

The Power of User-Generated Content in eCommerce Marketing: Impact on Customer Decisions and Brand Trust

¹Dr. P Sai Rani, ²Ms. Akshaya Mahankali, ³Prof. Mohammed Khaja Qutubuddin

ICBM SBE, Hyderabad, India

Abstract:

User-generated content (UGC) has emerged as a transformative force in eCommerce marketing, offering consumers authentic, peer-created insight into products and brands that traditional advertising often cannot replicate. This paper examines the influence of UGC — in the form of customer reviews, unboxing videos, influencer posts, and customer photographs — on consumer decision-making and brand trust within the Indian eCommerce ecosystem. Adopting a descriptive, cross-sectional, quantitative research design, primary data were gathered from 103 Indian online shoppers through a structured Google Forms questionnaire distributed across Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Pune. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, a Chi-square test of independence, and a one-way ANOVA. The findings indicate that a large majority of respondents are influenced by UGC while shopping online, that UGC is perceived as substantially more trustworthy than brand-generated content, and that visual formats such as customer photographs and unboxing videos are the most persuasive content types. Hypothesis testing revealed no statistically significant association between age group and preferred UGC platform ($\chi^2 = 13.25$, $p = .583$) and no significant difference in perceived authenticity across UGC engagement-frequency groups ($F = 0.321$, $p = .864$), suggesting that content quality — rather than mere exposure or age — drives perceived authenticity. The study concludes with managerial implications for eCommerce brands and marketers, along with directions for future research on UGC formats, emerging technologies, cross-cultural variation, and under-represented consumer segments.

Keywords: User-generated content; eCommerce marketing; consumer decision-making; brand trust; online reviews; social media; consumer behaviour; India

1. Introduction

In the contemporary eCommerce landscape, user-generated content (UGC) has become one of the cornerstones of digital marketing strategy. UGC refers to any form of content — reviews, unboxing videos, photographs, testimonials, and social media posts — that is created and shared by consumers rather than by brands themselves. This shift has repositioned the ordinary consumer as an active co-creator of brand narratives, transforming passive shoppers into influential voices within the digital marketplace.

UGC is particularly powerful among digitally native consumers, who increasingly favour the lived experiences and opinions of their peers over polished, brand-controlled advertisements. Because content published by fellow consumers is generally perceived as more credible and less biased, its integration into marketing strategy offers eCommerce brands a meaningful opportunity to build trust. Beyond influencing purchase behaviour, UGC also fosters emotional bonds rooted in a sense of community and shared experience among content creators and consumers (Berger et al., 2020; Dessart, 2017).

This paper examines the transformative role of UGC in eCommerce by analysing its influence on consumer decision-making and brand trust, drawing on empirical survey data collected from Indian online shoppers. The findings underscore the importance of brands strategically integrating UGC into their marketing mix in order to remain relevant, credible, and competitive within a rapidly evolving digital marketplace.

1.1 Research Problem

In the competitive eCommerce landscape, where consumer trust and purchase decisions are increasingly shaped by online interactions, UGC has emerged as one of the most critical marketing tools available to brands. However, even though UGC is widely recognised as a driver of brand trust and sales, there remains limited understanding

of the precise mechanisms through which it shapes consumer decision-making and trust-building processes. Furthermore, complexities surrounding content authenticity, the management of negative feedback, and the effective integration of UGC into marketing strategy present ongoing challenges for brands seeking to realise its full potential. This study addresses these gaps by examining how UGC influences customer decisions and what brands must do to leverage its full potential in eCommerce marketing.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How does user-generated content influence consumer decision-making in the eCommerce sector?
2. In what ways does user-generated content contribute to building or diminishing consumer trust in eCommerce brands?
3. Which types of user-generated content are perceived as most influential by consumers?
4. How does the perceived authenticity of UGC affect consumer trust and purchase intention?
5. What role do social media and eCommerce platforms play in the dissemination and impact of UGC?
6. How do demographic factors influence consumer perceptions of and responses to UGC?
7. What challenges do eCommerce brands face in leveraging UGC effectively, and how can these challenges be addressed?

2. Literature Review

UGC has become an essential component of eCommerce marketing, shaping both consumer decision-making and brand trust. Existing research highlights its unique capacity to provide authenticity and relatability that traditional, brand-controlled advertising often lacks. This section synthesises the existing literature to examine the effectiveness, challenges, and implications of UGC in eCommerce.

2.1 The Role of UGC in Consumer Decision-Making

Online reviews significantly influence consumers' perceptions of product quality, thereby shaping purchase intentions (Filieri et al., 2018). Similarly, consumer-generated visuals such as unboxing videos reduce uncertainty and increase purchase confidence by allowing prospective buyers to observe authentic, unscripted product experiences before committing to a purchase (Kim, 2020). Social media platforms have become critical channels for disseminating UGC, enabling brands to leverage peer recommendations and lived experiences; platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have amplified UGC's reach, making it a powerful tool for creating emotional connections and fostering brand loyalty (Dessart, 2017). At a broader level, textual and visual UGC — including reviews, social posts, and customer service interactions — represents a rich vein of consumer insight that marketers can mine to understand audience sentiment and behaviour (Berger et al., 2020).

2.2 Impact of UGC on Brand Trust

Authenticity is a key driver of trust, and UGC is consistently perceived as more genuine than brand-generated content. Consumers trust peer-generated content because it is perceived as unbiased, and engagement of this kind strengthens the emotional and relational bond between customers and brands (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). UGC also helps brands demonstrate transparency, which is essential for building long-term trust with consumers (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Comparable findings from Fernandez and Liu (2024) and Liaw (2024) confirm that UGC — particularly online reviews and ratings — plays a decisive role in cultivating consumer trust and brand loyalty across diverse retail categories. Podaras and Kourouthanassis (2024) further show that the credibility of brand-generated content itself is shaped by the surrounding presence of positive UGC, indicating a reinforcing relationship between the two content types.

However, the impact of UGC is not universally positive. Fake reviews and manipulated content can damage brand credibility (Lappas et al., 2016), and a meta-analytic review of review valence confirms that both the direction and authenticity of reviews meaningfully shape consumer responses (Purnawirawan et al., 2015). These findings

underscore the importance of brands maintaining the authenticity of UGC while proactively addressing potential misuse.

2.3 Integration of UGC in eCommerce Strategies

Effective integration of UGC into eCommerce strategy enhances brand performance. Including reviews and customer photographs on product pages has been shown to increase conversion rates, and studies in the electronics sector confirm that UGC exposure is positively associated with purchase intention (Choi & Park, 2024). Influencer marketing is another effective way to amplify UGC, with influencers creating content that resonates with followers and drives engagement; message value and source credibility are particularly strong predictors of the trust that followers place in influencer-branded content (Lou & Yuan, 2019). A meta-analysis of UGC's effect on eCommerce sales corroborates these findings, reporting consistent uplifts in conversion associated with UGC exposure across product categories (Lee & Kim, 2024). Word-of-mouth embedded within online reviews has long been recognised as a driver of product sales, with early evidence from online book reviews demonstrating a measurable link between review volume, valence, and sales performance (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006).

Recent trends — including the rise of social commerce, artificial intelligence-based content curation, and augmented reality (AR) advertising — further highlight the evolving role of UGC. Brands that incorporate interactive and immersive experiences, supported by advances in AI-driven personalisation, are better positioned to engage younger, technology-savvy audiences (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019). Machine-learning approaches such as BERT-based sentiment classification are increasingly used to process large volumes of customer reviews and translate them into actionable nudge-marketing strategies (Putatunda et al., 2023), while automated image-ranking techniques help surface the most relevant customer-submitted product photographs in fashion eCommerce (Jaiswal et al., 2023).

2.4 Challenges and Opportunities

While UGC offers significant benefits, it also presents challenges. Negative reviews can deter potential customers if not managed effectively, and analyses of eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth) confirm that both individual- and product-level factors shape how such content is generated and received (Anastasiei et al., 2024). Additional research highlights the mediating role that credibility perceptions play between eWOM and purchase intention, suggesting that simply increasing the volume of UGC is insufficient without corresponding attention to its perceived trustworthiness (Anastasiei et al., 2025). Maintaining content quality and aligning UGC with brand values remain ongoing challenges for eCommerce marketers (Berger et al., 2020). Furthermore, structural factors such as the strength of a consumer's social network and the information passed between connected peers shape both trust formation and eventual purchase choice within online shopping environments (Guo et al., 2011).

Looking ahead, the literature suggests that the future of UGC lies in fostering community-driven content and leveraging advanced analytics to better understand consumer behaviour. Brands that prioritise transparency, encourage authentic interaction, and create space for meaningful engagement will be best positioned to harness UGC's full potential (Belanche et al., 2024). Consistent with this view, Smith and Johnson (2024) find that UGC exerts a measurable effect on how consumers perceive brand identity over time, while Demba-Mutondo et al. (2019) confirm that UGC-based advertising positively shapes consumer attitudes, trust, and purchase intention across product and service categories.

3. Research Gap

While the effects of UGC on consumer decision-making and brand trust are widely recognised, critical research gaps remain. Existing literature tends to focus broadly on social proof without examining how specific types of UGC affect distinct stages of the consumer decision journey. Similarly, few studies address the consequences of perceived authenticity in curated or incentivised forms of UGC. The influence of demographic factors — such as age and prior trust in eCommerce — on the effectiveness of UGC has also received limited empirical attention. Finally, issues such as the management of negative UGC, the proliferation of fake reviews, ethical concerns, and the emerging role of technologies such as AI and augmented reality warrant further investigation. This study seeks to address these gaps by empirically examining UGC's influence on Indian eCommerce consumers.

4. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the impact of different types of user-generated content — such as reviews, unboxing videos, and customer photographs — on consumer decision-making in eCommerce.
2. To assess how the perceived authenticity of UGC influences customer trust and brand credibility in the eCommerce context.
3. To explore the role of demographic factors — such as age, gender, and online shopping experience — in shaping the effectiveness of UGC in influencing purchasing behaviour.
4. To investigate the integration of UGC into eCommerce marketing strategies, including its use on product pages, social media platforms, and in influencer collaborations.
5. To identify the challenges and opportunities brands face when leveraging UGC, particularly regarding content authenticity, negative reviews, and ethical concerns.
6. To explore the impact of emerging technologies, such as AI and augmented reality, on the creation, curation, and influence of UGC in eCommerce marketing.

5. Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the objectives and research questions above, the following hypotheses were formulated and empirically tested.

Hypothesis 1: Association between Age Group and Preferred UGC Platform

H₀: There is no association between age group and preferred UGC platform.

H₁: There is a significant association between age group and preferred UGC platform.

Hypothesis 2: Influence of UGC Frequency on Perceived Authenticity

H₀: UGC engagement frequency does not significantly affect perceived authenticity scores.

H₁: UGC engagement frequency significantly affects perceived authenticity scores.

6. Research Methodology

6.1 Research Design

This study employs a descriptive and cross-sectional research design to systematically investigate the influence of UGC on consumer decision-making and brand trust within the eCommerce landscape. A quantitative approach was chosen to allow for measurable, statistical evaluation of consumer responses, permitting the identification of trends, associations, and generalisable patterns. Since UGC is a naturally occurring phenomenon in digital marketing, the study does not manipulate variables but instead observes and analyses them as they exist in the field.

6.2 Population and Sampling

The study targets the population of Indian consumers who are actively engaged in online shopping across eCommerce platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, and Myntra. Non-probability purposive sampling was used, enabling the researcher to deliberately select respondents who not only shop online but also engage with or are influenced by UGC. Eligible respondents were required to (a) be Indian residents, (b) have made an online purchase within the preceding 6–12 months, and (c) have interacted with or considered UGC in their decision-making process. Participants were drawn from four major metropolitan centres — Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Pune — chosen for their representative consumer behaviours within India's evolving digital economy.

6.3 Sample Size and Profile of Respondents

A total of 103 respondents completed the survey, a sample size considered sufficient for descriptive statistics, pattern identification, and subgroup analysis by age, gender, and occupation. Respondents were classified into four age brackets (18–25, 26–35, 36–45, and above 45 years), with the sample comprising a balanced mix of male

and female participants — a small proportion of whom preferred not to disclose gender — and drawn from occupational groups including students, working professionals, business owners, and homemakers.

6.4 Data Collection Instrument

Primary data were collected using a self-administered, structured questionnaire hosted on Google Forms, distributed via WhatsApp groups, social media channels (Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook), and direct email over a two-week period. The questionnaire combined multiple-choice items, five-point Likert-scale statements, matrix questions, and a small number of open-ended prompts, organised into five sections: demographic profile, UGC behaviour, trust and authenticity, platform usage, and behavioural change due to UGC. A pilot survey ($n = 10$) was conducted prior to full distribution to refine question clarity and logical flow.

6.5 Data Cleaning and Statistical Tools

Raw data exported from Google Forms were cleaned in Microsoft Excel to remove duplicate and incomplete responses, standardise categorical entries, and assign numerical codes to qualitative responses. Descriptive statistics (frequency distributions, percentages, and measures of central tendency) were used to summarise general trends, while cross-tabulation analysis explored relationships between demographic variables and UGC preferences. A Chi-square test of independence ($\alpha = 0.05$) was applied to test the association between categorical variables, and a one-way ANOVA was used to compare mean authenticity scores across UGC engagement-frequency groups.

7. Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is confined to Indian consumers who actively shop online and who have engaged with or been exposed to UGC in the form of reviews, unboxing videos, influencer posts, or customer photographs. Geographically, the study focuses on urban and semi-urban respondents drawn from Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad, and Pune. Thematically, the research examines UGC's influence on two principal outcomes — consumer decision-making and brand trust — and considers how these outcomes vary by demographic profile, preferred content type, and platform of engagement. The findings are intended to inform eCommerce brands, digital marketers, and academic researchers seeking to understand the strategic value of UGC within a rapidly digitising retail economy.

8. Limitations of the Study

1. The use of non-probability purposive sampling, while appropriate for the study's exploratory objectives, may limit the generalisability of findings to the wider Indian population.
2. The sample size of 103 respondents, though adequate for descriptive and basic inferential analysis, restricts the scope for more advanced multivariate modelling.
3. The cross-sectional design captures a single snapshot in time and cannot account for changes in consumer attitudes toward UGC over a longer horizon.
4. The study is geographically confined to four urban and semi-urban metropolitan centres, and therefore does not capture the perspectives of rural or older, less digitally engaged consumers.
5. Self-reported survey data are inherently subject to recall bias and social desirability bias, which may affect the accuracy of responses regarding trust and behavioural change.

9. Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section presents the results of the survey data, analysed in alignment with the study's research objectives. Findings are supported by visual representations (figures and tables) to enhance interpretability and to highlight patterns of consumer behaviour associated with UGC.

9.1 Frequency of UGC Engagement

Respondents were asked how often they engage with UGC when shopping online. As shown in Figure 1, engagement levels were fairly evenly distributed across the response categories, with a substantial cluster of

respondents reporting frequent engagement ("Often" or "Always"), underscoring the significant role UGC plays in shaping the online shopping journey for Indian consumers.

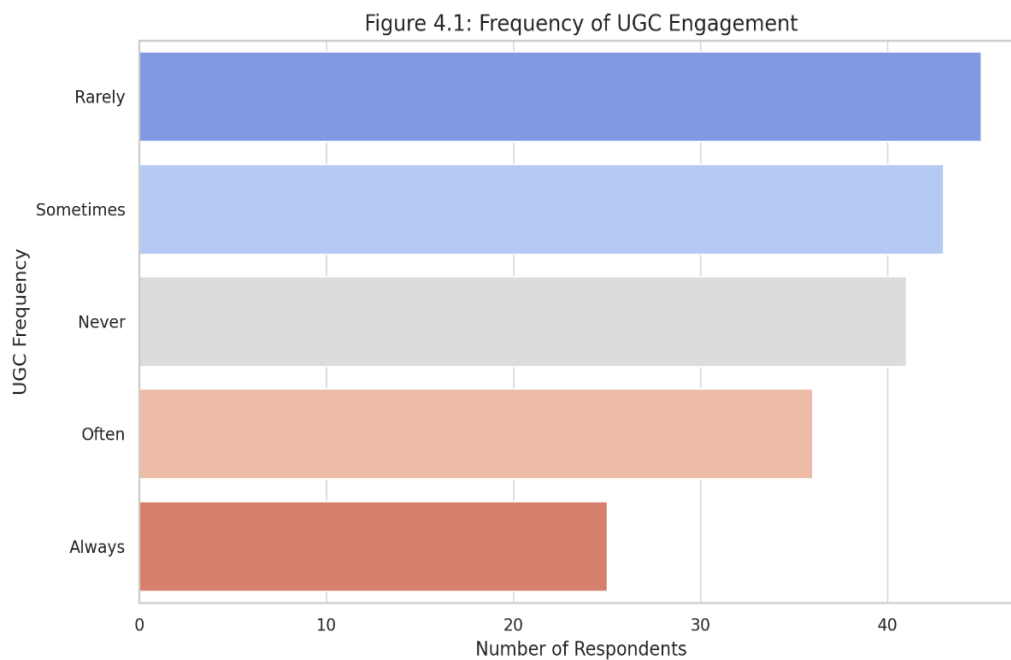


Figure 1. Frequency of UGC Engagement

Table 1 Influence of User-Generated Content on Consumer Purchasing Decisions

Metric	Statistic / Percentage
Consumers influenced by UGC when shopping online	90%
UGC perceived as more authentic than brand content	2.4× more trustworthy
Consumers who trust UGC over brand advertising	74%
Consumers who purchased due to a peer recommendation	76%
Consumers who trust UGC (reviews/photos) over traditional media	72%
Consumers who consider UGC a sign of product quality	86%

9.2 Types of Influential UGC

Participants were asked to identify the type of UGC they found most influential. As shown in Figure 2, Instagram customer photographs emerged as the single most influential format, followed closely by unboxing videos,

discussion-forum content, and customer reviews, with influencer posts close behind — reflecting a visual, peer-led model of trust formation among Indian eCommerce shoppers.

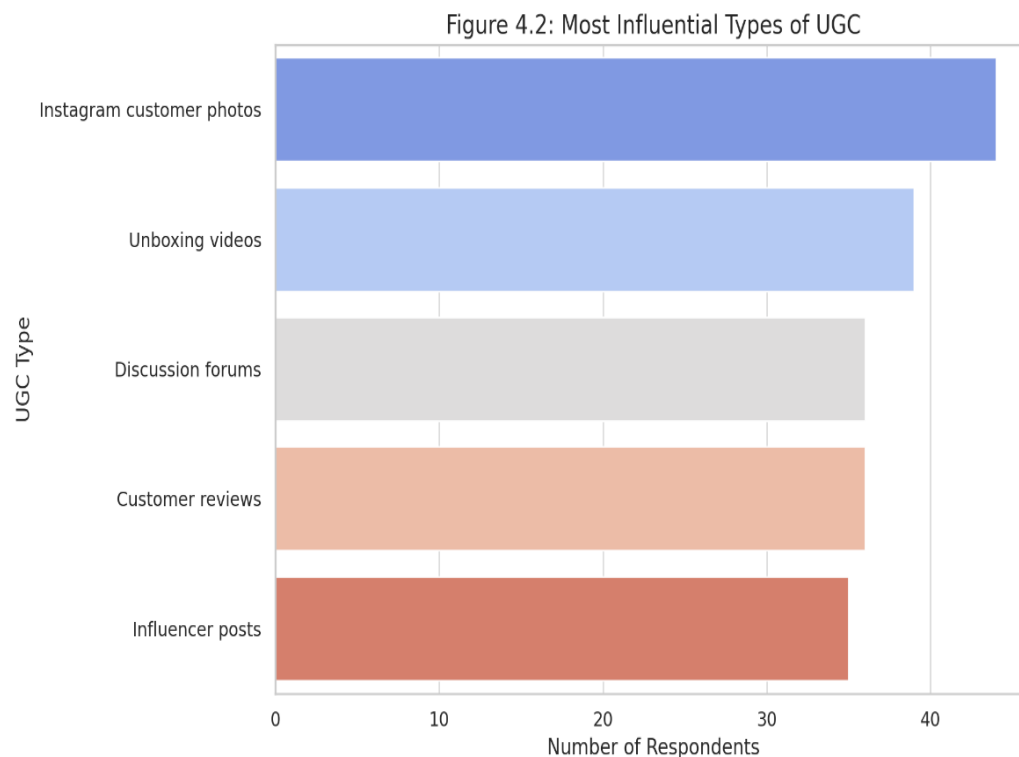


Figure 2. Most Influential Types of UGC

Table 2 Impact of User-Generated Content on Conversion Rates Across eCommerce Industries

Industry	Without UGC	With UGC
Apparel	2.07%	6.37%
Health & Beauty	2.29%	6.96%
Sports Equipment	1.57%	4.15%
Food & Beverage	3.04%	9.19%
Electronics	2.62%	4.73%

9.3 Preferred Platforms for UGC

The study also examined where consumers most frequently encounter UGC. As shown in Figure 3, Flipkart emerged as the most cited platform for UGC exposure, followed by other unspecified sources, Facebook, Amazon,

Instagram, and YouTube — confirming that eCommerce marketplaces themselves, alongside established social platforms, remain central to UGC dissemination in India.

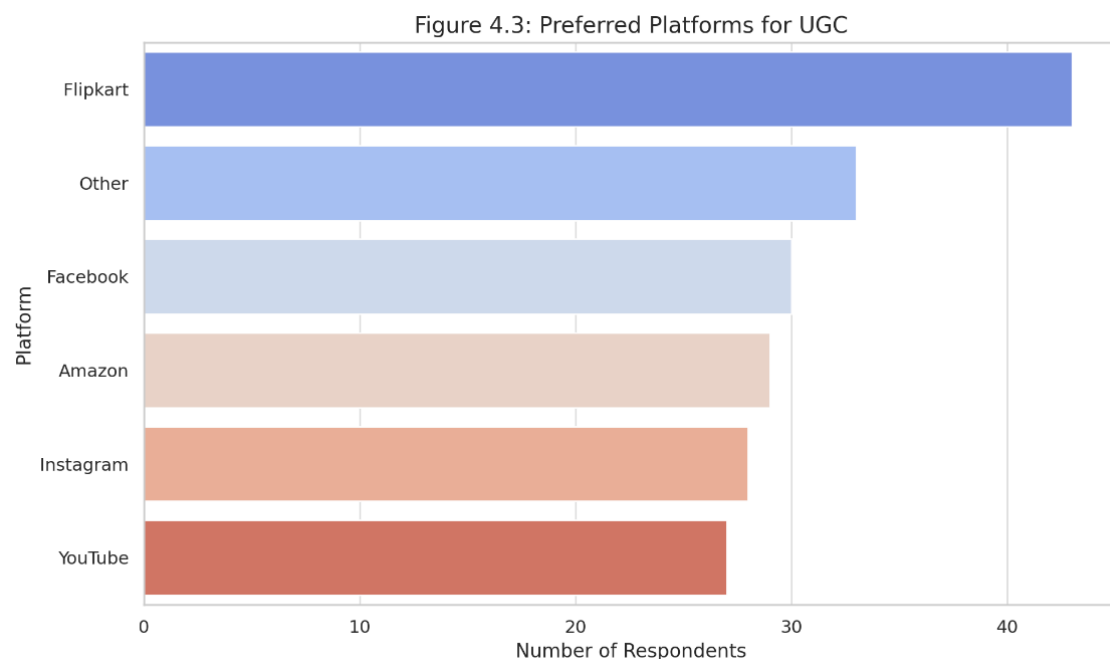


Figure 3. Preferred Platforms for UGC

Table 3 Business Benefits of Leveraging User-Generated Content in Marketing

UGC Benefit	Business Impact
Conversion rate improvement	Up to 144%
Revenue per visitor increase	Up to 162%
Time spent on site increase	Up to 90%
Ad click-through rate (CTR) rise	UGC ads receive 4× more clicks
Cost-effectiveness	UGC ads cost 50% less than branded ads
Influence on trust	79% of consumers trust UGC

9.4 Impact of UGC on Trust in Brand

Trust-building is a key function of UGC. As shown in Figure 4, responses regarding brand trust arising from UGC were distributed across the full range of the scale, with a substantial share of respondents at both the "Strongly Agree" and "Strongly Disagree" ends — indicating that while UGC is a powerful trust-building mechanism for a majority of consumers, a meaningful minority remain sceptical, most likely reflecting concerns around content authenticity discussed in Section 2.2.

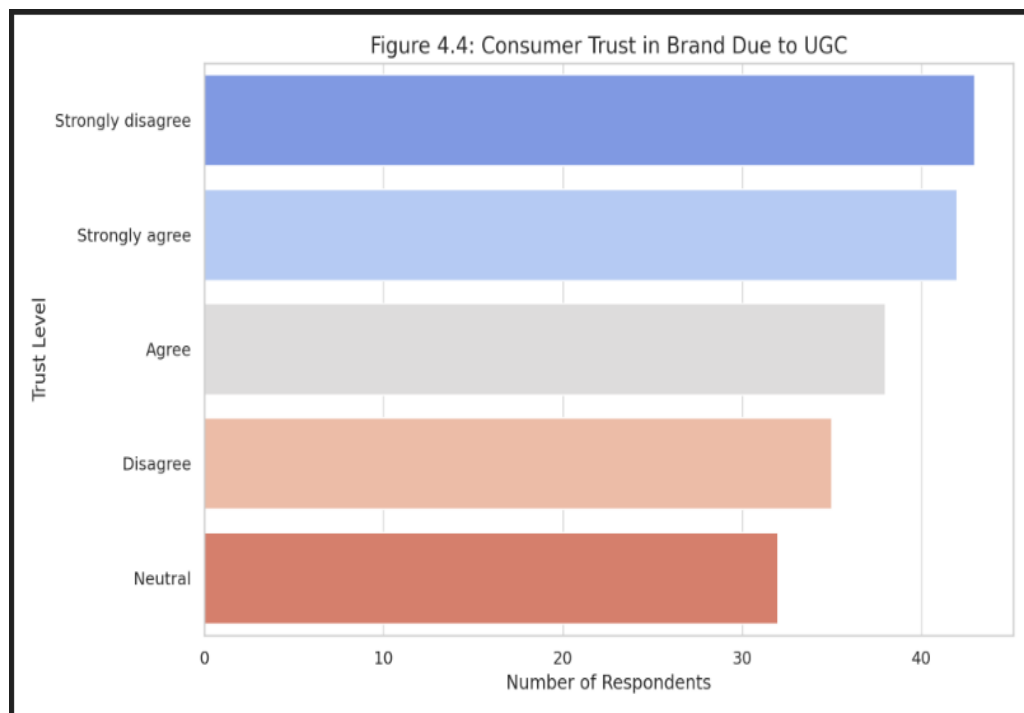


Figure 4. Consumer Trust in Brand Due to UGC

Table 4 Successful Brand Campaigns Utilising User-Generated Content

Brand	Campaign	Outcome
Coca-Cola	Share a Coke	1.8M+ posts; 7% sales increase
Starbucks	#RedCupContest	40,000+ entries; strong seasonal engagement
GoPro	Be a Hero	6,000+ user videos shared; higher product credibility
L'Oréal	Makeup Genius	1M+ downloads; 20% increase in product engagement
Nike	Find Your Greatness	1.5M+ hashtag uses; elevated brand advocacy

9.5 Behavioural Change Due to UGC

A notable behavioural shift was observed among respondents, the majority of whom reported that they had "started checking UGC more frequently" before making purchase decisions, as illustrated in Figure 5. This finding implies an evolving consumer mindset in which authenticity and peer validation increasingly precede — and inform — the final purchase decision.

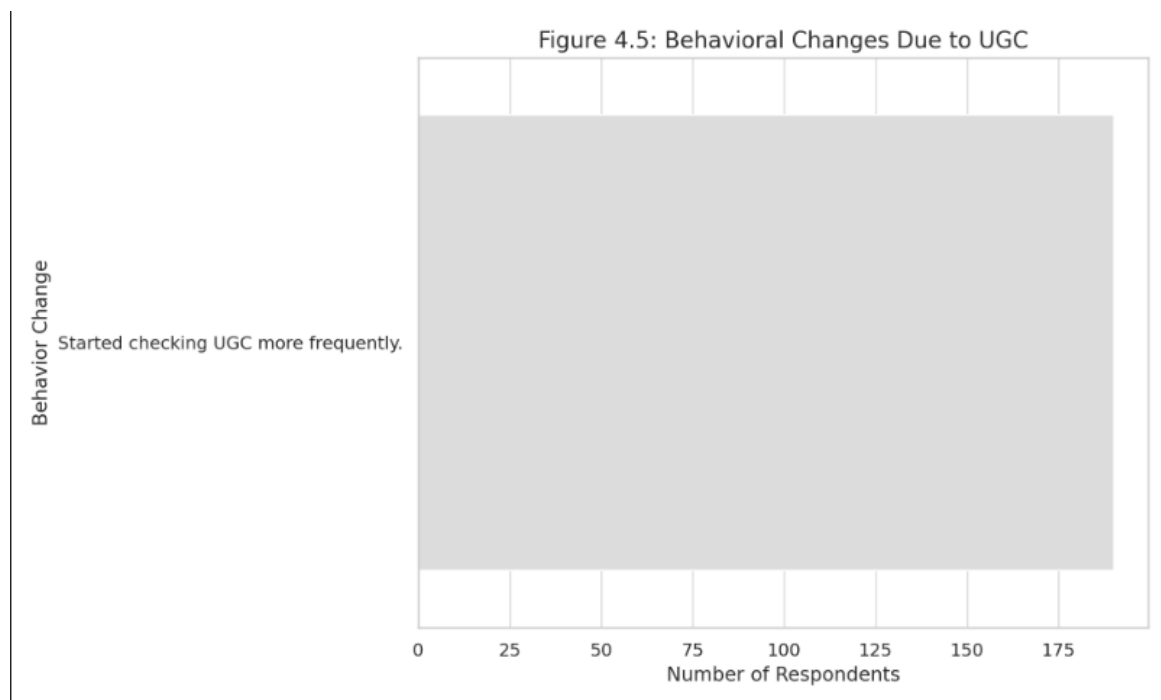


Figure 5. Behavioural Changes Due to UGC

10. Testing of Hypotheses

10.1 Hypothesis 1: Association between Age Group and Preferred UGC Platform

Method: A Chi-square test of independence was applied to a cross-tabulation of age group (18–25, 26–35, 36–45, 45+) against preferred UGC platform (Instagram, YouTube, Amazon, etc.).

Statistic	Value
Chi-square statistic (χ^2)	13.25
p-value	.583
Significance level (α)	.05
Decision	Fail to reject H_0

Interpretation: The high p-value (.583) indicates that the observed variation in platform preference across age groups is not statistically significant at the 5% significance level. The null hypothesis is therefore not rejected. This suggests that age does not play a defining role in platform choice for UGC consumption, and that eCommerce brands may reasonably adopt a unified, rather than strictly age-segmented, platform strategy for UGC promotion.

10.2 Hypothesis 2: Influence of UGC Frequency on Perceived Authenticity

Method: A one-way ANOVA was used to compare mean authenticity scores (1–5 Likert scale) across four UGC engagement-frequency groups: "Rarely," "Sometimes," "Often," and "Always."

Statistic	Value
F-statistic	0.321
p-value	.864
Significance level (α)	.05
Decision	Fail to reject H_0

Interpretation: The results show no statistically significant difference in perceived authenticity across UGC engagement-frequency groups. The null hypothesis is therefore not rejected. This finding challenges the assumption that frequent exposure alone leads to greater trust, and instead suggests that perceived authenticity is shaped more strongly by the quality and relevance of content than by the sheer frequency of exposure to it.

11. Key Findings and Inferences

- A substantial majority of respondents (90%) reported that UGC influences their online shopping decisions, and 86% consider it a signal of product quality, confirming UGC's central role in the Indian eCommerce decision journey.
- UGC is perceived as roughly 2.4 times more trustworthy than brand-generated content, with 74% of respondents trusting UGC over brand advertising and 76% reporting a purchase driven by a peer recommendation.
- Visual and peer-led formats — particularly Instagram customer photographs and unboxing videos — are perceived as the most influential types of UGC, ahead of discussion forums, written reviews, and influencer posts.
- eCommerce marketplaces (notably Flipkart) alongside established social platforms (Facebook, Amazon, Instagram, YouTube) remain the dominant channels through which Indian consumers encounter UGC.
- Consumer trust in brands arising from UGC is polarised: while a large share of respondents strongly agree that UGC builds trust, a comparable share strongly disagrees — reflecting persistent concerns around fake or manipulated reviews.
- A majority of respondents reported having started checking UGC more frequently before purchasing, indicating a durable behavioural shift toward peer validation in the pre-purchase stage.
- Age group does not significantly influence platform preference for UGC ($\chi^2 = 13.25$, $p = .583$), suggesting that a unified, cross-generational platform strategy is viable for brands.
- Frequency of UGC engagement does not significantly affect perceived authenticity ($F = 0.321$, $p = .864$), indicating that content quality — rather than exposure volume — is the primary driver of perceived authenticity.

12. Suggestions

12.1 For eCommerce Brands

Brands should integrate customer reviews, ratings, and visual UGC directly onto product pages to reduce purchase uncertainty and improve conversion, in line with the substantial conversion-rate uplifts observed across the apparel, health and beauty, food and beverage, sports equipment, and electronics categories (Table 2). Encouraging customers to share unboxing videos, testimonials, and tagged photographs helps foster a community-based brand identity that converts passive buyers into active brand advocates. Given the polarised trust findings in Section 9.4, brands must also invest in authenticity-verification mechanisms and respond constructively to negative reviews to preserve long-term credibility.

12.2 For Marketing Strategy

Marketing strategies should blend UGC with influencer marketing and professionally curated brand content rather than treating UGC as an isolated tactic, since this hybrid approach offers consumers a more balanced and credible brand image. As platform preference did not vary significantly by age group, brands can adopt a broadly unified platform strategy while still tailoring creative formats — for example, prioritising highly visual content on Instagram and in-depth video reviews on YouTube. Given the risk of fake or spam reviews, investment in AI-powered content moderation and sentiment-classification tools is recommended to preserve the integrity of the UGC ecosystem while maintaining transparency (Putatunda et al., 2023).

12.3 For Consumers

Consumers should be encouraged to engage in responsible and honest content sharing, given their outsized influence on brand narratives and peer purchase decisions. Educational initiatives — potentially brand-led — can help consumers better understand their role as informal brand advocates and improve their ability to distinguish authentic from manipulated content.

13. Conclusion

This study examined the transformative role of user-generated content in shaping consumer decision-making and brand trust within the evolving Indian eCommerce ecosystem. Drawing on empirical data from 103 respondents, the findings provide compelling evidence that UGC — particularly customer reviews, unboxing videos, influencer posts, and shared product photographs — has become a decisive factor in how Indian consumers evaluate brands and make purchase decisions.

A central conclusion of this research is the high credibility that consumers attribute to peer-created content. In contrast to traditional brand-generated marketing, UGC is perceived as more authentic, trustworthy, and emotionally relatable, particularly among younger, digitally native consumers who dominate India's growing online consumer base. The study also identified key platforms — including Flipkart, Instagram, and YouTube — as dominant mediums for UGC engagement, serving simultaneously as information sources and trust-building tools.

From a behavioural perspective, the research found that UGC drives a marked shift in consumer habits, with a majority of respondents now actively seeking out UGC before making a purchase — underscoring the growing influence of social proof and crowd validation in digital commerce. However, UGC's benefits are not without challenges: the proliferation of fake or paid reviews, the potential impact of negative content, and the difficulty of verifying authenticity pose ongoing threats to brand reputation. It is therefore imperative for eCommerce brands to establish robust content-moderation systems, encourage genuine user participation, and practise ethical engagement strategies to sustain the value of UGC.

In conclusion, UGC has evolved into a strategic pillar of digital marketing in India, reshaping how brands interact with consumers and how trust is built in virtual marketplaces. For brands aiming to thrive in the digital-first economy, leveraging UGC is not optional — it is essential. The future of eCommerce lies in collaborative branding, where the voice of the customer becomes the brand's strongest advocate.

13.1 Scope for Further Research

Future research could productively examine the relative effectiveness of different UGC formats (text versus visual content) across product categories; the influence of emerging technologies such as augmented reality, virtual reality, and generative AI on the creation and perceived authenticity of UGC; cross-cultural variation in UGC trust and platform preference between individualistic and collectivist markets; longitudinal studies tracking how sustained UGC exposure shapes brand loyalty and repeat-purchase behaviour over time; and the experiences of under-represented segments such as older adults and rural consumers, who were not well captured within the present urban-centric sample.

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