were consistent. The reliability analysis results for all study constructs are shown in the *Table 4*.

Table 4

The reliability analysis results

Construct	Questions	Mean	Standard deviation	Cronbach's alpha
Source credibility	Q7–Q11	2.85	0.988	0.908
Sponsored UGC	Q12–Q15	3.68	1.14	0.927
Social proof	Q16–Q19	3.49	0.884	0.865
Risk reduction	Q20–Q22	3.37	0.885	0.854
Emotional engagement	Q23–Q25	3.32	0.888	0.800
Informational value	Q26–Q28	3.44	0.876	0.853
Purchase behaviour	Q29–Q32	3.52	0.942	0.886

Questions related to the source credibility construct included statements about honesty, trust, knowledge, reliable product information, and relatability to the creators of beauty-related UGC (Q7–Q11). The results show Cronbach's alpha of 0.908. This indicates excellent reliability and consistency.

The sponsored vs non-sponsored UGC construct included statements related to trust in organic user-generated content, authenticity of non-sponsored UGC, perceived trustworthiness of sponsored content, and whether sponsorship reduces willingness to follow beauty product recommendations (Q12–Q15). The Cronbach's alpha value for this construct was 0.927. It indicates excellent reliability and strong consistency between the items.

The social proof construct included statements related to the influence of likes and shares from other users on beauty products, high product ratings, product popularity, and the likelihood of trying beauty products recommended by others (Q16–Q19). The construct achieved a Cronbach's alpha

value of 0.865, indicating good internal consistency and reliable measurement of social proof.

The perceived risk reduction construct included statements related to uncertainty reduction, avoidance of poor purchase decisions, and increased confidence when choosing beauty products through user-generated content (Q20–Q22). The construct produced a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.854, indicating good internal consistency and reliable measurement of perceived risk reduction.

The Emotional Engagement construct included statements related to emotional connectivity with content creators, the influence of personal stories on whether they make products seem more appealing, and trust in relatable and authentic content (Q23–Q25). The construct achieved a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.800, indicating good internal consistency and reliable measurement of emotional engagement toward beauty-related user-generated content.

The Informational Value construct included statements related to the usefulness of real-life product information, the evaluation of product quality, and the understanding of whether products suit consumers' needs through user-generated content (Q26–Q28). The construct achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.853, which indicates good internal consistency and reliable measurement of informational value.

The Purchase Behaviour construct included statements related to product purchase after beauty-related UGC, product search after seeing UGC, saving or bookmarking products featured in UGC, and the role of UGC in purchase decisions (Q29–Q32). The construct achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.886, which indicated good internal consistency and reliable measurement of purchase behaviour influenced by beauty-related user-generated content.

2.4.4 Correlation analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between purchase behaviour and the main study constructs: source credibility, sponsored UGC, social proof, risk reduction, emotional engagement, and informational value. The correlation analysis showed positive relationships between all constructs and purchase behaviour.

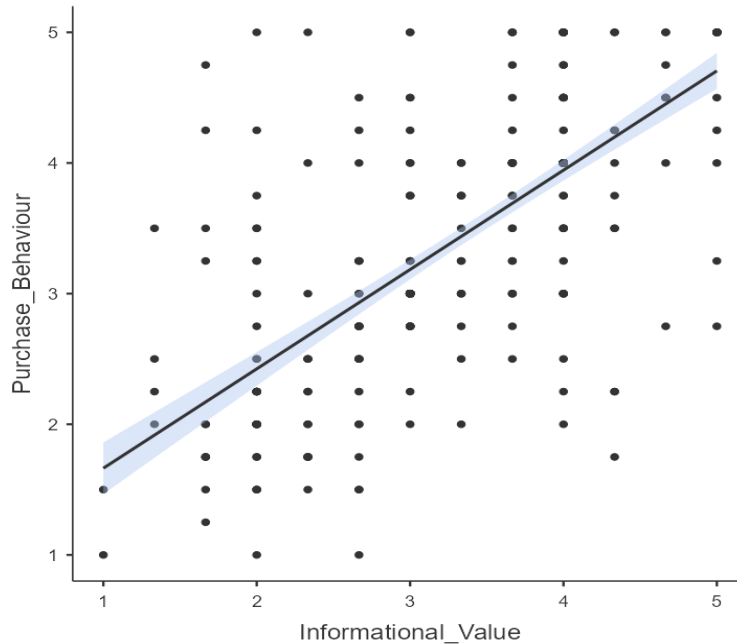
Correlation coefficients were interpreted based on the strength of the relationship, where values between 0.1 and 0.3 indicate weak correlations. Between 0.3 and 0.5 indicates a moderate positive correlation, and between 0.5 and above indicates a strong positive correlation.

The correlation analysis results between the study constructs and purchase behaviour are presented in *Table 5*.

Table 5*Correlations between study constructs and purchase behaviour*

Construct	r	p – value
Source credibility	0.227***	< .001
Sponsored UGC	0.577***	< .001
Social proof	0.637***	< .001
Risk reduction	0.620***	< .001
Emotional engagement	0.586***	< .001
Informational value	0.708***	< .001

In Table 6 above, the strongest positive relationship was identified between purchase behaviour and informational value. It is visible that Pearson’s correlation coefficient is $r = 0.708$, indicating a high positive correlation between purchase behaviour and informational value. Visual representation provided in the *Figure 5*.

Figure 5*Scatter plot graph between informational value and purchase behaviour*

The scatter plot demonstrates a positive linear relationship between informational value and purchase behaviour. The upward trend indicates that respondents who perceived beauty-related user-generated content as more informative were more likely to demonstrate stronger purchase behaviour tendencies. Each dot represents one respondent’s answer regarding the informational value of beauty-related UGC and purchase behaviour. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) measures how closely two

constructs are related and whether they tend to move together. Here, an r-value of 0.708 shows a strong positive connection: as the informational value increases, so does purchase behaviour. The p-value, which was less than 0.001, suggests this relationship is highly unlikely to be due to random chance and is statistically significant.

Another strong positive correlation was found between social proof and purchase behaviour ($r = 0.637$, $p < 0.001$). This result indicates that respondents were more likely to engage in purchase behaviour when beauty-related UGC provided social proof.

Risk reduction also showed a strong positive correlation with purchase behaviour ($r = 0.620$, $p < 0.001$). This result suggests that beauty-related UGC content can reduce uncertainty and increase confidence in purchasing decisions.

The emotional engagement construct showed a strong positive relationship with purchase behaviour ($r = 0.586$, $p < 0.001$), which shows that emotionally engaging beauty-related UGC positively influences respondents' purchase behaviour.

Furthermore, similarly, sponsored vs non-sponsored UGC demonstrated a strong positive relationship with purchase behaviour ($r = 0.588$, $p < 0.001$). The positive correlation suggests that a stronger preference for non-sponsored and authentic user-generated content is associated with stronger purchase behaviour.

To sum up, the correlation analysis results show that all examined constructs were positively associated with purchase behaviour. Informal value, social proof, and risk reduction demonstrated the strongest relationships with respondents' purchase behaviour.

2.4.5 Regression analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which source credibility, sponsored UGC, social proof, risk reduction, emotional engagement, and informational value predict consumer purchasing behaviour in response to beauty-related user-generated content.

The regression analysis results are presented in *Table 6*.

Table 6

Multiple regression analysis predicting purchase behaviour

Predictor	β	t	p-value
Source credibility	0.050	1.53	0.127
Sponsored UGC	0.123	3.33	< .001
Social proof	0.211	3.98	< .001
Risk reduction	0.065	1.14	0.254

Emotional engagement	0.093	1.83	0.068
Informational value	0.417	7.54	< .001

Note. Dependent variable: Purchase behaviour.

$R = 0.767$; $R^2 = 0.588$; $N = 385$.

The regression model explained 58.8% of the variance in purchase behaviour ($R^2 = 0.588$), which indicates that the selected constructs had a strong ability to explain respondents' purchase behaviour related to beauty-related UGC.

Based on the results, among all predictors, informational value had the strongest positive effect on purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.417$, $p < 0.001$). This result suggests that respondents were more likely to engage in purchase behaviour when beauty-related UGC provided useful and relevant information, such as real-life product experiences, product quality evaluations, and information that helped them decide whether the real-life experience of using products suited their personal needs.

Furthermore, the results show social proof also had a statistically strong positive effect on purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.211$, $p < 0.001$). This result indicates that respondents were more likely to purchase beauty products when UGC showed popularity and approval from other consumers, such as likes, shares, high ratings, and positive recommendations.

Similarly, sponsored vs non-sponsored UGC demonstrated a statistically significant positive effect on purchase behaviour ($\beta = 0.123$, $p < 0.001$). The result suggests that respondents who preferred authentic and non-sponsored user-generated content were more likely to demonstrate stronger purchase behaviour tendencies.

However, Source Credibility ($p = 0.127$), Risk Reduction ($p = 0.254$), and Emotional Engagement ($p = 0.068$) did not demonstrate statistically significant effects on purchase behaviour within the regression model.

Based on the regression analysis results, hypotheses H2, H3, and H6 were supported, as Sponsored UGC, Social Proof, and Informational Value demonstrated statistically significant positive effects on purchase behaviour. In contrast, hypotheses H1, H4, and H5 were not supported because Source Credibility, Risk Reduction, and Emotional Engagement did not demonstrate statistically significant effects within the regression model.

Overall, the regression analysis findings suggest that informational value, social proof, and sponsored versus non-sponsored UGC were the most significant predictors of respondents' purchase behaviour in the context of beauty-related user-generated content.

2.4 Summary of empirical research results

The aim of the empirical research is to examine how UGC influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry. Data for the analysis was collected through an online questionnaire, which was published on social media platforms with social media users who purchase beauty-related products. A total of 385 valid responses were received and analysed.

The questionnaire measured several constructs related to UGC: source credibility, perceived authenticity of non-sponsored UGC, social proof, perceived risk reduction, emotional engagement, and informational value. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha showed good internal consistency across all constructs. This indicates that measurement scales were reliable.

The descriptive statistical analysis revealed generally positive respondent perceptions regarding beauty-related user-generated content. The highest mean score was observed for the Sponsored vs Non-sponsored UGC construct, while Source Credibility demonstrated the lowest mean value among the examined constructs.

The regression analysis further demonstrated that Informational Value, Social Proof, and Sponsored UGC were statistically significant predictors of purchase behaviour. Informational value emerged as the strongest predictor within the regression model, indicating that respondents were more likely to demonstrate stronger purchase behaviour tendencies when beauty-related user-generated content was perceived as useful, informative, and relevant. In contrast, Source Credibility, Risk Reduction, and Emotional Engagement did not demonstrate statistically significant effects within the regression model.

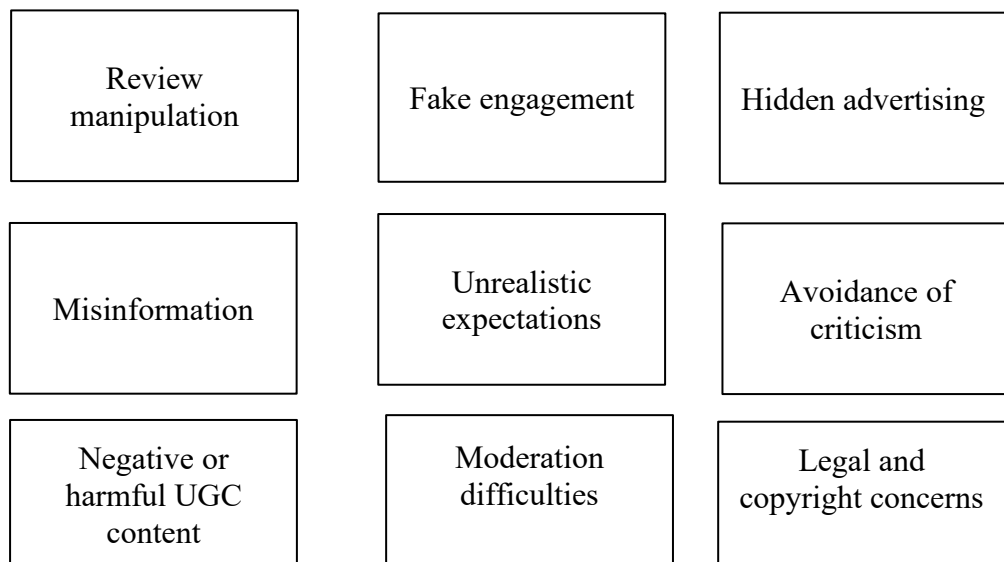
To sum up, the empirical research findings suggest that consumers are primarily influenced by informative, socially influential, and relatable beauty-related user-generated content when making purchasing decisions. The results additionally emphasise the importance of informative content, social validation, and consumer perceptions of sponsored and non-sponsored content within digital beauty-related marketing environments.

3. PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BEAUTY BRANDS AND USER-GENERATED CONTENT CREATORS

Firstly, this section discusses problematic aspects of the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry, which were identified through the survey and literature review. Secondly, based on the empirical research findings, practical recommendations will be provided for beauty brands, including a UGC leveraging model to improve consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry. Then, follow the recommendations for beauty content creators and the concluding notes for this section.

3.1 Problematic aspects of the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry

Based on the empirical findings and theoretical analysis, the following problem areas affecting the influence of UGC on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry were identified.



1. **Review manipulation:** companies or competitors may use fake positive ratings or intentionally negative evaluations to influence online reviews in their favour or damage competitors' products. Since consumers frequently rely on reviews and ratings when evaluating beauty products, manipulated reviews may mislead consumers and negatively affect purchase decisions. Especially in the beauty industry, where consumers often seek reassurance for product effectiveness and quality before making a purchase.

2. **Fake engagement:** fake likes, comments, shares, and reviews may create a false perception of product popularity and credibility, misleading consumers into perceiving beauty products as more trusted or widely accepted than they actually are. Since the empirical findings identified social proof as one of the significant predictors of consumer purchase behaviour.
3. **Hidden advertising:** although UGC is valued for appearing authentic and experience-based, much of beauty-related content has become increasingly commercialised through sponsorships, affiliate marketing, gifted collaborations, and paid partnerships. This blurs the distinction between genuine recommendations and promotional communication, making it more difficult for consumers to assess whether content reflects real experiences or marketing intentions.
4. **Misinformation:** beauty creators frequently share skincare, makeup, or haircare advice without scientific knowledge or professional expertise. Viral beauty trends, unsupported ingredient claims, or inaccurate product recommendations may encourage consumers to misuse products or develop unrealistic expectations regarding product effectiveness. Since informational value was identified as one of the strongest predictors of purchase behaviour, misleading or inaccurate UGC may negatively influence consumer decisions and reduce the overall usefulness of beauty-related information online.
5. **Unrealistic beauty expectations:** on social media platforms, beauty-related content often includes filters, editing tools, professional lighting, and carefully selected angles. This creates unrealistic beauty standards and encourages consumers to expect flawless or instant results from products.
6. **Avoidance of criticism:** beauty companies may ignore, limit, or remove negative feedback to maintain a positive image online. This behaviour reduces transparency and prevents consumers from accessing balanced information about a product's strengths and weaknesses.
7. **Negative or harmful UGC:** some companies could be reluctant to accept or respond to critical comments. Consumers sometimes post negative reviews, complaints, or controversial opinions that spread rapidly across social media platforms. Viral criticism about product performance, allergic reactions, or customer experiences can harm a beauty brand's reputation and reduce consumer confidence, especially when companies fail to address those concerns effectively.
8. **UGC Moderation:** Brands need to remove spam, false claims, or offensive content. Without effective moderation, harmful content can spread quickly and damage consumer trust.
9. **Legal and copyright concerns:** beauty brands often reuse customer photos, videos, and testimonials to promote products, but companies risk legal consequences when they use UGC without permission. Brands must protect consumers' personal information and comply with

copyright and privacy regulations when they share beauty-related content online.

To sum up, beauty brands should think about and deal with problems such as review manipulation, fake engagement, hidden advertising, misinformation, unrealistic beauty expectations, avoidance of criticism, negative or harmful UGC, brand consistency, UGC moderation, and legal concerns related to user-generated content. These problem areas may weaken the effectiveness of UGC in the beauty industry. Beauty brands by improving their content marketing strategy can increase UGC content effectiveness and influence consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

3.2 UGC leveraging model for improving consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry

Based on the theoretical analysis and empirical research findings, a strategic framework for leveraging beauty-related user-generated content was developed to strengthen consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry. The empirical findings revealed that informational value, social proof, and authenticity represented through the distinction between sponsored and non-sponsored content demonstrated statistically significant effects on consumer buying behaviour. Therefore, these factors form the foundation of the proposed framework.

The purpose of the developed model is to provide a practical and systematic approach for beauty brands and content creators seeking to improve the effectiveness of beauty-related user-generated content across digital environments. The framework was built directly on the regression analysis results. The empirical research confirmed that three factors have a statistically significant influence on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry: informational value ($\beta = 0.417$), social proof ($\beta = 0.211$), and perceptions of sponsored versus non-sponsored content ($\beta = 0.123$). Together, these three predictors explain 58.8 percent of the variance in consumer buying behaviour ($R^2 = 0.588$). The model is shown in *Figure 6*.

Figure 6

UGC leveraging model: three empirical pillars applied across four consumer touchpoints

	UGC LEVERAGING MODEL — THREE EMPIRICAL PILLARS × FOUR CONSUMER TOUCHPOINTS				
Consumer Touchpoints (consumer journey)	AWARENESS / DISCOVERY (consumers encounter content while browsing)	EVALUATION / EXPLORATION (consumers actively search and compare options)	PURCHASE DECISION (consumers seek last-minute reassurance before buying)	POST-PURCHASE (review sharing → feeds back)	Expected outcome
PILLAR I Informational Value $\beta = 0.417$	• Educational and tutorial videos on TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube • Creators demonstrate product use and application • Ingredient explainers, short tips, and how-to content	• Detailed reviews on product pages and long-form creator videos • Ingredient breakdowns and product comparisons • Product comparisons (“this vs. that”)	• UGC addressing last-minute hesitations shown near the purchase button • Creator content confirms suitability for specific skin concerns	• Buyers invited to share detailed post-purchase reviews • Collected reviews and redeployed to product pages for future consumers	<i>Reduced purchase uncertainty; useful product information at every touchpoint</i>
PILLAR II Social Proof $\beta = 0.211$	• Consumer review UGC and real experiences shared on social feeds • Comments and discussions create early peer validation	• Verified ratings and review counts visible on product pages • Community testimonials and consumer experiences support evaluation • Q&A sections and consumer discussions reinforce peer validation	• Review summaries, ratings, and popularity signals displayed near checkout • Peer validation reduces hesitation and increases purchase confidence	• Post-purchase invitations encourage review creation • New verified reviews become social proof for future consumers, creating a continuous feedback cycle	<i>Stronger purchase confidence; authentic peer validation at every touchpoint</i>

FINAL OUTCOME: Increased consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry

Continuation of Figure 6

UGC LEVERAGING MODEL — THREE EMPIRICAL PILLARS × FOUR CONSUMER TOUCHPOINTS					
Consumer Touchpoints (consumer journey)	AWARENESS / DISCOVERY (consumers encounter content while browsing)	EVALUATION / EXPLORATION (consumers actively search and compare options)	PURCHASE DECISION (consumers seek last-minute reassurance before buying)	POST-PURCHASE (review sharing → feeds back)	Expected outcome
PILLAR III Authenticity & Transparency $\beta = 0.123$	- Organic non-sponsored UGC prioritised on feeds - Sponsored content carries clear upfront disclosure	- Transparent creator reviews including benefits and limitations - Balanced feedback (positive and negative) increases perceived credibility - Visible disclosure cues reduce persuasion scepticism	- Organic consumer UGC visible at checkout as most trusted content - Clear sponsorship labels on any creator content	- Honest post-purchase reviews including critical ones actively collected - Authentic post-purchase content redeployed across T1–T3	<i>Higher consumer trust across all touchpoints; credibility conditions for Pillars I and II maintained</i>
FINAL OUTCOME: Increased consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry					

The model has three rows, one for each pillar, and four columns for the consumer touchpoints. Each cell describes what brands and creators should do to make that pillar active at that specific touchpoint.

Pillar I informational value is relevant at all four touchpoints since consumers can look for product information at any moment. At Touchpoint 1, tutorial and educational videos are published on TikTok and Instagram, so consumers learn about products while casually browsing. At Touchpoint 2, detailed review content is available on product pages and in longer creator videos for consumers who are actively researching. At Touchpoint 3, UGC addressing last-minute concerns is shown near the purchase button. At Touchpoint 4, buyers are invited to write detailed reviews that are then shared with future consumers at earlier touchpoints. The strength of this pillar ($\beta = 0.417$) is consistent with the elaboration likelihood model, which argues that argument quality is the main driver of attitude

change when consumers are highly involved in a decision (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Filieri et al., 2018).

Pillar II social proof is most important at Touchpoints 2 and 3 where peer validation helps consumers feel more confident. At Touchpoint 1, consumer reviews, product experiences, and real-user results circulate on social media feeds, allowing consumers to encounter peer experiences while casually browsing. At Touchpoint 2, verified ratings, community testimonials, and consumer discussions appear on product pages, reinforcing peer validation during active product evaluation. At Touchpoint 3, popularity signals and review summaries appear near checkout. At Touchpoint 4, buyers are invited to write reviews that become new social proof for the next consumer, creating a cycle where social proof continuously regenerates. This is consistent with social influence theory, which explains that people look to others for guidance when they are uncertain (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Cialdini, 2001).

Pillar III authenticity and transparency works as a supporting condition across all touchpoints. Its role is to make sure that the content from Pillars I and II is actually trusted by consumers. At Touchpoint 1, organic non-sponsored content is prioritised and sponsored content clearly shows commercial intent upfront. At Touchpoint 2, transparent creator reviews including both benefits and limitations, alongside visible sponsorship disclosure, increase perceived credibility and reduce persuasion scepticism. At Touchpoint 3, organic consumer UGC is positioned near checkout as a trusted source of reassurance, while sponsorship labels remain visible on creator content. At Touchpoint 4, honest reviews are collected and shared back with future consumers.

All three pillars need to work together across the consumer journey. Informational content is most effective when consumers also find it trustworthy and supported by peer opinions and experiences. Similarly, social proof is less convincing when UGC appears overly commercial or inauthentic. At the same time, transparency alone cannot compensate for weak information or limited peer validation.

3.3 Recommendations for the beauty brands

In this section, several practical recommendations for beauty brands are proposed in order to improve the effectiveness of beauty-related user-generated content and strengthen its influence on consumer buying behaviour.

Strengthening informational value through educational beauty content

Since informational value demonstrated the strongest statistically significant effect on consumer buying behaviour ($\beta = 0.417$), beauty brands should prioritise the development and

promotion of informative beauty-related content. Consumers often search for information regarding product price, expected results, product suitability, ingredients, and application methods, particularly when comparing beauty products before making a purchase decision. Therefore, beauty brands should encourage the creation of educational UGC, such as tutorials, skincare routines, product demonstrations, ingredient explanations, and realistic before-and-after examples.

Additionally, beauty brands should ensure that relevant and reliable product information is accessible across different digital platforms, including social media and product pages. Beauty consumers frequently encounter products through social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, while additional information is often searched for through product descriptions, creator reviews, and customer feedback. For example, skincare brands such as The Ordinary and Paula's Choice frequently provide ingredient-focused product explanations and educational content that help consumers better understand product suitability.

To reduce misinformation and unrealistic product expectations, beauty brands should avoid exaggerated claims and instead encourage realistic demonstrations of product performance. Content creators should also be encouraged to communicate both product benefits and limitations in order to support more balanced consumer expectations. This may help consumers make more informed purchase decisions and reduce dissatisfaction after purchase.

Strengthening social proof through authentic consumer experiences

The empirical findings revealed that social proof also has a statistically significant influence on consumer buying behaviour ($\beta = 0.211$). Consumers often rely on the experiences and opinions of others when evaluating beauty products, particularly skincare, make-up, haircare, and fragrance products, where product suitability and results may vary significantly between individuals.

Therefore, beauty brands should actively encourage authentic customer reviews, testimonials, ratings, and beauty-related consumer experiences. Companies could motivate consumers to share reviews, product experiences, and before-and-after content through social media campaigns, review requests, or loyalty programmes. Furthermore, verified reviews and ratings should be made visible on product pages. For example, beauty retailers such as Sephora and Ulta Beauty display verified customer ratings, reviews, and product feedback directly on product pages, allowing consumers to compare peer experiences and evaluate products through social validation.

Brands should also avoid practices associated with manipulated reviews or the removal of all negative feedback. Although negative reviews may appear harmful in the short term, balanced evaluations may strengthen perceptions of authenticity and transparency. Consumers may perceive products as more trustworthy when both advantages and disadvantages are discussed openly.

Increasing authenticity and transparency of beauty-related UGC

The findings of this study indicate that consumers respond more positively to authentic and non-sponsored content than to highly commercialised communication. Therefore, beauty brands should focus on maintaining transparency and authenticity within beauty-related UGC.

Although influencer collaborations remain important within the beauty industry, sponsored content should be clearly disclosed through visible sponsorship labels and transparent communication practices. Beauty brands should avoid excessive commercialisation and instead encourage content creators to provide realistic and balanced product evaluations based on actual experiences with products. Sponsored collaborations may be more effective when creators are allowed to discuss both positive and negative aspects of products rather than presenting exclusively promotional messages.

Furthermore, beauty brands should prioritise authentic consumer-generated content by reposting customer reviews, testimonials, and real beauty experiences. Organic UGC may help strengthen consumer trust and reduce scepticism towards branded communication.

3.4 Recommendations for content creators

Content creators play an increasingly important role in influencing consumer buying behaviour within the beauty industry. Since beauty consumers frequently rely on reviews, tutorials, and personal recommendations shared online, content creators may significantly influence product perceptions and purchasing decisions.

Providing informative and useful beauty-related content

Since informational value demonstrated the strongest influence on consumer buying behaviour, content creators should prioritise accurate, informative, and educational beauty-related content. Consumers frequently search for information regarding product price, expected results, ingredients, application methods, and product suitability before making purchase decisions.

Creators should provide realistic product demonstrations and avoid misleading beauty claims or exaggerated expectations regarding product performance. Tutorials, skincare routines, product comparisons, and before-and-after demonstrations may help consumers better understand products and evaluate alternatives more effectively. Consumers may perceive creators as more reliable when beauty products are presented realistically and supported by actual experiences. For example, creators such as Hiram Yarbro and Lab Muffin Beauty Science frequently explain skincare ingredients, discuss product suitability, and compare products based on different skin concerns, helping consumers better understand expected results before purchase.

Encouraging authentic social proof

Since social proof significantly influences consumer buying behaviour, content creators should encourage authentic interaction and open discussions regarding beauty products. Reviews, product experiences, audience feedback, and discussions may help consumers evaluate products more confidently, particularly in categories where results and product suitability may vary significantly between individuals.

Beauty creators may additionally strengthen trust by interacting with followers, responding to questions, and encouraging honest conversations about product performance. For example, creators such as Mikayla Nogueira frequently engage with audience comments, discuss product experiences, and share personal product recommendations that encourage peer discussion and consumer interaction. When possible, creators should present different consumer experiences and avoid portraying products as universally effective for all consumers. Encouraging audience feedback and balanced discussions may strengthen peer validation and increase consumer confidence in beauty-related recommendations.

Ensuring sponsorship transparency and authenticity

The findings suggest that authenticity remains an important factor influencing consumer buying behaviour. Therefore, content creators should clearly disclose sponsored collaborations and avoid presenting paid partnerships as organic recommendations. Since consumers increasingly recognise persuasive intent in beauty-related content, transparent sponsorship disclosure may help reduce scepticism and strengthen long-term audience trust.

Beauty creators should strive to maintain authenticity by sharing honest opinions and discussing both advantages and limitations of products. For example, educational skincare creators frequently discuss cases where products may not be suitable for every skin type or openly explain product limitations, which may strengthen perceptions of authenticity and credibility. In contrast, balanced product evaluations, transparent sponsorship disclosure, and realistic product communication may strengthen authenticity and improve long-term relationships with audiences.

Ensuring responsible beauty-related communication

Finally, content creators should recognise their responsibility in shaping consumer perceptions and beauty expectations. Since unrealistic beauty standards and misinformation remain common problems in beauty-related UGC, creators should avoid excessive editing of their content, unrealistic product claims, and unsupported beauty advice.

Ethical and transparent communication may contribute to stronger consumer trust, more informed purchase decisions, and a healthier digital beauty environment. Consequently, authentic and responsible beauty-related UGC may positively influence both consumer behaviour and long-term creator credibility.

Based on the theoretical analysis and empirical research findings, practical recommendations for improving the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry were developed. The empirical research revealed that informational value, social proof, and authenticity represented by the distinction between sponsored and non-sponsored content have the strongest influence on consumer buying behaviour. Therefore, the practical recommendations and the developed UGC leveraging model were designed based on these statistically significant findings.

The analysis of problematic aspects revealed that beauty-related UGC may also create several challenges, including review manipulation, fake engagement, misinformation, hidden advertising, unrealistic expectations, and lack of transparency. These problematic aspects may reduce consumer trust and weaken the effectiveness of UGC in influencing purchase decisions. Consequently, practical solutions were proposed in order to improve the quality, authenticity, and usefulness of beauty-related user-generated content.

The developed strategic framework for leveraging user-generated content integrates the consumer purchase decision process with the main factors identified in the empirical research. The framework proposes practical actions for beauty brands and content creators across different stages of consumer decision-making, including information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase engagement. In this way, the model contributes to a more systematic and practically applicable approach to strengthening the influence of UGC on consumer buying behaviour.

Furthermore, recommendations for beauty brands and content creators emphasise the importance of providing informative, transparent, and authentic content that reflects realistic consumer experiences. Beauty brands are encouraged to strengthen informational value, encourage authentic social proof, and increase transparency in sponsored collaborations. Similarly, content creators are encouraged to provide balanced product evaluations, disclose sponsorships clearly, and avoid misleading claims or unrealistic product expectations.

The proposed practical recommendations and strategic framework provide a realistic and applicable approach for leveraging beauty-related UGC more effectively. By strengthening informational value, authenticity, and social proof, beauty brands and content creators may improve consumer trust, reduce uncertainty, and positively influence consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

3.5 Concluding notes on practical recommendations

This section provided practical recommendations based on the empirical findings of the study regarding the influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry. The recommendations were developed based on the key factors identified as having the strongest influence on consumer buying behaviour, including informational value, social proof, and authenticity represented through perceptions of sponsored and non-sponsored content.

The proposed user-generated content leveraging model highlights the importance of providing informative, authentic, and socially validated content across different stages of the consumer journey. The findings suggest that beauty brands should prioritise educational beauty-related content, encourage authentic consumer experiences, and maintain transparency in sponsored collaborations in order to strengthen consumer trust and support more informed purchase decisions. Additionally, beauty brands are encouraged to integrate beauty-related UGC across relevant digital touchpoints, including social media platforms, product pages, and post-purchase engagement.

Recommendations for content creators emphasise the importance of providing informative, transparent, and authentic beauty-related content. Since consumers frequently rely on relatable product experiences and peer recommendations when evaluating beauty products, content creators should prioritise honest product evaluations, realistic demonstrations, and clear sponsorship disclosure. Furthermore, creators are encouraged to maintain responsible communication practices.

The practical recommendations and the proposed UGC-leveraging model developed in this study contribute to a better understanding of how beauty brands and content creators may strategically leverage user-generated content to influence consumer buying behaviour.

CONCLUSIONS

The theoretical analysis revealed that user-generated content has become an important digital communication and marketing tool influencing consumer buying behaviour in online environments. Scientific literature demonstrates that consumers increasingly rely on user-generated content, such as reviews, tutorials, ratings, recommendations, and shared experiences, when evaluating products and making purchase decisions. In the beauty industry specifically, UGC is particularly relevant due to the visual and experience-based nature of beauty products, where consumers frequently seek product demonstrations, real-life experiences, and peer recommendations before purchase.

The theoretical analysis also identified several key mechanisms through which user-generated content influences consumer buying behaviour. Based on previous scientific literature, source credibility, sponsored versus non-sponsored content, social proof, risk reduction, emotional engagement, and informational value were identified as the main factors potentially influencing consumer purchase decisions in digital environments. Furthermore, the consumer purchase decision process highlighted that UGC may influence different stages of consumer decision-making, including information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour.

The empirical research confirmed that beauty-related user-generated content significantly influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry. The research findings revealed that respondents frequently engage with beauty-related content on social media platforms and rely on digital information sources when evaluating beauty products and making purchase decisions.

The regression analysis revealed that informational value demonstrated the strongest statistically significant influence on consumer buying behaviour ($\beta = 0.417$), indicating that consumers place high importance on useful, accurate, and informative beauty-related content when making purchase decisions. Social proof also demonstrated a statistically significant positive influence ($\beta = 0.211$), suggesting that reviews, ratings, peer experiences, and recommendations significantly shape consumer evaluations of beauty products. In addition, sponsored versus non-sponsored content demonstrated a statistically significant effect ($\beta = 0.123$), indicating that authenticity and transparency remain important in influencing consumer purchase behaviour.

The empirical findings did not support hypotheses related to source credibility, emotional engagement, and perceived risk reduction, as these variables did not demonstrate statistically significant effects on consumer buying behaviour within the regression model. These findings suggest that within the beauty industry, consumers may prioritise informational value, peer experiences, and authenticity over emotional attachment, perceived expertise, or uncertainty reduction when making purchase decisions.

The analysis additionally revealed that the increasing use of beauty-related user-generated content may also be associated with several problematic aspects affecting consumer trust and perceptions. The identified challenges include review manipulation, fake engagement, hidden advertising, misinformation, unrealistic beauty expectations, avoidance of criticism, harmful user-generated content, insufficient moderation, and legal concerns related to the use of consumer-created content. These issues may negatively influence perceptions of authenticity and transparency within digital beauty communication.

Based on the theoretical analysis and empirical research findings, a strategic framework for leveraging beauty-related user-generated content was developed. The proposed framework integrates the consumer purchase decision process with the three statistically significant determinants identified in the empirical research: informational value, social proof, and authenticity represented by sponsored versus non-sponsored content. The framework provides a practical and systematic approach for strengthening the influence of UGC on consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

Practical recommendations for beauty brands and content creators were developed in order to improve the effectiveness of beauty-related user-generated content. Beauty brands are encouraged to prioritise informative content, strengthen authentic social proof, increase transparency in sponsored collaborations, and encourage realistic consumer experiences. Similarly, content creators are encouraged to provide balanced evaluations, disclose partnerships transparently, avoid misleading claims, and promote realistic beauty expectations.

The research has several limitations. Although the sample size of 385 respondents was statistically sufficient, the use of convenience sampling and the uneven demographic distribution may limit the generalisability of findings to the broader population of beauty consumers. In addition, the cross-sectional research design reflects consumer attitudes and behaviours at a specific point in time and may not fully capture changes in UGC engagement or purchasing behaviour over time. The study also relied on self-reported survey data, which may be affected by response bias or inaccurate behavioural recall.

Future research could further investigate the influence of beauty-related UGC by focusing specifically on consumers who actively engage with beauty content and by examining differences between demographic groups and purchasing patterns. Additionally, future studies could further investigate how informational value, social proof, authenticity, and different forms of sponsored and non-sponsored content influence consumer behaviour across different beauty product categories and digital platforms.

REFERENCES

- Abdul Talib, Y. Y., & Mat Saat, R. (2017). Social proof in social media shopping: An experimental design research. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 34, 02005. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20173402005>
- Ahn, Y., & Lee, J. (2024). The Impact of Online Reviews on Consumers' Purchase Intentions: Examining the Social Influence of Online Reviews, Group Similarity, and Self-Constraint. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, 19(2), 1060–1078. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer19020055>
- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50(2), 179–211. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978\(91\)90020-T](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-T)
- Al-Abdallah, G., & Wright, L. T. (2025). User-generated content vs. firm-generated content: Do consumers trust fellow consumers more than firms? Evidence from the Saudi telecommunication sector. *Cogent Business & Management*, 12(1), 2508928. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2025.2508928>
- Alalwan, A. A. (2018). Investigating the impact of social media advertising features on customer purchase intention. *International Journal of Information Management*, 42, 65–77. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2018.06.001>
- Alamer, M. A., Alrashed, H., Abuageelah, B. M., Kinkar, L. I., Alwayel, Z. A., Alfaifi, M. H., Alfataih, M. T., Alzakry, L. M., Alruwaili, Z. M., & Alhumam, A. A. (2023). Impact of Social Media on Choosing Skin Care and Cosmetic Products Among Females in Saudi Arabia. *Cureus*. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.49922>
- Aljarah, A., Sawaftah, D., Ibrahim, B., & Lahuerta-Otero, E. (2024). The differential impact of user- and firm-generated content on online brand advocacy: Customer engagement and brand familiarity matter. *European Journal of Innovation Management*, 27(4), 1160–1181. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJIM-05-2022-0259>
- Ariffin, N. M., Fikry, A., Shobri, N. D. M., & Che Ilias, I. S. (2024). A Review of Tiktok Livestreaming Commerce. *Information Management and Business Review*, 16(3S(I)a), 67–77. [https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v16i3S\(I\)a.4121](https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v16i3S(I)a.4121)
- Ayoubi, S. B. A., Fazl, S., & Araam, J. (2024). EXAMINING HOW CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEMSELVES AFFECT THEIR BRAND PREFERENCES AND PURCHASING BEHAVIOR.

International Journal of Professional Business Review, 9(8), e04903.

<https://doi.org/10.26668/businessreview/2024.v9i8.4903>

- Bahari, K. A., Abdullah, D., Wahab, J., Kamal, S. B. M., Johari, N. R., & Zulkafli, M. S. (2024). *The Factors Influencing A Customer's Purchase Intention on Online Shopping Website*. Khairil Anuar-150. <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2024.05.12>
- Baier, D., Decker, R., & Asenova, Y. (2025). Collecting and Analyzing User-Generated Content for Decision Support in Marketing Management: An Overview of Methods and Use Cases. *Schmalenbach Journal of Business Research*, 77(3), 419–455. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41471-025-00208-7>
- Balbi, G., Ribeiro, N., Schafer, V., & Schwarzenegger, C. (Eds). (2021). *Digital Roots: Historicizing Media and Communication Concepts of the Digital Age*. De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110740202>
- Bashir, M. A., Hameed, I., Ashraf, A., Raza, S. H., & Gundala, R. (2025). How Do Trust and Credibility Mediate the Impact of User-generated Content? Exploring the Moderating Roles of Tie Strength and Prior Knowledge. *Journal of Creative Communications*, 20(3), 347–365. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09732586251341226>
- Belanche, D., Casalo, L. V., Flavián, M., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2021). Building influencers' credibility on Instagram: Effects on followers' attitudes and behavioral responses toward the influencer. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 61, 102585. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102585>
- Bhandari, A., & Bimo, S. (2022). Why's Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media. *Social Media + Society*, 8(1), 20563051221086241. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051221086241>
- Bhattacharyya, S., & Bose, I. (2020). S-commerce: Influence of Facebook likes on purchases and recommendations on a linked e-commerce site. *Decision Support Systems*, 138, 113383. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2020.113383>
- Bogdan, A., Dospinescu, N., & Dospinescu, O. (2025). *Beyond Credibility: Understanding the Mediators Between Electronic Word-of-Mouth and Purchase Intention* (Version 1). arXiv. <https://doi.org/10.48550/ARXIV.2504.05359>
- Bolin, G. (2021). User-Generated Content (UGC): Understanding the Activity of Media Use in the Age of

- Digital Reproduction. In G. Balbi, N. Ribeiro, V. Schafer, & C. Schwarzenegger (Eds), *Digital Roots* (pp. 267–280). De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110740202-015>
- Bosnjak, M., Galesic, M., & Tuten, T. (2007). Personality determinants of online shopping: Explaining online purchase intentions using a hierarchical approach. *Journal of Business Research*, 60(6), 597–605. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2006.06.008>
- Bowen, G., & Ozuem, W. (Eds). (2019). *Leveraging Computer-Mediated Marketing Environments*: IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9>
- Budzanowska-Drzewiecka, M. (2026). Electronic Word of Mouth Communications: Character and Determinants of its Persuasiveness. In *International Encyclopedia of Business Management* (pp. 380–390). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-443-13701-3.00161-4>
- Bukhari, A., & Chouthoy, S. (2026). Influencer Marketing. In *International Encyclopedia of Business Management* (pp. 24–28). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-443-13701-3.00166-3>
- Caled, D., & Silva, M. J. (2022). Digital media and misinformation: An outlook on multidisciplinary strategies against manipulation. *Journal of Computational Social Science*, 5(1), 123–159. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42001-021-00118-8>
- Chen, X., Shen, J., & Wei, S. (2023). What reduces product uncertainty in live streaming e-commerce? From a signal consistency perspective. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 74, 103441. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2023.103441>
- Chen, Z. (2024). Research on the Influence of Consumer Purchasing Behavior on the Market Supply and Demand Relationship. *Modern Economics & Management Forum*, 5(4), 679. <https://doi.org/10.32629/memf.v5i4.2562>
- Cheung, C. M. K., & Thadani, D. R. (2012). The impact of electronic word-of-mouth communication: A literature analysis and integrative model. *Decision Support Systems*, 54(1), 461–470. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2012.06.008>
- Choudhary, M., Chouhan, S. S., & Rathore, S. S. (2024). Beyond Text: Multimodal Credibility Assessment Approaches for Online User-Generated Content. *ACM Transactions on Intelligent Systems and Technology*, 15(5), 1–33. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3673236>
- Chung, D. T. (2025). How user-generated content on social media platform can shape consumers' purchase behavior? An empirical study from the theory of consumption values perspective. *Cogent Business*

- & *Management*, 12(1), 2471528. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2025.2471528>
- Daugherty, T., Eastin, M. S., & Bright, L. (2008). Exploring Consumer Motivations for Creating User-Generated Content. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 8(2), 16–25.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2008.10722139>
- Davcik, N. S., Langaro, D., Jevons, C., & Nascimento, R. (2022). Non-sponsored brand-related user-generated content: Effects and mechanisms of consumer engagement. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 31(1), 163–174. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-06-2020-2971>
- Denga, E. M., Vajjhala, N. R. R., & Asortse, S. (2023). Digital Branding in the Digital Era: In R. F. Correia, D. Venciūtė, & B. M. Sousa (Eds), *Advances in Marketing, Customer Relationship Management, and E-Services* (pp. 171–197). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-8351-0.ch008>
- Dowling, G. R. (1986). Perceived risk: The concept and its measurement. *Psychology & Marketing*, 3(3), 193–210. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.4220030307>
- Eka Putra, F., & Afrilian, P. (2025). Visual Culture in Social Media: A Study on the Influence of Instagram on Aesthetics and Youth Culture Trends. *Asian Journal of Media and Culture*, 1(1), 40–56.
<https://doi.org/10.63919/ajmc.v1i1.18>
- Erkan, I., & Evans, C. (2016). The influence of eWOM in social media on consumers' purchase intentions: An extended approach to information adoption. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 61, 47–55.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.03.003>
- Fan, W., Osman, S., Zainudin, N., & Yao, P. (2024). How Content Attributes of Short Video Influence Online Purchase Intention: The Mediating Role of Perceived Value. *Journal of Wireless Mobile Networks, Ubiquitous Computing, and Dependable Applications*, 15(3), 445–458.
<https://doi.org/10.58346/JOWUA.2024.I3.029>
- Febriyantor, M. T. (2020). Exploring YouTube Marketing Communication: Brand awareness, brand image and purchase intention in the millennial generation. *Cogent Business & Management*, 7(1), 1787733.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2020.1787733>
- Filieri, R. (2016). What makes an online consumer review trustworthy? *Annals of Tourism Research*, 58, 46–64. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2015.12.019>
- Filieri, R., McLeay, F., Tsui, B., & Lin, Z. (2018). Consumer perceptions of information helpfulness and determinants of purchase intention in online consumer reviews of services. *Information &*

- Management*, 55(8), 956–970. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2018.04.010>
- Garg, M., & Bakshi, A. (2024). Exploring the impact of beauty vloggers' credible attributes, parasocial interaction, and trust on consumer purchase intention in influencer marketing. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 235. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-02760-9>
- Geng, R., & Chen, J. (2021). The Influencing Mechanism of Interaction Quality of UGC on Consumers' Purchase Intention – An Empirical Analysis. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 697382. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.697382>
- Gupta, S., & Singharia, K. (2025). Understanding the decision making process in consumer buying behaviour: An insight. *International Journal of Management, Public Policy and Research*, 4(1), 12–21. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/388937561_Understanding_the_Decision_Making_Process_in_Consumer_Buying_Behaviour_An_Insight
- Hayirli, O. (2025). YouTube as an Educational and Self-Development Tool. *European Journal of Teaching and Education*, 7(1), 89–108. <https://doi.org/10.33422/ejte.v7i1.1461>
- Hermida, A., & Thurman, N. (2008). A CLASH OF CULTURES: The integration of user-generated content within professional journalistic frameworks at British newspaper websites. *Journalism Practice*, 2(3), 343–356. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17512780802054538>
- Herrando, C., & Constantinides, E. (2021). Emotional Contagion: A Brief Overview and Future Directions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 712606. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.712606>
- Ho, V. T., Phan, N. T., & Le-Hoang, P. V. (2021). Impact of electronic word of mouth to the purchase intention—The case of Instagram. *Independent Journal of Management & Production*, 12(4), 1019–1033. <https://doi.org/10.14807/ijmp.v12i4.1336>
- Huang, T.-Y., Chen, W.-K., Chen, C.-W., & Silalahi, A. D. K. (2022). Understanding How Product Reviews on YouTube Affect Consumers' Purchase Behaviors in Indonesia: An Exploration Using the Stimulus-Organism-Response Paradigm. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*, 2022, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/4976980>
- Hund, E. (2017). Measured Beauty: Exploring the aesthetics of Instagram's fashion influencers. *Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Social Media & Society - #SMSociety17*, 1–5. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3097286.3097330>

- Hussain, S., Ahmed, W., Jafar, R. M. S., Rabnawaz, A., & Jianzhou, Y. (2017). eWOM source credibility, perceived risk and food product customer's information adoption. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 66, 96–102. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.09.034>
- Hasrini, H., Kussudyarsana, K., & Saputro, E. P. (2025). The impact of negative online reviews by social media influencers on the formation of brand loyalty to cosmetic products. *Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Sharia Economics (IIJSE)*, 9(1), 1283–1297. <https://doi.org/10.31538/ijse.v9i1.8368>
- Ismagilova, E., Slade, E., Rana, N. P., & Dwivedi, Y. K. (2020). The effect of characteristics of source credibility on consumer behaviour: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 53, 101736. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.005>
- Isibor, N. J., Attipoe, V., Oyeyipo, I., Ayodeji, D. C., Mayienga, B. A., Alonge, E., & Onwuzulike, O. C. (2025). Analyzing successful content marketing strategies that enhance online engagement and sales for digital brands. *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies*, 5(2), 842–851. <https://doi.org/10.62225/2583049X.2025.5.2.3906>
- Jeswani, Dr. R. (2023). The Role and Importance of Social Media Marketing in Brand Building. *Irish Interdisciplinary Journal of Science & Research*, 07(04), 01–09. <https://doi.org/10.46759/IJRSR.2023.7401>
- Jia, Y., Feng, H., Wang, X., & Alvarado, M. (2023). “Customer Reviews or Vlogger Reviews?” The Impact of Cross-Platform UGC on the Sales of Experiential Products on E-Commerce Platforms. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, 18(3), 1257–1282. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer18030064>
- Joshi, A., Kale, S., Chandel, S., & Pal, D. (2015). Likert Scale: Explored and Explained. *British Journal of Applied Science & Technology*, 7(4), 396–403. <https://doi.org/10.9734/BJAST/2015/14975>
- Kumar, S. H. (2024). The Impact of Video Marketing on Audience Engagement. *Shanlax International Journal of Management*, 11(S1-Mar), 78–86. <https://doi.org/10.34293/management.v11iS1-Mar.8089>
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59–68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>
- Kim, M., & Lee, M. (2017). Brand-related user-generated content on social media: The roles of source and

- sponsorship. *Internet Research*, 27(5), 1085–1103. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-07-2016-0206>
- Kostić, S., Spajić, J., Alavuk, Đ., Šidanin, I., Laličić, B., & Bunčić, S. (2026a). The Role of User-Generated Content in Social Commerce: A Systematic Review. *Sustainability*, 18(3), 1601. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su18031601>
- Karimkhan, F., & Chapa, S. (2025). Why do we buy what they recommend? Investigating the effects of fashion influencers' source factors on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. *Journal of Applied Marketing Theory*, 12(1), 76–98. <https://doi.org/10.20429/jamt.2025.120105>
- Le, T. M., Lai, M. D., Nguyen, T. H., & Le, B. N. (2025). Understanding the Effect of Product Reviews on YouTube on Consumers' Intention to Purchase Electronic Devices. *SAGE Open*, 15(3), 21582440251381530. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440251381530>
- Lemon, K. N., & Verhoef, P. C. (2016). Understanding Customer Experience Throughout the Customer Journey. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(6), 69–96. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0420>
- Leong, C.-M., Loi, A. M.-W., & Woon, S. (2022). The influence of social media eWOM information on purchase intention. *Journal of Marketing Analytics*, 10(2), 145–157. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41270-021-00132-9>
- Li, H., & See-To, E. W. K. (2024). Source credibility plays the central route: An elaboration likelihood model exploration in social media environment with demographic profile analysis. *Journal of Electronic Business & Digital Economics*, 3(1), 36–60. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEBDE-10-2022-0038>
- Li, S. G., Zhang, Y. Q., Yu, Z. X., & Liu, F. (2021). Economical user-generated content (UGC) marketing for online stores based on a fine-grained joint model of the consumer purchase decision process. *Electronic Commerce Research*, 21(4), 1083–1112. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10660-020-09401-8>
- Liang, S.-Z., Xu, J.-L., & Huang, E. (2024). Comprehensive Analysis of the Effect of Social Influence and Brand Image on Purchase Intention. *Sage Open*, 14(1), 21582440231218771. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231218771>
- Liu, Z. (2025). Beauty in the Digital Age: How Social Media Shapes Gen Z's Cosmetic Trends, Consumer Behavior, and Its Ethical Concerns. *Advances in Economics, Management and Political Sciences*, 171(1), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2754-1169/2025.21839>
- Mangold, W. G., & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix.

- Business Horizons, 52(4), 357–365. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.03.002>
- Mathur, S., Tewari, A., & Singh, A. (2022). Modeling the Factors affecting Online Purchase Intention: The Mediating Effect of Consumer's Attitude towards User- Generated Content. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 28(7), 725–744. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2021.1936126>
- Mayrhofer, M., Matthes, J., Einwiller, S., & Naderer, B. (2020). User generated content presenting brands on social media increases young adults' purchase intention. *International Journal of Advertising*, 39(1), 166–186. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1596447>
- McClure, C., & Seock, Y.-K. (2020). The role of involvement: Investigating the effect of brand's social media pages on consumer purchase intention. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 53, 101975. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.101975>
- Mohamed, O. E. (2025). The role of user-generated content (UGC) in enhancing digital marketing strategies to increase Brand Awareness. *International Design Journal*, 15(4), 50–70. <https://doi.org/10.21608/idj.2025.372777.1304>
- Mohammad, J., Wasim, S., Rizvi, S. A. A., & Abideen, Z. U. (2023). Consumer's Attitude Towards Sponsored Content and the Impact of Influencer's Credibility, Brand Credibility, and Influencer's Motive. *Sustainable Business and Society in Emerging Economies*, 5(3), 239–254. <https://doi.org/10.26710/sbsee.v5i3.2707>
- Müller, J., & Christandl, F. (2019). Content is king – But who is the king of kings? The effect of content marketing, sponsored content & user-generated content on brand responses. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 96, 46–55. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.02.006>
- Muda, M., & Hamzah, M. I. (2021). Should I suggest this YouTube clip? The impact of UGC source credibility on eWOM and purchase intention. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 15(3), 441–459. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-04-2020-0072>
- Mei, X. (2024). The Influence of User-Generated Beauty Content on Xiaohongshu on the Purchase Decisions of Generation Z Chinese Women. *Advances in Economics, Management and Political Sciences*, 141(1), 20–27
- Ngo, T. T. A., Nguyen, K. B., Pham, M. T., Tran, N. T., Tran, H. T., & Dao, C. T. (2025). The influence of online customer reviews (OCRs) on the online-shopping intention for domestic fashion: A case study of Vietnam. *Acta Psychologica*, 260, 105639. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105639>

- Niu, Y. (2025). The Impact of User-Generated Content on Consumer Trust and Brand Loyalty. *Advances in Economics, Management and Political Sciences*, 161(1), 141–146. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2754-1169/2025.19906>
- Ntousi, E., Lazaris, C., Katiaj, P., & Koukopoulos, A. (2025). Directed Consumer-Generated Content (DCGC) for Social Media Marketing: Analyzing Performance Metrics from a Field Experiment in the Publishing Industry. *Systems*, 13(2), 124. <https://doi.org/10.3390/systems13020124>
- Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and Validation of a Scale to Measure Celebrity Endorsers' Perceived Expertise, Trustworthiness, and Attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 19(3), 39–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1990.10673191>
- Omar, B., & Dequan, W. (2020). Watch, Share or Create: The Influence of Personality Traits and User Motivation on TikTok Mobile Video Usage. *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies (iJIM)*, 14(04), 121. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijim.v14i04.12429>
- Park, D.-H., Lee, J., & Han, I. (2007). The Effect of On-Line Consumer Reviews on Consumer Purchasing Intention: The Moderating Role of Involvement. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 11(4), 125–148. <https://doi.org/10.2753/JEC1086-4415110405>
- Petit, O., Velasco, C., & Spence, C. (2019). Digital Sensory Marketing: Integrating New Technologies into Multisensory Online Experience. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 45(1), 42–61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2018.07.004>
- Phamthi, V. A., Nagy, Á., & Ngo, T. M. (2024). The influence of perceived risk on purchase intention in e-commerce—Systematic review and research agenda. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 48(4), e13067. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.13067>
- Photcharoen, C., Chung, R., & Sann, R. (2020). Modelling Theory of Planned Behavior on Health Concern and Health Knowledge towards Purchase Intention on Organic Products. *International Business Research*, 13(8), 100. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v13n8p100>
- Qin, M., Qiu, S., Zhao, Y., Zhu, W., & Li, S. (2024). Graphic or short video? The influence mechanism of UGC types on consumers' purchase intention—Take Xiaohongshu as an example. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 65, 101402. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.elerap.2024.101402>
- Rachmiani, R., Kintan Oktadinna, N., & Rachmat Fauzan, T. (2024). The Impact of Online Reviews and Ratings on Consumer Purchasing Decisions on E-commerce Platforms. *International Journal of*

- Management Science and Information Technology*, 4(2), 504–515.
<https://doi.org/10.35870/ijmsit.v4i2.3373>
- Rahman, I. J., Rachmayandi, F., Fatimah, S. E., & Rahmadi, R. (2025). Generation Z's Reliance on UGC and Vlogs For Driving Buying Interest in The Fashion Industry. *Jurnal Aplikasi Bisnis Dan Manajemen*, 11(3), 917. <https://doi.org/10.17358/jabm.11.3.917>
- Rajendran, P. T., Creusy, K., & Garnes, V. (2024). *Shorts on the Rise: Assessing the Effects of YouTube Shorts on Long-Form Video Content* (Version 2). arXiv.
<https://doi.org/10.48550/ARXIV.2402.18208>
- Rozenkowska, K. (2023). Theory of planned behavior in consumer behavior research: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 47(6), 2670–2700.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12970>
- Regmi, P. R., Waithaka, E., Paudyal, A., Simkhada, P., & Van Teijlingen, E. (2017). Guide to the design and application of online questionnaire surveys. *Nepal Journal of Epidemiology*, 6(4), 640–644.
<https://doi.org/10.3126/nje.v6i4.17258>
- Rosli, N., Johar, E. R., Bin Mad Lazim, M. L. H., Hashim, S., & Juhari, N. F. (2024). From Hearts to Carts: Understanding the Impact of Comments, Likes, and Share Functions on Consumer Purchase Intentions in a Social Media Landscape. *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, 13(2), 46.
<https://doi.org/10.14207/ejsd.2024.v13n2p46>
- Rosillo-Díaz, E., Muñoz-Rosas, J. F., & Blanco-Encomienda, F. J. (2024). Impact of heuristic–systematic cues on the purchase intention of the electronic commerce consumer through the perception of product quality. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 81, 103980.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2024.103980>
- Sarhour, K. (2025). The influence of persuasion knowledge activation on Gen Z purchase decisions: A comparative analysis of user-generated content and macro-influencer marketing. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(1), 4965–4976.
<https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2025.9010383>
- Sang, V. M., Thanh, T. N. P., Gia, H. N., Quoc, D. N., Long, K. L., & Yen, V. P. T. (2024). Impact of user-generated content in digital platforms on purchase intention: The mediator role of user emotion in the electronic product industry. *Cogent Business & Management*, 11(1), 2414860.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2414860>

- Sachu, B., Sengottaiyan, K., & Rathinaswamy, J. (2025). Social media influencer credibility on consumer purchase intentions: A source credibility theory perspective. *International Journal of Environment and Climate Change*. <https://doi.org/10.64252/d4c62073>
- Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 53, 101742. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.011>
- Schröder, N., Schultz, C. D., Paetz, F., Grzadziel, A., & Clegg, M. (2025). Unraveling the influence: Exploring the role of user generated content along the customer journey and understanding its relevance for research and practice. *Schmalenbach Journal of Business Research*, 77(3), 457–496. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41471-025-00214-9>
- Santos, M. L. B. D. (2022). The “so-called” UGC: An updated definition of user-generated content in the age of social media. *Online Information Review*, 46(1), 95–113. <https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-06-2020-0258>
- Sengoz, M. (2024). The effect of emotional engagement on decision-making behaviour. *Pressacademia*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.17261/Pressacademia.2024.1906>
- Sujatmiko, S., Ar, D. P., Hamdat, A., & Salam, K. N. (2025). User-Generated Content (UGC) and Its Impact on Tourism Marketing: A Systematic Literature Review. *Golden Ratio of Mapping Idea and Literature Format*, 5(2), 97–105. <https://doi.org/10.52970/grmilf.v5i2.1491>
- Tan, J. J. X., & Md. Noor, S. (2025). The Effects of User-Generated and Influencer-Generated Content on Beauty Product Purchases: Navigating Scepticism in Malaysia. *Journal of Communication, Language and Culture*, 5(2), 254–275. <https://doi.org/10.33093/jclc.2025.5.2.15>
- Tian, Y. (2025). Beauty Marketing Strategy under New Media——Taking Tiktok Platform as an Example. *Interdisciplinary Humanities and Communication Studies*, 1(4). <https://doi.org/10.61173/n4br4r88>
- Timoshenko, A., & Hauser, J. R. (2019). Identifying Customer Needs from User-Generated Content. *Marketing Science*, 38(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mksc.2018.1123>
- Turcu, O., & Brancu, C. (2024). The Economic and Socio-Cultural Impact of the Beauty Industry in the European Union. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Business Excellence*, 18(1), 3737–3748. <https://doi.org/10.2478/picbe-2024-0304>

- User-Generated Content: A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) Research. (2025). *Jurnal Komunikasi Indonesia*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.7454/jkmi.v14i1.1235>
- Uti, T., & Marcella-Hood, M. (2025). The lifecycle of a social media beauty trend: A case study of the Instagram body. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 12(1), 2472544. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2025.2472544>
- Van Dijk, J. (2020). *The Network Society*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529739114>
- Wan, L., & Zhao, J. (2025). A Study on the Impact of High-Quality Content on Consumer Decision-Making from a Digital Media Perspective. In J. C. Hung, N. Yen, & J.-W. Chang (Eds), *Frontier Computing: Volume 2* (Vol. 1356, pp. 360–369). Springer Nature Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-96-2391-4_38
- Wang, J. (2024). TikTok under Marketing Saturation: Comprehensive Analysis of User-Generated Content (UGC) Marketing. *Advances in Economics, Management and Political Sciences*, 85(1), 85–91. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2754-1169/85/20240848>
- Wang, J., Ma, Y., Min, L., Geng, J., & Xiao, Y. (2025). The impact of social media fashion influencers' relatability on purchase intention: The mediating role of perceived emotional value and moderating role of consumer expertise. *Acta Psychologica*, 258, 105174. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105174>
- Wang, L., Liu, Y., Liu, X., & Liu, M. (2025). The influence of informative and normative features of social e-commerce UGC on consumers' purchase intention: The moderating effect of persuasive resistance. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 44(16), 4065–4081. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2025.2461228>
- Xiao, Q., Huang, W., Qu, L., & Li, X. (2025). The impact of multimodal information features of short sales videos on consumer engagement behavior: A multi-method approach. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 82, 104136. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2024.104136>
- Yang, G., & Wei, L. (2025). When Influencers Compare Brands: Defensive Processing of Sponsored Comparative Messages and Effects on Consumer Evaluations. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 46(4), 503–523. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2024.2413606>
- Younis, D. (2025). How User-Generated Content Shapes Brand Authenticity and Shopping Behavior in Social Media Advertising: A Consumer Perspective. *Athens Journal of Mass Media and*

Communications, 12(1), 45–56. <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajmmc.12-1-3>

- Zhang, Z., Qiu, K., & Ye, Y. (2025). Influence of audiovisual features of short video advertising on consumer engagement behaviors: Evidence from TikTok. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 83, 104221. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2025.104221>
- Zollo, L., Carranza, R., Faraoni, M., Díaz, E., & Martín-Consuegra, D. (2021). What influences consumers' intention to purchase organic personal care products? The role of social reassurance. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 60, 102432. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102432>
- Zhou, R. (2024). Understanding the Impact of TikTok's Recommendation Algorithm on User Engagement. *International Journal of Computer Science and Information Technology*, 3(2), 201–208. <https://doi.org/10.62051/ijcsit.v3n2.24>
- Zannettou, S., Nemeth, O.-N., Ayalon, O., Goetzen, A., Gummadi, K. P., Redmiles, E. M., & Roesner, F. (2023). *Analyzing User Engagement with TikTok's Short Format Video Recommendations using Data Donations* (Version 2). arXiv. <https://doi.org/10.48550/ARXIV.2301.04945>

Glossary of terms

Attractiveness – a source credibility dimension which refers to perceived similarity, likability, familiarity and physical appeal of the content creator (Ismagilova et al., 2020).

Beauty industry – an industry which consists of skincare, cosmetics, haircare, fragrance, and personal care items and services (Turcu & Brancu, 2024).

Behavioural intention – a person's conscious plan or intention to perform a specific behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

Consumer – the natural or legal person who is predisposed to different purchases of material products or services for the purpose of daily consumption (Zhihang, 2018).

Consumer buying behaviour – refers to all activities and decision-making processes of consumers when deciding to purchase a product or service, covering psychological activities, information collection, evaluation and decision-making before and after the purchase (Z. Chen, 2024).

Content creator – an individual who produces and shares digital content online through platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube (Bukhari & Chouthoy, 2026).

Digital marketing – marketing activities conducted using electronic devices to promote brands, products or services (Jeswani, 2023).

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) – any positive or negative statements made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions online (Budzanowska-Drzewiecka, 2026).

Emotional engagement – the deep, affective connections and interactions that individuals experience in response to stimuli, events, or relationships, which significantly influence behaviour and decision-making (Sengoz, 2024).

Engagement – consumer interaction with a brand or product-related content through likes, comments, shares, and reviews (Rosli et al., 2024).

Expertise – the degree to which a content creator is perceived as knowledgeable and experienced regarding a specific topic (Ismagilova et al., 2020).

Influencer marketing – refers to collaboration or partnership with an individual who has a significant online or social media presence and followers and has the potential to influence and shape the attitude of their network audience (Bukhari & Chouthoy, 2026).

Informational value – the usefulness and relevance of information provided through user-generated content for consumer decision making (Wang et al., 2025).

Need recognition – the stage in which consumers realise a need or problem requiring a solution (Gupta et al., 2023).

Online customer reviews (OCRs) – refer to comments and evaluations about products or services generated by consumers and posted on online platforms (Ngo et al., 2025).

Organic UGC – non-sponsored content voluntarily created and shared by consumers without compensation, free products, or other incentives (Davicik et al., 2022).

Perceived behavioural control – the extent to which individuals believe they have the ability, resources, and opportunities to perform a behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

Perceived risk – the degree of the consumer's concern that products or services may not meet their expected benefits (Dowling, 1986).

Persuasion knowledge – consumers' awareness and understanding of persuasive or advertisement intentions behind marketing content (Mohammad et al., 2023).

Purchase intention – refers to the likelihood that a consumer plans or intends to buy a specific product or service (Bahari et al., 2024).

Social media – digital communication platforms which allow users to interact, create, and share information with online communities (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Social media marketing – the strategic use of social media platforms to promote services, products, and brands (Jeswani, 2023).

Social proof – a psychological mechanism where individuals rely on the behaviour and opinions of others to guide their own decisions (Zollo et al., 2021).

Source credibility – the perceived trustworthiness, expertise, and reliability of an information source (Ohanian, 1990).

Sponsored UGC – content created in a collaboration with a brand in exchange for compensation, free products or other incentives (Kim & Lee, 2017).

Subjective norms – perceived social pressure to engage or not engage in a specific behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

Theory of planned behaviour – a theory which suggests that behaviour is influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991).

Trust – the degree to which consumers perceive information provided online and brand communications as believable, reliable, and honest (Cheung et al., 2012).

Trustworthiness – the extent to which a content creator or information source is perceived as honest, reliable, and unbiased (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

User-generated content (UGC) – any form of media content that is voluntarily created and shared by consumers, rather than professionals or brands (Bowen & Ozuem, 2019).

Declaration on the usage of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) and GAI-based tools (GAI tools)

2026-05-27

Erika Starazinskyte

The influence of user-generated content on consumer buying behaviour

☐ I confirm that NO GAI tools NO GAI tools were used in the preparation of this work.

☒ I confirm that the GAI tools listed and described below were used in the preparation of this work' :

1.

GAI tool (name and version, e.g. ChatGPT version 3.5): DeepL Pro (latest web version)

Company that developed the GAI tool (e.g., OpenAI): DeepL SE

GAI tool web address (e.g., <https://openai.com/chatgpt/>): <https://www.deepl.com/translator>

Date of content/output creation (e.g., xx/xx/20xx): 03.03.2026 – 14.05.2026

Purpose of using the GAI tool (e.g., data collection, editing, translation, or other): Translation

Specific location (section/page) where the GAI tool was used: All sections

2.

GAI tool (name and version, e.g. ChatGPT version 3.5): Grammarly Premium (latest web/browser extension version)

Company that developed the GAI tool (e.g., OpenAI): Grammarly, Inc.

GAI tool web address (e.g., <https://openai.com/chatgpt/>): <https://www.grammarly.com>

Date of content/output creation (e.g., xx/xx/20xx): 03.03.2026 – 14.05.2026

Purpose of using the GAI tool (e.g., data collection, editing, translation, or other): Editing, grammar correction

Specific location (section/page) where the GAI tool was used: All sections

3.

GAI tool (name and version, e.g. ChatGPT version 3.5): ChatGPT (GPT-4o, ChatGPT Plus)

Company that developed the GAI tool (e.g., OpenAI): OpenAI

GAI tool web address (e.g., <https://openai.com/chatgpt/>): <https://chatgpt.com>

Date of content/output creation (e.g., xx/xx/20xx): 03.03.2026 – 14.05.2026

Purpose of using the GAI tool (e.g., data collection, editing, translation, or other): Editing, checking source formatting requirements

Specific location (section/page) where the GAI tool was used: All sections

¹ If more than one GAI tool was used, the declaration shall contain information on each of them, numbered accordingly.

Survey questionnaire

Dear Participant,

You are invited to take part in a survey conducted as part of a Master's thesis at Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania). This research examines how user-generated content (UGC) influences consumer buying behaviour in the beauty industry.

UGC refers to content created by everyday users, such as reviews, tutorials, and social media posts, which may be:

- Non-sponsored (organic): created voluntarily
- Sponsored: created in collaboration with brands

Participation in this survey is voluntary and open only to individuals who are 18 years of age or older. The questionnaire is anonymous, and all information collected will be used solely for academic purposes.

The survey will take approximately 6–8 minutes to complete.

Your participation is greatly appreciated and will contribute valuable insights to this research.

Thank you for your time!

SECTION 1: Screening

The following two questions determine your eligibility for this survey. If you answer “No” to either question, you will not be able to proceed.

Q1. Have you purchased beauty products (e.g., skincare, makeup, haircare) online in the past 6 months?

- *Yes*
- *No*

Q2. Do you use social media platforms?

- *Yes*
- *No*

SECTION 2: Exposure to and Usage of Beauty-Related UGC

Q3. Which social media platforms do you use regularly? (Select all that apply)

- Instagram
- TikTok
- YouTube
- Facebook
- Other: _____

Q4. How often do you encounter beauty-related user-generated content?

(1 = Never, 5 = Very often)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

Q5. Which type of beauty-related user-generated content do you engage with most? (Select all that apply)

- Reviews
- Tutorials
- Before/after results
- Unboxing videos
- Social media posts/photos
- Other: _____

Q6. How much attention do you pay to beauty-related user-generated content?

(1 = None, 5 = A lot)

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

SECTION 3: Source Credibility

Please evaluate statements provided below on the scale from 1 to 5, where: 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Q7. I perceive beauty-related user-generated content as honest					
Q8. I trust the opinions expressed in user-generated content about beauty products					
Q9. User-generated content creators are knowledgeable about beauty products					
Q10. User-generated content provides reliable product information about beauty products					
Q11. I relate to people who create beauty content about beauty products					

Continuation of Annex 3

SECTION 4: Sponsored vs Non-Sponsored UGC

Please evaluate statements provided below on the scale from 1 to 5, where: 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Q12. I trust non-sponsored (organic) user-generated content about beauty products more than brand-created content					
Q13. Non-sponsored user-generated content about beauty products feels more authentic					
Q14. Sponsored user-generated content (#ad, paid partnerships) about beauty products feels less trustworthy					
Q15. Sponsorship reduces my willingness to follow recommendations about beauty products					

SECTION 5: Social Proof

Please evaluate statements provided below on the scale from 1 to 5, where: 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)

	1	2	3	4	5
Q16. I am influenced by how many people like or share beauty products					
Q17. High ratings increase my trust in beauty products					
Q18. I prefer beauty products that are popular on social media					
Q19. I am more likely to try beauty products that many others recommend					

SECTION 6: Perceived Risk Reduction

Please evaluate statements provided below on the scale from 1 to 5, where: 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Q20. User-generated content reduces my uncertainty about beauty products					
Q21. User-generated content helps me avoid poor purchase decisions when buying beauty products					
Q22. User-generated content increases my confidence when choosing beauty products					

Continuation of Annex 3

SECTION 7: Emotional Engagement

Please evaluate statements provided below on the scale from 1 to 5, where: 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Q23. I feel emotionally connected to creators of user-generated content about beauty products					
Q24. Personal stories about beauty products make them more appealing					
Q25. I trust content about beauty products that feels authentic and relatable					

SECTION 8: Informational Value

Please evaluate statements provided below on the scale from 1 to 5, where: 1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5
Q26. User-generated content provides useful real-life information about beauty products					
Q27. User-generated content helps me evaluate the quality of beauty products					
Q28. User-generated content helps me understand whether beauty products suit my needs					

SECTION 9: Purchase Behaviour

	1	2	3	4	5
Q29. I have purchased a beauty product after seeing user-generated content					
Q30. I searched for a beauty product after seeing it in user-generated content					
Q31. I have saved or bookmarked beauty products featured in user-generated content					
Q32. User-generated content plays an important role in my decisions to purchase beauty products					

SECTION 10: Behavioural Intention

Q33. I intend to rely on user-generated content in the future when making beauty product purchases

SECTION 11: Demographics

Q34. What is your age?

- 18–24
- 25–34
- 35–44
- 45+

Q35. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

Q36. How often do you purchase beauty products?

- Rarely
- Occasionally
- Monthly
- Frequently

UNIVERSITÉ CATHOLIQUE DE LOUVAIN
Louvain School of Management

Place des Doyens, 1 bte L2.01.01, 1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgique | www.uclouvain.be/lsm